

CEMETERY SANCTUARIES

by Michael J. Mooney

TEXAS' MOTHER PEPPER

by Cat Cardenas

TEXAS

HIGHWAYS™

THE
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MAGAZINE
OF TEXAS

COWTOWN REBOOT

**FORT WORTH'S
RENAISSANCE**

by Sarah Hepola



OCTOBER 2022

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- Winnie the Pooh

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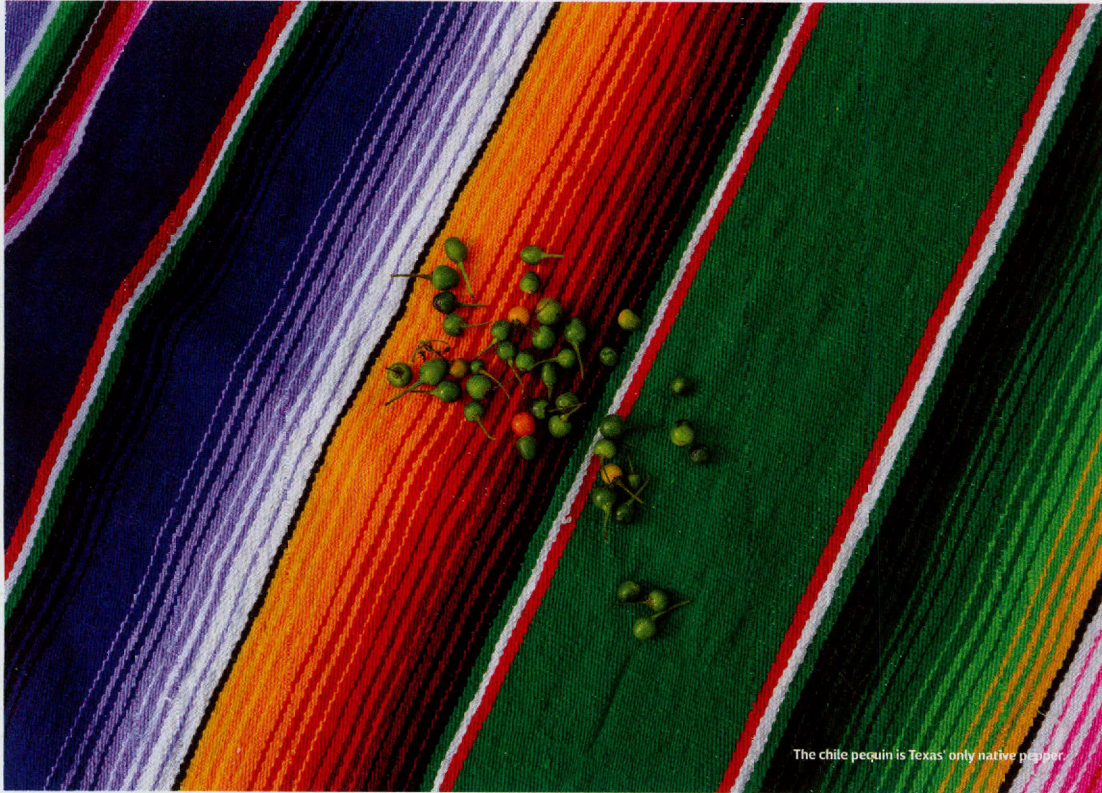
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EDITOR'S
NOTE



The chile pequin is Texas' only native pepper.

Valley Roots

This month's story on Texas' only native pepper, the chile pequin, originated from a conversation between our new senior editor, Danielle Lopez, and her father. She started her research by calling her dad, who like many Texans, has been on a lifelong quest to find the perfect salsa. "He started telling me about how his mcm would pick fresh pequins that grew around their house in Pharr and bring them in to make a really hot, delicious salsa," she says. "It's a very common practice among South Texans. But he joked that we don't see it in restaurants too often because people can't handle the heat." Danielle joined our team in June to head up our food coverage, after stints at the *Alcalde*, KUT, and the *Texas Observer*. One of her first tasks was shaping a nebulous story idea we'd been kicking around for a while on peppers and their prominence in Texas cuisine.

The resulting story, penned by Austin-based writer Cat Cardenas, delves into the many uses for the chile pequin and its deep roots in Latino culture across the state. Born and raised in McAllen in the Rio Grande Valley, Danielle grew up "in a big family, speaking Spanglish, eating lots of Mexican food, and singing along to country and Tejano music." It's that culture and the feeling of community that she misses most about her hometown since moving to

Austin. She's looking forward to exploring more of Texas' cultural diversity and inimitable variety of food in her role as Plates editor. "I think there's a lot to be learned about people through their relationship with food," she says. "Whether it's a chef in one of the big cities serving cutting-edge dishes or a family who's been baking pastries in their hometown for 100 years, there's always a great story to tell."

Danielle's favorite place to visit in Texas is South Padre Island, where her family vacationed frequently. For the last few years, she's taken annual trips to Kingsland, about an hour-and-a-half northwest of Austin, to spend time on Lake LBJ. She's hoping to explore the Panhandle in the coming years. "In our next issue, we have a story about a restaurant in Lubbock that I'm excited about," she says. If you have ideas for future food stories we should cover, send her an email at danielle.lcpez@txdot.gov.

Emily R. Stone

EMILY ROBERTS STONE
EDITOR IN CHIEF



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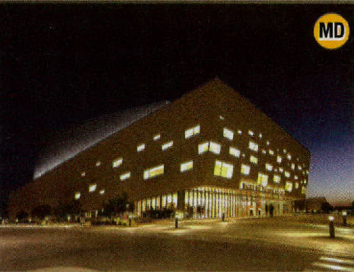
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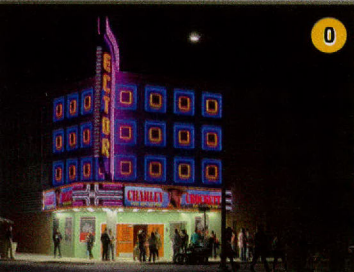


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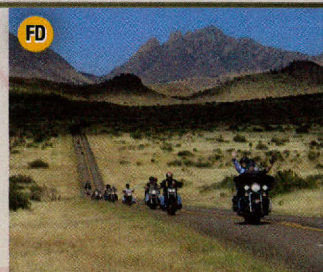


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Oct 14-16 - Marfa 100 Road Bike Race

MF



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Some Like It Hot

Despite its diminutive size, the chile pequin—the “mother of all peppers”—looms large in Texas cuisine.

*By Cat Cardenas
Photographs by Brenda Bazán*

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Cowtown Reboot

Fort Worth is no longer Dallas' cowboy cousin: From the Stockyards to Near Southside, the city is reinventing itself.

*By Sarah Hepola
Photographs by Dave Shafer*

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The Last Time Anyone Says Your Name

Cemetery tours offer a glimpse into the past—and a reconciliation with the future that awaits all of us.

*By Michael J. Mooney
Photographs by Kenny Braun*

MARTIN PURYEAR'S
Ladder for Booker T. Washington is housed at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.



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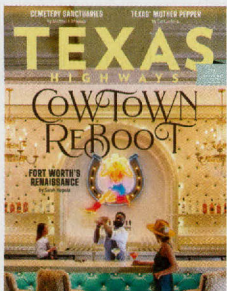
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May the best chili win



ON THE COVER

Photograph by Dave Shafer
Shot at Hotel Drover

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Behind the Story



When she was growing up in San Antonio, writer Cat Cardenas remembers picking chile pequin from a lot next to her grandfather's house. "He would send us over to a little shrub with a couple of empty jars," the Austin-based writer says, "and we'd collect as many as we could and bring them back to his kitchen so he could make fresh salsa." Cardenas wrote "Some Like It Hot" (Page 36) as an ode to the pequin, the only native pepper in the state. "I hope it helps people develop an appreciation for the native plants of Texas and the people who have spent years cultivating them and developing so many of the Tex-Mex staples we know and love," she says.

Featured Contributors



Rubén Degollado

For "Home Before Sundown" (Page 14), Degollado traveled to a place full of memories and legends: his family's hometown of Hidalgo. For the writer based in La Feria, this piece was a long time coming. "My family lived in Hidalgo for generations and left their mark on the town, yet I had never written about it," Degollado says. "Putting down the words about those Saturdays of my childhood brought me closer to my past and my family." Degollado has written two novels set in Texas, *Throw* and *The Family Izquierdo*.



Brooke Lewis

Lewis first met Sam Collins III, who she interviewed for "My Hometown: Hitchcock" (Page 12), in 2018 while researching a story about the remains of 95 African Americans found in a forgotten cemetery from the late 1800s in Sugar Land. "I always enjoy talking with Sam because of his outgoing and welcoming personality, but even more because of Sam's vast knowledge of Black history across Texas," the Houston-based writer says. "You can tell Sam knows Hitchcock like the back of his hand." At the *Houston Chronicle*, Lewis wrote extensively about the Sugar Land 95, which renewed interest in the history of convict leasing.

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READERS RESPOND

MERGE



In South Texas, our friends from the northern Midwestern states are called Winter Texans, not snowbirds. Those folks called snowbirds are Yankees from the Northeast and go to Florida.

Ray Moore, McAllen

Visual Wonders
Great issue this month [September] showcasing wonderful art and artists.
f Marsha Baxter

Árbol de la Vida, San Antonio
I am so happy that I got to be part of this project ["Canvassing the State," September]. My sculpture is right in the center of the tree.

f Laura Riojas-Noriega

My husband and I really enjoyed making our piece [of the sculpture]. Ours is blue and yellow, visible mid-upper right.
f Hilda East

Biker's Heaven

We had a chance to visit the Texas Vintage Motorcycle Museum with our car club back in June ["Vroom Room," September]. I was expecting to see the large American bikes that ruled the 1950s and 1960s. I was amazed to see that the collection featured the stars of the 1970s. The Honda CBX with its six cylinder in-line motor. The Norton Commando with right hand gear shift. The Triumphs, Bultacos, BMWs, and so many more. For anyone who started riding in the 1970s, these machines bring you right back to those times. The exhibit includes regular stock machines as well as some customized for racing. It is a great collection and an excellent daytrip from many Central Texas towns. If you love the bikes from

the 1970s, don't miss it.

Jeff Levine, Austin

Small Towns, Big Ideas

Great August issue, starting with the Uvalde tribute. Also, nice to include small town tribute and "history" of town names. A suggestion: Include the history of the town Uncertain. Local history says when the small community around Caddo Lake applied for the town to be recognized by the state, the application had left out the name. Thus, the state office filled in "Uncertain."

Jerry Swiggart, Hideaway

We live in Algoa, a small community in Galveston County. The plat of Algoa was recorded Sept. 13, 1897, by the Blum Land Company and officially placed on the

map. The town is 3 miles east of Alvin on State Highway 6. Rumor has it that during a hurricane there was a ship that was washed up in this area named the Algoa. That's where we got our name. Algoa used to have its own post office. The "Smallest Post Office in the United States" was officially closed in 1972.

Barry Nestle, Algoa

I Know Him!

I was surprised when looking at the August issue Vintage page ["The Village Blacksmith"] to see my grandpa's blacksmith shop and his picture. It was so exciting that I asked the doctor there if I could keep the magazine. Keep up the great articles and looks back at the past.

Bobbie Andres, Texarkana



Stockyard Lights

Developed in the late 1800s as a hub for cattle shipping and meatpacking, the Fort Worth Stockyards remains a vibrant marketplace. Today, cows have been replaced by locals and tourists exploring the National Historic District's shops, eateries, saloons, hotels, and museums. Dave Shafer set out to capture the contemporary vitality of the Stockyards in his photograph of the intersection of West Exchange Avenue and North Main Street, which is home to M.L. Leddy's, a venerable Western wear shop. "There is always something going on, and I wanted to convey in one picture that it's a busy, fun place," Shafer says.





Hitchcock

Sam Collins preserves the multifaceted history of the Texas Gulf Coast

By Brooke A. Lewis



SAMUEL COLLINS III, a financial consultant and historical preservationist, restored a Hitchcock home that dates to the 1880s.

Before Galveston and Houston were connected by rail, boats plied Highland Bayou between the two Gulf Coast cities. Farmers settled along the bayou and Galveston Bay in the mid-1800s, forming a community that became Hitchcock in the 1870s. The settlers included Henry Martyn Stringfellow, a Confederate veteran renowned for his organic farming practices. Over the decades, Stringfellow Orchards eventually fell into disrepair before Samuel Collins III bought the remaining 10 acres in 2005. Collins, 51, was born in Galveston, grew up in Hitchcock, and now lives in neighboring La Marque with his wife, Doris. He restored the property's 1880s Victorian residence as an office for his financial consulting business. Collins has long been active in promoting the area's African American heritage, including fundraising for the *Absolute Equality* mural in Galveston. An advisor to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Collins has hosted Juneteenth celebrations at Stringfellow and says he'd like to someday open it as a park and a link to local history.

Stringfellow Orchards

"I would've never imagined that I would have 10 acres in the center of town. I didn't know all of the history when I had an opportunity to acquire the property. It's not included in our history books. After I researched the story, Mr. Stringfellow's connection to the formerly enslaved and the African American community was strong because he offered 30 Black men the opportunity to work there and get paid \$1 a day. This was the early 1880s, when the going rate was 50 cents per day. The other planters and growers in Hitchcock were upset with Stringfellow, but he paid them what he felt was fair. He took the high road because the low road was crowded during the late 1800s."

Gulf Coast Roots

"My dad's family and my mom's family lived in Galveston. But land was cheaper in Hitchcock. My mother's family moved off the island, and my dad's family stayed. They met at Lamar University in Beaumont. At the corner of Highway 6 and Mike Street, my grandmother used to have Odessa's restaurant—soul food. That's where I learned to walk. When my mother was working, I stayed with my grandmother. I grew up in a little green and white house on Mike Street. I used to think it was the biggest yard in the world when I had to cut it. Many birthday parties in that front yard."

Red Raider Football

"The Hitchcock Red Raiders is like a rite of passage for boys. As a little boy, I felt like I've got to play little league football. Some kids come from other cities to play in the

Hitchcock league because the coaches do a good job."

Good Ole Days

"We always look forward to the Good Ole Days Festival every year in August. Growing up, my grandmother and I used to always go get an Italian sausage sandwich. There was a 'Miss Good Ole Days.' Whose girlfriend is going to win Miss Good Ole Days? That was a big thing. They bring out different rides for the kids like the merry-go-round and games with prizes. I think you'll get 13,000 people. For our town, that's big."

Economic Drivers

"Hitchcock is a bedroom town. The jobs are in Galveston at the hospital, insurance, and tourism businesses. Mainly, the best-paying jobs are in Texas City at the petrochemical plants and businesses that support that."

Salt Life

"When I was a child, my dad had an apartment two blocks from the beach. Anytime I was over in Galveston, we'd be out on the beach or on the Seawall. My grandmother fished all the time. They had places closer to Hitchcock on the bay. My grandmother used to fish out there long before it was all developed. Now, there's a gated community with million-dollar homes."

Community Treasures

"Hitchcock is a diamond in the rough. It's special because of the people in it. At the post office, somebody mailed a letter from Austin and they wrote 'Sam Collins, Hitchcock Texas.' No address. The postmaster of course knew who I was." 🐾



TOWN TRIVIA



POPULATION:

7,800



NUMBER OF STOPLIGHTS:

6



YEAR FOUNDED:

1884



NEAREST CITY

Galveston, 15 miles southeast



MARQUEE EVENT:

Good Ole Days BBQ Cook-Off and Festival, held annually the second weekend of August



MAP IT:

Stringfellow Orchards, 7902 State Highway 6





Home Before Sundown

Old gives way to new in Hidalgo, but the ghosts persist

By Rubén Degollado



I

In the only photograph I have of my grandfather, taken in the 1970s, he is wearing his City of Hidalgo deputy marshal uniform. He is half smiling, head slightly askew, with one hand on his leather police belt. Whenever I see

this picture, it's not his uniform, his badge, or the .357 Magnum on his hip that draws me in. It's the expression in his eyes: kind and gentle, but also commanding of respect and wary of wrongdoers. It's also the way he wears his cowboy hat, back on his head and tilted left at a cocked angle. In those eyes, I see strength and courage, but also love for his family and for the town he helped build, first as a school bus driver, then a taxicab company owner, and finally a peacekeeper. I envision my grandfather Roberto Dennett Garza Sr. wearing that uniform as he gathered my uncles and aunts—children then—in their small living room to pray, as he did every day before he went to work.

I never got to know him well. My parents had moved up north to Indiana in the late '60s, and I spent most of my childhood away from the Rio Grande Valley, seeing Grandpa Roberto only at Christmas and sometimes in the summer. He went on to glory before we had a chance to return home in 1981, a move driven by my father's desire for his children to grow up around family. I did get to know him in my own way, though, through the stories my mother and her sisters told on Saturdays

when we would visit the tiny house in Hidalgo where my Grandfather Roberto and Grandmother Juanita had raised their family.

Their tales were either stories of bravery and heroism involving my grandfather or the supernatural legends of La Llorona (the Weeping Woman), La Mano Pachona (the Furry Hand), and El Jinete sin Cabeza (the Headless Horseman). I longed for these stories to collide—to hear Grandpa Roberto had confronted La Llorona, thrown La Mano Pachona into the river, or lassoed El Jinete sin Cabeza into submission. I could never understand why they didn't. I spent those Saturdays exploring his hometown for myself—the roads, levees, canals, ruins, and banks of the Rio Grande brought his presence to life for me. The ghosts were always present in my mind, somewhere beyond sight.

Those moments of my later childhood in Hidalgo were full of adventures with my cousins Gregorio and Steven, whom we called Goyito and Stevie then, while everyone called me Benny. In this little town, my primos and I learned how to drive in my mother's Ford Thunderbird, got our first jobs mowing our grandmother's mostly dirt lawn, and talked about girls we had crushes on. We had free rein, made our own decisions between life and death. On those Saturdays of our youth, I lived by only one rule: Get back before sundown. Because if you don't, the ghost of La Llorona will get you.

There are many versions of the legend of La Llorona, and the story's roots are often disputed. Some claim it's an Indigenous story that predates the arrival of

the Spanish to Mexico, while others say it's a result of the latter's colonization. In the version I grew up hearing, a woman named María is engaged to a soldier, but he tells her he can't go through with marriage when he discovers she has children. Fearing a life of poverty and an inability to put food on the table without the soldier's wages to support her, she drowns her children. She then returns to the soldier and tells him they are free to marry now that she is childless. When he learns what she has done, he rejects her and rides out of town. María—with no lover and no children, wracked by guilt, wearing her white wedding dress—drowns herself. She is denied entry into heaven and is cursed to an eternity of roaming along the banks of the Rio Grande, searching for her children, weeping, and crying out for them. Every night, when La Llorona



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doesn't find them, she takes any child she finds, and they are never seen again.

