

TOP SPOT REVEALED!

San Antonio NAMED OUR READERS' *Favorite* TRAVEL DESTINATION

TEXASTM HIGHWAYS

DECEMBER 2014



The TRAVEL MAGAZINE of TEXAS

PG. **40**
SAN ANTONIO'S
MESMERIZING
MOSAIC OF
CULTURE
AND COLOR!



EL PASO'S MISSION
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ROCK, PRESIDENTIAL
LIBRARIES TOUR,
FREDERICKSBURG'S
CHRISTMAS STORE,
AND MORE!



Drumroll, Please

And the winner is ... San Antonio—the No. 1 destination in the *Texas Highways* Readers' Choice Texas Top 40 countdown! Now, you might not be sputtering out your sweet tea in surprise over this revelation. After all, San Antonio consistently tops many state and national travel “best” lists. And throughout *Texas Highways*' 40 years as a travel magazine, America's seventh-largest city has been a perennial favorite with our readers, who in past *TH* surveys have ranked local attractions tops in their respective categories—from the Alamo and other Spanish missions to the River Walk, the Witte Museum, the San Antonio Zoo, the Menger Hotel, Six Flags Fiesta Texas, and SeaWorld San Antonio.

Those attractions factored into the Texas Top 40 feedback, along with Southtown and the Mission Reach and Museum Reach (including the Pearl Brewery complex) stretches of the River Walk. Considering the number of voters lauding return visits, family reunions, and annual Christmas trips, it's no stretch to say that to many

**Win a
Corpus Christi
getaway! Details
on page 8.**

TH readers, San Antonio is Texas' hometown.

The city's mosaic of cultural influences and comingling of the contemporary and historic continue to define its dynamism. As noted in *The Handbook of Texas*, which describes San Antonio's beginnings as a missionary and

military outpost in 1718: “Each successive group of immigrants put its stamp upon the city, its culture, and architecture; all mingled, none quite submerging the others. ... Peculiarly, San Antonio succeeded in merging its past into the new in each generation. Old Spanish walls remain beside modern glass towers, with rows of Victorian mansions a block away...”

The subject of this month's cover image epitomizes that melding of modern and bygone. Several nights a week through 2024, a vibrant video art installation by French artist Xavier de Richemont is being projected onto the façade of the historic San Fernando Cathedral at Main Plaza. Titled *San Antonio, The Saga*, the mesmerizing show spans local history, from Native American inhabitants to the fight for Texas independence to the oil boom. Find details on showtimes at www.visitsanantonio.com.

We've had a ball sharing our own past and present with you for *Texas Highways*' 40th-anniversary celebration. And what a fun ride the countdown of your Texas Top 40 favorites has been! We're already fired up for 2015: In January, we'll reveal what we're cooking up for next year's Top 40. Hope you're hungry.

Jill Lawless, Editor



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BE NEXT MONTH:**

Ring in 2015 with
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Central Texas, and
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December 6

Christmas on the Square in Round Top | 17th Annual Round Top Area Historical Society Christmas Tour of Homes | Houston Chamber Ringers Christmas Concert at Round Top Festival Institute

December 13

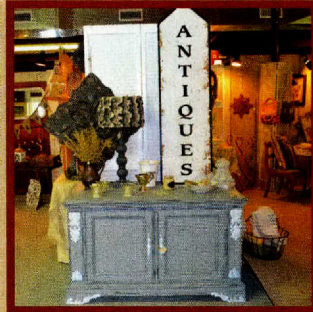
Christmas at Winedale | "The Nutcracker" Ballet at Round Top Festival Institute

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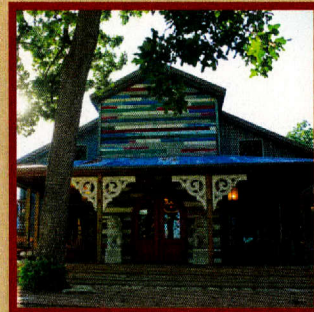
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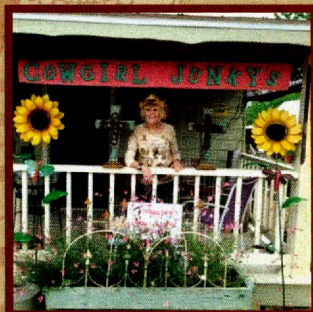
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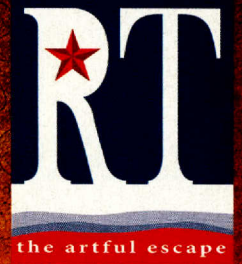
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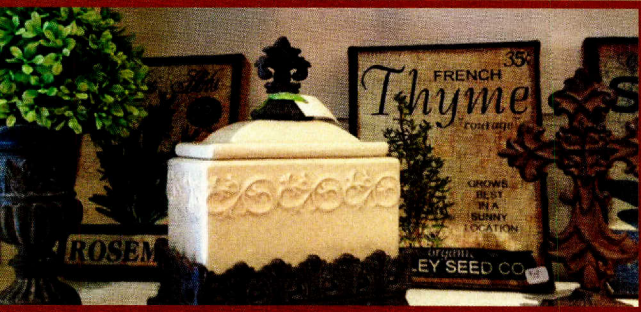
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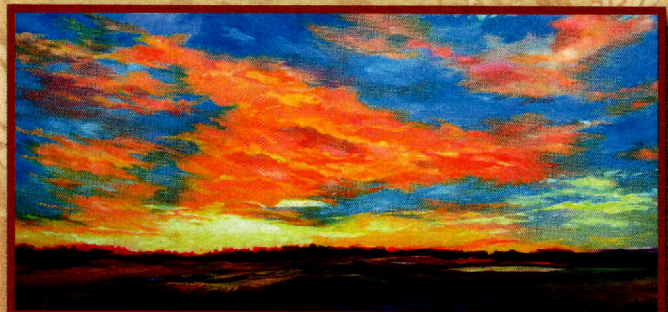
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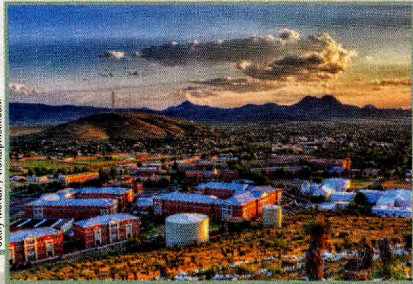
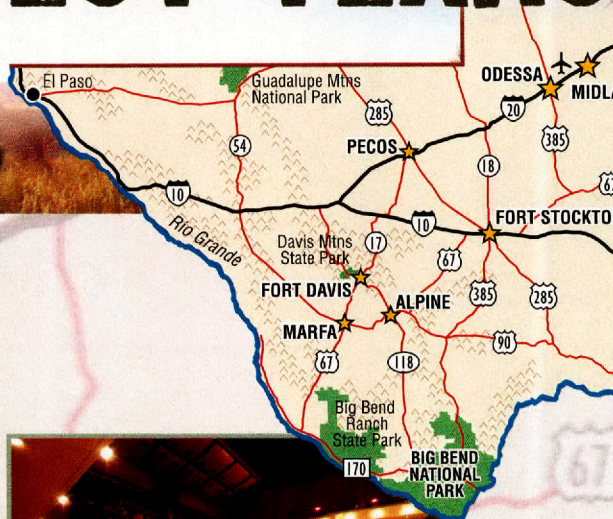
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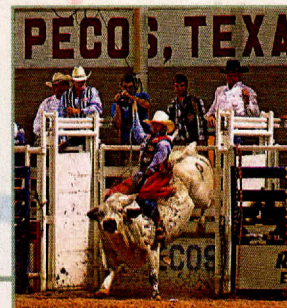
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EVENTS

- Nov 28 - Chrinati presents Sharon Johnston & Mark Lee - **Marfa**
- Dec 2 - Community Christmas Lighting - **Pecos**
- Dec 4-31 - *Starbright Village* Christmas lights in McKinney Park - **Odessa**
- Dec 5-14 - *Little Women* at Permian Playhouse - **Odessa**
- Dec 6 - Christmas Parade - **Fort Stockton**
- Dec 6-7 - Mountain Country Christmas Bazaar - **Alpine**
- Dec 10 - Disney's *Beauty & The Beast* - **Midland**

- Dec 13 - Frontier Christmas! - **Fort Davis**
- Dec 13 - State Park Cookie Walk & Christmas Workshops - **Fort Davis**
- Dec 14 - Tour of Historic Homes - **Alpine**
- Dec 30 - Moscow Ballet's Great Russian *Nutcracker* - **Midland**
- Jan 9-10 - Pecos County Livestock Show - **Fort Stockton**
- Jan 16-17 - Reeves County Jr. Livestock Show, Sale & BBQ - **Pecos**

DECEMBER 2014

The **PEOPLE**, the **PLACES**, and **WIDE-OPEN SPACES** of 

40

TEXAS TOP 40

Viva San Antonio!

