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Travel Log

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A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

U.S. TRAVEL

Spending by **black Americans** on tourism and conventions has grown from about \$16 billion in 1991 to about \$35 billion last year. Now city and state tourism agencies are sitting up, taking notes and aggressively promoting themselves to tour operators and meeting planners. The *Austin American-Statesman* reports communities where painful chapters of black history were written have been especially successful in drawing tourists. "Many of them feel they have more to sell for the African American market because of all the history and events that have taken place there," said **Solomon Herbert**, publisher of *Black Meetings and Tourism* magazine. "They've turned that around, made it attractive and turned it into a marketing tool." Black tourism professionals say black struggles in the South attract, not discourage, visitors. People want to know what happened, they say. They want to know the truth.

COMING UP

Near the gateway to the Texas Panhandle north of Lubbock, the people of **Hale Center** are sprucing up their town. Led by the Hale Center Beautification Committee, the citizens in this West Texas farming community are turning an old vacant lot between Sixth Street and Cleveland into an eye-pleasing **Community Plaza**. Visitors and townsfolk can follow walkways past flowering gardens or rest a spell on shaded park benches. Murals depicting the heritage and history of Hale Center will be

painted on the sides of adjacent and nearby buildings. For details or info on area attractions, call 806/839-2642.

Grapevine was tapped as the site of the next **Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World**, headquartered in Springfield, Missouri. *The Dallas Morning News* reports the 200,000-square-foot superstore will include an indoor trout stream, waterfall, aquarium, full-service restaurant, two-story archery range and indoor log cabin. RV and boat showrooms will be as big as some traveling trade shows. With news that the Springfield store attracts 4 million visitors each year, the excitement is building in Grapevine. The folks at Grapevine Mills mall, across the street from the Bass Pro building site, expect sales to increase at least 15 percent from the spillover of Bass Pro customers. A 12-story Embassy Suites Hotel, already under construction, will have wilderness decor and connect to the store to accommodate out-of-town visi-

tors. The City of Grapevine expects an additional \$1 million in annual sales tax revenue because of it all.

A new **DART** rail station and the expansion of the **McKinney Avenue Trolley** in Dallas will begin operation by 2000. *The Dallas Morning News* reports final construction on the \$41-million Cityplace station is set to begin in January. A \$10.5-million expansion of the McKinney Avenue Trolley will add service to the West End along Ross Avenue and San Jacinto Street, and extend north along McKinney Avenue to Blackburn Street. Four reconditioned trolleys will join the four cars now in use. Both systems will converge at Cityplace, where passengers can choose train or trolley.

Fort Worth could have its own herd of **Longhorns** to entertain tourists, if a newly proposed municipal budget passes, officials say. The 12 big-horned cows would pasture in the historic Stockyards and along the Trinity

River. Comparing the Fort Worth herd with the bronze Longhorns in Pioneer Plaza in Big D, *The Dallas Morning News* notes though the 40 Dallas steers cost an initial \$9 million, they're "neater, cleaner, and easier to control." It would take seven cowpokes to tend the Fort Worth Longhorns, while only three trail drivers manage the 40 bovines in Pioneer Plaza. Never mind that the herd and cowboys in Dallas are fake.

Houston officials are working hard to return the **NFL** to Texas' largest city. Plans are on the drawing board for a one-of-a-kind football stadium, which will sit next door to the world-famous Astrodome. The structure will follow the Ballpark at Union Station as the city's second retractable roof stadium. The Ballpark will open in 2000 as home to the Houston Astros Baseball Club.

Houston's aging Music Hall now lies in state as a giant pile of rubble. Demolition began in June to make way for the \$75-million



OUR BUDDY Lubbock will honor its favorite son with a \$2-million Buddy Holly Center housing the world's largest public collection of Holly memorabilia. The museum attraction will be located in an historic depot at 18th Street and Avenue G. Visitors can see Holly's Fender guitar, interactive exhibits and a showcase of West Texas musicians. The center will include a Texas Music Hall of Fame and the Lubbock Fine Arts Center. Renovation of the depot will be complete September 1999, just in time for the Buddy Holly Music Festival, held each Labor Day weekend. Call 806/767-2686.

TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. The center will reign in the heart of **Houston's Theater District**, at the corner of Bagby and Walker streets. Grand opening events are scheduled for 2001. For details, call 713/227-2001.

San Antonio is making its pitch to host the **Republican National Convention** in 2000. A crowd of 3,500 greeted the GOP's site selection committee this summer in the 65,000-seat Alamodome. Party leaders were serenaded by mariachi bands and entertained by band students, a teenage dance group and the San Antonio Spurs dancers. The Spurs presented each Republican official with a team jersey. *The Dallas Morning News* reports more than \$18 million in city and private money would pay for costs associated with the convention, which would be held in the Alamodome.