To most, it's just a Mexican ghost story, a *cuento de fantasmas*, fodder for retellings like Joe Hayes' popular bilingual book *La Llorona: The Weeping Woman*. But to my family, the story was real enough, and La Llorona was out there, a fact reinforced by accounts we heard on those Saturdays. My mother had her own brush with La Llorona when she was a teenager in the '60s. One night, she and her friends found some cigarettes and snuck out of the house. Before they'd even had a chance to light them, they heard wailing coming from the river, about 50 yards away. They ditched their smokes, ran to their homes, and were too afraid to look behind them, terrified they might see her. As an adult, one of my tías saw La Llorona when she was taking

We had free rein, made our own decisions between life and death. On those Saturdays of our youth, I lived by only one rule: Get back before sundown. Because if you don't, the ghost of La Llorona will get you.

care of my Grandmother Juanita in her later years. She'd gotten up in the middle of the night and heard the same telltale cry of La Llorona, then saw a white sheet flying by the window. My cousin Goyito even saw her along the canals in San Juan one foggy morning on his way to school. These family legends reinforced our parents' commandment to always come home before dark.

It is fitting now that I take my own children—my two sons, ages 16 and 12; and

my 8-year-old daughter—to visit Hidalgo. I want to share a little of my history with them but keep the scary stories to myself for now. Just as I have always wanted to know more about my grandfather, they often ask to hear about the days when I was young, so I tell them about my adventures with Stevie and Goyito.

I come from big families, with over 40 uncles and aunts when you combine both sides. This means a lot of cousins. In large families, you get grouped with



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the ones who are either your age or share your interests, or in the case of Stevie and Goyito, those who share both. You love all your cousins, but these two are like a mix between siblings and best friends. All of us still live in Texas—I live on a ranch in La Feria, only 30 minutes from Hidalgo. Every time we see each other, the years of building families and careers fade away. We are kids again, the proud grandsons of Roberto. We revert to our childhood nicknames.

A few years ago, we got together for my uncle Ed Vela's 90th birthday. He is the former mayor of Hidalgo and married to my mother's twin sister. As we told stories with increasingly inflated details about those younger days, we took turns sticking out our tongues and saying, "Ahh," in a low voice. This is our Rio Grande Valley way of playfully

expressing disbelief. We also used our chins instead of our forefingers to direct our collective attention to someone we hadn't seen in years because we were all taught as kids that it's rude to point. We repeated, "Pues si, pues si"—*Well you are right, well you are right*—when we agreed with someone's philosophizing. We jokingly said, "Deja tú"—*What's worse*—when we wanted to emphasize an important point. We all laughed in appreciation of these "Valleyisms."

There is no greater symbol of my childhood and the Rio Grande Valley's complexities than the Hidalgo Pump-house, which we all called La Pompa. It was an imposing building that housed a steam-powered pump, which provided thousands of gallons of water to farmlands beginning in 1909. By the mid-'80s,

when we were adolescents roaming the town, it was a defunct shell of what it had been but a place of imagination for us. We never could have envisioned what it would become in 2022.

Today, our Pompa is the Old Hidalgo Pump-house, a tourist attraction with a renovated museum and an event center. The now picturesque location is used for engagement, quinceañera, and commemorative photos. As I stand with my children in the same place I stood with Stevie and Goyito, I explain how none of what we are seeing was as nice as it is now. In my childhood, it was a ruin, a place of wonder that gave me the account I am about to share with them.

It is a few years after my Grandfather Roberto passed away in 1981. On this Saturday, my cousins and I are in a dry canal a few hundred yards from the



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house—as the grackle flies—near the ruinous Pompa. We are running from danger, and one or all of us might not make it back to the safety of Grandma Juanita's casita.

We had gone exploring during the hottest part of the day, armed with tree branches we fashioned into spears with the Swiss Army knife I got for Christmas. Sometimes we'd go as far as the banks of the Rio Grande, but it seemed like we always ended up at the Pompa. In my mind, the Pompa was a castle from whatever Dungeons & Dragons campaign I was playing then or a post-apocalyptic fortress where we could live out our boyhood fantasies of surviving in the wasteland, scavenging for resources, and fighting off roving gangs of road warriors.

Our fantasy of survival has become far too real as we are now running for our

lives from a pack of wild dogs. Our earlier bravado with the spears has faded, and my Swiss Army knife is no more capable of protecting me than a nail clipper. The dogs are a few hundred yards behind us, but they are gaining. Our only hope is to make it to the Pumphouse's dam, which forms a bridge where the water from the Rio Grande was released by turning gears to raise wooden gates. We throw our spears, climb up the gates, and make it to the top. We are out of breath. Goyito has lost one of his shoes. The dogs approach the bridge, cross under us, and trot away. We realize they were never really chasing us, and if they were, they are now bored with the hunt. They are not the dingoes from the wasteland I had imagined. Still, at 12 years old, we had never felt more alive.

As I relive the story in its retelling, I see wonder in my children's faces, some-

thing like a newly found respect for me. I realize I should have brought them to Hidalgo sooner, or at least told them more about me as a boy. They should know who I was, who my cousins and I were together. We were young, invincible, and we were Garzas even if we had different surnames. We were Roberto's grandsons—proud, brave, and strong. We wore our baseball caps tilted back on our heads at a cocked angle, in much the same way our Grandfather Roberto wore his cowboy hat.

One of my favorite stories about my grandfather exemplifies his courage and inspired us to find our own. Roberto had been called to a local bar after a fight had broken out. What had started as a disagreement was now an all-out brawl

continued on Page 77



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DRIVE

A photograph of a cemetery. In the foreground, there are several weathered, upright headstones of varying shapes and sizes, some with small blue markers. The ground is covered in dry, yellowish-brown grass. In the background, a dense line of green trees stretches across the horizon under a bright blue sky with some light clouds. The overall scene is quiet and somewhat somber.

SHILOH CEMETERY
in Hurst is one of many
Black cemeteries in
Texas targeted for
historical preservation.



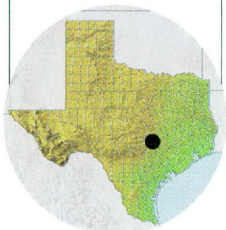
Members of the community are working to preserve Citizens Memorial Garden cemetery in Georgetown.

Graveyard Shift

Volunteers garner historical status for Black cemeteries in Texas

By Dina Gachman

SHILOH CEMETERY
1043-1143 CR 139,
Hutto.

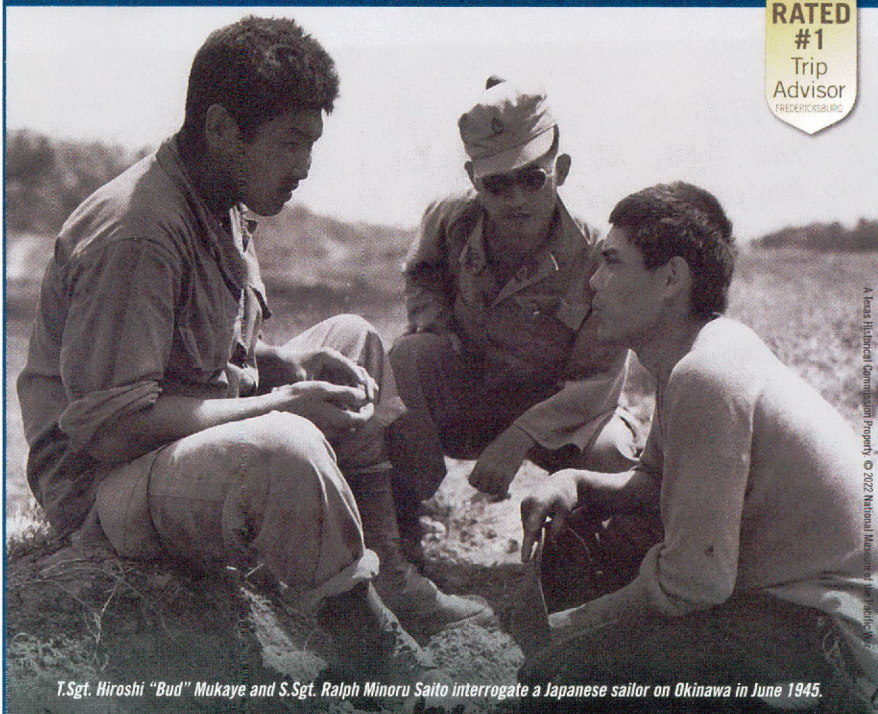


The nearly 3-acre patch of green off County Road 139 in Hutto was covered in weeds and trash for decades. Several of the remaining tombstones and wooden markers were chipped and rotting. Most passersby likely thought the site was an overgrown field with an illegal dumping ground in the back. Until Hutto resident Robyn Bieber and organizations including Black Families of Hutto fought to clear the refuse and add signage, Shiloh Cemetery was one of roughly a couple hundred aging Black cemeteries across Texas that could have faded away. But now the cemetery is accessible to the public, providing generations of descendants access to where their ancestors were laid to rest.

"I was astounded at how bad these cemeteries can get," says Bieber, a veteran, mom of three, and graduate student of history at American Public University. "There are sometimes 50 or 60 years of growth." In the fall of 2020, Bieber and several other volunteers began cleaning up the garbage in their quest for a Historic Texas Cemetery designation from the Texas Historical Commission. Donning boots and gloves, they joined like-minded members of Black Families of Hutto, Keep Hutto Beautiful, and other organizations from around town to brave spiders and snakes while sifting through beer cans and broken glass. It took them six months to clean up enough to even begin the application process.

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The Allies fought the Axis powers of Germany, Japan and Italy in WWII. The loyalty of Americans whose ancestry was of Axis countries was doubted.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, an estimated 80,000 Japanese Americans living along the West Coast were sent to internment camps.

Over 11,000 German Americans were also interned as well as a small number of Italian Americans. Though initially prohibited from military service, 33,000 Japanese Americans ultimately served — even after being interned.

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Paulette Taylor helps to oversee Citizens Memorial Garden, where her grandparents are buried.

About 15% of all 15,906 known cemeteries in Texas carry the Historic Texas Cemetery designation, according to Carlyn Copeland Hammons, the Texas Historical Commission's cemetery preservation program specialist. The designation is important because it legally records a cemetery location in the county's official public records so present and future landowners are aware of the historic nature of the property. To qualify, the cemetery must be at least 50 years old. The application includes deed research, a narrative history, surveys, photographs, and sketch maps.

"Some of them have really interesting histories or handmade grave markers or heirloom plants you can't find anywhere else," Copeland Hammons says. "All of them have something special."

Inside Shiloh's flimsy border fence are stories of lives well lived, of people who were loved. The land is sacred, but without something as simple as a roadside sign, outsiders might not know it exists. Unlike the all-white Shiloh-McCutcheon Cemetery a few miles across Brushy Creek, which has an official historical marker, Shiloh had no obvious protections. Both cemeteries are thought to be named after a small farming community nearby that was one of the original settlements in the area.

When I met Bieber at Shiloh, during the summer of 2021, she was talking with a geophysicist about conducting a ground penetrating radar survey to get a better idea of what was there. She introduced herself as "Robyn Bieber, like Justin." As a resident of Hutto, I'd passed by

Shiloh many times, just making out the tops of a few gravestones, always wondering what this place was and who was buried there. Save for someone mowing on occasion, it was always empty.

Hutto was founded in 1876, and one of the first settlers was a Black man named Adam Orgain, a former enslaved person who was born in Tennessee. The first known burial at Shiloh was in 1866, about a century before cemeteries were no longer segregated in Texas, according to Copeland Hammons. The most recent burial was Harold "Bobo" Kerley Sr. in February 2022. Bieber and others estimate about 30% of the roughly 130 graves at Shiloh have markers. Along with Black Families of Hutto members Debbie Bonner and Rabiab Ngbwa, she plans to create markers or a memorial

statue to commemorate the unnamed graves they're able to locate.

A Black cemetery in Georgetown, Citizens Memorial Garden, faces even tougher challenges. The day I meet Georgetown native Paulette Taylor, president of the Georgetown Cultural Citizens Memorial Association and partial overseer of the cemetery for more than a decade, there are beer cans strewn about and unruly weeds winding around headstones. The cemetery, established in 1906, is owned by the city and does not yet have a Historic Texas Cemetery designation. Residents like Taylor are working to clean it up. As we walk among the tombstones, Taylor tells me her grandparents are buried here.

"I can't tell you where, though," she says. Her grandparents' placards disappeared many years ago. She has a vague memory of where they might be buried based on a

"Cemeteries don't migrate. They stay, and many of them lost the only caretakers they had. Entire communities dispersed."

childhood visit, but she isn't certain.

Taylor is troubled that, due to so much construction happening around the grounds, the main road into Citizens Memorial has become "a shortcut to Walmart." She facilitated adding more signage, so all those shoppers understand they're passing a historic cemetery on their way to buy socks or Gatorade.

Taylor sees the potential value of a Historic Texas Cemetery designation, and Georgetown Parks & Recreation, which has authority over the cemetery, says it's open to working with Taylor.

Larry Wade, a retired educator and historian, has helped manage preservation at Universe Cemetery in Tyler since local history buff Vicki Betts helped it earn the Texas Historical Commission's approval in 2020. He says he's beginning to see the effects of the Historic Texas Cemetery designation. There are over 300 graves at the public Black cemetery—renowned local athletes, veterans, educators, community leaders, and former slaves. Wade organizes monthly cleanups, where volunteers bring chainsaws, rakes, and trash bags to clear brush.

"We do what we can," Wade says. He believes many Black cemeteries in Texas

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From left: Shiloh Cemetery is waiting for a sign with the correct spelling; Rabiati Ngbwa was a chief organizer of the Shiloh Cemetery cleanup.

Gone but Not Forgotten

Black cemeteries across the state tell their own stories.

Olivewood Cemetery, Houston

The city's first incorporated Black cemetery is the resting place for formerly enslaved people, prominent businesspeople, attorneys, religious leaders, and physicians.

Many of the graves include examples of pre-emancipation burial practices.

*1300 Court St.,
descendantsof
olivewood.org*

Freedman's Cemetery Memorial, Dallas

More than 1,000 graves were relocated from the site of Freedman's Cemetery due to construction, and community members fought for the memorial that now stands in their place. Statues and poems commemorate the story of the journey from slavery to emancipation.

2700 Lemmon Ave.

Concordia Cemetery, El Paso

Over 40 Buffalo Soldiers are known to be buried here. The cemetery features a memorial dedicated to the all-Black regiments that served on the frontier after the Civil War.

*3700 East Yandell Drive,
concordiacemetery.org*



were left in disrepair because as families moved away from rural areas and into cities, the graves of their ancestors were often neglected.

"Cemeteries don't migrate," Copeland Hammons adds. "They stay, and many of them lost the only caretakers they had. Entire communities dispersed."

Ancestry is important to Wade. He says he can name every one of his ancestors. Whether he's connected to them by blood or not, though, all the graves at Universe are significant to him. "Any life lived on this earth is important and should not be forgotten," he says. Not long ago, Wade brought some local Black leaders to the cemetery. "They didn't know it existed," he says. "They were blown away."

All across Texas, land is up for grabs. As people flood into the state, forgotten graveyards could be covered with new

homes or yet another car wash. There are laws that protect cemeteries, but as Copeland Hammons says, "Cemeteries still get vandalized, they still get bulldozed, and they still get destroyed even though there are laws against it. What really keeps cemeteries safe is people."

The Historic Texas Cemetery designation gives individuals power to preserve these sacred grounds. Thanks to Bieber, Bonner, Ngbwa, and others, Shiloh got its designation this past May. Bieber immediately contacted the living descendants of the Kerley family, one of the most common names a visitor will find on a Shiloh marker, to tell them the news.

Alice Kerley was thrilled when Bieber called. She has relatives on both her side and her ex-husband's side buried at Shiloh, including her father-in-law "Bobo" Kerley. "For a long time, nobody knew that cemetery was there," Kerley

says. "I want our kids to know where their ancestors are buried. I want people to know it exists."

A historical marker hasn't gone up at Shiloh yet, but they did get a sign donated. "They spelled the name wrong, but I'll take what I can get," Bieber says.

Bieber doesn't have any relatives at Shiloh but caring for the cemetery is a duty she holds dear. "I was raised by my great-grandmother, and this helps me connect with her," she says. "I think about all the things she couldn't talk about, growing up when she did. I want to make sure we honor the ancestors."

Bieber knows that even with the designation, there's a lot to do. Volunteers are still needed to preserve and protect. And that sign, well, maybe one day they'll get one with an "h" on the end. **L**



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Oh My Gourd

A festival in Fredericksburg inspires new ways to decorate for the fall

By Sallie Lewis


For thousands of years, civilizations across the globe have used gourds in their daily lives. The plant is not only a popular food source, but throughout human history its versatile shell has been transformed into a multitude of goods, including musical instruments, containers, and drinking vessels.

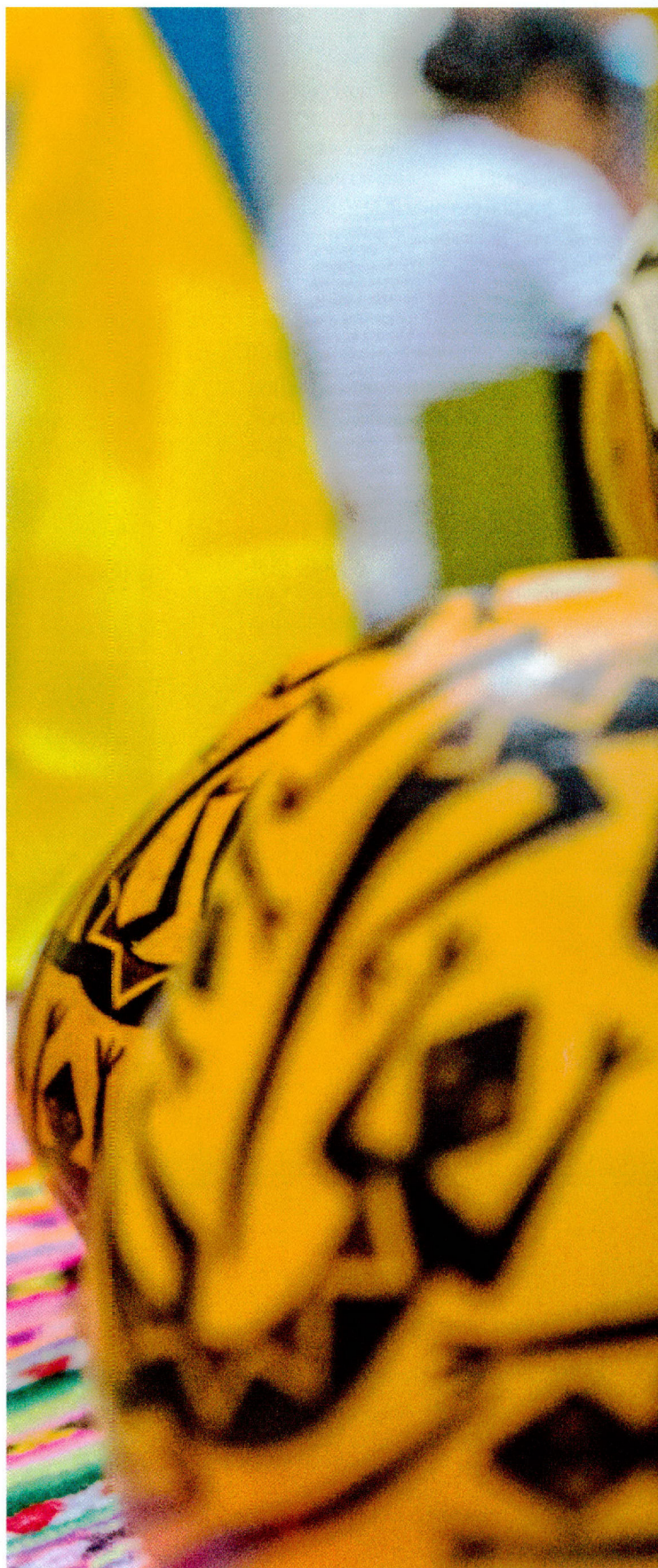
Many artists, like Judy Richie of Kerrville, see gourds as the ultimate canvas. When dried, their shells turn hard and hollow, inviting all kinds of creative experimentation, from sculpting and painting to staining, dying, and carving. Pumpkins are the prize of the gourd family every fall when families transform them with a host of disguises on Halloween. “You can do so many things with gourds,” Richie says. “Once you start working on them, they kind of take over.”