San Antonio prevails in our yearlong countdown of readers' Texas Top 40 travel destinations.

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Photographs by **KEVIN STILLMAN**

50 *The Light Fantastic*
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Text by **HELEN ANDERS**



56 *Portals of Power*
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Text by **MARGARET SHAKESPEARE**

Photographs by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**



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DECEMBER 2014

The PEOPLE, the PLACES, and WIDE-OPEN SPACES of 



DEPARTMENTS

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In praise of Texas makers and talkers

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Run with a ranger at Enchanted Rock

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PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS AVAILABLE

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ON OUR COVERS

FRONT: Xavier de Richemont's video art installation *San Antonio, The Saga* at San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio's Main Plaza. Photo © Al Argueta.

BACK: The Guadalupe Shrine at the 1851 Ysleta Mission in the historic Tigua Indian town of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, now part of El Paso. Photo by Kevin Stillman.

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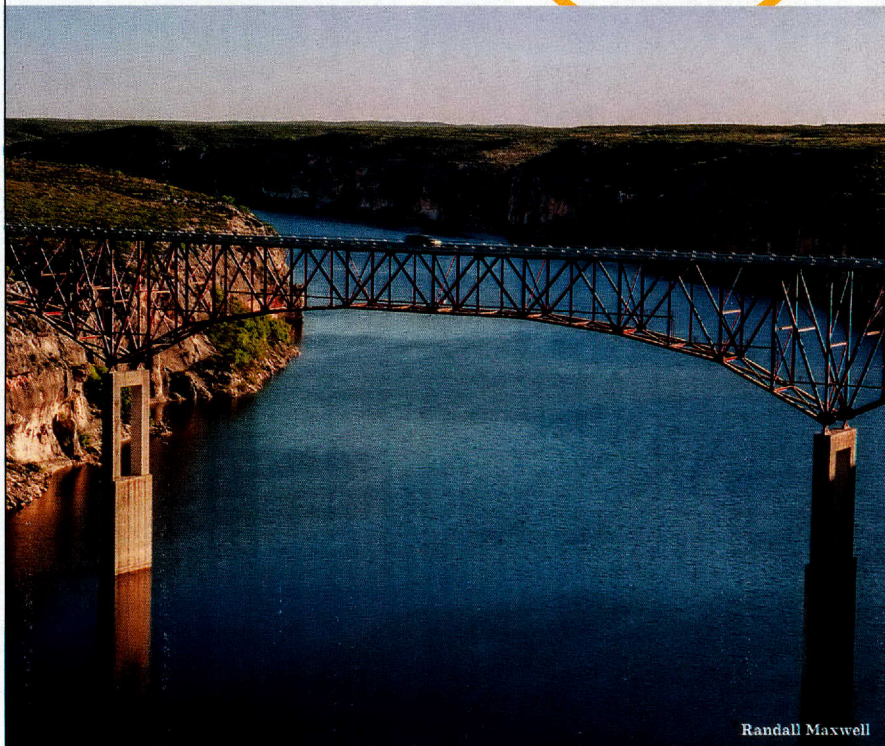
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Randall Maxwell

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Here's a look at a few events happening this holiday season:

- Moody Gardens Ice Land: Ice Sculptures Featuring Christmas with Spongebob SquarePants (Nov 15-Jan 4)
- Festival of Lights at Moody Gardens (Nov 15-Jan 4)
- 41st Annual Dickens on The Strand (Dec 5-7)
- The Grand 1894 Opera House: A Christmas Carol, The Irish Tenors, Flashdance and The Manhattan Transfer (Nov 15-Jan 4)
- Holiday Shopping in Galveston's Historic Downtown District (Nov 15-Dec 24)
- Holiday Splash at Schlitterbahn Indoor Waterpark featuring Surfing with Santa (Nov 28-Jan 4)
- Holiday Lights and Magic in the Park (Nov 29-Dec 31)
- Santa Train at the Railroad Museum (Dec 13)
- Breakfast with the Sandhill Cranes (Dec 13-14)
- A Magical Christmas Dinner and Show at Moody Gardens (Dec 18-27)

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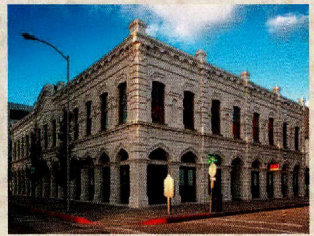
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MERGE

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

I am honored to be chosen to represent Ovilla, the State of Texas, and its people, who are original and creative from birth. I can say it's in their genes, and maybe in their jeans, too!

CHUCK LEE, banjo maker pictured on the cover of the November issue



OUR FAVORITE SOCIAL MEDIA OF THE MONTH...



Texas Top 40: Denton is a great place to live and visit. And my husband painted that freaky guy on the window of Atomic Candy.

Jane Piper-Lunt



Texashighways.com/ cuisine-confidential: @Kevin_Floyd talks with @Texas Highways about beer trends, Guadalupe Mountains & the early days of @anvilhouston. @HayMerchant



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Playing for Keeps

In October 1976 while on the way home to Wichita Falls, we stopped in Nocona at the Nokona baseball glove factory [November]. While there, we purchased a baseball glove for Paul, our 10-year-old son. Over the years, he used the glove for Little League, Pony League, and Babe Ruth leagues. He used the glove during high school, college intramural, church, and independent league softball play. During these times, the lacing was changed several times as well as the padding, but overall, a large percentage of the glove is original. Paul still uses the glove when playing toss with his children, nieces, and nephews as he always carries it in the trunk of his car. It has truly been a great glove, constructed of durable quality leather that has stood the test of time and many ball games. Thanks Nokona!

DR. CHARLES AND CYNTHIA JONES, Houston

Magnificent Trees

I went to an art festival in Rockport over the 4th of July weekend in 2013 and stumbled upon Yan Lee's booth [November]. I, too, was drawn to his beautiful pen and ink drawings of heritage trees. I purchased his Founder's Oak piece. Founder's Oak is in Landa Park in New Braunfels and has special significance to me. I suspect many folks have purchased Mr. Lee's work because of the feelings his work evokes. He truly captures the awesome beauty of magnificent trees.

SONA NAST, Austin

The Gift of Gab

I loved Barbara Rodriguez's column "Always Talk to Strangers" [November]. That is almost my motto. Recently, on one of my daily workout trips to the YMCA, I engaged in conversation with the gentleman seated next to me on a stationary bicycle. I pride myself on being the oldest working out, so I asked him how old he was. He said, "81," and I said, "Me too." I asked him "What month?" and he said, "April," and I said "Me too." I said "What day?" and he said "29th," and I said, "Me too." First person I have



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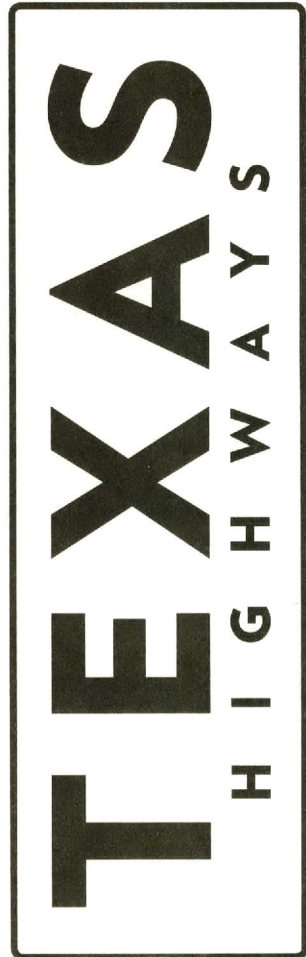
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ever met in my 81 years with my same birth date. If I didn't always talk to strangers, I wouldn't have made a new friend. I am older. I was born just after midnight, and he was born around 6 a.m.

VAN ED DAVISON, Austin

Comanche Moon

I enjoyed E. Dan Klepper's article "Under the Comanche Moon" [October]. Due to the historic reference, I would recommend the renowned Texas storyteller J. Frank Dobie and his 1930 *Coronado's Children*, which contains many enriched references to the area covered by Klepper's article.

