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Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

FINAL NOTICE!

If you enjoy your free subscription to *Texas Travel Log*, return the form on the back page of this issue. Only one response is necessary, so if we've already heard from you, forget we mentioned it.

COMING UP

A \$19.6-million project to expand the **Amarillo Civic Center** and construct a new **Special Events Center** was approved by Amarillo voters, 3 to 1. The 65,000-square-foot Civic Center addition will bring total meeting and exhibit space to 345,000 square feet. The Special Events Center will be located on the grounds of the Tri-State Fair, east of downtown. The structure will include 5,000 permanent seats, a 150-by-300 foot multipurpose dirt floor and special facilities for handling livestock. Construction will begin at the close of the 1998 Tri-State Fair in September and be complete before next year's event. For details, call 1-800-692-1338.

The \$35-million new terminal project at **Midland International Airport** remains on schedule. The *Midland Reporter-Telegram* reports by November the building's exterior will look complete. Already airport officials have begun the operational aspects of the changeover. Contracts on the food court, advertising and retail have been awarded. Upcoming proposals include telecommunications, car rental, concession agreements, ATMs and miscellaneous services. Officials say the early 1999 switch to the state-of-the-art facility will be fast-paced and dramatic, taking an amazing

amount of coordination from airport personnel, tenants and concessionaires.

When Big Spring Army Air Field opened in **Big Spring** during World War II, it brought a sophistication and worldliness to the small West Texas town. The base was renamed Webb Air Force Base in 1952 to memorialize Lt. James L. Webb, a Big Spring native and WWII combat pilot, who was killed off the Japanese coast. With a decrease in the need for Air Force pilots at the close of the Vietnam War, the base was deactivated and the property it occupied turned over to Big Spring Industrial Park. Now an energetic group of residents plan to turn the decaying site into the **Hangar 25 Museum**. *The Monahans News* reports the historic 1942 hangar will be refurbished to its WWII appearance and house a museum honoring the service personnel who were stationed there. The restoration committee hopes to acquire the four planes connected with the base's history, and display them inside the hangar museum. Con-

struction will begin in May, with a completion date slated for the end of this year. For details call **Nelda Reagan**, City Air Park Coordinator, at 915/264-2362.

Ranger-approved merchandise at the **Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum** in **Waco** will help pay for a much-needed expansion and renovation plan. *The Dallas Morning News* reports everything from miniature gun replicas to snack food will carry the stamp of the museum's distinctive new logo. The program could generate as much as \$1 million this year in licensing fees, paving the way for construction of new galleries, interactive exhibits and offices, and modification of the Hall of Fame to honor those who have served with distinction or died in the line of duty. Construction is scheduled to begin next year.

A three-acre attraction for toddlers to preteens will open in the spring of 2000 at the **Dallas Zoo**. *The Dallas Morning News* reports the current children's area covers about a quarter-acre and is limit-

ed to a petting zoo stocked with mostly domestic animals. The new \$5.5-million facility will offer an atmosphere of fun and education where children can touch and discover animals and plants and learn about nature through exciting interactive exhibits. Three habitats will show how different animals live in urban environments, rural environments and in the wild. A Tot Spot for toddlers will be equipped with bouncy toys and playground equipment. The older kids can learn about wildlife at an answer section with computers, books and artifacts. An amphitheater will set the stage for wildlife demonstrations and shows. Open daily at 650 South R.L. Thornton Freeway. Call 214/670-5656 for details.

PLACES

In the January issue of *Texas Travel Log*, we reported the partnership with Six Flags Theme Parks Inc. and **Six Flags** owners was extended by another 30 years. This voided a deal with Premier Parks to buy Six Flags Over Texas



PLUGGED IN The Dallas Convention Center became the first major convention center in the U.S. to offer wireless Internet service to exhibitors, show managers and event planners. A permanent fiber optic "backbone" provides quick, reliable access to the Internet in 900,000 square feet of exhibit halls, ballrooms and lobbies. Initial user setup takes just five minutes, and the system's dedicated band prevents interference from cellular phones and other electronic devices. For details, call 214/571-1332.

TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

in Arlington. Now the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reports **Premier Parks** has acquired the entire theme park chain. The \$1.9-billion deal pushed the Oklahoma City-based company behind Disney as the second-largest park operator in the nation. Premier president **Gary Story** said the unsuccessful negotiations last fall were the catalyst for his company to pursue a bigger deal. In addition, Premier obtained licensing rights to Warner Bros. characters, so the likes of Bugs Bunny, Tweety Bird and Yosemite Sam will remain. Focus of park improvement will begin in 1999. Some of Premier's existing parks will assume the Six Flags name.