In Texas, there is perhaps no better place to see this versatility than the Lone Star Gourd Festival in Fredericksburg. The four-day event, held Sept. 29–Oct. 2 at the Gillespie County Fairgrounds & Exhibition Hall, is sponsored by the Texas Gourd Society, an organization that aims to educate the public about gourds. Adult admission is \$5, and children under 12 are free. Attendees are afforded a diverse collection of gourd art for sale, along with classes and competitions for every skill level.

Richie has participated in the festival since 2003 and will lead her own classes this year on leaf carving and alcohol dying. Other instructors will teach ancient Peruvian carving traditions, pyrography techniques (right), and specific skills like laser cutting and stitching. While most artists and attendees are Texans, out-of-state visitors stop in every year, lured by the art form’s timeless quality and visual beauty.

The varying shapes, colors, and textures of gourds have inspired artists for generations. No two plants are exactly alike, and there is no limit to their decorative potential. Some artists use paints, dyes, stones, and beads, while others use strips of seagrass and cactus fiber, inlaid gemstones, and coiled pine needles.

“When people see gourd art for the first time they are just blown away,” Richie says. “Their mouths fall open.” *For more information, visit texasgourdsociety.org.* 

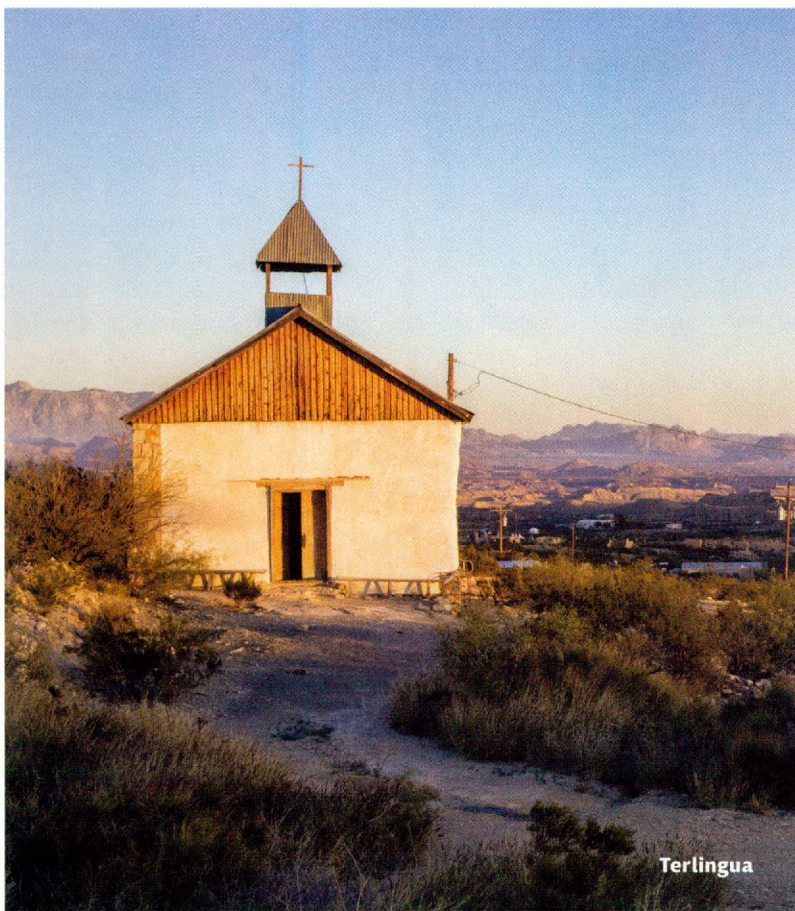




Population: Unknown

A road trip through the ghost towns of North Central Texas and beyond

By Scott Bedgood

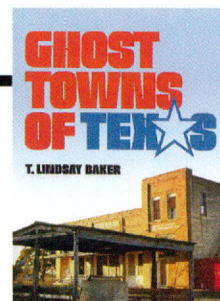


Terlingua

The history of Texas is marked by booms and busts. The booms brought droves of people from all over the world. The busts caused those same people to abandon the towns they had built, creating hundreds of ghost towns around the state. Visitors to a ghost town tour the dashed dreams of idealistic founders of the past, not unlike visitors to Italy taking photos of Roman ruins.

“The reason towns become abandoned is that there are economic changes beyond the control of the people who live there,” says T. Lindsay Baker, a historian and author of *Ghost Towns of Texas* and *More Ghost Towns of Texas*. “We see it in the everyday world today. When the jobs disappear, the people do.”

Every part of the state has towns like these, which means travelers can plan their own ghost town road trip depending on where they want to drive. When you are visiting a ghost town, remember to be respectful of private property and of those who may still live there.



Hidden Texas

T. Lindsay Baker is a professional historian and former director of the W.K. Gordon Museum and Research Center for Industrial History of Texas. The center, located in Thurber, utilizes the ghost town's history as a case study of Texas' industrial development.

TH: What is a ghost town?

TLB: It is town for which the reason for being no longer exists. The places that I've written about may be totally uninhabited or they may still have a skeleton population, but there's no real reason for the town to exist.

TH: What criteria did towns have to meet to be included in your books?

TLB: First, the locations had to have legal public access. Second, I only included places for which there were tangible visible remains. Third, I gave even distribution across the state so that wherever a reader might be there would be a ghost town within a reasonable drive.

TH: What might cause ghost towns to form in the modern era?

TLB: Economic displacement is never a happy story, but it is inevitable in countries where there is economic change. Places where people live today will in some cases become depopulated. We don't know what climate change is going to do to the western half of Texas, but we know that there are places running out of water.

500+

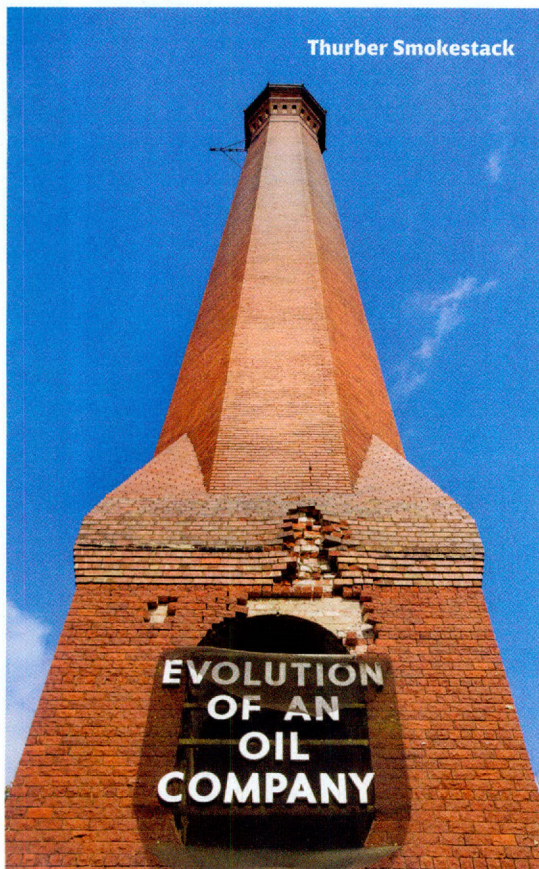
Number of ghost towns in Texas

10,000

Thurber's population at its peak

19th–20th

Centuries when most ghost towns were founded



Ain't Afraid of No Ghosts

Spend a day exploring these ghost towns in North Central Texas

Thurber (pop. <50)

This ghost town in Erath County directly off Interstate 20 is one of the most accessible in the state, with its own exit and a large smokestack visible from the road. Thurber sits atop one of the largest bituminous coal deposits in Texas, and at the turn of the 20th century, thousands moved to the town to work in its coal mine. But railways' transition from coal to oil spelled doom for Thurber's main industry.

The large smokestack with "1908" emblazoned on its side can be reached from I-20's Exit 367. On the south side of the interstate, an old miner's house has been restored to its coal-boom-era appearance. Nearby St. Barbara's Catholic Church hosts weddings, funerals, and an annual Christmas program. The Smokestack Restaurant in the old drugstore offers chicken-fried steak and buttermilk pie.

Indian Gap (pop. unknown)

The town of Indian Gap in Hamilton County was established in the 1870s. "After World War II, much of the community moved

to larger cities, and Indian Gap slowly lost most of the businesses in the area," says Patricia Smith, a former president of the Indian Gap Cemetery Association.

A general store formerly owned by Smith's great-grandparents and the Indian Gap Baptist Church are the only active remaining structures in town. The old schoolhouse was torn down in 2019 after being deemed unsafe. Two columns that used to hold up its facade are its only trace.

College Mound (pop. <400)

The town was named Beck's Mound when it was founded in 1840 as a farming community. Talks of establishing a college in town led to the name being changed to College Mound. The college never materialized, but the name stuck.

A cemetery off I-20 houses the graves of several generations of residents who lived in the town during the 19th and 20th centuries. The annual Decoration Day event, held for more than 130 years, brings family members of previous College Mound residents to clean and decorate the gravestones on the fourth Sunday of April.

Famous Ghost Towns

Terlingua (pop. 110), right outside Big Bend National Park, is known for its two annual chili cookoffs in early November. The Starlight Theatre, now a restaurant, was once an entertainment destination for cinnabar miners in the early 1900s.

Indianola (pop. unknown), on Matagorda Bay near Victoria, was a thriving port with 5,000 residents before Union troops seized it during the Civil War. Hurricanes damaged the town in 1875 and fully destroyed it in 1886, leaving only gravesites and statues.

Lobo (pop. 15), located in Culberson County, is privately owned by three people from Germany who purchased it in 2001. The abandoned buildings are a favorite of photographers in far-out Texas.



The Bounty of the Valley

Explore South Texas culture in McAllen

By Aaron Nelsen

Sometimes known as the “City of Palms,” McAllen has reinvented itself time and again, yet still remains true to its roots. The town is named for John McAllen, an Irish settler and businessman who donated land along a new railroad in 1904. From its early days as a ranching and farming economy, the city has become an important hub for international trade on the Mexican border. The arrival of *maquiladoras*, or factories, in the 1980s turbocharged trade. Today, McAllen anchors a sprawling Rio Grande Valley metro area that encompasses the cities of Edinburg, Mission, and Pharr, along with several international bridges, where trucks import and export everything from auto parts to vegetables. Though celebrated for world-class citrus and produce, McAllen’s mild winters also draw winter Texans from the north, and the city’s retail shopping districts lure visitors from south of the border. But McAllen isn’t all business. It’s also an ecotourism destination known for its diverse birdlife, and it hosts numerous popular festivals, including Fiesta de Palmas. The three-day event (Oct. 22–24) features art vendors, live music, an “Octubrefest,” and a food park.

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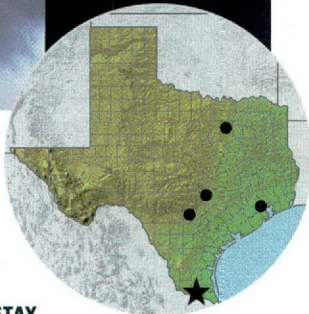
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7



5



6



3



1 / CASA DE PALMAS This 1918 hotel (starting at \$125/night) strikes a balance between modernity and the glamour of a bygone era. Set in the heart of downtown, just blocks from the city's nightlife, the restored Spanish Revival hotel offers contemporary amenities, such as a restaurant and cantina, but the hacienda-style courtyard and pool set it apart.



5 / SALOMÉ ON MAIN McAllen's star chef, Larry Delgado, and his wife, Jessica, bring the cuisine of interior Mexico to the Texas border. In their third restaurant, the Delgados embrace Central Mexican influences with a menu that emphasizes poblano peppers, mole sauces, and masa ground from six varieties of Mexican corn. A photo of the restaurant's namesake, Salomé Ballí McAllen, hangs on the wall.



2 / EARTH BORN Earth Born Market is a family-owned farm in McAllen that grows the valley's signature lemons, limes, tangerines, and grapefruit. During the harvest from October to April, visitors can pick organic citrus off the vine (call first to check availability). Year-round, Earth Born's two McAllen retail shops offer cold-pressed juices sourced from the farm's fruit.



6 / INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART AND SCIENCE The museum's 50,000 square feet of exhibit space feature an expansive collection of Mexican and Latin American folk art, fine art, and rotating science and history displays from the Smithsonian Institution. Open Wednesday through Sunday, the museum regularly offers hands-on art activities designed to complement the bilingual exhibits of the natural world and beyond.



3 / NATIONAL BUTTERFLY CENTER This restored riverfront habitat in nearby Mission harbors 240 species of butterflies. The 100-acre preserve is also an ideal setting to view birds, including the ringed kingfisher, the continent's largest kingfisher. Exhibits in the visitor center explore butterfly biology from migration to diets.



7 / QUINTA MAZATLAN Built in 1935 as a sprawling adobe hacienda, the Spanish Revival country estate is now one of nine World Birding Centers in the Valley. A system of trails weaves through 15 acres of Tamaulipan thornscrub forest where plain chachalacas, green jays, and clay-colored thrushes flit among the tangle of branches. The center also offers nature tours.



4 / CINE EL REY Built in 1947, the downtown McAllen theater celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, hosting free movie nights, live comedy, concerts, and Mexican wrestling. During its heyday of the 1940s and '50s, Mexican actors appeared here—such as Pedro Infante and Cantinflas—and even Freddy Fender graced the stage of the 500-seat theater.



8 / RIVERSIDE CLUB Set along the Rio Grande in Mission, this club features live music every Sunday, with winter Texans scooting across the floor to rollicking country tunes. The restaurant slings a mean pork tenderloin sandwich, and best of all, the family-owned club offers a rare chance to see the Rio Grande's serene beauty with tours on the Riverside Dreamer pontoon boat. 🐾



Museum of South Texas History

Ground yourself in the Rio Grande Valley by visiting this Edinburg museum's exhibits on local history. Last year, the museum reopened its 1910 Jail building after almost a decade of closure and repairs. The building also formerly served as Edinburg city hall, a firehouse, and a police station. The restored building chronicles the history of Abram Ortiz, the only person to be executed in the jail, and houses rotating exhibits. Through June 4, see *Borderlands—An Illustrated History* by José Cisneros, featuring original artwork by the late El Paso artist. 200 N. Closner Blvd, Edinburg. 956-383-6911; mosthistory.org

Located less than a half-mile from Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, **Bentsen Palm Village RV Resort** in Mission provides a range of RV sites with full hookups. Amenities include a full-service clubhouse, pickleball courts, and a woodworking shop. Guests have free access to the state park, where activities include birding, biking, and paddling. Weekly pontoon boat tours and pontoon boat rentals are also available. bentsenpalm.com/active-adult/rv-resort

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**BY CAT CARDENAS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENDA BAZÁN**



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Known as the “mother of all peppers,” Texas’ native chile pequin is a tiny plant full of fierce flavor.

“It’s like a sparkler,”

spraying embers in the air,” Benito Treviño says excitedly, as he strolls through the grounds of his sprawling ranch in the Rio Grande Valley. “That’s what it’s like when you bite into a chile pequin.”

The 75-year-old botanist from Rio Grande City, a town of around 15,000 people about an hour west of McAllen, delights in caring for each of the hundreds of plants that thrive at his Rancho Lomitas Native Plant Nursery. There are the bougainvilleas and scarlet sage, both saturated in color; the sturdy and fragrant lantana; the rare star cactus; and the sprouting seeds he takes methodical notes on. But only the pequin, in all its tiny glory, is part of his weekly ritual. “When my wife calls me for dinner, I’ll walk 75 yards from the kitchen over to my nursery to pick some chile pequin,” he says, grinning. “I do that almost every day because they’re that good.”

The pepper—which was declared the official state native pepper in 1997 by then-Governor George W. Bush—grows wild throughout the South Texas brushland where Treviño was born and raised. No bigger than the tip of a pinky finger, the pequin can pack a mean punch, clocking in at 50,000 to 100,000 Scoville Heat Units—up to 10 times hotter than the jalapeño. Some may know it as the pequin, chile tepin, chile petín, bird pepper, bird’s eye pepper, or even the *chiltecpin* (a name used by Nahuas, descendants of the Aztecs, that means “flea pepper”). But whatever you call it, the minuscule pepper is beloved across the state, particularly in Mexican American households where it’s a key ingredient in a number of culinary staples and home remedies.



BENITO TREVIÑO grows hundreds of plants native to Texas at his Rancho Lomitas Native Plant Nursery in Rio Grande City.

RANCHO LOMITAS NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

621 W. La Sagunada Road, Rio Grande City. To schedule a visit, call 956-486-2576 or email info@rancholomitas.com; rancholomitas.com





Whether it's a deep green or a mature, firecracker red, the pepper can be pickled; dried; ground into seasoning; used in jellies, sauces, and salsas; or just eaten whole.

The fiery chile is unfussy and blooms in late spring through fall, producing in abundance once the temperature drops below 90 degrees. The pequin flourishes in the hotter regions of Texas, Arizona, Florida, Mexico, and Central America. It often pops up along roadsides, in the cracks of sidewalks, and on lawns, thanks to the various birds, especially mockingbirds, that help disperse its seeds. Unlike humans and other mammals, birds lack the capsaicin receptors that give hot peppers their eye-watering kick.

Despite its ubiquity, the pequin is often taken for granted in favor of other peppers more easily found at the grocery store. But for Treviño, the chile was a fixture of his upbringing—an ingredient so central to the food he ate that it's almost inconceivable to imagine many of his favorite dishes without it. His mother would deposit the chiles she harvested from their yard into a *molcajete*, where she would grind them up with tomatoes and onions to make fresh salsa. “My father always preferred the hottest ones,” he recalls. “They grew under the mesquite and granjeno trees

Pepper People

Artisans, ranchers, and distillers get creative with the state's native pepper

Brushfire Farms in San Antonio specializes in sweet jams and glazes—all given an extra kick from chile pequins sourced from the Rio Grande Valley. Their Prickly Pear Chile Pequin Jam is a customer favorite, and great for slathering on a buttermilk biscuit or to spice up your next barbecue. brushfirefarms.com

Texas Iberico's array of cured meats are sourced by third-generation rancher Ashly Martin at the Trails End Ranch in Comfort, where her Iberico pigs munch on grass, prickly pear, acorns, and mesquite. Their chile pequin and honey-cured coppa blends the marbled, traditionally Italian cold cut with bold Texas flavors. texasiberico.com

Ingram silversmith **Clint Orms** typically specializes in elaborately engraved belt buckles and jewelry, but he's also accommodated requests for custom pillboxes, specifically meant to store dried chile pequin. clintorms.com










If spicy just isn't enough, **Texas Chile Dulceria** in Donna creates mouth-watering dulces enchilados—sour rings, belts, worms, and more, all covered in chamoy and chile mixtures. texaschiledulceria.com



THE CHILE PEQUIN is a bite-sized pepper that starts off green and turns more red as it ripens.