ROB L. ROARK, Archer City

Climate of Cricket

This is a tongue-in-cheek reply to the "Drought Buster" letter [October]. We in England don't often have a problem with drought as you in parts of Texas do. However, on the odd occasions when we do, setting up for a five-day cricket match, a test match, usually does the trick. This entails marking out the pitch with white paint (water soluble), putting the stumps in their correct places, and all the spectators taking their seats. However, it is only when the umpires, men in white coats, walk on to the pitch, that the prayers are answered and we get the rain. It can last for the whole five days, in which case the match is then declared a draw. On the other hand, we can get four-and-a-half days of wonderful weather and the match can still end in a draw. Wonderful game is cricket.

RICHARD CORKE,

Ockbrook, Derbyshire, England



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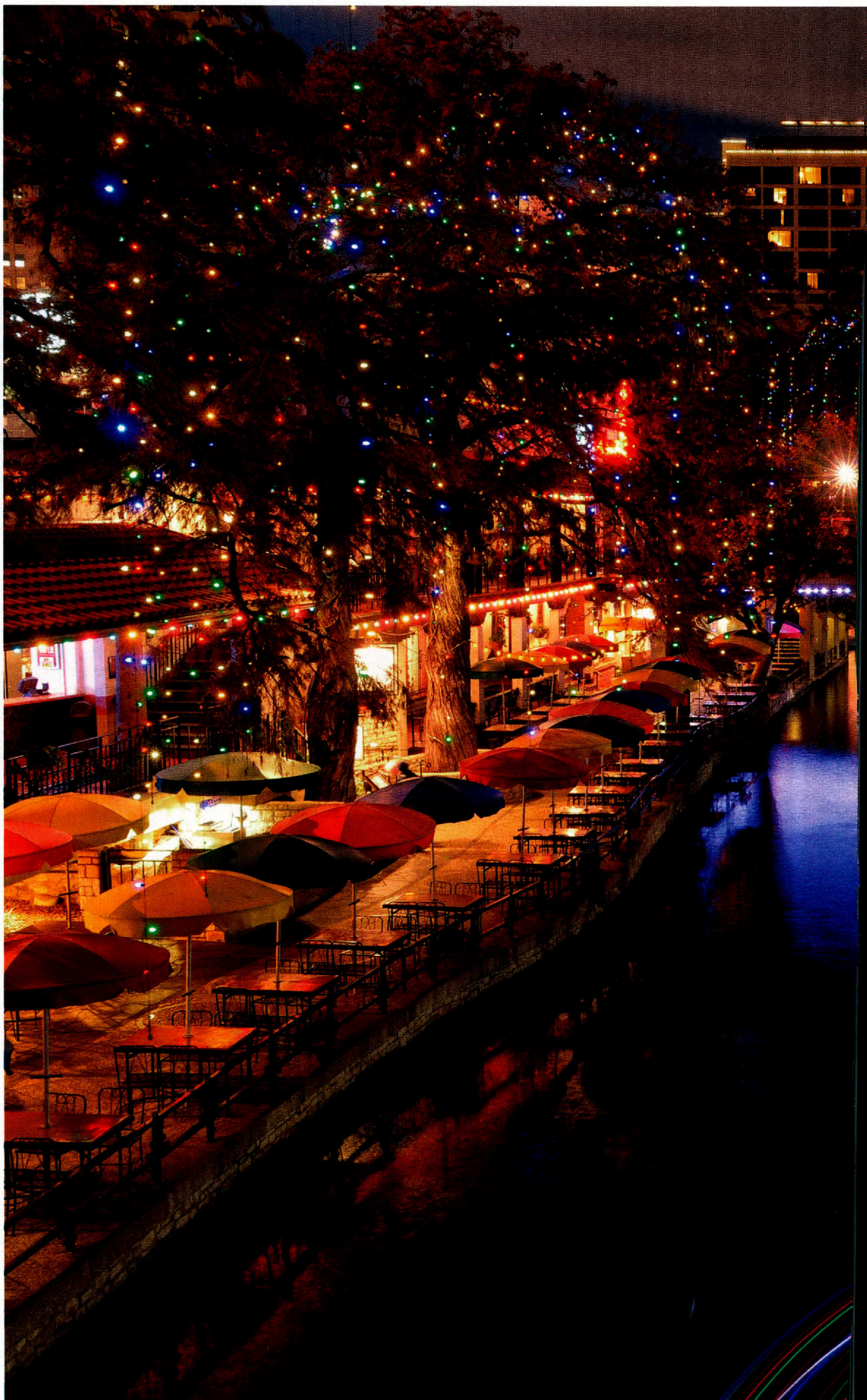


South Texas Plains

The San Antonio River Walk becomes even more magical during the holiday season with thousands of lights draping the trees. One spectacular and popular scene can be found from the Market Street bridge looking down over the colorful umbrellas outside Casa Rio Mexican Food. A staircase leads to the River Walk so that travelers can explore by foot or take a boat tour of the river with Rio San Antonio Cruises.



For more information about the San Antonio River Walk and the holiday event schedule, visit [www.thesanantonio.com/riverwalk.com](http://www.thesanantonio.com/riverwalk).

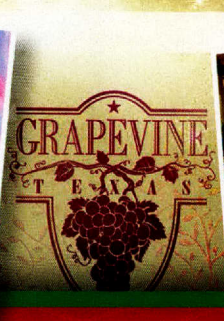






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TEXAS FAMILY

Round Top Holiday

SIX SISTERS, ONE FESTIVE GETAWAY

text by TERRI SCHEXNAYDER



THE SHOPPING SPIRIT

Round Top kicks off the season December 6 with Christmas on the Square.



We were in junk heaven at Junk Gypsy with the selection of “prairie meets boho” clothing, vintage boots, and funky home accessories, such as alphabet wall art and crazy chandeliers made from silverware.

MY FAMILY OF 12 WAS ONCE referred to as “a small country.” Growing up in a four-bedroom house in Houston with six sisters, four brothers, and two parents fostered close ties among my siblings. Our adult lives took us on different paths and to different places, so in the 1980s, I proposed our first “Sisters’ Getaway,” a weekend escape for us to get together in a small Texas town. Thirty years later, the tradition continues, usually scheduled during the first weekend in December when the towns of Texas come alive with twinkling lights, Christmas strolls, and colorful markets filled with one-of-a-kind arts and crafts. It would be tough to find a town that fits this description better than the destination we chose last year: Round Top.

With four sisters living in Austin and two in Houston, Round Top made a sensible meeting point for our getaway. Plus, Round Top is known for its antiques fairs, festive holiday offerings, and accommodations for weekend travelers. Arriving on a Friday afternoon, we checked into the Round Top Inn, a bed-and-breakfast with country chic furnishings and tasty breakfasts of Mediterranean sandwiches and crème



ROUND TOP

is in Fayette County, 16 miles northeast of La Grange. For lodging and events information, call the Round Top Area Chamber of Commerce at 888/368-4783; www.roundtop.org.

brûlée French toast with mixed berries. Located three blocks from downtown’s Henkel Square, the inn made a convenient home base for exploring Round Top’s shopping and dining spots.

Friday evening, we bundled up and walked next door to Scotty & Friends Restaurant for a casual dinner of dishes like fried catfish, salads, and turkey burgers, along with those southern favorites—fried green tomatoes. Plastic checked tablecloths, brightly colored walls of red and yellow, and friendly service provided a warm atmosphere on an extremely cold night.

Traditionally, Saturdays mean a leisurely stroll around the downtown square of our host hamlet, browsing shelves stuffed with antiques or discovering delicately crafted clothing accessories. Round Top’s Henkel Square Market is home to seven shops to peruse for perfect holiday gifts. (Across the street,