Enter a world of mammoth bugs and colossal butterflies at a special traveling exhibit at the **Fort Worth Zoo**. Giant animated robotic insects greet visitors at **Incredibugs**, where detailed replicas of a tarantula, wasp, caterpillar, beetles and a dozen butterflies measure 8- to 16-feet. Touch-screen games, puzzles and other interactive activities designed to educate and entertain focus on the beauty of the insect world. On view through May 26; \$2.50, plus regular zoo admission. Open daily at 1989 Colonial Parkway. Call 817/871-7050 for more info.

TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

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Ann Kelton, Editor

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DENISON TIC The folks at Six Flags aren't the only ones with a mascot named Bugs. A little over a month ago, a fluffy gray and white rabbit showed up at the center and announced he'd found home. Counselor Devon Armstrong said Bugs comes hopping out of the bushes when they call his name, always ready for his share of apple, lettuce and rabbit feed.

Last summer, in the Hill Country town of **Boerne**, flood waters uncovered a never-before-seen, 90-foot trackway of **dinosaur footprints**, 20 by 20 inches in size. When the tracks were uncovered, they became more susceptible to damage from weather, including floods. Paleontologist advisors at the **Cibolo Nature Center** agreed the best way for visitors to view the tracks was to make a mold of the trackway and lay it along the Cibolo Wilderness Trail in Boerne City Park. With completion of the project last month, children and adults can now sit beside the three-toed tracks and feel the enormity of the prehistoric giants who once roamed the region. Fund-raising events begin in May for construction of a handicap-access trail and creation of educational displays and curriculum. For more info, call 830/249-4616.

After years of moving from one temporary quarters to another, the **Asian Cultures Museum and Educational Center** in **Corpus Christi** found a permanent home at 1809 N. Chaparral. The exquisite collection of artifacts from Japan, India, China, Korea, the Philippines and Vietnam was scarcely unpacked when torrential rains collapsed a portion of the roof, forcing the museum's closure last fall.

JUDGE ROY BEAN TIC A couple of West Texas valentines from the city of Sanderson got hitched at the Jersey Lilly on February 14. Manager Neal Billings said the marriage of Andra Smith and Mike Scott marked the 18th wedding ceremony at the judge's courtroom and saloon.

WASKOM TIC In 1936, the Texas Highway Department opened 13

information houses at major highway entrances to welcome motorists to the Texas Centennial. Mrs. Ernest Berglund, now 101 years old, lived behind one of the original centers in Marshall. She rented a room to Theodore T. Carter, who manned the information house on U.S. 80. Mrs. Berglund's daughter stopped in the "new" Waskom TIC, toting an old photograph of Theodore and the '36 structure.

Director **Nancy Stevens** said though most of the office computers and equipment and a few silk screens were damaged beyond repair, the museum's most valuable items were saved. Depending on construction progress, the museum could open as early as April, with grand reopening ceremonies planned for May. Recorded messages at 512/882-2641 provide updated reports.

Just steps from the **San Antonio IMAX Theatre** in Rivercenter Mall awaits Texas' most visited attraction and most famous shrine. The IMAX opened its doors ten years ago this month with the premiere of "**Alamo...The Price of Freedom.**" Since then more than five million people have visited the theater. Of that number, more than three million have viewed the "Alamo" on

GARDEN OF DELIGHTS

In the mid-1930s, English portraitist Douglas Granville Chandor created a garden showplace on his family's four-acre estate in Weatherford.

New owners Melody and Chuck Bradford have spent the last three years restoring the gardens to the quiet tranquillity of 18th-Century England with a splendid display of fragrant roses, a lush English lawn bowling green, a 40-foot waterfall and a meditation garden room. For tour details, call 817/613-1700 or 594-3801.



the theater's giant six-story screen. The award-winning film tells the story of the 13-day siege, the fall of the Alamo and the 189 defenders who fought and died there. The 425-seat theater presents other IMAX films during the day and conventional feature-length movies at night. For showtimes, call 210/225-6517.

HISTORY

A newly approved master plan would restore the **San Jacinto Battleground** near **Houston** to the way it looked in 1836, when Sam Houston routed the Mexican army there to win Texas independence. The **Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission** approved the plan with the understanding that the **San Jacinto Museum Association** would raise the funds to implement the ambitious project. Plans include restoring the historical landscapes, relocating non-battle-related elements away from the main battle area, re-designing roads and trails through the battlefield and adding or relocating signs and markers to enhance interpretation. A new museum and visitor center along the main entry road would be built to serve as a visitor orientation and interpretation facility. Parking and access facilities for the Battleship *Texas* would be relocated to the north side of the slip to create separation between the 19th-Century Sam Houston camp and the 20th-Century ship. Cost is estimated at \$35-47 million. Call 281/479-2431 for more info.