Hot Stuff

RANKING SOME OF THE MOST COMMON PEPPERS USED IN TEXAS ON THE SCOVILLE CHART

Bell 	0 Scoville Heat Units
Pepperoncini 	100-500 SHU
Ancho, Poblano 	1,000-1,500 SHU
Jalapeño 	2,500-8,000 SHU
Chipotle 	5,000-10,000 SHU
Serrano 	5,000-23,000 SHU
Cayenne, Tabasco 	30,000-50,000 SHU
Pequin 	40,000-100,000 SHU
Habanero 	100,000-350,000 SHU

*Scoville rankings listed are according to *Useful Wild Plants*

on our property. We liked them so much that it was almost like we didn't want to eat a meal without them."

Food blogger and South Texas native Vianney Rodriguez recalls the pepper being a rite of passage in her kitchen growing up. Even now, she incorporates it into different dishes and regularly prepares jars of pickled pequins for her dad. "It was your first chile," she says. "From there, you could graduate onto the jalapeño or serrano, but, even then, the pequin was always on the table."

Rodriguez and her siblings were trained by their father on exactly what to look for in a pequin—not too big, not too small, not bright green, not too red. And for years, no matter what changed at their family home in Aransas Pass, the plucky chile plant remained steady in their front yard. "Between droughts and freezes, it was so resilient," she says. "The dogs or cats would run through and trample it, but it would still be there holding on for dear life. I used to think, 'Wow, we have this special little plant,' but then, come to find out, the entirety of South Texas loves it, too."

As the state's only native pepper, the pequin and the centuries that were spent growing and cultivating it forever transformed Texas cuisine as we know it. "People have been growing this pepper for thousands of years," says Austin-based botanist Scooter Cheatham. With his research and writing partner Lynn Marshall, Cheatham has spent decades creating a multivolume encyclopedia of Texas' useful wild plants.

"IMAGINE ALL THE PEPPERS THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TO NOT JUST TEX-MEX BUT NORTH AMERICAN CUISINE—EVERY ONE OF THEM IS OWED TO THE CHILE PEQUIN."

In the 60-page section Cheatham and Marshall dedicated to the pequin, or *capsicum annuum*, they note that the plant has come to be known as the "mother of all peppers." It's the genetic ancestor to practically every pepper we eat. From the bell to the poblano to the jalapeño, all are essentially offshoots of the pequin. "Imagine all of the peppers that are essential to not just Tex-Mex but North American cuisine," Cheatham says. "Every one of them is owed to the chile pequin. Take it away, and you've wiped out 70% of American food."

The pequin has been a crucial part of American diets since pre-Colombian times, and European settlers quickly developed a taste for the heat. By the early 19th century, Thomas Jefferson, who kept extensive records of his garden, noted that he was growing capsicum from seeds given to him by friend and Army captain Samuel Brown. Stationed in San Antonio, Brown was so pleased with the pequin that he remarked in a note to Jefferson, "I find this taste growing so fast that it will soon become as essential to my health as salt itself." Jefferson went on to send some of the seeds to a nursery in Pennsylvania, where these descendants of the pequin were grown as ornamental potted plants. "Nearly 200 years after Jefferson got his seeds

Planting Pequins

Benito Treviño offers growing tips

When a bird eats a chile pequin, the pepper goes through the digestive tract, which treats its seeds with acid. The seeds are ready to germinate once the bird passes the pepper. But a seed that hasn't been treated with acid takes longer to germinate.

Here's how to mimic nature:

1. Take 3/4 of a teaspoon of potassium nitrate and dissolve it in 200 milliliters of water.
2. Place the chile seeds in mixture, stirring it every few hours.
3. Take them out after four hours, pat them dry, and plant them. Within a few days, you'll have lots of chiles sprouting.

from Texas, offspring of these plants are still going strong in Pennsylvania," write Cheatham and Marshall.

Over time, spice fanatics have continued to seek out the heat. The YouTube series Hot Ones has earned a loyal fanbase eager to watch celebrities make their way through a gauntlet of increasingly hot chicken wings. Elsewhere, there have been countless challenges, from the viral One Chip challenge to San Antonio's 4 Horsemen Challenge, in which people eat the "hottest burger on the planet." And even after creating the Carolina Reaper (formerly the hottest pepper in the world) in 2013, South Carolina-based pepper breeder and PuckerButt Pepper Company founder Ed Currie kept going, eventually creating Pepper X, which is reportedly 3.18 million Scoville Heat Units. None of this would be possible without the pequin.

Today, at Treviño's nursery, the pequin remains one of his most popular items—a point of pride considering his first years in the business weren't easy. "At the time, people weren't very interested in native plants, but that's where my heart was, so I kept on growing," he says.

For the majority of his life, Treviño has worked to help people see the South Texas brush not as harsh and unforgiving, but as a landscape abundant with culinary and medicinal resources. The sixth of 15 children, Treviño's family has lived in this part of the state for more than two centuries. In that time, they learned to read the land: The willow bark that grew near the water could be used for pain relief, dried mesquite leaves could treat indigestion, and the pequin could be ground into a paste to help treat arthritis.

For so long, this knowledge was passed down by word-of-mouth within families, but as interest waned and increased development in the area wiped out many of the native plants, Treviño saw the importance of sharing his knowledge with future generations.

"These plants are a part of our culture, our survival, our history on this land," he says. "If we don't pass on our knowledge, it will disappear." 🌱

* Chile Pequin Salsa



A staple in many Texas households, homemade chile pequin salsa pairs great with chips or tacos. This recipe is Benito Treviño's own creation.

INGREDIENTS

4 tomatoes
1 medium onion
Juice of 8-10 key limes
1 bunch cilantro, leaves only
40 to 50 chile pequins
Salt and pepper

Mash the chile pequin using a *molcajete* or another form of mortar and pestle. Combine and mash the additional ingredients or use a food processor or blender to process to your preferred consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.



A large mural of a cowboy's face is painted on a brick wall. The cowboy has a mustache and is wearing a red shirt. The mural is the central focus of the image. In the foreground, a smaller figure of a cowboy is sitting on the ground, wearing a straw hat, a plaid shirt, and blue jeans. The overall scene is set in a rustic, cowboy-themed environment.

REINVENTING COWTOWN

A brick wall with a window, a light fixture, and a large mural of a person's face. The mural is painted on the brick wall and shows a person's face with a white shirt, a black cross necklace, and a yellow circular object. The person's face is partially obscured by the window and the light fixture. The background of the mural is a mix of colors, including yellow, red, and green. The brick wall is made of reddish-brown bricks. The window has wooden shutters. The light fixture is a black, ornate wall sconce. The mural is a large-scale piece of art that covers a significant portion of the wall.

BY

SARAH HEPOLA

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
DAVE SHAFER

LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS AND LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENT
HAVE KICK-STARTED A CREATIVE RENAISSANCE IN FORT WORTH

I PULL UP TO A RAMSHACKLE

wood-plank building on the slower side of the Fort Worth Stockyards on a Saturday afternoon. A sign out front says, "The Texas House of Liquor & Sport." Don't be fooled; this is actually a burger joint. But the sign and the rickety facade, like much of the Stockyards, is a throwback to a time when these streets teemed with cowboys, gamblers, ladies of the night, and so much marauding adventure it was known as Hell's Half Acre. Last summer, native Texan filmmaker Taylor Sheridan shot part of his *Yellowstone* prequel about a brutal pioneer journey, 1883, on this very block. The sign and the facade are some of the last artifacts of that shoot, a little pixie dust Hollywood left behind.

"Can I get you something to drink?" asks Ruth Hooker, the friendly owner of this establishment. Standing at the counter with her long dark hair in a braid, she slides a Diet Coke across the counter. "Here you go, hon."

Ruth represents a change in the tourist corridor of the Stockyards. She's Choctaw, the only female Native American business owner in a place swarming with macho "giddy-up" clichés. Part of Fort Worth's charm, but occasionally its curse, is that it has such deep roots in the past it can seem a little stuck there. Mexican restaurant Joe T. Garcia's still only takes cash, honky-tonk Billy Bob's Texas still has two-stepping every night, and the Stockyards still have those Longhorn cattle looking majestic and bored as tourists sit astride them. But five-and-a-half years ago, Ruth opened Hookers Grill. Her specialty was Oklahoma-style fried-onion burgers, a tradition in Ruth's home state but mostly unknown in North Texas. Her beef patty smashed with loads of caramelized onions became such a hit she recently won the readers' choice awards for best burger in both the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and *Fort Worth* magazine.

"Think of all the ethnic food this city has, and there was nothing Native American around here," Ruth says. "Nothing!" Ruth used a family recipe for fry bread, a Native American staple, and she built tacos, sundaes, and burgers. The food could spark gentle educations, like how tribes started eating fry bread on the reservations after the government gave them flour and lard. Her presence among the old-timey storefronts is one of the subtle ways this city is evolving, finding ways to hold onto traditions but opening the door to new experiences. One day Ruth counted Native



OPENING SPREAD: A mural by Juan Velázquez, "Dancing with you," adorns The Original Del Norte on Main Street. **THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT:** Ruth Hooker of Hookers Grill shows off her award-winning fried onion burger; Mule Alley after its \$175 million restoration.

Americans from five different tribes standing in line at her counter.

Fort Worth is the 13th largest city in the country, but locals like to point out the place feels more like a small town. You can get to most places in 15 minutes. Folks are happy to chitchat. The laid-back vibe is a huge part of the appeal, but the downside has been that the place can feel a bit provincial. Over the past few years, a renaissance of development and creative energy has found the city stepping into its size. Some of this owes to innovative thinking by individuals like Ruth, and some traces to large-scale development efforts. The \$540 million Dickies arena near the Stockyards has brought both Paul McCartney and professional bull riders to town. The \$300 million Clearfork development carved out a piece of the enormous Edwards Ranch to build upscale shopping and alfresco dining along the Trinity River. On

THE LAID-BACK

VIBE IS A HUGE PART OF THE APPEAL, BUT THE DOWNSIDE HAS BEEN THAT THE PLACE CAN FEEL A BIT PROVINCIAL. OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, THOUGH, A RENAISSANCE OF CREATIVE ENERGY HAS FOUND THE CITY STEPPING INTO ITS SIZE.

the other side of the Stockyards from Hookers Grill, visitors can find the \$175 million renovation of Mule Alley, where a long-vacant stretch of horse and mule barns have been vibrantly reimagined as retail and dining.

Rising up at the end of Mule Alley is Hotel Drover, whose name pays homage to the cattle drovers who once rode the trail—a tradition kept by the Stockyard's twice-daily cattle drives. Outside, a neon cowboy welcomes folks to a property that is chic enough for gawking but relaxed enough for hanging. "If there was a cattle baron's estate in the Stockyards, this would be it," says Craig Cavileer, managing partner for the Stockyards Heritage Development Co. On a Friday night, the high-ceilinged lobby bar is bustling with young couples, families gathered on leather couches, and clusters of women in wedge heels and cowboy boots sipping wide-brimmed cocktails. The Drover's 1-acre backyard is a delightful ramble, with fire pits and live music and a gravel path that opens onto the Trinity Trail. Hotel Drover so nailed the upscale down-home aesthetic that *Travel + Leisure* readers recently voted it the best hotel in Dallas-Fort Worth.

But some of the exciting innovation has happened on a





smaller scale. Take Inspiration Alley, where local artists transformed an ordinary back alley into a 4,600-square-foot immersion of murals that explodes with whimsy and color. Introduced in 2017 and expanded in 2021, Inspiration Alley is the heart of The Foundry district, developed by 30-something twin sisters Susan Gruppi and Jessica Miller, who started refurbishing the low-slung warehouses in 2015 and soon attracted eclectic businesses. Aruna Hanna opened her high-end saddle refurbishing store, Double Oak Tack, in The Foundry in 2021. “I like that it’s artsy and fun and caters to businesses that are super unique,” Hanna says. She relishes watching locals arrive to take selfies in front of Inspiration Alley, from women in wedding dresses, kids in graduation gowns, and, once, a person riding up on a horse.

ALL ACROSS TOWN,

I met individuals who were putting their own spin on what it means to be a pioneer. “The spirit of the cowboy is still here, but it’s reimagined in entrepreneurship,” says Jonathan Morris, who opened the 21-room boutique Hotel Dryce across from the Dickie’s Arena in 2021. (The name comes from the property’s previous life as a dry-ice facility.) Morris wanted to create a kind of intimate sophistication he’d never seen in Fort Worth. If Mule Alley’s Hotel Drover is like a cattle baron’s estate, then Hotel Dryce is like chilling at your coolest friend’s pad. “I didn’t want to do one single cow hide,” Morris says while sitting on a sumptuous jade couch.



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT:

Inspiration Alley is a popular selfie spot; Hotel Drover bartender Alex Jackson shakes up the hotel’s signature Smokin’ Marg; Hotel Dryce Owner Jonathan Morris is a key figure in Fort Worth’s current renaissance.

“FOR THE LONGEST TIME, THIS TOWN WAS DOMINATED BY ARISTOCRATIC SOCIETY AND OLD MONEY, BUT THE INFLUENCE IS SHIFTING TOWARD PEOPLE WHO ARE CREATING THIS FLY STUFF THAT’S CREATIVE AND FRESH.”



Large portraits of a Black cowboy and a Black cowgirl hang on the wall. “For the longest time this town was dominated by aristocratic society and old money, but the influence is shifting toward people who are creating this fly stuff that’s creative and fresh,” he says.

Leon Bridges’ song “Texas Sun” plays on the sound system as Morris is talking, and you could hardly find a better ambassador for this new Fort Worth. When the soul singer hit in 2015 with the album *Coming Home*, Bridges seemed to come out of nowhere, a handsome Black man in doo-wop duds. To have such a suave hero emerge from Cowtown certainly helped explode stereotypes. Earlier this year, when rap superstar Kendrick Lamar dropped his new video for “N95,” there he was in Fort Worth, walking along the tiered sunken steps of the Fort Worth Water Garden and playing piano on a concert stage in the Kimbell Art Museum.

Fort Worth had become something rather unexpected: A cool place.

I GREW UP IN DALLAS,

only 30 minutes from Fort Worth, and I can quickly summarize what I thought about Fort Worth in those years: I didn’t. About once a year, I loaded into someone’s SUV for field trips to the museums or the Stockyards, but the city had the feel of obligation to me. I’d grown accustomed to shopping malls and boxy skyscrapers, and I never felt comfortable around the pens of goats and pigs tended to by country kids

who had the bad fortune not to live near a Gap. This was very Dallas of me. Although Dallas and Fort Worth have been roped together into the DFW metroplex, the country’s fourth-largest urban area, they have always been foils.

“People call them the twin cities, but it’s like twins standing back-to-back and looking opposite directions,” says Bud Kennedy, a longtime writer for the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*. “Dallas always looked to New York and London and Paris, and Fort Worth looks west to the prairie and the cattle ranches and the oil fields.”

Another way to say this is that Dallas distanced itself from its roots, while Fort Worth embraced theirs. Or, as the late sportswriter Dan Jenkins, who lived in Fort Worth, put it: “If you want to see Atlanta, go to Dallas. If you want to see Texas, go to Fort Worth.”

A military outpost in the mid-19th century, Fort Worth got cooking when the Texas and Pacific Railway came to town in 1876, and it became a stop on the Chisholm Trail. Cattle ranchers were the first millionaires, drawing meat-packing firms like Swift and Armour to the Stockyards in 1902, and turning Fort Worth into a blue-collar town during the decades when white-collar Dallas rose as a banking and retail center. Fort Worth newspaper magnate Amon Carter, born in a log cabin in the small North Texas town of Crafton, was apparently so disdainful of Dallas snobbery that he brought a sack lunch to business meetings so he wouldn’t have to give the city any money.

Carter was the man responsible for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, and he also popularized the city motto “Where the West Begins.” He’s one of the philanthropists whose values—and fine art collection—shaped the town. When Dallas was chosen for the Texas Centennial in 1936, Carter didn’t like the idea of Fort Worth being upstaged, so he secured funding for the Will Rogers Memorial Center. In 1944, it became home to the stock show. A museum bearing Carter’s name, housing Western art, opened in 1961 in the emerging cultural district, which grew to include the Museum of Science and History, the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, and the elegant grounds of the Modern Art Museum.

The 1972 opening of the Kimbell Art Museum put Fort Worth on the cultural map. Kay Kimbell owned more than 70 businesses, from grain to oil, but he and his wife, Velma, had amassed a collection of works by old masters, including Michelangelo and El Greco. After Kay died, Velma commissioned architect Louis Kahn to build a museum that would become a high-water mark in modernist architecture. A series of austere barrel vaults, made of concrete, travertine, and white oak, the Kimbell is striking from the outside but a marvel of light on the inside, with skylights that run along the ceiling like a silvery spine. Its permanent collection includes Asian and African art, but the bigger draw is European art that time travels from Caravaggio to Monet to Picasso. The museum elevated the city’s reputation by providing a highbrow mecca in a prairie town, a curious intersection of cows and culture. The museum will mark its 50th year in October. “I’m delighted to celebrate this enormous milestone with our Fort Worth community,” museum director Eric M. Lee says. A week of events kicks off Oct. 4 and includes architecture tours and a family festival on Oct. 8, in addition to a yearlong exhibit on the museum’s history, *The Kimbell at 50*.

The ‘80s saw the rise of Sundance Square, an urban revitalization before such a term was coined. The project was the brainchild of the Bass family, four billionaire brothers whose wealth began with \$2.8 million inheritances from their oil tycoon uncle Sid Richardson, another Fort Worth patron. Suburban flight had emptied downtowns across the country, and in 1979, the Bass brothers began quietly acquiring those derelict properties and restoring them to hotels and retail and restaurants, inspired by urbanist Jane Jacobs, a champion of mixed-use development and historic preservation. They named the area after the gunslinger the Sundance Kid. As the area grew into a thriving entertainment district, including the 1998 opening of the \$67 million Bass Performance Hall—a glorious concert venue whose development was led by brother Ed Bass—Sundance Square became a blueprint for downtown renewal across the country. More recently, it paved the way for revitalization efforts in once-blighted areas of Fort Worth like Magnolia Avenue and the Near Southside, which have become two of the city’s trendiest neighborhoods.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Vaquero José Hernández watches over the Longhorn herd at the Stockyards; Artist Jenny Holzer’s “Kind of Blue” at the Modern Art Museum; Longhorns file back to their pens.