TEXAS FAMILY

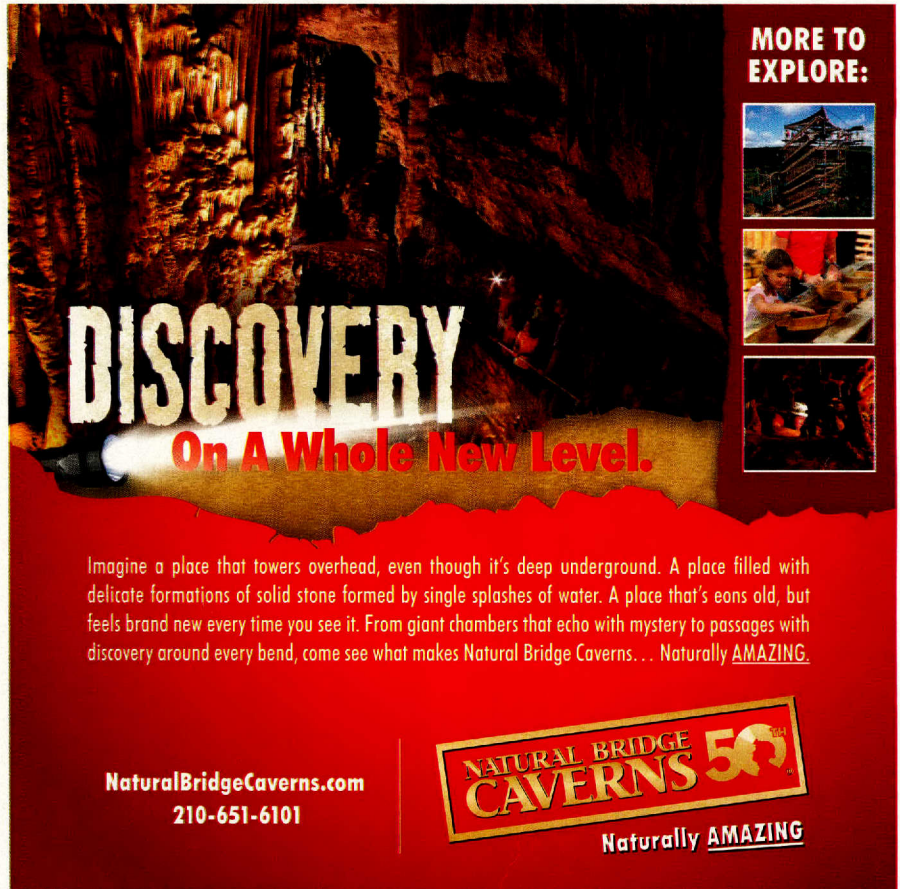
Bybee Square also has seven stores.) My favorites included Lizzie Lou, an eclectic shop with an array of religious icons, colorful hats, and handmade artwork. I loved the folk-art dolls from the Ozark Mountains and snatched up the sole cloth monkey for my daughter's collection. As we stepped into the Blue Door Décor, a delicious spicy aroma filled the log cabin building. An employee enticed us to stay and shop with a cup of wassail, and we checked out the candlesticks made from found items and lamps made from antiques, as well as vintage furniture, pillows, aprons, and "wearable art" necklaces.

Restaurants around the square offer cuisine ranging from pizza to Mexican food, but we opted for lunch at the renowned Royers Round Top Cafe, a country kitchen that serves "gourmet comfort food." I enjoyed a burger with hand-cut fries, while my sister Kelly sampled the stuffed jalapeños.

Our final stop for the afternoon was the Junk Gypsy headquarters store, set in a 7,000-square-foot, barn-like building about a mile south of downtown on Texas 237. Opened by the Sikes family, including sisters Amie and Jolie—flea-market mavens and stars of the reality show *Junk Gypsies*—the store includes a mix of merchandise that evokes cowgirl, rock-and-roll, and glamour styles. We were in junk heaven with the selection of "prairie meets boho" clothing, vintage boots, and funky home accessories.

We hunkered down Saturday evening to fix a potluck dinner in the Round Top Inn's large kitchen. Afterward, we settled into overstuffed chairs and cozy couch pillows to write about our childhood Christmas memories. The exercise provided lots of laughter and tears, and a peek into how differently each of us remembered a past family event.

New insights about my sisters always come during these getaways. Round Top, with its intimate and welcoming spirit, proved to be the perfect setting to bring family closer together, especially during the holiday season. ★






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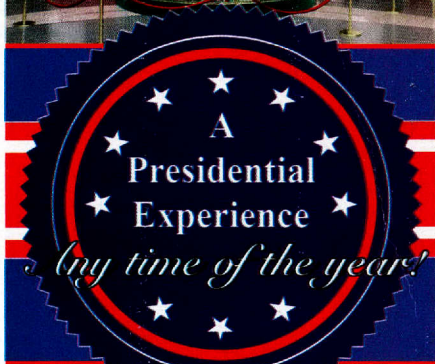
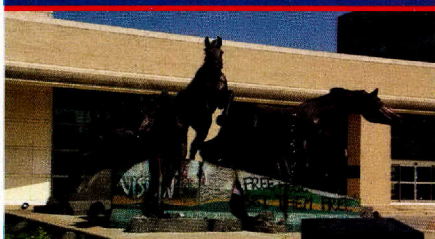
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The Drover's *Dream*

THE CHISHOLM TRAIL HERITAGE MUSEUM IN CUERO

text by Gene Fowler

THEY HEADED NORTH FROM CARDwell Flats on April 1, 1866. Crockett Cardwell, who operated a trading post and stagecoach stop near present-day Cuero, had gathered some 1,800 rangy Texas Longhorns for trail boss Thornton Chisholm and a handful of cowboys to drive to a railhead at St. Joseph, Missouri, a journey that would take them seven months. Over the following decades, their general route would come to be known by one of the most storied names in the West—the Chisholm Trail.

Like many Old West legends, the Chisholm Trail, with its many branches and stories of origin, is a tangle of tales and trails. Disagreement has long simmered, for instance, over whether it was named for Thornton Chisholm or for Indian Territory trailblazer Jesse Chisholm, or possibly even for Texas/New Mexico cowman John Chisum.

Like many Old West legends, the Chisholm Trail, with its many branches and stories of origin, is a tangle of tales and trails.

We'll likely never know everything, and frankly, history is a lot more fun with some lingering mysteries. But a great place to explore the era is the Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum in Cuero, a few miles south of the site of Cardwell Flats. Opened in 2013 in the restored 1903 Knights of Pythias Hall, the museum aims to preserve not only the legacy of the Chisholm Trail and Guadalupe River Valley ranching, but to keep the cowboy spirit alive, as well.

Museum visitors first encounter a gallery dedicated to ranching traditions of the Guadalupe River Valley. The valley's rich grazing lands of blue-stem and other grasses have made the area a cradle of the Texas beef cattle industry since the 1700s. The exhibit includes a pair of period stovepipe cowboy boots and an 1852 ledger from Crockett Cardwell's store, open to a page showing Thornton Chisholm's outstanding balance of \$11.68.

Ranching in the area had begun under the flag of Spain, which stocked its missions and forts with cattle. Later, ranching flourished under Mexican jurisdiction, with a 20,000-acre ranch belonging to empresario Martín De León. The museum chronicles the valley's blending of traditions: the Mexican *vaquero* with his riding and roping skills, and the Anglo-American cowboy, who more often relied on dogs and stock whips for herding cattle.

Texas cowboys drove some 9 million cattle to shipping yards in Kansas from 1867 to 1890, museum exhibits explain.



THE CHISHOLM TRAIL HERITAGE MUSEUM

is at 302 N. Esplanade (US 183 South) in Cuero. Hours: 10-4:30, Tue-Sat. Call 361/277-2866; www.chisholmtrailmuseum.org.

In the late 1860s, a steer worth \$4 in Texas brought \$40 in Eastern packing plants. One of several interactive features, *Lead a Trail Drive*, challenges visitors to pick cowboys for the trail-driving positions of drag, flank, swing, point, and wrangler. Other interactive stations offer the chance to choose routes, grazing places, and bedding grounds.

Accompanying a re-created chuckwagon, an interactive screen describes such features as the wagon's possum belly, which was the rawhide hammock stretched beneath the wagon bed for storing wood and dried cow chips to be used as fuel. Western and English riding saddles, two of the museum's many saddles on display, invite folks to "Climb Aboard and Feel the Difference!" between the two styles. In the gallery's Stars Along the Rawhide Trail Theater, the 15-minute film *Pointing Them North* reenacts the 1866 drive from Cardwell Flats. [continued on page 74 »

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Marathon, TX

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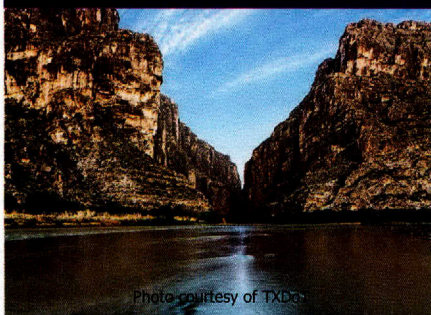