The original handwritten journal of the convention held to declare **Texas independence** in 1836 has returned to **Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park**, the site where the document was written. The journal was transported under armed

guard from its permanent home at the Dallas Historical Center. With assistance from the Summerlee Foundation of Dallas, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department negotiated to have the document loaned to the state park for six months out of each year through 2003. The convention began on March 1 during the siege of the Alamo. By March 10, the convention had declared Texas independence, written a constitution, provided for military defense and dispatched Gen. Sam Houston with

TEXAS TRIVIA

Who is known as the "father of the Texas Constitution"?

If your answer was David Thomas, consider yourself a hard-core Texas history buff. Though you don't see schools, streets signs and city limit signs emblazoned with his name, David Thomas played a vital role in the birth of a struggling young nation. After the adoption of the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836, one person from each municipality was appointed to a committee to draft a constitution. David Thomas chaired the committee, spoke for the group and drafted the document. Born in Tennessee about 1801, Thomas came to Texas in 1835 and joined the United States Independent Volunteer Cavalry. He was a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, and an interim attorney general and acting secretary of war for the Republic of Texas. In April 1836, Thomas was mortally wounded by the accidental discharge of a firearm while aboard the steamship *Cayuga* en route from Lynch's Ferry to Galveston. Though his time as a Texan was cut short, David Thomas was integral to the declaration of freedom and the framing of a Texas Constitution.

TEXAS TRIVIA



GREAT PARKING SPOTS
In 1923, the Texas Legislature created the State Parks Board to accept donations of land for use as state parks. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department salutes the 75th anniversary of the Texas state parks system with a year-long commemoration of more than 100 special events and open houses. A nostalgic treasure trove of memorabilia will be on view at the department's Austin headquarters and at 15 regional showcase events. Call the state parks information line at 1-800-792-1112.

troops to the relief of the Alamo. All the historic events of that time are recorded in the manuscript journal, including the Texas Declaration of Independence. For more information, call the park at 409/878-2214.

MUSEUMS

The realities of teen parenting are explored in **Children of Children**, on view through May 10 at the **Witte Museum in San Antonio**. The experience of becoming a parent while still a child is depicted through 50 black and white portraits and narratives produced by renowned photographer **Michael Nye**. Each photograph is accompanied by a three to five minute audio recording that tells the story behind the face in the subject's own voice. The exhibit represents people from multicultural and mixed socioeconomic backgrounds spanning every decade through age 100. Open daily at 3801 Broadway. Call 210/357-1900 for more info.

The **Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston** is transformed each month into the **Steel Lounge**, where visitors can relax with a quiet drink, listen to live music and explore the museum's exhibitions. The event, which premiered in February, will become a monthly invitation every last Friday from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Join a host of other art-lovers on March 27 at 5216 Montrose Boulevard. Call 713/284-8250 for details.

EVENTS

Masses of color await visitors at **Dallas Blooms**, a five-week celebration of spring at the **Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden**. This year's theme, **A World of Flowers**, presents tulips and daffodils from Holland, azaleas from China and cherry trees from Japan. Arrangements of exotic plants from Mexico, Africa, Turkey and the Near East adorn the historic DeGolyer House. Dallas Blooms welcomes visitors through April 12. For details, call 214/327-4901.

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
Amarillo	6,675	-29.54	13,545	-31.12
Anthony	15,096	+8.68	29,259	+6.20
Denison	14,823	+2.45	29,958	+4.01
Gainesville	25,170	+18.15	50,586	+13.58
Langtry	9,864	+29.40	17,652	+20.08
Laredo	13,935	+128.93	28,506	+133.52
Orange	40,773	+20.06	80,607	+14.19
Texarkana	26,964	+2.61	56,604	+1.22
Valley	48,981	-24.05	99,567	-21.82
Waskom	39,303	-2.11	75,951	-5.97
Wichita Falls	12,060	-6.25	23,412	-9.60
Capitol Complex	8,136	+3.12	14,538	+6.83
1-800 Phone Center	1,653	-81.23	1,653	-90.40
CENTER TOTALS	263,433	-1.44	521,835	-3.15

MAIL SERVICES	This Mo.	Y-T-D
	54,168	90,084

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Internet address: <http://traveltex.com>
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Data as of February 28, 1998
*Compared to last year

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