

T E X A S Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL . . .

NOTICE!

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COMING UP

Former President George Bush and 1,000 guests gathered on November 30 for groundbreaking ceremonies of the **George Bush Presidential Library Center** at Texas A&M University in **College Station**. The \$42-million library and museum will be the permanent repository for about 36 million pages of documents, a million photographs, and 40,000 objects gathered from Bush's years as president, vice president, congressman, United Nations ambassador, CIA director, and chairman of the Republican National Committee. An adjoining \$43-million facility will house the George Bush School of Government and Public Service, the Center for Presidential Studies, the Center for Public Leadership Studies, and the Center for International Studies. The Bush Library, touted as the largest presidential library complex ever undertaken, will be the tenth presidential library in the nation and the second in Texas. Completion is scheduled for early 1997.

Ben Carpenter, son of the late Dallas business and civic leader John Carpenter, has donated a 1927 trolley to the **McKinney Avenue Transit Authority**

in **Dallas**. According to *The Dallas Morning News*, the 54-seat vintage car once belonged in the fleet of the old Dallas Railway, the company John Carpenter was president of from 1927 to 1935. Now the 19-ton streetcar will be shipped to Iowa for restoration, which should take about a year. After returning to Dallas, No. 754 will become a working unit of the McKinney Avenue fleet, running on tracks between downtown Dallas and Oak Lawn.

PLACES

When **Sam Houston Race Park** in **Houston** opened in April 1994, the future of big-time horse racing in Texas seemed bright. About 16,500 race fans bet \$1.3 million on a 10-race card for a glorious opening of Texas' first Thoroughbred track in 57 years. Now the future of the new \$84-million facility is gloom. *The Dallas Morning News* reports attendance, which averaged a disappointing 7,500 for the initial 45-day meet, has dwindled to less than 4,000 a day. Investors have provided an additional \$6.5 million just to make ends meet, and purses,

racing days, and expectations have all been slashed. Still, major stockholders remain optimistic about the track's chances for survival. Track officials acknowledge that Sam Houston's main failing was overestimating Texans' knowledge and enthusiasm for the sport. Texas is horse country, they said. But pari-mutuel wagering is a different game.

On New Year's Day 1993, the magnificent **Hill County Courthouse** in **Hillsboro** was destroyed by fire. The bronze bell and four faces of the tower clock were gone. All that remained was the shell of a roofless limestone wall. For 102 years, the Victorian edifice, praised as one of the most beautiful courthouses in the state, was the center of community activity. Now, the proud folks of Hill County, who vowed to restore the courthouse to its original splendor, have broken ground for the first phase of restoration. **County Judge Tommy Walker** said it will take about seven months to get the courthouse "in the dry." By then, he hopes the county can raise enough money to rebuild the inside. When complete, the interior will more close-

ly resemble the courthouse that was erected in 1890, than the much-altered building that burned.

All roads, parks, and recreation areas in **W. Goodrich Jones State Forest**, five miles south of Conroe, will be closed to the public through June 1. **Mary Spencer** at the **Conroe C&VB** said the Texas Forest Service will be repairing damage from the October floods, in addition to damage from heavy recreational use. Entrance to the forest is restricted to Texas Forest Service and administrative personnel. For more information, call Jim Blott or John Ross at 409/273-2261.

Mike Talley, editor of TxDOT's *Texas State Travel Guide*, received a letter from **Naomi and Thomas Michalsky**, owners of the 19th-Century **Highlands Mansion** in **Marlin**. After 28 years, the Michalskys regretfully have decided to close their elegant home to the public because of the cost of upkeep and their advancing age. Naomi wrote, "The *Texas State Travel Guide* has been our best source of advertisement, bringing in approximately 50 percent of our tourists. *Texas Highways* maga-

START YOUR ENGINES **Billy Meyer**, developer and owner of the **Texas Motorplex** drag strip in **Ennis**, announced plans to build a \$60- to \$75-million auto racing facility in west **Oak Cliff** in **Dallas**. **Pinnacle Park** will be the site of the largest auto racing facility in Texas, with a 1.52-mile racing oval and more than 70,000 seats. The project will take at least 18 months to complete.



TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

zine brought a landslide of tourists for the year 1992. This has been an enjoyable experience. We have met people from every state and many countries. We cannot say thank you enough." Our hats off to the Michalskys for playing such an important part in tourism all these years.

FACES

Tamerah Ringo resumed her position as director of the **Uvalde Convention and Visitors Bureau**, after the C&VB's recent merger with the Chamber of Commerce. Give her a call at 210/278-4115 or 1-800-588-2533.

Robert Workman, director of exhibitions at the American Federation of Arts in New York, was appointed assistant director for exhibitions at the **Amon G. Carter Museum in Fort Worth**. Mr. Workman will oversee all aspects of exhibition planning, from grant applications to the production and distribution of catalogues. Open Tuesday through Sunday at 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd.