All this turned out to be quite the draw. For many of the past 20 years, Fort Worth has been the fastest growing large city in the country. It’s also the youngest large city in Texas, edging out youthful Austin (33.7) with an average age of 33. This may be partially due to Fort Worth’s growing Latino population, which was about 35% in the 2020 census, up from 19% in 1990. Families flocked to a part of the state that offered affordability and opportunity. With its sleepy vibe and lack of pretentiousness, Fort Worth started to look something like the lost dream of old Austin, which is not necessarily something the locals like to hear. “We saw what happened to Austin,” Kennedy tells me.

These days Fort Worth real estate is not much cheaper than Dallas. “I can’t think of a neighborhood that isn’t hot right now,” says real estate agent Lisa Logan. Logan has worked in real estate for eight years and has seen a large portion of the city’s homes nearly double in price from where they were 15 years ago. “People want a place where houses are cheap, and the people are cool,” she sighs, as if watching that ship sail. “Maybe two and a half years ago, but not now.”



“PEOPLE CALL

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TWINNS STANDING BACK-TO-BACK.

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NEW YORK, LONDON, AND PARIS;
AND FORT WORTH LOOKS WEST
TO THE PRAIRIE, THE CATTLE
RANCHES, AND THE OIL FIELDS.”



FORT WORTH'S FRESH ENERGY

HOOKERS GRILL:

Fried-onion burgers are the specialty, but don't miss the Indian tacos and Indian sundaes (made with fry bread) in this friendly Stockyard joint.
[facebook.com/hookersgrillFTW](https://www.facebook.com/hookersgrillFTW)

HOT BOX BISCUIT CLUB:

Started as a pop-up, Hot Box is a brunch sensation in its Near Southside storefront, with biscuits and fried chicken so generous you'll have to unhinge your jaw.
[hotboxbiscuitco.com](https://www.hotboxbiscuitco.com)

HOTEL DROVER:

Whimsy meets Western glam in this 200-room Stockyards hotel (nightly rates start at \$349), but any visitor can enjoy the chic lobby bar, fine dining, or rambling back patio.
[hoteldrover.com](https://www.hoteldrover.com)

KIMBELL MUSEUM:

The 50th anniversary of the gold-standard collection kicks off in October with special programming and events.
[kimbellart.org](https://www.kimbellart.org)

HOTEL DRYCE:

A groovy 21-room boutique hotel, with rates starting at \$119, for the sophisticated traveler and anyone heading to nearby Dickie's Arena.
[hoteldryce.com](https://www.hoteldryce.com)

PANTHER CITY BBQ:

Tex-Mex style mixes with smoked meats at one of the best new 'cue spots in the state.
[panthercitybbq.com](https://www.panthercitybbq.com)



TWO AND A HALF YEARS AGO

is when I started hanging out in Fort Worth. This was pre-pandemic, and I toured the city's growing craft barbecue scene. Pitmasters have long hailed from Central Texas, but that started to shift in 2016, when Fort Worth's Travis Heim and his bacon burnt ends caught national attention, and he turned what was once a backyard business into a booming local franchise with Heim Barbecue.

The barbecue explosion was a welcome change for a city defined by steakhouses. On a side street of the Near Southside neighborhood, I fell in love with a rustic joint called Panther City BBQ. (Panther City is a nickname for Fort Worth, dating to a 19th-century story about a panther spotted at city hall.) I confess to being nothing of a barbecue aficionado—sausage, fatty meat, all good to me. But I'd never had anything like brisket elote, a decadent heaping of Tex-Mex and barbecue comfort food, served in a cup.

"It happened by accident," says owner Chris Magallanes, who runs the place with his friend Ernie Morales, both of whom left corporate gigs to sling meat full time. "Someone asked for elote, and we didn't have that, so we dressed up some creamed corn, added some queso fresco, hot sauce, cream, and Ernie was like, 'Hey, why don't we put some brisket on this?'" They posted a picture on Instagram, and soon had a sensation. Last October, *Texas Monthly* named Panther City one of the state's top 10 barbecue restaurants.

DALLAS DISTANCED
ITSELF FROM ITS ROOTS, WHILE
FORT WORTH EMBRACED THEIRS.
AS THE LATE SPORTSWRITER DAN
JENKINS PUT IT, "IF YOU WANT TO
SEE ATLANTA, GO TO DALLAS. IF
YOU WANT TO SEE TEXAS, GO TO
FORT WORTH."



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A barbecue platter from Panther City BBQ; the Stockyard's neon lights; Aruna Hanna owns Double Oak Tack in The Foundry near Inspiration Alley.

As I continued to take trips to Fort Worth, I found new spots to love. Hot Box Biscuit on the Near Southside has the most incredible fried chicken buttermilk biscuit smothered with sausage gravy. The Japanese Gardens is like stepping out of my car and into an enchanted forest. By the time the Stock Show and Rodeo rolled around in January, I was driving to Fort Worth nearly every weekend. I loved pivoting from the grungy hipster neighborhoods to the vaulted hush of the museums to the happy sprawl of carnival rides and cotton candy at the fair. I felt a bit foolish for only discovering Fort Worth now, so many decades after my life began alongside it, but I'm sure I wasn't the only one.

"Everyone from Fort Worth is having that moment where we're rediscovering our city and reinventing it," says Megan Henderson, director of events and communications for nonprofit Near Southside Inc. Henderson grew up in the Fort Worth area and was eager to leave, but she returned several years ago because the place called to her. The tenaciousness of the people. The chance to broaden what felt too narrow. So much potential. "We don't have majestic mountains or beautiful oceans," she says, "but there is a cluster of people who have found themselves in the middle of the damn prairie, and we have an enthusiasm and a passion to make this city better." 🐾



A WIFE TEACHES HER HUSBAND

The Last

Time

TO APPRECIATE LIFE IN THE

LAND OF THE DEAD

Anyone

Says

BY MICHAEL J. MOONEY

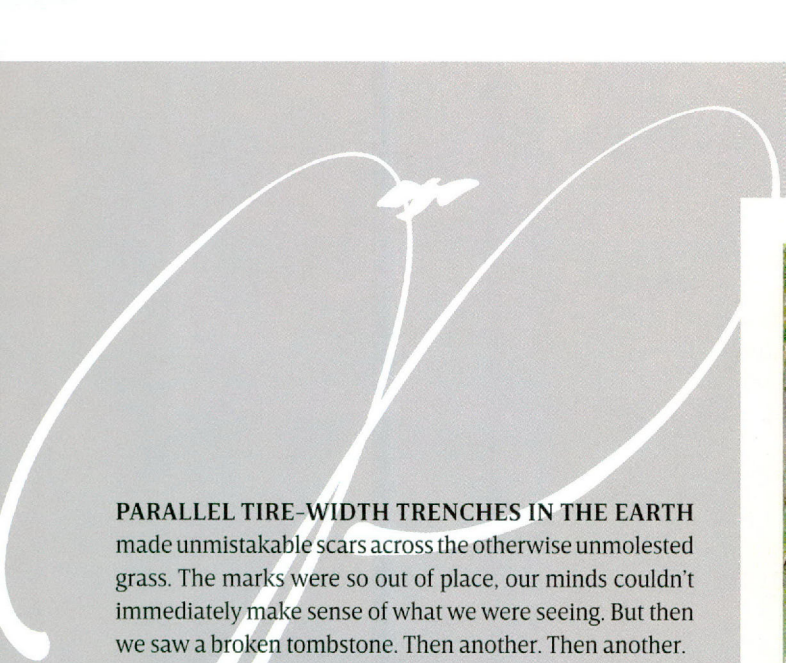
PHOTOGRAPHS
BY KENNY BRAUN

Your

Name



OAK CLIFF CEMETERY



PARALLEL TIRE-WIDTH TRENCHES IN THE EARTH made unmistakable scars across the otherwise unmolested grass. The marks were so out of place, our minds couldn't immediately make sense of what we were seeing. But then we saw a broken tombstone. Then another. Then another.

This was right before Halloween a few years ago. We followed the tracks up a small hill, then around in a circle, then back out the front gate. Someone had driven through the cemetery—our cemetery—skidding in the early autumn mud, snapping old headstones in every direction. Our incredulity turned to rage.

The Oak Cliff Cemetery, one of the oldest public cemeteries in Dallas, had become a special place for my wife, Tara, and me. The archway of bent trees along the main pathway has been the setting of some of our most important conversations: about our dreams, our families, what we each want out of life for the short time we spend above the soil. The trees in the cemetery are tall, the shrubbery thick, so even though it's just five minutes from downtown, standing in the middle of the 10-acre plot seems far from any road. In all our time there, we'd rarely encountered another living person, making this intrusion, this act of senseless vandalism, feel like even more of a violation.

Tara and I love cemeteries. I know that might sound morbid to some people, but it's not that unusual. You can find cemetery tours in nearly every large city in the U.S., and anyone who observes Día de los Muertos understands the idea of celebrating the dead. But in most Western literature and film, graveyards have been relegated to horror settings and the macabre. In reality, though, cemeteries are the sites of some of our most public rituals. They are physical manifestations of society's reckoning with the unknowable. They're almost all quiet, peaceful places.

We visit dozens of cemeteries a year. We've crossed into graveyards all over Texas and in at least 15 other states and a dozen other countries. We extend every road trip we take by at least a few minutes when we see one of those green cemetery signs. We see the way a community treats its dead, and we can tell a lot about the place. Oak Cliff Cemetery is one of our favorites partly because it's only a few blocks from our house, but also because it's filled with settlers who trekked here before the community now known as Dallas even had a name. It's a vital connection to the area's past.

The ground here holds some of the wealthiest white people in the city's history—alongside freed slaves, some



of their graves marked with handcarved stones featuring misspellings and backward letters. The oldest grave dates to 1844, when Texas was its own nation. This area wasn't even called Oak Cliff yet, and it'd be half a century before it became part of Dallas.

In addition to the historic headstones, it's not uncommon to see the body of a dead black chicken here, remnants of rituals that aren't so public. A sign on the gate of nearby Five Mile Cemetery warns, "NO HOODOO NO VOODOO NO SANTERIA."

There are around 2,500 marked graves and as many as 2,500 more that are unmarked at the Oak Cliff Cemetery. Sometimes, when it rains hard enough, human bones emerge from the upturned earth. Every set of dates—every hole in the ground—signifies a collection of stories lost to time. Someone's child, someone's sibling, someone's deepest love.

Tara and I didn't understand why anyone would want to vandalize a place like this. Maybe the driver speeding through the tombstones was drunk and lost, we told ourselves. Maybe they were mad at the world and couldn't think of a better way of showing it.



OAK CLIFF CEMETERY

We realized this would be yet another unknowable story, forever buried here, like part of a massive tome.

I DIDN'T ALWAYS ADMIRE CEMETERIES. Like most people, I didn't think about them much, and when I did think about them, I thought they were creepy. But Tara spent some of her early childhood in Europe, where cemeteries are often regularly utilized public spaces. It's common to see families on walks or even picnicking in graveyards.

When we first got to know each other toward the end of college, more than 15 years ago, we were both aspiring writers trying to understand our place in the world. I'd never met anyone like Tara, someone who can see the tragedy and beauty in everything. She was fierce and sensitive in a way I couldn't stop thinking about. Early in our relationship we were in a writing class that met in Archer City. She suggested we drive to the Archer City Cemetery, which lingers at the edge of a plateau looking out over plains that stretch all the way to the horizon. Initially, the idea seemed strange, but I would've gone anywhere she wanted.

As we walked along the markers, some of which were a century old and some only a year or two, she read many of the names aloud. I must have looked confused because she asked me if I'd ever heard the idea that everyone has three deaths. I might've pretended I had, but she was kind enough to explain anyway.

"The first death is when your body dies," she said. "The second is when you're buried or cremated, and nobody will ever see you again."

I hung on her every word.

"The third death is the last time anyone says your name."

I realized she saw in these places something more than what most of us see. Each headstone, a bookmark in a closed book. Each epitaph, a life scrubbed down to a handful of poetic words—often conjured amid the deepest pangs of grief. Each set of dates, a window into when this person roamed the planet. Some are reminders of humans' astonishing endurance. Some are reminders of how fragile life is.

I felt lucky Tara saw something more in me, too.

Through the years, going to cemeteries just became one of our things. We've explored burial grounds all over the state: Waxahachie to Wichita Falls, Lubbock to Luckenbach. We've shared peaceful afternoons in the cemeteries of San Antonio, Austin, Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth—but also in tucked-away Panhandle hamlets like Claude, where there are about 1,500 people living, and at least that many dead.

Some worry about the future of these cemeteries. The preservation of our state's burial grounds is largely at the



GRANBURY CEMETERY

mercy of market forces, according to Jim Kennerly, secretary and treasurer of the Texas Cemeteries & Crematories Association. He said a lot of cemeteries in Texas are maintained by funds from the interest on an endowment. When the economy of the living is thriving, the interest rate might be 7–8%, he said. During a financial crisis like the country saw in 2008, the interest rate might drop as low as 1%, and cemetery associations must figure out other ways of bringing in money to pay people to tend to the landscape and perform general maintenance. He sees it as a challenge spurred by the increasingly transient nature of our society.

“The people who are buried there, their families are gone,” Kennerly said. “People move away, relatives die, and while 25 years ago there might have been a group with a real strong interest in maintaining those family plots, you don’t necessarily have that anymore.”

EVERY TRIP WE TAKE, no matter where or why we’re traveling, we somehow find time to visit a local graveyard.

In the snowy drifts of Ontario, during the coldest sprints of Canadian winter. Under the humid New Orleans sun, during the soupiest weeks of summer. We’ve visited millennia-old burial chambers in Ireland and Portugal. We’ve walked silently through the largest cemetery in Japan—one of the country’s most sacred spaces—on a rural mountaintop dotted with ancient shrines. Cemeteries are reflections of what a culture values most. There’s no better way to understand a patronymic naming society than to walk among the tombstones of a cemetery in Iceland. Everyone is someone’s *sen* or *dottir*.

We’ve learned the symbolism, the codes that often tell the stories of the people buried beneath the grave markers. A rose in bloom often means the person was an adult. An ear of corn signifies the harvest of a life well spent. Clasped hands typically represent one person welcoming another into heaven. A lot of the older graves in Texas feature symbols from a variety of fraternal orders: Woodmen, Elks, Eagles. An open Bible surrounded by candles likely means the person was a Mason.

Kathleen Maca, an author and a photographer, has written a book about Texas cemeteries and gives tours of graveyards in Galveston. She’s found some visitors are most fascinated by the detailed sculptures that populate the cemeteries. If a tour includes a lot of children, she’ll focus on the interesting



CEMETERIES ARE THE SITES OF SOME OF OUR MOST PUBLIC RITUALS. THEY ARE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF SOCIETY'S RECKONING WITH THE UNKNOWNABLE. THEY'RE ALMOST ALL QUIET, PEACEFUL PLACES.

images and secret codes. "Some groups want to know more about the history, so I'll show them the soldiers," she said. "There really is something for everybody."

Cemeteries often provide opportunities to commune with nature. In a graveyard in Manitou Springs, Colorado, we stood still and quiet as a herd of deer passed through just a few feet away. In Key West, we saw a gigantic iguana crawl out of the crack in a cement sarcophagus. The first day of our honeymoon, in Wales, we walked through the rain, across a footbridge, to an old church and cemetery on a small island in the Menai Strait. We marveled at the tall, thin headstones, some dating to the 15th century. Everywhere we go, we do our best to say aloud at least some of the names we see on the grave markers.

We've also had several chances to glimpse some of the darker chapters of human history. In Hungary, we saw graves of Holocaust victims not far from graves of the country's political leaders who were executed by the Soviets a decade and a half after World War II. We've come to appreciate the way cemeteries offer insight into the way a community reckons—or doesn't—with its past. The graves of formerly enslaved people at the Oak Cliff Cemetery are mostly at the southern end of the plot, the area most likely to flood.

Dallas historian Kristi Coleman has spent years researching the stories collected in the Oak Cliff Cemetery. She recounts even some of the grimmer details with a cheery smile. Coleman said one couple buried here walked to Dallas from Houston—a journey that took two months—to build a life in North Texas. That couple's daughter, buried a few feet away, married the first French horn player in the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. Another man buried here, George William Maledon, was the son of a federal executioner.

"He claimed to have helped out with 300 executions," Coleman said.

Cemeteries are repositories for the dead, of course, but they exist for the living. And for Tara and me, they've become places to contemplate important decisions, spaces that mark many of the milestones in our life. The settings keep us cognizant of what matters in this world and what doesn't.

IN 2021, TARA AND I TOOK A DAYTRIP to the Granbury State Historical Cemetery. The people buried here include General Hiram B. Granbury, the town's namesake, who was killed in the Battle of Franklin during the Civil War. Ashley Crockett, the grandson of Davy Crockett, is here, too. Some of the veterans here fought in the War of 1812. The outlaw Jesse James might be buried here, though most historians believe he's buried in Missouri, where he was killed.

At the time of our visit, the world was on pause for a pandemic. But our lives were still going: Tara was pregnant with our son. As we walked through the rows of grave markers, reading a few out loud, we talked about what we wanted for our family, where we might want to take our child, what we want to show and teach him.

"I just want him to understand how big this world is," Tara told me. "I want him to know how diverse it can be, how many beautiful things are out there."

I said I hope he understands how much we have in common with the strangers we encounter and how much we share with the strangers who came before us. We hope the world our son inhabits is at least a little brighter than the one we have now.

The conversation in Granbury turned, as it does sometimes, to an undeniable reminder: We're going to die someday. Neither of us are sure where we'd like to be buried, or even if we'd like to be buried at all. Cemeteries, after all, are a relatively modern concept in the grand scope of humanity. And it's not clear how long future generations will maintain them.

No matter where we end up, Tara and I agree it's nice to imagine that one day after we're gone, someone might see something marking the fact that we existed. If it's not a headstone, maybe it'll be something we've written—and maybe they'll wonder about our stories.

I hope when they see our names, they'll say them out loud. **L**

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PLATES



IN EL PASO, build your own pizza at Monteleone's Ristorante, which the owners say is haunted.

Dining With the Dead

An Italian restaurant in El Paso offers a taste of the supernatural

By James Hernández



A mural on the exterior of Montealeone's Ristorante, painted by owner Gary Montealeone.

Inside the “casino room” at Montealeone’s Ristorante in El Paso, a statue of the Virgin Mary watches over dinner guests from atop the mantle. But according to Gary and Laura Montealeone, the owners of the campy Italian restaurant, a different, smaller version of the figurine once sat in her place—a haunted one.

Gary found the original hidden in the building’s walls as he prepared to launch the restaurant in 2001. During the years the first statue reigned over the room, the Montealeones say they’d periodically find her turned away, staring at the wall. Each time, they’d place her back in the right position and soon enough she would have inexplicably moved again. But this wasn’t the only sign something eerie was going on.

Throughout the years, unexplained phenomenon continued to occur. While locking up one evening, Gary

MONTEALEONE'S RISTORANTE
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Thu 5–8 p.m.
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says an arm reached out for him from the other side of the front door. Laura found a construction worker in a frenzy after claiming he saw a man with no feet. Candles lit themselves, staff encountered more apparitions, and strange voices were heard. Word of these hauntings eventually landed Montealeone’s Ristorante on the Syfy network’s *Paranormal Witness* in 2013.