Photo courtesy of TXDOT

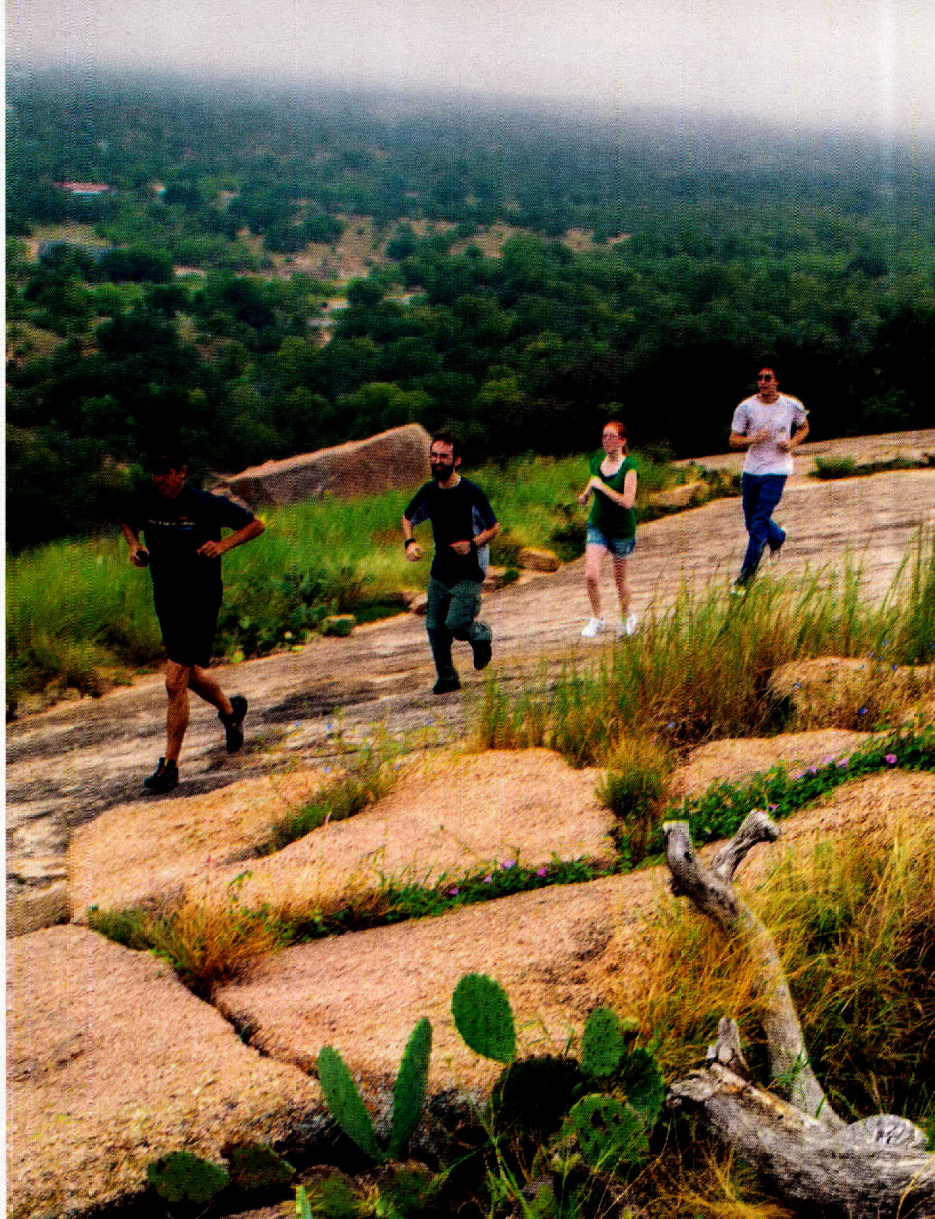
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Running *the Rock*

RUN WITH A RANGER AT ENCHANTED ROCK

text by Sofia Sokolove

WE'VE BEEN RUNNING for about 15 minutes—skipping over small boulders and sidestepping cacti that spike up from a trail winding the perimeter of Enchanted Rock State Natural Area. Tiny rocks slide and crunch underneath my feet as I try to stay balanced. I know that bits of gravel are flying back and pelting my boyfriend, who's a couple of paces behind, but there's nothing I can do about it. I focus my eyes down and in front of me,

PEAK PERFORMERS
Enchanted Rock State Natural Area's nine miles of trails offer major challenges and spellbinding views.

on the wiry legs of Ranger Scott Whitenner, who glides across uneven terrain with the muscle memory of a veteran trail runner.

While most of the other park visitors are hiking the Summit Trail—a .6-mile incline leading to the park's namesake dome, Scott is taking us on the four-mile Loop Trail as part of the park's monthly Run With the Ranger program, introducing a group of rookie trail runners to the hidden gems of the park trails. Squinting, I make out the tiny silhouettes of hikers at the top of the Summit Trail, and I feel like we're in on a secret: Some of the most spectacular views at the park aren't from the top of Enchanted Rock at all, but are found all around its perimeter.

There are actually seven granite domes at the park, with the 1,825-foot Enchanted Rock being the tallest. We run past (and sometimes, up) most of them as we follow Scott in a wide,

There are more than 100 protected archeology sites here, and the entire park is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as an Archeological District.

winding circle. The route leads us up to look-out points where we can observe the rolling landscape from new angles. We've stopped for one such view—and to catch our breaths—at the top of a long incline that brought us up-close with the back of a dome known as Little Rock. Like the other domes at the park, Little Rock is known as an exfoliation dome; as the outer layers of rock break and slide off, the next layer begins to peel away.

Scott tells us that these domes have been slowly changing shape for as long

as 1 billion years; they formed when molten rock deep underground pushed through the earth's surface and cooled—all 18 miles north of present-day Fredericksburg. "It's the heart of Texas," says Scott—the only one of us not out of breath.

Scott seems genuinely happy to run at our speed. He is passionate about introducing people to trail running to encourage fitness and a kind of tranquility. "The reason to run trails is so you aren't surrounded by roads and cars," Scott says. "I'll knock 10 miles out, but I always make sure I smell the roses."

And Enchanted Rock, with nine miles of trails, offers an abundance of roses to smell, so to speak—whether you run or walk. As Scott puts it, "It's a great playground." And one that humans have been playing on for centuries. Certain depressions in the granite, called bedrock mortars, indicate the

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TEXAS WILD

presence of prehistoric people pounding or grinding their food on the rocks throughout the park. These days, there are more than 100 protected archeology sites here and the entire park is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as an Archeological District.

Running the trail, I am constantly looking and thinking—should I jump over or around that boulder? How steep is this downhill? Or even—yikes, was that a rattle? (“If you hear a rattle, that is what it is,” Scott tells us matter-of-factly.) The need to focus on my steps forces a kind of meditative state that allows me to be awed by the splendor of the park, while challenging myself within it. I’m not going for a best time, but I’m not just aimlessly wandering, either. The physical challenge makes me that much more tuned into—and appreciative of—the park’s beauty. “I find something different every run,” Scott says.

As we run our final stretch, I have finally hit a rhythm. In front of me, bursts of early-spring color pop out in the most unexpected places. Tall purple and blue wildflowers grow down the middle of the trail. Lichen—an extremely slow-growing composite of fungi and algae—covers some rocks, turning them unusual shades of orange and blue. A dulled and bone-dry cactus is in bloom with a fluffy yellow flower.

To me, it's these intense signs of life amid the dry air and hard rocks that make this area feel truly enchanted. And it turns out that here, as in life, the real magic is found by running the trails less traveled. ★



ENCHANTED ROCK STATE NATURAL AREA

is 18 miles north of Fredericksburg, a few miles west of Texas 16. Free “Run with a Ranger” excursions are planned monthly; call 830/685-3636 for details. See www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/enchanted-rock.

The Accidental Ornament

IT'S HOLIDAY SEASON YEAR ROUND
AT FREDERICKSBURG'S CHRISTMAS STORE

text by **Sofia Sokolove**

THIS DECEMBER, WHEN I STRING MY LIGHTS AND trim my tree and light my menorah, I have four new friends to help me ring in the holiday cheer. Four miniature ceramic figurines, to be exact. Dressed in wintry clothes and perched on patches of white faux snow, my people are all busily headed somewhere. One lady, clutching a bag of wrapped gifts with another under her arm, is “walking” so swiftly her scarf flies behind her. One of my men is pulled along by his dog, which wears a red flannel sweater to match his master’s. I impulsively purchased my figurines, which are meant to be part of a sprawling Christmas-village display, last spring at Fredericksburg’s Christmas Store. And now I’m responsible for staging them a home for the holidays.