WILDLIFE

An endangered Arabian oryx left **Fossil Rim Wildlife Center** in

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Ann Kelton, Editor
 Contributing Editors: Marty Lange, Jane McNally, Mike Talley
 Layout: Jane Yansky Design

AMARILLO TIC A gentleman stopped in for a Texas map shortly after eating at Amarillo's famous Big Texan steak house, where patrons are offered a free 72-ounce steak if it's consumed within an hour. After downing his 72-ounce portion, the visitor claimed he couldn't move, much less get out of the car, having to send a friend in his place. Poor thing.

CAPITOL COMPLEX TIC Manager Mary Ulrich said they're gearing up for the

Glen Rose to be released in its homeland of Oman in the Middle East. The yearling female oryx represents the first animal born at Fossil Rim to be returned to the wild. The Arabian oryx are a highly endangered desert antelope that were hunted to extinction in the wild by the early 1970s.

STATE PARKS

Matagorda Island, off the Texas Gulf Coast, has long been a tropical paradise for anglers, bird-watchers, and campers. The problem was getting there if you didn't have some sort of boat. Now, the **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department** makes the trip easy with the recent addition of the ferryboat **McBride**. The 50-foot aluminum hull boat, certified to transport 49 passengers, operates out of TP&WD's docks in **Port O'Connor**. On Thursdays and Fridays, the **McBride** leaves dockside at 9 a.m. and returns at 5 p.m. On Saturdays and Sundays, the vessel leaves at 8 and 10 a.m., returning at 3 and 5 p.m. Cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children, and includes the round trip ferry ride and beach shuttle while on the island. Once on the island, visitors can stay at a prim-

restoration probably will begin within the next few months. The opera house will serve to complement the existing saloon, courtroom, and billiard hall where the colorful judge ruled with his own brand of homespun law.

Governor's Inauguration slated for January 17, when thousands will swarm the Capitol grounds to witness swearing-in ceremonies, speeches by state dignitaries, and a grand parade. "The inauguration is always an exciting time," said Mary. "We've stocked up on literature just for that day."

JUDGE ROY BEAN TIC The Texas Department of Transportation recently acquired an historic opera house, just across the road from the center. Manager Neal Billings said complete

restoration probably will begin within the next few months. The opera house will serve to complement the existing saloon, courtroom, and billiard hall where the colorful judge ruled with his own brand of homespun law.

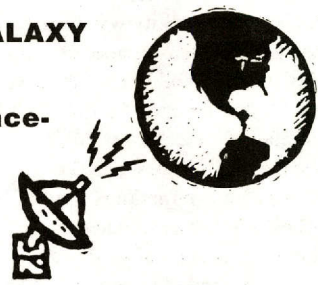
LAREDO TIC Barbara Grove from the Austin C&VB dropped in with all kinds of great information about Austin happenings and attractions. She said the 1995 edition of Austin's visitors guide will be shipped to all the centers soon.

itive campsite for \$4 per night for up to four people on either the bay side or the Gulf side. A bunkhouse that sleeps 14 people is available for \$12 per person per night. For more information, contact Matagorda Island State Park at 512/983-2215.

Long before there was a Texas or even a United States, the "**Big Tree**" at **Goose Island State Park** near **Rockport** weathered whatever nature threw its way. Now the state's largest live oak is

in trouble. The 1,000-year-old tree is weakening and needs an annual dose of organic fertilizer to strengthen its limbs, a procedure costing between \$750 and \$1,000 a year. In November, Goose Island staffers installed a donation box at the Big Tree, raising \$500 that first month. Park superintendent **Stormy Reeves** said, "About 50,000 people came here last year to see the tree and we knew they'd want to lend a hand once they learned it needed help." The Big Tree

COMING SOON TO A GALAXY NEAR YOU "Destiny In Space," the newest space-related IMAX film, makes its world premiere at Space Center Houston this month. Narrated by Leonard Nimoy, the 40-minute, giant-screen adventure features unique views of the Space Shuttle in flight around Earth, the heroic Hubble Space Telescope servicing mission, and thrilling flyovers of Mars and Venus. On view through 1995. For show times, call 1-800-972-0369.



has a 35-foot circumference, is 44 feet high, and nearly 90 feet wide. In 1969, it was certified as Texas' largest live oak by the Texas Forest Service and is thought to be one of the largest in the U.S. Donations may be sent to Goose Island State Park, HC01 Box 105, Rockport 78382.

P U B L I C A T I O N S

An extensive list of Texas inns, hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts are found in the **1995 Texas Accommodations Guide**, still hot off the press. The popular guide is published as a cooperative effort between the **Texas Hotel & Motel Association** and TxDOT's **Travel and Information Division**. **Valery Hansen**, director of membership at TH&MA, said, over the past two years, listings have jumped from about 600 to 937. The guide now sports a fresh, new look, both inside and out, and includes seven special sections, encompassing major metropolitan areas, for use in conjunction with the *Texas State Travel Guide*. Each city listing includes its map coordinates on TxDOT's *Official Travel Map*. For a complimentary copy, call TH&MA at 512/474-2996, or TxDOT at 1-800-452-9292.