PLACES

In a national survey of amusement park fans, **Schlitterbahn Waterpark in New Braunfels** was voted the "Best Waterpark" in the country. The park's six-story Master Blaster uphill water coaster was voted the nation's "Best Waterpark Ride."

TEXAS TRAVEL LOG

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Ann Kelton, Editor

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ANTHONY TIC Manager Lucia Cordova reports Davy Crockett stopped in the center asking for directions to the Alamo. It appeared he had missed a turn en route from Tennessee. Actually, Lucia said, he was a tourist from Oregon, claiming no relation to the Texas hero, simply seek-

ing the trail to the famous Shrine.

ORANGE TIC Sam Lamar of Tallahassee, Florida, was on the way to his cousin's birthday party in Beaumont. It was a long journey, but Sam said the old boy was approaching his 200th birthday and it was a celebration not to be

missed. Because of his contributions to Texas education, Lamar University was throwing a party in his honor. Sam said his cousin Mirabeau was even known by some as the "Father of Texas Education." He fought in the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836 and was elected second president of the Republic of Texas.

The survey was conducted by *Amusement Today* magazine, which selected seasoned parkgoers as participants. This is the fourth national survey that has rated Schlitterbahn as the country's best. Call 830/625-2351.

Visitors looking for a quick, weekend getaway can now save money by taking advantage of **Arlington's Red Hot Deals.** **Judy Everett Ramos**, communications director at the **Arlington C&VB**, said the tourism incentive is an ongoing program, with participating hotels offering various rates and packages throughout the year. For the latest rates, key in www.arlington.org, then click on "Red Hot Deals." Or call 1-800-342-4305.

The **Austin C&VB** issued its first-ever multiyear license to **Wild About Music Inc.** to produce a line of art-based apparel and merchandise celebrating the theme, "**Austin—Live Music Capital of the World.**" Wild About Music opened the world's first art gallery and gift shop dedicated to music-themed works. The Austin-based company created the first designs by tapping into the creative talents of the more than 70 visual artists represented at the gallery. A portion of the sales proceeds will return to the C&VB, which will use the funds for further tourism marketing to reinforce the Live Music Capital theme.

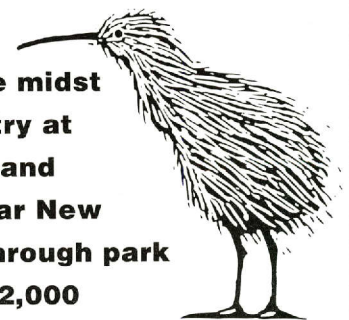
The role cabdrivers play in Austin's \$1.4-billion travel industry is largely ignored. So the City of **Austin** created **Cabdriver Appreciation Day** to thank these important frontline greeters. Working 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, cabdrivers are often the first to come in contact with the 16 million tourists who come to visit each year.

The Brazosport Chamber of Commerce announced the for-

mation of the **Brazosport Convention and Visitors Council**, a new regional tourism organization representing area communities and towns. Director of tourism **Jennifer Waida** said the council will promote Brazoria, Clute, Freeport, Jones Creek, Lake Jackson, Oyster Creek, Quintana, Richwood and Surfside Beach. Add 'em to your mailing list or give 'em a call. Address: 420 Highway 332 W., Brazosport 77531. Phone: 409/265-2505 or 1-888-477-2505.

FLIGHT OF FANCY

Savor the tropics in the midst of the Texas Hill Country at Clear Springs Aviaries and Zoological Gardens near New Braunfels. The walk-through park teems with more than 2,000 species of tropical plants and 200 exotic and endangered birds. Co-owner Pat Otten said the new attraction is, "like a zoo, but more personal." Visitors can visit eye-to-eye with parrots, cranes, starlings, finches and Australian magpies. Recent arrivals include squirrels, deer, foxes and Arabian oryx. Zebras and various species of cats will be added this fall. Open daily at 5686 I-35 South. Call 830/606-6029 for details.



F A C E S

Ric Luber, executive director and CEO of the Austin C&VB, was elected to the board of directors of the **International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus (IACVB)**. The board consists of 23 members from around the world. Founded in 1914, the IACVB represents more than 400 convention and visitors bureaus in 31 countries. As an international trade association, it promotes sound professional practices in the solicitation and servicing of meetings, conventions and tourism.

H I S T O R Y

In the April 1998 edition of *Texas Travel Log*, we told you about the possible find of another of French explorer La Salle's vessels, the supply ship **L'Aimable**, which ran aground and sank in 1685. The **Texas Historical Commission (THC)** reports artifacts discovered confirm the sunken shipwreck is not *L'Aimable*, but rather of possible Spanish military origin, dating from the mid-to late-1700s. **James Bruseth**, THC director of antiquities protection, said though the Spanish ship is historically significant, finding *L'Aimable* will add one more piece to the puzzle of La Salle's expedition. "Locating *L'Aimable* could provide important new information about the French attempt to colonize Texas," he said.