Nestled between antiques stores and beer gardens on Fredericksburg’s bustling Main Street, the Christmas Store jingles—and jangles—year round. Amid mounds of shimmery snow-dust and greenery, ceramic Santas reign like kings from windowsills, grinning jollily from their twinkling thrones. Inside, psychedelic mushroom ornaments hang from the branches of plastic, neon trees, their eye-catching glow straddling that amorphous line between funky-cool and kitschy. It’s a subjective line—overdone versus classic, gaudy versus hip, sentimental versus cheesy—that the Christmas Store deftly walks throughout its 10,000 square feet of cheer. Costume jewelry festoons stuffed reindeer, and artificial trees of many colors and sizes sparkle and heave under the weight of eclectic ornaments. There’s a lot of cat stuff. An entire alcove is dedicated to funny wine sayings and martini-glass charms, as if to say, we get it: There’s a reason why we drink around the holidays.

The expansive quirkiness is so endearing that at first you may not realize how carefully curated the store is. Twin brothers John and Don Mooring and their cousin Beth Watson, the store’s energetic owners, know what they’re doing. Before John and Don became partners, they worked as interior designers in Los Angeles and came to Fredericksburg every so often to help Beth “make the shop pretty.” About a decade ago, the brothers ditched West Hollywood for the Hill Country, where they



THE CHRISTMAS STORE

is at 155 E. Main St.
in Fredericksburg.
Call 800/944-1882;
www.fredericksburgchristmasstore.com.

now live with their four cats and their blue beach bikes, which are equipped with cup holders (for wine!) and bells for greeting folks about town. The three partners aren't just local businessmen—they're engaged citizens and advocates. When you visit, don't leave without picking up their list of favorite local shops and restaurants.

In a room devoted to ornaments made by the popular Christopher Radko company, extraordinary and intricate glass-blown ornaments line the shelves. Stacked on the floor, red-and-green cardboard boxes hold assortments of the company's "Shiny-Brite" ornaments, which harken back to classic glass ornaments of the '40s and '50s. But all the Radko ornaments here aren't traditional: There are also sparkling candy skulls, green pickles, and blonde mermaids to hang from your tree. Some ornaments look like characters from a Tim Burton movie—these are made in

The expansive quirkiness is so endearing that at first you may not realize how carefully curated the store is.


Italy, John explains, and they're blown without a mold. This year's *pièce de résistance*, though, is "The Prince of the Hill Country," featuring a slender Santa Claus figure sporting an intricately painted yellow-and-black cape and a fluffy white beard. Each year, John designs a special-edition ornament to be made by the Christopher Radko artisans in Poland; they are sold exclusively at the Christmas Store.

All told, there are eight rooms filled with ornaments, trinkets, and holiday ephemera, presented with such charm and enthusiasm that even Scrooge might muster a smile. It's in the last room—known casually as "the Christmas village room"—where I find my

people, creations of the Department 56 company out of Minneapolis. The Christmas Store in Fredericksburg is the country's largest dealer of Department 56 collectibles. This makes the back room at the Christmas Store—a sprawling universe of tiny houses and ice-skating rinks and snowy train tracks, all carefully arranged and designed by Don—a mecca for serious fans. As someone who had never heard of Department 56 before my visit to the store, I have no idea what inspired me to buy my first village piece; I guess the bundled-up figures somehow spoke to me. I also have no idea what I'm planning to *do* with my miniature holiday people, which are part of the "Christmas in the City" series, without a starlit Chrysler building or snowy brownstone to place them under. We'll see once I take them out of their box, but I have a feeling I may need to take another trip to see Don and John. ★

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PRE-HOLIDAY-LIGHTS DINING NEAR THE COURTHOUSE

text by LORI MOFFATT



CAJUN TEX

Cajun specialties like gumbo and jambalaya share the menu at Cajun Tex with Lone Star classics like chicken-fried steaks and burgers.





LIGHT BRIGHT
Diners at the Blue Frog enjoy made-from-scratch specialties for meat-eaters and vegetarians alike. It's BYOB, so bring a bottle of wine if you're inclined.

I**N THE NORTHEAST TEXAS TOWN OF** Marshall—where I'm closer to the borders of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma than the state capital of Austin—strangers call me “darlin’” and “honey,” and sometimes even “sugar.” And I like it.

“Can I get you some more lemonade, darlin’?” (Why yes, thank you!) You looking for the courthouse, hon’? (Yes, I am, thank you!) Did you save room for some of our bread pudding, shug?” (I sure did, thank you!)

And so it goes in this extraordinarily friendly city of 25,000 people, whose dining scene is kept fresh by students at its four colleges and universities, tourists making the rounds to nearby Caddo Lake and historic Jefferson, and a steady stream of patent attorneys who like the Harrison County seat for its history of sympathetic juries. This unlikely mash-up of tastes and influences means you’ll find cappuccino and espresso at downtown’s Central Perks, and craft cocktails at the 100-year-old former dry-goods store that now houses OS² Restaurant & Pub. Chicken-and-waffles pair with live music at the Blue Frog Restaurant. And you’ll find muffaletta sandwiches and smoky gumbo in the bustling eatery known as Cajun Tex, where oilfield workers and legal eagles alike help

Cajun Tex and the Blue Frog are a few minutes’ drive from the 1901 courthouse.

themselves to pickles and pepperoncini at a condiment bar fashioned out of an old swamp boat.

And there may be no better time to visit Marshall than during the holiday season, when its opulent 1901 courthouse glitters with more than a million lights as part of the annual Wonderland of Lights Festival, bestowing a festive glow on a city that already basks in a spirit of conviviality.

In fact, you’ll find twinkling Christmas lights year round at Cajun Tex, just one element of a wacky décor theme that also includes duck decoys, aluminum johnboats, rodeo memorabilia from the nearby Josey Ranch, a trophy bass caught at Lake Fork, and a 1937 Marshall High School fraternity paddle. It’s an East Texas time capsule with a zydeco soundtrack. “I always wanted to have a half-Cajun, half-Texan restaurant,” says Louisiana-born owner Johnny Horne, whose wife,

Donna, hails from Arlington. “We have Tex-Mex, why not Cajun-Tex?”

Johnny and Donna opened the first Cajun Tex in 2007 and eventually expanded to the current site not far from the courthouse square. “The Cajun stuff is from my relatives’ recipes,” says Johnny, who imports his bread—served in massive buttered slabs with everything from jambalaya and chicken-fried rib-eyes to crawfish salads—from New Orleans. “Our gumbo is our house speciality, and our Breaux Bridge Classic is our most popular dish; that’s two strips of fried catfish topped with crawfish étouffée,” says Johnny.

I’m too full of gumbo (\$8.99), which is flecked with spices and rich with smoky sausage and chicken, to try the Breaux Bridge. In fact, after sampling Cajun-Tex’s Natchitoches meat pies, Cajun fries, red beans and rice, and New Orleans-style bread pudding with bourbon sauce, I doubt I’ll ever feel hungry again.

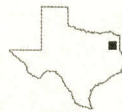
But I change my mind that evening as I settle into a seat looking out onto the courthouse lawn at the Blue Frog. A guitarist plays songs by Eric Clapton and James Taylor in a corner framed by 100-year-old windows, and I study a menu full of made-from-scratch burgers, vegetarian selections like lentil “meat” loaf and spinach salad with chick peas, and entrées that run the gamut from shrimp fettuccini to chicken-and-waffles.

“We do all kinds of things with waffles now,” says owner Shawne Somerford, who sometimes travels to

California and New York to scope out food trends. “We do a waffle Monte Cristo sandwich, a waffle eggs Benedict. We try to keep things fun but also make things healthy.”

I’ve got my eye on a square of chocolate buttermilk cake—the dessert that launched Shawne’s first catering business in the 1990s—so I order the grilled tuna with tea-braised cauliflower and Brussels sprouts (\$14.99). Perfectly seared and served with house-made bread, it’s delicious. And it’s light enough that I order the cake (\$4.50), which shares the dessert menu with made-from-scratch crème brûlée and chocolate meringue cake with fresh raspberries and mint. It’s rich and gooey, with a slight saltiness that makes the chocolate taste even sweeter.

“Can I get you anything else, hon?” asks my waiter, who’s a good two decades younger than me. I smile. Just a take-out box, please. ★



MARSHALL DINING

Cajun Tex is at 104 W. Grand Ave.

Call 903/935-7719;

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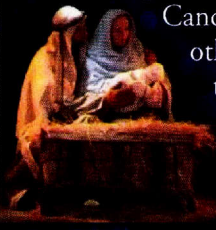
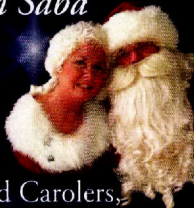
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Fun Fare

VICTORIA'S HISTORIC RIVERFRONT PUMPHOUSE

text by Clayton Maxwell

THESE DAYS, WHENEVER I bump into someone from my hometown of Victoria, the conversation inevitably turns to Bloody Mary shrimp shooters. On the menu at the Pumphouse Riverside Restaurant & Bar, a hangout that is breathing fresh air into the culinary landscape of South Texas, these wee hybrids of a Bloody Mary and shrimp cocktail are tasty morsels that you savor in one spicy swig.