But Montealeone’s Ristorante is known just as much for its food and environment as its supernatural activity.

From the restaurant’s start, Gary and Laura were often left scrambling in the middle of shifts, cooking extra batches of their homemade pasta, sauces, and bread to keep up with the growing lines of guests willing to wait

“I don’t do anything normal. Everything is just like what we did in Hollywood, and people really love the atmosphere here.”

hours for a table. Ranging from tortiglioni with sautéed zucchini to Italian wedding soup, their menu is the culmination of recipes passed down from Gary’s grandmother, a native of Reggio Calabria, Italy.

“I was always cooking with her, and when she gave me the recipes, I figured I should open a restaurant and put them to use,” he says. “It’s all made fresh daily, including the bread and pizza dough.”

Gary, who grew up in El Paso, is a former Hollywood prop and set designer who has created an immersive world primarily inspired by old gangster films. Adding to the restaurant’s eclectic speak-easy feel, the preferred way in is through the back. Fittingly named the “mob entrance,” guests are instantly transported into a nearly pitch-black tunnel you’d expect to see Al Capone and his cronies trotting down.

Arguably the most iconic part of the restaurant is the giant mobster face adorning the building’s exterior, created by Gary himself. Its piercing blue eyes, cigar, and wizened face have long caught the attention of drivers on nearby Interstate 10, which rips through central El Paso. “I don’t do anything normal,” Gary says. “Everything is just like what we did in Hollywood, and people really love the atmosphere when they come here and eat.”

The Monteleones never intended for their themed restaurant to also be a spooky one. The worst of the hauntings started after the Monteleones began expanding the restaurant into the neighboring building. As Gary chipped away

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Clockwise from top: Gary and Laura Monteleone inside Monte Leone's Ristorante; the Italian Nachos are a local favorite; the restaurant is filled with wacky props and decor.



“The place is very unusual, in a good way. They are so welcoming that you feel like you are family.”

the bottle cap open for them. “It still happens, but not to everybody,” Gary says. “It just depends on who she’s comfortable with, I guess.”

As of 2021, Gary and Laura also own three other businesses in the same neighborhood. They playfully describe their little eccentric empire as their own version of the board game Monopoly—just spookier. Next to the restaurant is their Blue Moon Drive-In, where old sci-fi horror films are shown weekly. One street over is their Wrap & Roll café, a vintage carnival and circus-themed hamburger and hot dog joint that sits adjacent to Monte Leone’s Haunted Motel & Restaurant. The motel, which has its own scary story, is a house that Gary and Laura converted into a murder-mystery dinner theater that serves steaks.

The Monteleones admit the original restaurant remains their favorite. It’s where tradition has been passed on and celebrated through friends and family members that have worked alongside the Monteleones, including “Mrs. B.,” Laura’s 82-year-old mother. Monte Leone’s Ristorante was their first love and introduction into the community they say embraced each of their wacky business ventures. “You can tell the food is homemade,” says longtime customer Marthella Trueba. “The place is very unusual, in a good way. They are so welcoming that you feel like you are family.”

Almost every week, patrons pack in with vigilant eyes and hungry stomachs, eager to see if all the stories are true. It might not be the paranormal hotbed it once was, but as the menus proudly boast, the food is still “hauntingly delicious.”

at the 100-year-old plaster, he found a walled-off room concealing funeral prayer cards, decaying photos, a plaque reading “CÍRCULO ESPIRITA, SAN PABLO, IX-15-1923,” and a worn document that was a 1922 charter from the Texas Spiritualist Association. Turns out, the building was once a gathering place for a spiritualist church. “That’s when all chaos broke out,” Laura says.

Not knowing what to make of all this at first, the Monteleones moved the objects into the restaurant and went about business as usual. But as more incidents continued that would turn even the most hardened skeptics into unapologetic believers, the Monteleones took action. “It got to the point, where out of safety, we knew we needed help,” Gary says.

They enlisted a local psychic to conduct a *limpia*, or cleansing, on the

property. She gave the Monteleones insight into the supernatural occurrences—positing that a ghost woman who enjoyed gambling didn’t want to be watched by the Virgin Mary statue while she placed bets, which explained why she’d turn the figurine away. (The original statue is now safely tucked away in a filing cabinet in the restaurant’s office.) Ultimately, she concluded the restaurant had become a “portal” for wandering souls when the Monteleones had moved the found items during the expansion. Once they returned them to their original spots, incidents became less and less frequent. Now, the Monteleones say, all ghostly encounters are friendly.

These days, it’s become tradition for visitors to order a beer and wait for what the Monteleones say is the spirit of a young girl to miraculously twist

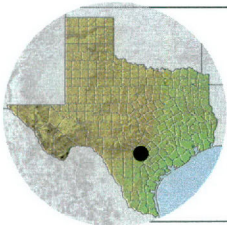


Project Pollo's Original Project sandwich is made with house-breaded vegan chicken.

Tastes Like Chicken

San Antonio's Project Pollo bets the farm on its plant-based menu

By Cynthia J. Drake



PROJECT POLLO
303 San Pedro Ave.,
San Antonio.
Mon–Fri 11 a.m.–11 p.m.
Sat–Sun 10 a.m.–10 p.m.;
projectpollo.com

With a baby on the way and \$3 left in his back account, Lucas Bradbury huddled in a food truck in San Antonio, tinkering with a secret recipe he planned to sell to customers in less than 24 hours. It was September of 2020, a year full of unexpected moves, and Bradbury was betting on his new creation: a deep-fried chicken sandwich with a slather of aioli and a dill pickle slice, accompanied by a side of creamy macaroni and cheese.

His secret? The chicken wasn't really chicken. Rather, it was a plant-based patty that would become the staple of his rapidly expanding restaurant chain Project Pollo.

Since then, Bradbury's Project Pollo has grown from that humble truck parked outside of Roadmap Brewing Co. in San Antonio to 21 brick-and-mortar locations across Texas, Colorado, Nevada, and Arizona—with audacious plans to open 100 total locations by 2025. All serve food using a proprietary soy protein made by TiNdle Foods, a plant-based chicken company owned by Next Gen Foods of Singapore.

"This is a legacy to teach my son that no matter what he does, to go out there and do it 100%," Bradbury says, wearing a Pollo baseball cap while sitting in his headquarters at the historic 110 Broadway building in downtown San Antonio. It's a spacious suite spray-painted with graffiti chickens and irreverent tags like, "We don't give a cluck." The scent of deep-fried food wafts through the space from a nearby test kitchen as a group

of Project Pollo employees engages in a team-building exercise led by Bradbury's wife, Morgan.

At first glance, it might seem unusual for an entrepreneur from meat-loving Texas to be one of the first to hatch a large-scale, plant-based, quick-service restaurant chain. He joins a few others like Veggie Grill and Native Foods, which both started in California, and Oregon-based Next Level Burger.

These days, more people are embracing plant-based diets. A 2022 survey from researchers at Oklahoma State University found that about 10% of Americans over the age of 18 identify as vegetarian or vegan. Bradbury's dream builds upon what's going on nationally, says Emily Williams Knight, president and CEO of the Texas Restaurant Association. "The consumer segment known as 'flexitarians' is driving the trend, with a growing

number of Texans reducing their animal product intake without eliminating it entirely," she says, noting their motivations range from concern for the environment to health to animal welfare.

Though meat substitutes still cost more on average than real meat, Bradbury says increasing prices on everything from fertilizer to fuel will continue to impact meat prices and may make plant-based diets more appealing over time for economic reasons.

The quick-service space isn't new to Bradbury, nor is meat production. He grew up in Kansas, raising chickens and surrounded by farms. Before Project Pollo, he worked in management positions for major fast-food chains, such as Dunkin' Donuts and Pizza Hut, among others. Prior to moving to Texas, he was tapped to step into an executive role at Wing Stop before pivoting to his plant-based dream.

In 2016, after settling in Texas and struggling with health issues he believes were related to his heavily barbecue-inclined diet, he turned to veganism.

Upending meat consumption isn't the only way he's attempting to disrupt the market. Bradbury made a pitch on ABC's *Shark Tank* that aired on May's Season 13 finale, though his rapid expansion plans scared off the sharks and he left without a deal. He didn't even tell them the most unconventional aspect of his business in the brief TV pitch: his pay-what-you-can model. Boldly listed over a few key items on every menu, this offer means any customer can pay whatever money they have, no questions asked.

"We will never turn down someone at any of our locations. If you don't have any money, it doesn't matter," he says. "This is the way that I can give back on multiple levels—to the community in terms of

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Clockwise from top: Inside Project Pollo in San Antonio; founder Lucas Bradbury; a dairy-free double chocolate oatmilk shake.



being able to get the food that you like, and on a global level in terms of being able to tackle animal agriculture.”

On my way out of town after interviewing Bradbury, I stop by the chain’s San Pedro Avenue location. I order an Original Project, a fried faux-chicken patty topped with vegan aioli and dill pickles and a side of jacked mac—macaroni with a cashew-cheese creamy sauce with fake bacon and sliced jalapeño. There are also a few select burgers on the menu using Beyond Meat, as well as shakes made with oat milk.

Nothing on the menu screams “vegan,” and that’s by design. Bradbury says he’s successfully fooled meat eaters and vegans alike—the latter have accused him

of mistakenly serving meat. One Austin Yelp reviewer wrote, “It wasn’t until half-way through my chicken sandwich that my friends told me it wasn’t chicken.”

Though I think I can tell the difference between this sandwich and my go-to fast-food meat version, the savory flavor and slightly gristly texture of the chicken patty is a convincing alternative.

The restaurant’s sleek branding pecks at the big chains: Posters inside proclaim “1 million chickens saved,” and “Together we WILL change the world.” There are no long lines of cars at the restaurant’s drive-thru like at the other more established fast-food joints nearby, but perhaps with a little luck and a lot of hustle, the chickens will eventually come home to roost. 🐔

Where’s the Beef?

If you’re looking for more plant-based options for your flexitarian, vegetarian, or vegan dining needs, here are a few restaurants around the state worth exploring.

Korny Vibes, Houston

This restaurant boasts “plant-based comfort food,” including the Impossible burger, Nashville Hot Chik’n sandwich, and oat-milk-based shakes. kornyvibeshtx.com

Citizen Eatery, Austin

The 100% meat-free menu uses products from JUST Egg, a company that makes egg substitutes from plants, vegan sausage and bratwurst, soy BBQ, and more. citizeneatery.com

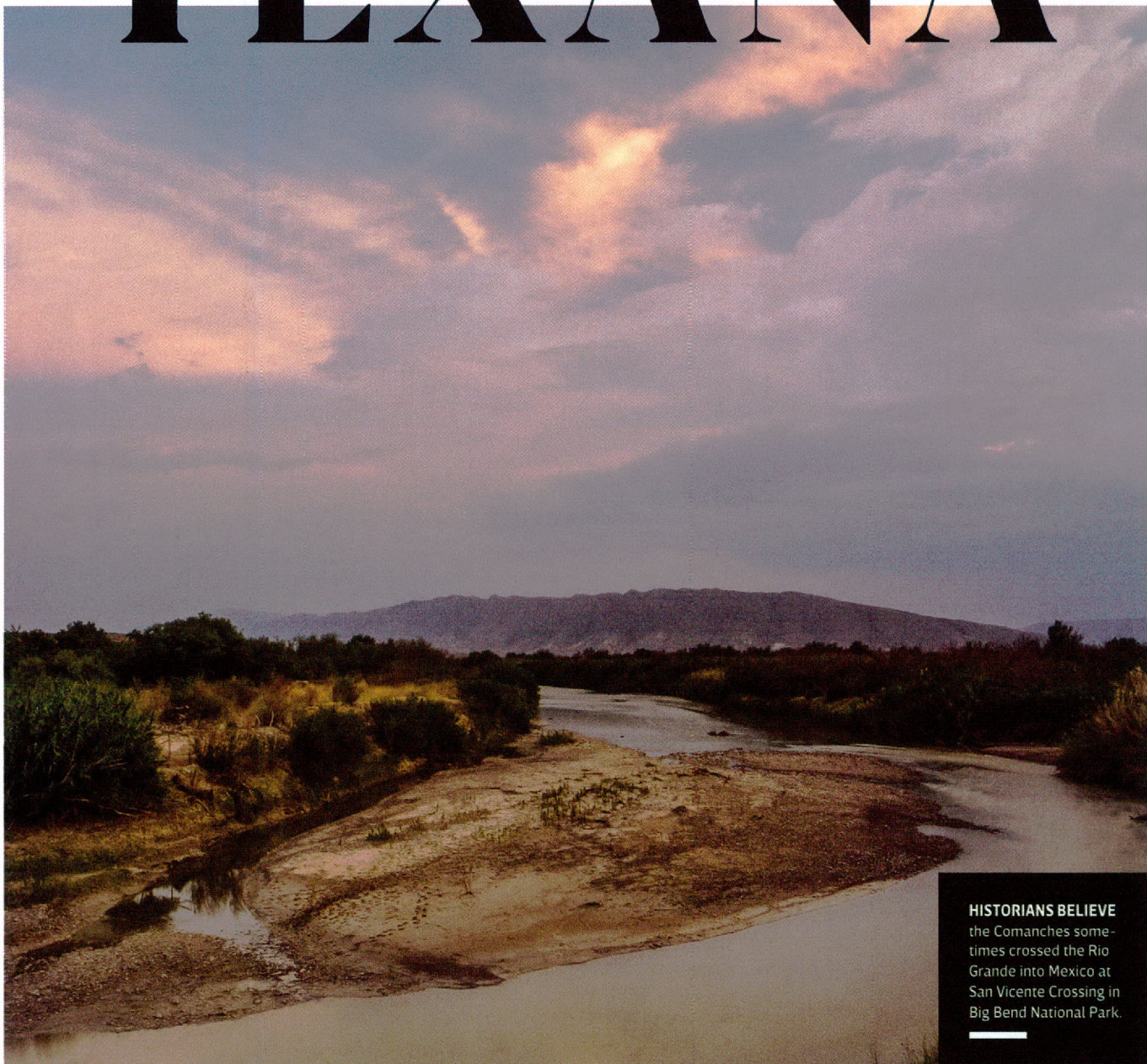
Lick It Up, El Paso and Austin

This restaurant, which started as an El Paso food truck, incorporates Mexican flavors into its 100% plant-based menu. Protein choices include mushroom chorizo, jackfruit carne asada or adobada, and seitan-based milanesa. lickitupeats.com

Veggie Del Sol, Brownsville

From stuffed jalapeños to soy-based bistec tacos, Veggie Del Sol offers a large menu full of vegan Tex-Mex options. veggiedelsol.com

TEXANA



HISTORIANS BELIEVE the Comanches sometimes crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico at San Vicente Crossing in Big Bend National Park.

The Comanche Trail

Traces of the tribe's raiding route to Mexico recall the sunset of a wild era in West Texas

By W.K. Stratton

The final months of summer were both the best and worst parts of the year in the Big Bend country during the mid-1800s. In August, monsoons brought rainfall and relief from the Chihuahuan Desert's blistering heat. Dry creeks began to flow, springs were replenished, and runoff filled depressions in rock formations, creating natural cisterns. Grass for grazing reappeared across arid basins. When September rolled

around, the Big Bend was at its most hospitable—which is why the Comanches showed up when they did.

Hundreds, possibly thousands, of Comanches made the trek each year from their home territories across the Southern Plains. They came to make raids into Mexico to capture horses, and sometimes mules and humans. The “Lords of the Plains” valued horses the most; they needed them for hunting, warfare, and trade. Reaching the Trans-Pecos region of Texas, tribal bands navigated a route now referred to as “the Comanche Trail” through desert scrublands and mountains. Once in Mexico, they raided ranches and villages in the northern states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, and elsewhere. After a few months, the parties herded their newly pilfered animals back north.

Other Indigenous people, including the Apache, blazed the trail, according to Spanish records from the 1700s. But the Comanches made the most extensive use of it, especially from the 1830s to the late 1850s, when a growing population of settlers from the U.S.—many hostile to Native Americans—made routes through eastern parts of Texas too dangerous for the Comanches. The Big Bend was mostly unpopulated and offered a more direct path to haciendas in northern Mexico, an area with minimal military presence.

History books and websites such as the *Handbook of Texas* contain various accounts of the routes of the Comanche Trail. It’s a perplexing topic. Rather than a cohesive nation, the Comanche world was made up of autonomous divisions, each consisting of multiple bands, who lived in widespread regions. Some of them, such as the Yamparika band, lived most of the year hundreds of miles away in eastern Colorado and western Kansas. Encountering divergent records, I eventually came to wonder if a single Comanche Trail even existed. I decided to travel to the Big Bend area to try to nail down the route. If it was real, I wanted to attempt to trace it using modern highways.

Joaquín Rivaya-Martínez, an associate professor of history at Texas State

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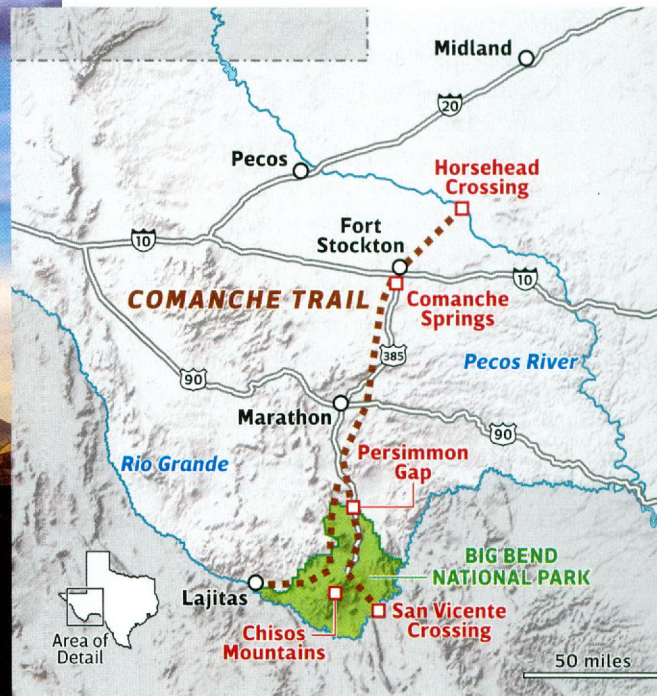
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The Comanches navigated Chihuahuan Desert grasslands and mountains like these near Marathon.



University who studies Indigenous people of the Southwest, says the trail to Mexico was one of multiple Comanche traveling routes. “In Texas, people talk about the Comanche Trail or the Great Comanche War Trail, but in reality, there were plenty of trails,” he says. “There are ‘Comanche Trails’ recorded on maps from the 1830s, including one by Stephen F. Austin himself, that go from North Texas to what is now the border between Louisiana and Texas.”

While many of those paths are lost to time, Rivaya-Martínez says the Comanches’ route across Big Bend is fairly well established, thanks in part to the natural landscape: The rockiness and aridity of the Trans-Pecos region helped to preserve the trail. For four decades, retired Big Bend National Park archeologist Thomas Alex has studied the contours of the Comanche Trail, at times tracing it in a small aircraft. “You can find it on Google Earth, if you know where to look,” he says.