The **Texas Historical Commission (THC)** is investigating several major battle sites associated with the **1874 Red River War**, which brought an end to Native American power in the Southern Plains. Goals for the project include establishing site records, generating maps, nominating sites to the National Register of Historical Places and working with museums to exhibit

findings. THC hopes to eventually develop a Red River War Heritage Trail that would promote public education about the sites. THC will solicit Native American perspectives on this phase of Texas history. For more information, call 512/463-8882.

M U S E U M S

The **Grace Museum** in Abilene was chosen as the only Texas

? TEXAS TRIVIA

Which piano teacher became one of Texas' foremost philanthropists?

Ima Hogg, daughter of Texas Governor James Stephen Hogg, played the piano from age three. After studying music in New York, Berlin and Vienna between 1901 and 1909, she moved to Houston, where she gave piano lessons and helped found the Houston Symphony Orchestra. When oil was struck on the Hogg property near West Columbia, Miss Hogg became involved in a wide range of philanthropic projects. She founded the Houston Child Guidance Center and the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. She incorporated her love for the arts into her work for human welfare. As a member of the Houston school board, Miss Hogg worked to establish symphony concerts for schoolchildren, get equal pay for teachers regardless of sex or race, and set up a painting-to-music program in the public schools. In 1966 she presented her collection of early American art and antiques and her River Oaks mansion, Bayou Bend, to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Her endeavors in the arts, historic preservation and goodwill spanned almost five decades. In 1975, at age 93, Ima Hogg died in London. She was buried in the Hogg family plot in Oakwood Cemetery in Austin.

TEXAS TRIVIA



SETTING THE STAGE With the recent production of "**Carmen**," the **Houston Grand Opera (HGO)** christened its new **Multimedia Modular Stage**, a **\$1.3-million portable stage**, resembling those used by touring rock bands. The stage is the centerpiece of HGO's **Community Connections Initiative**, intended to expand audience base and bring the company closer to its diverse community. "**Carmen**" drew attention from throughout the U.S. and Europe, with critics visiting from as far away as London and Paris. Call 713/546-0200.

venue for an exhibition of more than 40 **Russian works** by master artists, dating between 1930 and 1980. The paintings offer a vivid narrative of the U.S.S.R. during the Cold War era, replacing the notion that Russian art is drab and morose with one that depicts love, joy and hope. The exhibit will include a collection of Russian icons, prize-winning photographs and Russian children's art. On view November 14 through January 10 at 102 Cypress Street. Call 915/673-4587 for details.

The **Museum of Southern History**, formerly known as the Confederate Museum, relocated this month from Richmond to **Sugar Land** at 14070 Southwest Freeway. Director **Suzie Snoddy** said the expanded new facility makes room for additional displays, traveling exhibits and a community room for lectures, seminars and other special events. Confederate uniforms, 1860s furnishings and dress, an exhibit on Terry's Texas Rangers and hand-

guns from the War Between the States take visitors back to one of the saddest periods in American history. Visitors can view an extensive collection of artworks and displays on local history, and thumb through rare and fascinating books on Texas in the new research library. Outside, an authentic sharecropper's cabin from Fort Bend County offers a glimpse of everyday life in the 1800s. Open Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday, 1 to 4 p.m. For more info, call 281/269-7171.

The **Brazosport C&VB** announced the opening this month of the new **Lake Jackson Historical Museum**. Interactive exhibits and high-tech displays focus on Lake Jackson's prehistoric era, its plantation days, the development of the area's petrochemical industry, and the birth and growth of a modern city. Open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sunday, 1-5 p.m. At 249 Circle Way. Call 409/297-1570.

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
Amarillo	13,377	+3.67	96,432	-15.86
Anthony	13,311	-5.21	108,930	-.49
Denison	18,225	-9.21	154,749	-3.87
Gainesville	27,942	-11.34	238,620	+1.46
Langtry	5,088	-26.96	72,129	+6.55
Laredo	10,260	-8.06	98,784	+46.51
Orange	44,157	+4.06	377,313	+5.77
Texarkana	36,252	-10.94	278,469	-11.69
Valley	19,128	-3.20	242,730	-18.59
Waskom	49,902	-7.99	384,936	-20.27
Wichita Falls	18,621	-1.51	147,270	-1.11
Capitol Complex	7,995	-11.23	74,388	-6.64
CENTER TOTALS	264,258	-6.19	2,274,750	-9.02

MAIL SERVICES	This Mo.	Y-T-D
	24,354	641,961

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Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily)
 Internet address: <http://traveltex.com>
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Data as of August 31, 1998
 *Compared to last year

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