While the idea did not initially appeal to me, our waiter suggested them, so I went for it, and found myself happily surprised. The sweet flavor of the shrimp perfectly complemented the vodka and tomato juice of the Bloody Mary, and my husband and I polished them off.

Indeed, "happy surprise" is a fitting theme for my whole



THE PUMPHOUSE RIVERSIDE RESTAURANT & BAR

is at 1201 W. Stayton
in Victoria. Call
361/572-9800;
[www.victoria
pumphouse.com](http://www.victoria
pumphouse.com).

evening at the Pumphouse. Because, going in, I wasn't even sure what a pumphouse *was*. But I soon learned that for more than a century starting in the 1880s, this compound of weathered buildings—now listed in the National Register of Historic Places—held the pump, boilers, and other equipment that moved water from the Guadalupe River to be distributed to the citizens of Victoria. According to Victoria County deed records, the Republic of Texas granted the land to the township of Victoria in 1841; Sam Houston himself signed the property title. In the early 1890s, local architect Jules Leffland built what is now the oldest surviving part of the pumphouse—a charmingly faded brick structure with graceful interior arches where the bar area now stands.

If you arrive past dark, the Pump-house might suggest an oasis—a building of many brightly lit steel casement windows surrounded by a handsome

Chef Cliff Denton's popular Sunday brunch includes New Orleans-style shrimp-and-grits and the "Texas Benedict," a cheesy polenta cake with pan-fried chorizo.

stucco wall, gardens full of palmettos and purple agapanthus, and a 150-year-old iron gate open wide. Just outside the gate is a Texas Historical Commission plaque explaining how the English-born William Wheeler arrived to town in the 1880s to set up the waterworks here. The life and times of William Wheeler, who presided over the pumphouse for approximately 40 years, is a bit of Victoria's history that I had never known.

Entering the restaurant is like stepping into a grand country estate. Soaring ceilings, burgundy brocade curtains, and rows of dramatic, tiered

chandeliers define the space, which is large enough to hold 130 people inside, and about 160 on the outside terrace.

We had made a reservation, which was good, because it was a weekend night and the place was hopping, with every table full. Soon we were sitting within the brick arches of the original pumphouse building, sipping glasses of cabernet while our children reveled in the Sprites they are allowed on special occasions.

They call the menu here "Classic American," and it leans toward such fare as potato skins, burgers, and fried mac-and-cheese—although fish dishes like grilled salmon with a side of quinoa are options, too. Chef Cliff Denton is a Victoria native and culinary-school graduate who worked on the East Coast and in San Antonio before returning to Victoria to take the helm here. His popular Sunday brunch, which includes New Orleans-style shrimp-and-grits and the "Texas Benedict," a cheesy

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EAT

polenta cake with pan-fried chorizo, is a happy mimosa-drinking ritual for many locals.

After those celebrated shrimp shooters, we dug into our tasty entrées: pecan-crusted chicken breast drizzled with lemon butter and tender beef fillets heaped with caramelized onions (with buttered macaroni for the kids). As the children fell asleep at the table, I looked around at the many cheerful groups of people and marveled that this historic site had ever been close to demolition.

In fact, if it hadn't been for Dennis and Louise Patillo, this building might have been relegated to history. Surrounded by a chain link fence and unmanned by the 1980s, the building seemed doomed. In 2005, the City of Victoria estimated it would cost at least \$250,000 just to tear it down. Luckily, one councilman suggested they not spend the money, but rather wait it out to see if anyone would buy the place.

In spring of 2010, the city put the building up for auction, and the Patillos purchased it. Eighteen months of extensive restorations, landscaping, hiring, and menu-planning later, the Pump-house opened for business.

The Patillos had never intended to be restaurateurs. But when the couple began dating in 2001, Dennis, who lived in Houston at the time, visited Louise in Victoria over the Christmas holidays. "When he came over the top of that hill in Riverside Park for the first time," says Louise, "he saw the old pumphouse and said, 'Someone should put a restaurant there.' Never in our wildest dreams did we imagine that a few years later it would be us.

"Many of our friends thought we were crazy," says Louise. "They warned us about how hard it is to make a restaurant succeed. But Victoria had a lack of destination restaurants, no place really to eat outside, and no development on the river here. All those things put together made us feel like it would work, that we could do it."

Count me among the many visitors who are glad they did. ★

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Kerrville's *Living Room*

DINE AND DRINK IN STYLE AT GRAPE JUICE

text by **Rob McCorkle**

IT'S A TYPICAL THURSDAY EVENING IN laid-back downtown Kerrville. From our bistro table in a niche between the wine shelves and bar, my wife and I watch the eclectic mix of locals and out-of-towners making themselves at home at Grape Juice. Some sip libations at the bar, while couples and small groups chat in the lounges tucked along one wall. Although it's not quite 6 p.m., the restaurant and outdoor patio are humming with activity. Welcome to "Kerrville's living room."

In 2009, owners Patrick and Keri Wilt, who had built a following in nearby Ingram with their Grape Juice Wine Shop, moved downriver to Kerrville to play a part in the downtown



GRAPE JUICE

is at 623 Water St. in Kerrville; closed Sunday and Monday. Call 830/792-9463; www.grapejuiceonline.com.

historic district's revitalization efforts. They bought a 50-year-old building on the banks of the Guadalupe River and began re-creating the homey feel of the old Grape Juice, converting a large, open area into smaller spaces where customers can belly up to the bar, hide away on plush leather armchairs in a curtained lounge area, dine in the restaurant, relax on a deck outfitted with patio furniture and twinkling lights, and purchase bottles to enjoy at home. A mix of modern and vintage furniture, along with interior walls enlivened by paintings and photographs by local artists, lend Grape Juice a casually sophisticated feel.

Design details also reference Kerrville's history: A wood-lined, vintage walk-in Friedrich meat locker—now used to chill kegs of beer—serves as a focal point of the bar area, and keen-eyed visitors might notice wrought-iron ceiling beams and a wall that once framed the eastern exterior of Kerrville's 1938 Rialto Theater next door, which was demolished in 1974. From the Grape Juice parking lot, shared with a longtime print shop, customers can make out the faint outline of the stairs that led to the movie theater's balcony back in the days of segregation.

Grape Juice customers like me who enjoy both beer and wine can find awesome selections under one roof. Either goes well with such dishes as macaroni and cheese accented with cabrito from Leakey's Hilltop Place Ranch, soft tacos stuffed with sautéed quail from Bander's Diamond H Ranch, and Asian lettuce wraps incorporating Ingram's Broken Arrow Ranch venison.

As a fan of draft craft beers, I can always find a tempting selection of seasonal beers from Texas craft breweries, such as Blanco's Real Ale Brewing



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DRINK

Company and Fredericksburg's Pedernales Brewing Company, or I can go international with a pint of Belgian ale.

Customers who aren't sure what style of beer or wine they want benefit from a knowledgeable and personable staff, who are happy to offer samples before pouring a full glass. Bartenders aren't shy, either, about encouraging steadfast light-beer drinkers to venture outside their comfort zones with a flavorful draft pilsner or lager. Those who insist on a bottled Bud Light will find it listed in the "Bottled Up" section, tongue-in-cheek, for a mere "1 million dollars." "We try to make it fun and simple. It's about the journey," says Keri, channeling her inner vintner Zen.

Grape Juice customers like me who enjoy both beer and wine can find awesome selections under one roof.

Most of Grape Juice's wine selections come from vineyards that the Wilts have visited and the winemakers they have befriended in the United States and abroad. On Grape Juice's lengthy wine list, look for compelling selections not only from California, Oregon, and other top U.S. wineries, but also from throughout the world, such as carmenere from Chile, rioja from Spain, and ugni blanc/colombard from France.

"I'm going to get you the best of the best," Patrick promises. "It may not be a label you're familiar with, but it will be a label that I've traveled the world to acquire so you can enjoy it in Kerrville."

Above all, the Wilts strive to make their customers—oenophiles with sophisticated palates and novice wine sippers alike—feel at home. And, most beer and vino—which Patrick and Keri call "Sanity by the Glass"—sells for \$6 to \$16 by the glass, and \$22 to \$62 by the bottle.