The Comanche Trail received heavy use. Alex says he has discovered places where thousands of hoofs over time wore ruts in the trail bed. When he explored

stretches of the route in the national park, he found pottery shards and other relics dating from the 1800s. (The park doesn’t identify artifact sites to protect them from looters.) “The Mexican-bound raids were often large-scale efforts that drew members from several Comanche divisions,” Oxford scholar Pekka Hämäläinen wrote in his 2008 book, *The Comanche Empire*. As many as 400 warriors wearing breechcloths, leggings, and moccasins could make up a raiding party.

“Think of the Comanche Trail as a rope that is frayed on both ends,” Alex says. The solid part of the rope runs about 150 miles south from Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos River to Big Bend National Park. On the northern end, various strands of reported Comanche trails from places like Muleshoe, Odessa, Big Spring, the Monahans Sandhills, and Fort Sumner, New Mexico, converge at Horsehead Crossing, which today is located on a private ranch about 30 miles northeast of Fort Stockton. A state historical marker at the intersection of Farm-to-Market Road 11 and Horsehead Road, roughly midway between Girvin and Imperial, recalls the crossing’s significance.

On a scorching morning this past summer, I set off in a car from Horsehead Crossing to trace the Comanche Trail based on what I’d learned. At first glance, the Pecos doesn’t look to be a particularly treacherous river, but quicksand, unpredictable currents, and steep embankments make it nearly impossible to ford except at Horsehead Crossing. The water is strongly alkaline, and thirsty horses and cattle that drink too much of it can die. According to legend, Native people placed animal skulls in mesquites to mark the crossing, which is how it got its name.

After leaving this mesquite-littered country, the trail moves southwest until it reaches Comanche Springs, located near current-day Fort Stockton’s courthouse square. Agricultural pumping dried up the six artesian springs by 1960, although in recent years water has again flowed during winter months when farming fields are fallow. In the mid-1880s, the springs were a reliable water source. Legend holds that Native tribes agreed not to engage in warfare with each other when they were at the springs. That’s how important the location was.

From there, the trail runs south to the

vicinity of Marathon, paralleling US 385 through expansive grasslands punctuated by the Glass Mountains. About 20 miles south of Marathon, the solid rope of the Comanche Trail begins to fray. A branch known as the San Carlos Trail breaks away and rolls toward the west. But I stayed on 385 and drove to the Persimmon Gap entrance of Big Bend National Park, following a branch known as the Chisos Trail because it skirts the eastern slopes of the Chisos Mountains.

Driving south along Main Park Road, I followed the branch to Panther Junction Visitor Center, where evidence of the trail dissipates. Alex says the Comanches would use whatever river crossing made the most sense given the conditions. One they favored was near the ghost town of San Vicente, 20 miles southeast of Panther Junction.

The western branch of the Comanche Trail, known as San Carlos Trail, veers down the western slope of the Chisos and reaches the river at Lajitas, a historical crossing. "The ford on the river is still there today, but where the Comanches crossed was destroyed by the Lajitas golf course construction," Alex says.

The next noon, with the temperature at 115 degrees on the river, I went to Boquillas Crossing, the only operational entry point into Mexico in the Big Bend. It's about 10 miles downstream from San Vicente. I paid \$5 to be rowed across the river, then rented a horse to ride to the village of Boquillas del Carmen. As I sat astride my horse, I felt certain I was riding over a Comanche trail or two now long forgotten.

The Comanches continued to raid Mexico until the mid-1870s, although by the 1850s the raids were getting less frequent as the tribe struggled against epidemics, diminishing bison herds, and the western expansion of population growth across Texas. The last free band of Comanches, the Quahada, surrendered to the U.S. government after losing the Battle of Palo Duro Canyon in 1875. The Comanche were forced to move to a reservation in Oklahoma, and the storied Mexican raids faded into memory. **L**

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EVENTS



The Grass Is Always Bluer

In West Texas, a new bluegrass festival fosters new roots

Originally from Arkansas, Harold Ferguson grew up playing bluegrass music. While working on a cotton farm as a child, he'd run into the house and play the mandolin between picking rows. Ferguson eventually moved to the West Texas town of Wickett—where he later became mayor—and started the Wickett Bluegrass Festival 20 years ago. Though Ferguson died in 2016, the festival continued until the pandemic, for a total of 21 years.

After the festival ended its run in Wickett, Ferguson's daughter, Cyndi Perdue, moved to the Big Bend area, where she discovered an array of music and art. Bluegrass, however, was mostly absent, so she started the Big Bend Bluegrass Association. From Oct. 7-8, the association is hosting the inaugural Big Bend Bluegrass Festival at the Alpine Civic Center, bringing a mix of gospel and bluegrass music to West Texas.

"Alpine and the Big Bend area are very rich in music and the arts, and we're really trying to showcase that here," Perdue says. Visitors can expect multiple bands, including The Kody Norris Show, a 2021 International Bluegrass Music Awards Band of the Year finalist. Other performers include the Edgar Loudermilk Band, Bluegrass Express, and an array of local acts. Workshops for guitar, banjo, fiddle, and more are available as part of the admission fee (\$30 for the full weekend). Instrument giveaways, door prizes, food vendors, and visual artists round out the event. —Amanda Ogle

Big Bend Bluegrass Festival,
Oct. 7-8
Alpine Civic Center,
801 W. Holland Ave., Alpine.
bigbendbluegrass.com

BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE

Trappings of Texas

Through Nov. 5

The nation's longest-running exhibit of Western art and custom cowboy gear includes daytime artist demonstrations and a grand opening reception and sale. *Museum of the Big Bend*, 400 N. Harrison St. 432-837-8145; museumofthebigbend.com

ALPINE

Big Bend Octane Fest

Oct. 7-10

High-performance autos cruise the Big Bend's scenic highways and participate in events including a show-n-shine and river road cruise. *The Stable Performance Cars*, 511 W. Holland Ave. 432-837-9789; thestablealpine.com

CRANE

Trails of Time Living History Event

Oct. 28-29

This two-day celebration commemorates the various historical figures who passed over this well-known crossing during the 16th through 19th centuries. Events include live cannon fire, reenactors, chuckwagon meals and contests, historians and presenters, a silent auction, vendors and exhibitors, and a trail ride. *Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos River, FM 11 near Girvin*. 432-336-6316; pecoscountyhistoricalcommission.org

DEL RIO

Fiesta de Amistad Parade

Oct. 22

Enjoy a small town parade with music, food trucks, and vendors. *South Main Street*. 830-775-3551

EL PASO

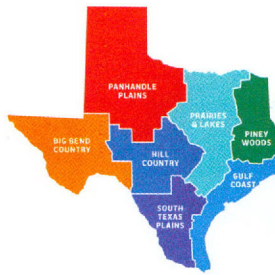
El Paso Wine and Food Festival

Oct. 15

The Grand Tasting features 400 wines from around the world plus food from 20 of El Paso's finest restaurants. Select wines are also for sale. *Downtown El Paso, Near San Jacinto Plaza, 401 N. Mesa St.* 915-833-6616; elpasowinefest.com

FREE EVENTS GUIDE

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GULF COAST

CORPUS CHRISTI

Moonlight in the Gardens Oct. 7

Spend a casual evening with cocktails, food stations, and music while strolling through floral exhibits under the moonlight. *South Texas Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, 8545 S. Staples St. 361-852-2100; stxbot.org*

GALVESTON

ArtOberFest Oct. 15-16

This festival features various fine artists, food, and live music on Postoffice Street amid Galveston's Victorian architecture, art galleries, and shops. *Postoffice Street, between 20th and 23rd streets. 409-457-9780; artoberfest.com*

HOUSTON

Bayou City Art Festival Oct. 8-9

The festival features an outdoor gallery, two entertainment stages, a food truck park, beverage stations, art installations, and the Active Imagination Zone with hands-on art activities for all ages. *Sam Houston Park and along Allen Parkway. 713-521-0133; artcolonyassociation.org*

PALACIOS

Pedal Palacios Bike Ride Oct. 29

Quiet country roads offer water views and a flat and friendly ride. A shrimp boil caps the event. *South Bay, South Bay Boulevard and Fourth Street. 361-972-2615; pedalpacios.org*

PORT ARANSAS

Wooden Boat Festival Oct. 21-23

Bring your wooden boats to display. Boats don't need to be fancy, just made of wood, and they can be displayed unfinished. Guests can attend informative programs on boat building and even build their own boats. *Roberts Point Park, 301 JC Barr Blvd. 361-416-1614; woodenboatfestival.org*

ROCKPORT-FULTON

Seafair

Oct. 7-9

This festival includes a gumbo cookoff, crab races, arts and crafts, a market, food vendors, an outdoor boat show, and live big-name and local entertainment including Cory Morrow. *Aransas Navigation District, 100 Seabreeze Drive. 361-729-6445; rockport-fulton.org*

WHARTON

Party Under the Bridge Oct. 20

Celebrate the restoration of the historic Colorado River Bridge with food trucks and music. *Dinosaur Park, 413 W. Colorado St. 979-532-1862; whartonchamber.com*

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN

Austin City Limits Music Festival Oct. 7-9, 14-16

This six-day event brings the TV series *Austin City Limits* outside the studio and into Austin's most beloved park. More than 140 musical acts perform on eight stages. *Zilker Park, 2207 Lou Neff Road. 512-478-0098; aclfestival.com*

AUSTIN

Oktoberfest Oct. 8

The German-Texan Heritage Society holds its annual festival featuring kid-friendly activities, live music, and authentic German food. *German Free School, 507 E. 10th St. 512-467-4569; germantexans.org*

AUSTIN

Austin Film Festival Oct. 27-Nov. 3

Recognized as one of the top film festivals in the country, this cinematic event shines the spotlight on both top-billed films and indie films. *Various locations. 512-478-0098; austinfilmfestival.com*

BOERNE

Music in the Cave: Haunted Show Oct. 29

The Rahim Quazi Trio returns with an eerie evening in the Cave Throne Room just before Halloween. Songs include *Moonlight Sonata* (played in total darkness), the themes from

Young Frankenstein and *A Nightmare Before Christmas*, and *Danse Macabre*. *Cave Without a Name Throne Room, 325 Kreuzberg Road. 830-537-4212; cavewithoutaname.com*

BROWNWOOD

Corks and Caps Oct. 1

The sixth annual Corks and Caps features tastings of beer and wine from across Texas. The first 300 tasters get their choice of a Corks and Caps commemorative wine glass or pilsner glass. *Depot Plaza, 600 E. Depot St. 325-646-9535; visitbrownwood.com*

BURNET

Utopiafest Oct. 14-15

This is a weekend of camping and live music featuring more than 35 bands. Festivalgoers enjoy craft food, a wine grove, a beer garden, workshops, and art installations. *Reveille Peak Ranch, 105 CR 114. 512-478-0098; utopiafest.com*

FREDERICKSBURG

Texas Mesquite Arts Festival Oct. 7-9

This 28th annual festival showcases the world's largest selection of original mesquite art, including sculptures, furniture, wood turnings, architectural accents, gift items, and ornaments. *Marktplatz, 100 block of West Main Street. 830-997-8515; texasmesquiteartfestivals.com*

FREDERICKSBURG

Monarch Celebration Oct. 8

Celebrate the monarch butterfly migration at this tag and release program with educational activities. *Wildseed Farms, 100 Legacy Drive. 830-990-1393; wildseedfarms.com*

FREDERICKSBURG

Food and Wine Fest Oct. 22

The 31st annual Fredericksburg Food and Wine Fest features live music and several events at locations including Messina Hof Hill Country, Becker Vineyards, and Marktplatz. *Various locations. 830-997-8515; fbgfoodandwinefest.com*

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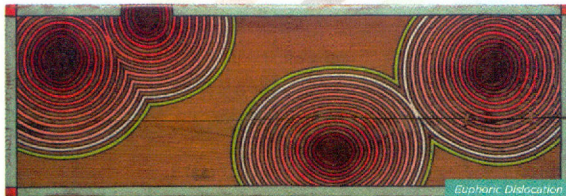
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KERRVILLE

Kerrville Mountain Bike Fest

Oct. 22–23
 The largest mountain bike festival in Texas brings outdoor adventurers together for several events. Kerrville–Schreiner Park, 2385 Bandera Highway. 830-896-6864; kerrvillemountainbikefestival.com

KERRVILLE

Texas Fleece and Fiber Festival

Oct. 28–30
 Fiber artists, enthusiasts, and producers offer their products and art. There are classes on fiber arts and animal husbandry, demonstrations, and exhibits. Hill Country Youth Event Center, 3785 SH 27. 361-537-0503; texasfleeceandfiber.com

LLANO

Llano River Pumpkin Float

Oct. 29
 Bring your carved pumpkins and enjoy the evening float as carved and lit pumpkins glide across the Llano River. Costumes are encouraged. Badu Park, 300 Legion Drive. 325-247-5354; llanochamber.org

MEDINA

Love Creek Orchards

Pumpkin Patch
 Oct. 8–30
 The pumpkin patch is open Saturdays through Mondays in October (closed Oct. 31). Admission includes pumpkin painting, an apple orchard tour, farm animals, games, a hayride, a hay maze, storytelling, scarecrow building, and singalongs. Enjoy tree-ripened apples, an old-fashioned sweet cider press, and apple goodies. Love Creek Apple Orchard, 13558 SH 16 North. 830-200-0302; lovecreekorchards.com

NEW BRAUNFELS

Texas Clay Festival

Oct. 22–23
 Potters and sculptors from around Texas display and sell their wares and demonstrate a variety of techniques. Hands-on activities are available for children. Gruene Historic District. 830-629-7975; texasclayfestival.com

PIPE CREEK

Pipe Creek Pumpkin Patch

Oct. 1–30
 Open on weekends, this event features a haystack, hop ball, scarecrow dressing, farm animals, a large sandbox, rubber duck races, pumpkin painting, and 6,000 Christmas trees. Pipe Creek Tree Farm, 805 Phils Road. 210-426-6191; pipecreekpumpkinpatch.com

DON'T SEE YOUR EVENT?
 If you think your event might be of interest to Texas Highways readers, submit your information at texashighways.com/submit-event

PANHANDLE PLAINS

CANADIAN

Fall Foliage Festival

Oct. 15-16

As fall rolls in, Canadian celebrates the season with nature tours, an art show, a quilt show, arts and crafts, a car show, and a snake show. *Canadian Elementary School, 500 Dogwood St. 806-323-6234; canadiantx.com*

CISCO

Pie Fest

Oct. 21-22

This event includes a pie baking contest, pie eating contest, pie in the face game, and a 40-foot-long pie buffet as well as games, music, a car show, and arts and crafts. *Conrad Hilton Center, 309 Conrad Hilton Blvd. 254-334-9621; ciscotxpiefest.com*

LEVELLAND

Petticoats on the Prairie

Oct. 14-15

Shop from vendors with vintage items, furniture, antiques, clothing, handmade goods, jewelry, and repurposed items. *Mallet Event Center, 2320 US 385 South. 806-894-4161; petticoatsontheprairie.com*

LUBBOCK

Grape Day Celebration

Oct. 15

Celebrate the grape harvest and 46 years of Texas winemaking at the 28th annual Grape Day Celebration. Patrons can enjoy self-guided tours, art booths, vendors, food, bounce houses for kids, and live music. *Llano Estacado Winery, 3426 E. FM 1585. 806-745-2258; llanowine.com*

WICHITA FALLS

Mystery Art Exhibit and Auction

Oct. 1-20

This annual exhibit and auction features works by regional artists of all levels. Artwork is donated by the artist, and their name is hidden. The exhibit begins with a competition and awards. Artwork is displayed in the NorthLight Gallery for three weeks and auctioned throughout the event. *Kemp Center for the Arts, 1300 Lamar St. 940-767-2787; artscouncilwf.org/mystery-art*

PINEY WOODS

HUNTINGTON

Catfish Festival

Oct. 1

The event features live music, vendors, a petting zoo, pony rides, good

food, and bounce houses. *Centennial Park, 700 N. Main St. 936-635-3306; shophuntingontexas.com*

HUNTSVILLE

Scare on the Square

Oct. 29

This festival offers games, activities, giveaways, crafts, trick-or-treating for all ages, and a costume contest. *Downtown Huntsville, 1203 University Ave. 936-291-5920; huntsvillemainstreet.com*

JEFFERSON

Halloween Express Train

Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

The Halloween Express includes vignettes along the railroad track. You may see a ghostly spirit or monster emerge from the swamplands of East Texas. While there may be a startle or two, this is not a scary train ride. *Historic Jefferson Railway, 400 E. Austin St. 903-742-2041; jeffersonrailway.com*

PALESTINE

Hot Pepper Festival

Oct. 22

The 2022 Hot Pepper Festival features a wide variety of vendors, food and drinks, music and other live entertainment, and the Hot Pepper Eating Contest. *Main Street District, 903-729-6066; visitpalestine.com*

TYLER

Texas Rose Festival

Oct. 13-16

Since 1933, the Texas Rose Festival has held ceremonial events such as the Queen's Coronation, Ribbon Cutting and Rose Presentation, the Queen's Tea, and the Rose Parade. It all takes place against a backdrop of vibrant roses. *Tyler Rose Garden, 420 Rose Park Drive. 903-521-1212; visittyler.com/texas-rose-festival*

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

BOWIE

Chicken and Bread Days Heritage Festival

Oct. 1

See the championship fiddler's contest, Piston Heads Auto Club Show, quilt and art shows, live music, and kids' activities like the egg toss. *Bowie Community Development, 101 E. Pecan St. 940-872-6246; cityofbowietx.com/142/chicken-bread-days-heritage-festival*

BRENHAM

Texas Arts and Music Festival

Oct. 15-16

Held annually the third weekend in October in historic downtown

Brenham, the festival celebrates Texas street art with live mural installations, an art village, and live music, all free to the public. *Downtown Brenham. 979-530-7993; texasartsandmusicfestival.com*

BRYAN

Halloweentown in Downtown Bryan

Oct. 28

The third annual Halloweentown in Downtown Bryan is a free event featuring trick-or-treating, a costume contest, photo stations, children's crafts, and kid-friendly activities on the streets of downtown Bryan. *Downtown Bryan, 200 and 300 blocks of N. Main Street. 979-721-9506; destinationbryan.com/events/halloweentown-in-downtown-bryan*

CANTON

Texas Star Quilters Guild Quilt Show

Oct. 14-15

Browse at this annual quilt show that includes vendors, demonstrations, door prizes, a silent auction, a bazaar, a scavenger hunt for kids, and a judged quilt show. *Canton Civic Center, 800 Flea Market Road. 903-312-5252; texasstarquilters.wixsite.com/tsaq*

CHAPPELL HILL

Scarecrow Festival

Oct. 8-9

The Chappell Hill Historical Society hosts this annual event that places visitors in the land of scarecrows with 400 vendors, food, and live music in downtown Chappell Hill. *Downtown Chappell Hill. 979-836-6033; chappellhillhistoricalsociety.com*

CUERO

Turkeyfest

Oct. 7-9

Held the second weekend of October, the 50th Turkeyfest features food, dances, a parade, entertainment for the whole family, and the "Great Gobbler Gallop" turkey race to see which town gets the title of "Turkey Capital of the World." *Cuero Municipal Park, Leonard Roy Harmon Drive. 361-277-1790; turkeyfest.org*

EDOM

Art Festival

Oct. 8-9

For 50 years, the East Texas community of Edom has hosted a festival for working artists to present their painting, photography, clay, jewelry, sculpture, fiber, wood, and mixed media. Local wineries, food trucks, and singer-songwriters fill the festival grounds behind the galleries on the town's main street.