M U S E U M S

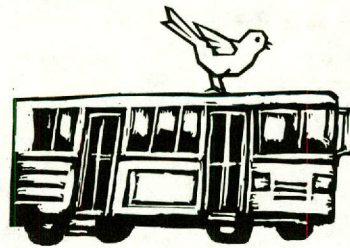
The **Texas Heritage Archives & Library** in **Jefferson** hosts **Toward a Better Living for Rural Texas Blacks, 1930-1960**. The photographic exhibit, timed to coincide with local celebrations of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, pays homage to rural black Texans who worked to improve their standard of living under the philosophy and instruction of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. In addition, three films

examine black history and the Civil Rights Movement. On view through January 28 in Haywood House, at Dallas and Market Streets in historic downtown. For information on upcoming events, call 903/665-1101.

A one-of-its kind oil-and-gas exhibit opened at the **Houston Museum of Natural Science** last fall. The **Wiess Energy Hall** educates visitors on the process of energy development through dazzling visuals and interactive displays. A 180-pound brass Foucault pendulum demonstrates the rotation of the Earth and the passage of time. Visitors learn about the origin of energy through a three-minute computer-animated video with 18 large-screen monitors. The exhibit includes 67 interactive computer stations, two holographic "geologists," a virtual-reality gas plant game, and a seven-minute simulated journey thousands of feet into

? TEXAS TRIVIA
Who first established the Texas Almanac?

Englishman Manxman David Richardson, who came to Texas in 1852 at the age of 37, is credited with establishing the *Texas Almanac*, the oldest continuously operating business institution in Texas and a major force in the development of the state. The *Almanac*, which grew out of the *Galveston News*, was first published in 1857 as an effort to attract settlers to Texas. Today, the *Texas Almanac* is published by *The Dallas Morning News*, which was a satellite of the Galveston paper in the 1800s.



TAKE A RIDE ON THE WILD SIDE The world-famous **King Ranch** near **Kingsville** is offering wildlife tours of land that is home to more than **200 species of native and exotic animals**. During the three-hour, **50-mile tour** visitors are treated to sightings of **alligators, coyotes, javelinas, wild turkeys, deer, red-eared slider turtles, and a multitude of colorful and rare birds**. **Tours begin at 8:30 a.m. every Tuesday and Saturday; \$15 per person, plus tax. For information and reservations, call 512/592-8055.**

an oil well. A visit to the **Wiess Energy Hall** is included in the price of admission to the museum. Open daily at One Hermann Circle Drive. Call 713/639-4600 for more info.

The **Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History** presents **Indians of the Plains: A Flash of Glory**, January 14 through April 30. The exhibit explores the culture that rose and faded in less than 100 years on the plains of North America when the horse arrived from the southwest. With the horse, the hunter's territory expanded, making him a more efficient bison hunter. The horse also changed battle and raiding tactics among the tribes, and made it easier for large numbers of people to move. It lasted hardly a century, ending with the coming of the railroad and white expansion. The days of glory are depicted through a rich collection of intricately beaded clothing, objects for personal adornment and ceremonial use, and weaponry. Open daily at 1900 N. Chaparral in Bayfront

Arts and Sciences Park. Call 512/883-2862 for details.

E V E N T S

January 1996 marks the **100th anniversary** celebration of **Fort Worth's first Fat Stock Show**, held under a shelter of giant oaks in October 1896. Year-long festivities will immediately follow the 99th Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show & Rodeo, January 20 through February 5. Events kick off on February 6 with ground-breaking ceremonies for a 180,000-square-foot livestock facility, scheduled to open in January 1996. The new \$8-million expansion will feature an 1,100-seat arena, an animal exercise area, and room for 280 portable horse stalls or 700 head of cattle. In honor of the centennial, the Statehood Wagon Train will end its statewide journey in Fort Worth, just in time for the Stock Show Parade, January 20, 1996. There's more in the works, so watch this space. Call 817/877-2400 if you just can't wait.

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
Amarillo	7,704	+4.52	169,386	+9.87
Anthony	12,702	-14.14	204,783	+1.13
Denison	18,522	**	80,022	**
Gainesville	28,149	-21.87	432,165	-12.17
Langtry	6,087	-5.19	105,252	+10.99
Laredo	10,593	-3.15	150,537	-0.03
Orange	35,001	-.21	571,890	+7.61
Texarkana	48,462	+19.09	614,352	+24.12
Valley	26,307	-12.89	321,921	+8.72
Waskom	49,509	+41.77	571,578	+11.27
Wichita Falls	10,845	+2.41	209,574	+10.96
Capitol Complex	6,642	-24.97	142,995	-3.25
1-800 Phone Center	12,585	+86.53	185,517	+30.53
CENTER TOTALS	273,108	+12.42	3,759,972	+9.08

Data as of December 31, 1994

*Compared to last year

** The Denison TIC was temporarily closed in 1990 due to highway construction; resumed operation September 13, 1994.

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SERVICES TO THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY		
TxDOT TRAX System	This Mo.	Y-T-D
Subscriber inquiries	65	
Addresses offered	34,122	
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Addresses transmitted		696,324
OFFICIAL STATE TRAVEL MAGAZINE		
Texas Highways print run		
This month		380,861
This month last year		431,123
This year-to-date		4,890,533
Last year-to-date		5,349,472

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NOTICE!

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