Ranch Hand Weekend



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2022



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October 8th to November 27th

TexRenFest.com

Admission is free. 9726 FM 279. 903-258-5192; edomarts.com

ELGIN

Hogey Festival Weekend

Oct. 20-22
This festival features handmade arts and crafts, live music, food, and kids' activities. Events include Lindsay Kay Wing Children's Costume Pet Parade, Road Hog Car Show, Gordon Swenson Memorial Barbecue Pork-Off, a carnival, and cow patty bingo. *Historic Downtown Elgin, 109 Depot St. 512-229-3217; hogeyfestival.com*

FARMERSVILLE

Oktoberfest Trail Run

Oct. 8
Race over a paved and crushed-stone trail, across bridges, and along prairies and farmland. The out-and-back course features a canopy of trees and country views. Distances are 5K, 10K, half-marathon, full marathon, and 50K. *Historic Onion Shed, 154 S. Main St. 210-749-1118; ultraexpeditions.com/oktoberfest-trail-run-festival*

GRANBURY

Harvest Moon Festival of the Arts

Oct. 14-16
This festival showcases artists and craftspeople. Visitors can find food, local entertainment, and seasonal activities—all surrounded by a vibrant downtown square with wineries, shops, boutiques, art galleries, live entertainment venues, and restaurants. *Granbury Square, 201 E. Pearl St. 682-936-4550; visitgranbury.com*

PLANO

International Festival

Oct. 15
Experience multicultural music and dance performances, food trucks, cultural displays, and other festivities from over 100

cultures. Kids can explore STEAM activities and travel the booths with a virtual passport. Come early for free flu and COVID shots and a variety of health screenings. *Haggard Park, 901 E. 15th St. planointernationalfestival.org*

SALADO

Tablerock Fright Trail

Oct. 29-30
The walking trail on the 9-plus-acre Tablerock site transforms into a haunted pathway. Guides accompany visitors and perform scenes mimicking *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *Macbeth*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and other classics. *Tablerock, 409 Table Rock Road. 254-308-2200; tablerock.org*

SEGUIN

Pecan Fest

Oct. 29
At this celebration of all things pecan and Seguin's agricultural heritage, visitors can take photos with the World's Largest Pecan, shop with vendors, hear live music, and honor the state's official nut. *Central Park, 201 S. Austin St. 830-401-5000; visitseguin.com*

WAXAHACHIE

Screams Halloween Theme Park

Through Oct. 29
The world's largest Halloween theme park comes complete with five haunted houses (all with different themes), the Rottingwood Cemetery walk-through attraction, stage entertainment, Scary-Oke, games, and a food court. Admission allows you to tour through attractions as many times as you'd like. *Scarborough Faire, 2511 FM 66. 972-938-3247; screamspark.com*

WAXAHACHIE

Texas Country Reporter Festival

Oct. 29
For 26 years, this one-day event

has featured artists, artisans, musicians, and chefs from all over the state. Many have been featured on *Texas Country Reporter* over the years. *Historic Downtown Waxahachie, 100 W. Main St. 469-309-4040; waxahachiecvb.com*

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

BEEVILLE

Michael Kennaugh Exhibition

Through Dec. 17
Abstract artist Michael Kennaugh's work is exhibited, including selected paintings and sculptures. *Beeville Art Museum, 401 E. Fannin St. 361-358-8615; bamtexas.org*

SAN ANTONIO

Georgia O'Keeffe and American Modernism

Through Dec. 11
This exhibition features works by Georgia O'Keeffe alongside American Modernist artists from throughout the 20th century. Known as the "mother of American Modernism," O'Keeffe figures prominently in this early 20th century artistic movement. *McNay Art Museum, 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave. 210-824-5368; mcnayart.org*

SAN ANTONIO

Tangible/Nothing

Through April 30, 2023
The exhibition features some 40 works by artists with Texas roots as well as national and international artists. Many works represent apparent voids, vestiges of what's missing, or subjects not pictured—a pair of arms bereft of a body, a woman represented only by her purse, or Miss America seen only as a bobbing crown. Admission is free. *Ruby City, 150 Camp St. 210-227-8400; rubycity.org*



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continued from Page 19

involving most, if not all, of the bar's patrons. I imagine it was the kind of bar fight you see in cowboy movies, with chairs being thrown and mirrors breaking. It was one the bartender could not stop, necessitating the call to the police station. When my grandfather showed up, he looked around the room and saw the faces of the men. He took off his Stetson and started slapping them with it, yelling at them to calm down and stop fighting. He called them *muchachos*. When they saw who it was, they immediately stopped fighting and apologized. Roberto had been their bus driver when they were kids, paternally giving them his *consejos*, or advice, and getting them to behave when they got too rowdy. I think he even got them to clean up the bar. Sometimes we heard these stories at the kitchen table, eating bowls of beef caldo my mother or tía made weekly, or roast chicken from the Wonder food store. And though the stories were entertaining, and the food was always good, my cousins and I longed to venture outside, go to the Pompa and along the river to make our own stories. So, we stuck out the tips of our tongues—"Ahh"—and went on our way.

Despite how much time has elapsed and altered the familiar Hidalgo I knew, I still see the old town from memory. There are new houses and apartment complexes alongside the homes I remember, and this makes me think about how memories linger despite change, just like La Llorona forever roaming the banks of the Rio Grande. Some things persist.

My kids and I drive down Ramon Ayala Drive, named after the famous norteño musician who owns a home here. The road is also named East Texano Drive, a reminder of how the old and new coexist alongside each other in Hidalgo. Along this stretch, the Hidalgo Killer Bee statue—though a nod to Hidalgo as the “killer bee capital”—recalls the time when the town had its own minor league hockey team that played at State Farm Arena, now Payne Arena. The Killer Bees

belonged to the Central Hockey League in Texas. In 2012, when other teams folded, sadly, they too called it quits due to increased travel costs. To the north is the Hidalgo City Cemetery, established in 1884. My grandparents and great-grandparents are buried there. I take the kids to pay their respects. After a prayer for our departed, I tell them even though our family no longer lives here in Hidalgo, we will always have roots here. Like memory, our family's history will persist.

We were Roberto's grandsons—proud, brave, and strong. We wore our baseball caps tilted back on our heads at a cocked angle, in much the same way our Grandfather Roberto wore his cowboy hat.

All these places hold meaning for me, but I feel most connected to the Pompa and the area marked by a drive-through overhang bearing the name Old Hidalgo. You can take a guided tour of the Old Hidalgo Pumphouse, ride a trolley past it during the annual Christmas Festival of Lights, enjoy the hike and bike trails, and go birdwatching, since the Pumphouse is also a wing of the World Birding Center. As I stand here with my kids, I point at the house next to the water tower, which in 1983 became something of a shrine and local pilgrimage destination. The woman who owned the house saw the face of Jesus on a tortilla from the burns the *comal* had made. I tell them about standing in line to see it. It's now Paula's Tea House & Deli, a highly rated eatery. Where there was once wild brushland around the Pumphouse, there are now park benches, stringed hipster lights, a trendy gift shop, and Rock & Roll Sushi—a popular music-themed Asian fusion chain that serves boba tea. Hidalgo also hosts many sites with Texas Historical Commission markers: the Old Hidalgo County Courthouse, the Hidalgo Irrigation Pump Plant, and the Vela

Building, where my Uncle Ed lived when he was a boy.

As we walk back to the parking lot and reach our car, I pause when I hear the scream of a chachalaca bird off in the horizon. A story comes to mind: an adventure I had all by myself just before I started junior high in 1984. My cousins hadn't come to Hidalgo that Saturday, and I'd decided to head to the Pompa alone. It was late in the day, and I remembered the one rule about coming home by sun-

down. As I walked along the canal's levee, I heard an unmistakable sound in the wind, somewhere in the trees toward the river. I remember hearing it distinctly.

And then the revelation hits me. I finally understand why the *fantasma* stories and the tales of my grandfather's courage never converged in the way I wanted them to in my childhood. This was my story to live, my story to share with Roberto's great-grandchildren as I stand in this place of remembrance.

So, I tell it. I tell them how, with my Grandfather Roberto's courage and faith pumping through my heart, I walked toward the sound, not away from it. I was either going to help someone like my grandfather had or face the actual ghost of La Llorona. I would tell the spirit about forgiveness like Grandpa Roberto would have, tell her how she didn't have to scare people anymore, even slap at her with my hat if necessary. But as much as I wanted to, I never found the wailing woman. Here at the Pompa now with my children, I am surrounded only by the ghosts of my memories. I can hear them calling to me from all around, as the wind whispers through the trees. 🐻

DALLAS/FORT WORTH



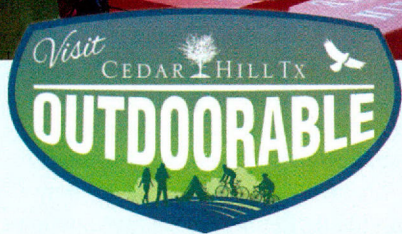
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THE DAYTRIPPER'S TOP 5



North Dallas

Big D at its best

BY CHET GARNER

The biggest challenge of visiting Dallas is that it's big. There's enough in this bustling metropolis to fill dozens of daytrips, so my advice is to pick a section and explore its many nooks and crannies. While it may be hard to pinpoint where the city's northside begins and ends, it doesn't really matter; as long as you're learning, exploring, and eating well, you're doing it right.

SMU Campus

Visit Southern Methodist University for its stunning Georgian architecture and lessons in art history and the politics of Texas and the nation. The Meadows Museum features modern and Renaissance artwork, and the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum takes visitors through his terms as governor and the tragedies of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Don't miss the 15-acre Native Texas Park, which features trails running through displays of native plants from around the state, cultivated by former First Lady Laura Bush.

Burger House

This burger stalwart has been slingin' beef patties since 1951. The walls are cluttered with photos of SMU Mustangs, celebrities, and athletes who have eaten here over the years. Co-owner Chris Cannellos claims his secret to success lies in the special seasoning added to every savory item on the menu, including the award-winning fries.

White Rock Lake

It's hard to imagine a 1,015-acre lake with over 9 miles of trails so close to downtown Dallas. If the weather's good, you're guaranteed to find hundreds of Dallasites jogging, biking, kayaking, and even practicing tai chi at one of the best urban parks in Texas. Bring sunscreen.

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden

This outdoor wonderland, once two sprawling private estates, comprises 66 acres of picture-perfect horticulture. Half a million flowers, each hand-planted, rise from the ground at this garden in the spring, and fall brings an unrivaled pumpkin display. I'm not a flower guy, but I walked away with more than enough glamor shots for my next 20 Christmas cards.

Truck Yard

Chef Jason Boso combined his love for food, Texas honky-tonks, and casual beer gardens into this outdoor venue that defies all Dallas stereotypes. It offers over 20 craft beers and an ever-rotating selection of local food trucks in a junk-filled yard. The one permanent food counter serves Boso's take on the Philly cheesesteak, complete with made-to-order rib-eye. It's best enjoyed at the top of the Truck Yard treehouse.

**So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path,
I hope to see you on the road.**

*Chet Garner is the host of The Daytripper® travel show on PBS.
To view the North Dallas episode, visit thedaytripper.com.
Follow along on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @chetripper.*



Welcome to the Table

Acclaimed TV chef and cookbook author Pati Jinich explores the food and culture of the Texas border

By Antonio Ruiz-Camacho

Almost 10 years ago, while on tour to promote one of her cookbooks, Pati Jinich visited the U.S.-Mexico border for the first time. “I was standing at the Rio Grande where Laredo and Nuevo Laredo meet, and I was like, ‘What is this force?’” she recalls. “I could feel the flow of hundreds and thousands of lives that have passed through there.”

Born and raised in a Jewish family in Mexico City, Jinich is best known for her Emmy-nominated and James Beard Award-winning cooking show *Pati’s Mexican Table*, which opened its 11th season on PBS in mid-September. But growing up, Jinich didn’t dream of becoming a chef. “I’ve always been a very good eater, but I wasn’t a good cook,” says Jinich in her distinctive *chilanga* (Mexico City) accent.

Jinich wanted to be a political analyst. She earned a master’s degree in Latin American Studies from Georgetown University and worked at a

“Everybody who doesn’t know Texas thinks of its food and culture as something that’s narrow and defined. Then you realize there’s this rich diversity—different regional uses of chiles and salsas.”

policy research center in Washington, D.C. But when she felt nostalgic for Mexico and her family’s dishes, Jinich turned to cooking to find a cure for homesickness. In the process, she found her true calling.

In 2021, after more than a decade of traveling between Mexico and the U.S. to make *Pati’s Mexican Table*, Jinich returned to the Texas border for a new docuseries called *La Frontera*, which not only covers food but also transcends cooking with its exploration of border culture. The first season aired last fall, and a second season is expected to air next year on PBS and Amazon Prime.

“I felt it was my responsibility as a Mexican and American,” says Jinich, who lives in the D.C. area with her husband and three sons. “As someone who has Mexican and American kids—and who explains and understands the world through food—I wanted to try to bring a microphone to the very misunderstood Texas-Mexico border and the world of Tex-Mex food.”

TH: How did Texas play into your American journey?

PJ: After I got married, my husband and I moved to Dallas in 1997 for his job. I remember my years in Dallas with a lot of fondness today, but when I first moved, I was lonely and homesick. My husband used to travel all the time. I remember going to the supermarket, trying to find ingredients to replicate the meals I was hoping would make me feel at home. This was 20 years ago. There wasn't the richness, the diversity you find in stores today. And I remember really sheltering in trying to recreate the foods that I missed. I would dream with *caldo de pollo* simmering in my kitchen, the steam of beans cooking in a pot. I started calling my family and asking them how they make their *arroz rojo*, their *frijoles de olla*, their salsa. Not being able to visit Mexico, I developed a really strong relationship with Mexican food.

TH: Dallas is also where the seed for Pati's Mexican Table was planted.

PJ: I still wanted to be an academic; I was working on my thesis. One day I heard KERA, the local public TV station, was working on a documentary about the Mexican Revolution. That period was a big part of my thesis so I thought, *I can help there*. I found their address and knocked on the door. They said, "We're already wrapping up that project, but there's another show you can help with. They need a production assistant, an intern. There's no money, but if you can get to Mexico, we could use your help." The show was [Southwestern chef] Stephan Pyles' *New Tastes from Texas*. It was my first connection back to Mexico through food. I was the only one who spoke Spanish, so I became their translator in Oaxaca. I had been so hungry and so homesick for Mexico, and I got back by explaining it through food.

TH: How long did you live in Dallas?

PJ: Almost three years. My first son, Alan, was born in Dallas. We call him our Tex-Mex boy. Then we moved to Washington, D.C. Here I did my master's and worked so hard toward becoming a

political analyst, working in a think tank. Eventually I resigned, enrolled in cooking school, switched careers, and found my way to trying to build bridges through food rather than through political analysis. I find it so much more comforting and rewarding because you can eat your research.

TH: What's the one thing about Texas you wish people who've never visited knew more about?

PJ: I wish people knew how not shallow Tex-Mex is in terms of food and culture. Everybody who doesn't know Texas thinks of its food and culture as something that's narrow and defined. Even the food, they think, *Oh, it's just hard-shell tacos or breakfast tacos*. Then you realize there's this rich diversity—different regional uses of chiles and salsas.

TH: What was the impulse behind *La Frontera*? It uses food to showcase the U.S.-Mexico border, but it's a documentary, not a cooking show.

PJ: As my platforms became stronger and had a wider audience, I felt this responsibility to delve into deeper, more meaningful topics. I wanted to bring the microphone to places that either don't get attention or only get attention to the bad, demonizing topics—at the border it's the drugs, the crime, the cartels, the illegal immigration. Border communities are living their lives and doing businesses that are enriching these two countries. They're international, bicultural, have two languages and sister cities, and are working together in incredible ways nobody's talking about. So, I was like, "I'm gonna go to the border and bring the microphone without an agenda, just to shine a light on what is life in those places, to help change the narrative, so it's not so narrow and harsh."

TH: Did you discover any favorite Tex-Mex dishes?

PJ: I love a good burrito with freshly made flour tortillas. The burritos I tried in Juárez and El Paso were insane. But I couldn't just tell you one thing. The tacos I ate in McAllen and Brownsville were

incredible. The Tex-Mex I tried in the Rio Grande Valley was like no other Tex-Mex in terms of the richness—the flavor, the ingredients. I love Texas breakfast tacos. I love the traditional San Antonio Tex-Mex food. And I do love queso. Mexican purists complain about Tex-Mex queso, but I think it's just addictive.

TH: You have dedicated your work to connecting the two countries you call home. Why do this through food?

PJ: The most noble way to understand who we are, where we come from, and what we can do is [through] food. There's power in recipes because they go beyond the individual and a single life. We get to this Earth, and these recipes are here; we inherit them. By the time we're gone, the food and the recipes remain. There's such beauty in jumping into that food space because it allows us to understand things we wouldn't be able to grasp, or to communicate things we wouldn't be able to talk about, just by eating it. You and I can have different political views or come from different backgrounds. But if you share with me your grandmother's soup, you've already brought the wall down. And when I sit down to taste it, we're connecting on a different human level. With every recipe I share, I am grateful when I get a response from somebody sharing a photo of what they made. And they tell me, "I made this recipe with my grandmother. She hadn't been able to find it, but now I'm making it with her. But by the way, I changed this." I'm like, "Yay for you because that means that recipe is now yours." 🍴

Find Pati Jinich's TV shows, cookbooks, and recipes at patijinich.com, and on social media @PatiJinich. The 11th season of *Pati's Mexican Table* premiered on PBS in mid-September.

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VINTAGE

BY JAC DARSNEK, TRACES OF TEXAS



Fiery Throwdown

TERLINGUA, 1967

The so-called Great Chili Confrontation started on Oct. 21, 1967, when journalists H. Allen Smith and Wick Fowler met in Terlingua for a cookoff to decide who could make the best chili. Smith, who lived in New York, had written an article in *Holiday* magazine titled “Nobody Knows More About Chili Than I Do,” with a recipe including pinto beans. Fowler—a well-known Texas reporter and creator of the Wick Fowler’s Two-Alarm Chili Kit—could not abide such an assault on the national dish of Texas, where ground beef is the prized ingredient and beans are frowned upon. The two met at high noon to settle the dispute, but the judging ended in a tie, leading to a rematch the following year. As evidenced by this photo of chili judge Floyd Schneider, a brewery executive, the cookoff was so much fun that 55 years later, chiliheads still meet in Terlingua every year on the first weekend in November. Since 1983, two cookoffs have carried the torch—one hosted by the Chili Appreciation Society International and the other by The Tolbert Chili Cookoff Group. **L**

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



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