Regardless of price, wine lovers visiting the popular Kerrville hangout or any of the myriad Hill Country wineries would be wise to heed Grape Juice's simple philosophy: "Remember: At the end of the day, it's just grape juice." ★

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Happy in Harlingen

FROM PAINTINGS TO PARROTS,
THE PLEASURES OF A VALLEY HAVEN

text by EILEEN MATTEI

ROCK AROUND THE MURALS

The 20 murals in downtown Harlingen include this depiction of rock-and-roller Bill Haley, who spent his last years in Harlingen. John Aretakis created the mural in 2003.

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HARLINGEN CAME TO LIFE IN 1904 as a crossroads on the Arroyo Colorado, garnering the daunting nickname of “Rattlesnake Junction” because of the abundance of rattlers that greeted railroad workers. While Harlingen’s frontier past lingers in art and artifacts, today the town is better known for its expansive downtown murals, Rio Grande Valley culture, and a subtropical climate that invites you to slow down, smell the orange blossoms, and watch flocks of wild parrots swirl above the palms.

Harlingen’s historic downtown is a landscaped slice of Americana brimming with simple pleasures and unexpected treasures. To acquaint visitors with the area, Downtown Harlingen, a public improvement district, offers free, hour-long walking tours on Saturdays during the winter. The tours focus on notable historic buildings, as well as seven of the 20



HARLINGEN

For information about visiting Harlingen, call the Harlingen Convention and Visitors Bureau at **800/531-7346**; www.visitharlingen.texas.com.

larger-than-life murals that decorate downtown streets and businesses.

Harlingen’s tradition of murals stretches back to the 1940s, and the city continues to commission new outdoor paintings to illustrate various aspects of its past. “Murals tell stories while inviting you to see art as fun,” says Cheryl LaBerge, the manager of Downtown Harlingen.

The 112-foot-long *Downtown Harlingen: Where the Past is Present* depicts seven historic buildings in vibrant, vintage-postcard style. Painted by Weslaco artist Brett Oberthaler, the mural shows the buildings in their 1920s and '30s heyday, although each structure continues to play a role in downtown. “This mural

shows how historic buildings create a strong sense of place when preserved and adapted to new uses," LaBerge says.

Another part of Harlingen's history is depicted on the eastern wall of the former Rialto Theater, now an event center. Created by Angel Hernandez in 2004, the *Golden Age of Hollywood and Mexican Cinema in Harlingen* features the town's old cinema marquees, along with cameos of cowboys, heroes, and femme fatales.

At the *Early Days* mural, painted by Iowa artist Jermain Steed in 2001, LaBerge fills in historical information about the town's Hispanic and Anglo pioneers. The mural, which faces the downtown railroad tracks, depicts influential elements of the city's past, including Arroyo Colorado, a creek that first attracted settlers to Harlingen's location.

Also next to the railroad tracks, a 1975 ceramic tile mosaic called *The History of Mexico and Mankind* is the stunning centerpiece of Centennial Park. The late Mexican artist Raúl Esparza Sanchez created the mosaic, which captures historic moments in Mexico and was installed in Harlingen in 2010.

The tour also pauses at the tin-ceilinged Army Surplus Store, where you can stock up on camouflage and outdoor gear; Cooley's Classic Cars, a retired Chevy dealer's collection of vintage cars; and the office of Downtown Harlingen, where historic photos chronicle the city's evolution from the days of dirt streets and hitching posts.

Next, the tour visits the tropical garden that is Grimsell Seed Co., a nursery that's been around since 1909. Across the street, tourists can peer up at the mural of 1950s rock-and-roller Bill Haley, who spent his last years in Harlingen.

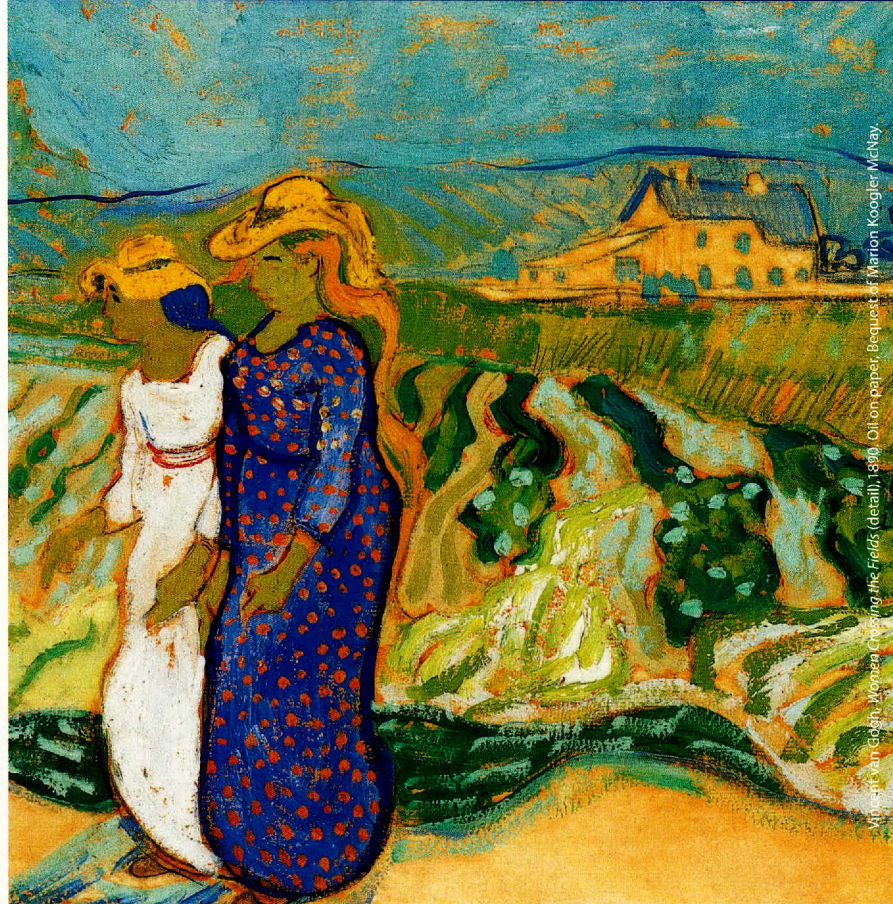
LaBerge wraps up the tour by pointing out the downtown galleries: Beyond Arts Gallery, which exhibits works by local artists; the D'Arte Centre, which showcases the work of Harlingen Art Forum members; and the Schaub Art Studio, featuring the pop art of Tony

Schaub and set in a 1917 mortuary building whose doors are said to swing open mysteriously.

While downtown, a worthy stop for lunch is El Sombrero, which serves up delicious panchos (a variation of nachos topped with beef or chicken fajitas) and a tasty fajita-avocado plate. Then stroll through downtown shops like The Antique Emporium, The White Lion, and

Coun-Tree Woods to find vintage earrings, funky bookends, and handcrafted mesquite tables and benches. Wrap up the afternoon by sliding into a booth at Ol' D's Soda Shop, ordering a root-beer float, and listening to the band play '50s and '60s country and rock. Before dark, dash over to City Lake (once a watering hole for livestock) to enjoy sunset and the noisy red-crowned parrots circling

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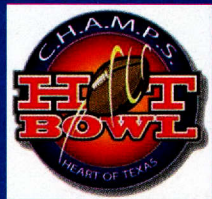
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Next Weekend HARLINGEN

overhead as they settle into their roosts.

For dinner, make the drive east on Business-US 83 to Stefano's, an authentic New York transplant that serves pizzas, pastas, and sub sandwiches. Specialties include tender cannelloni accented with morsels of sweet sausage, shrimp Romano graced with lemon butter sauce, and old-country cannoli.

Morning is a perfect time to relish the Valley's citrus industry, which provides Harlingen with more than its fair share of sweet and tangy oranges and grapefruits. Drive west of town about 10 minutes to Granny Clare's Citrus at Rio Pride Orchard for a jug of fresh orange juice or red grapefruit juice, squeezed from the fruit of the orchard's 5,000 trees. (The store opens from mid-October through about mid-April.)

Next, head to La Reyna Bakery, where the 11 glass-fronted cabinets are filled with all types of *pan dulce*. The challenge is choosing between empanadas of pineapple, cheese, or pumpkin and other tasty pastries, such as gingerbread pigs (called *marranitos*), puffy *molletes* topped with colored sugars, and the flaky *cuernitos*.

Amplly provisioned, it's time for a walk along the Arroyo Colorado at Hugh Ramsey Nature Park, part of the World Birding Center. Buff-bellied hummingbirds, white-tipped doves, golden-fronted woodpeckers, great kiskadees, and spectacular green jays—emerald, sapphire, ebony, and yellow—flutter and sing along the trails. Benches provide a shady respite to watch chubby, southern plains wood rats and cottontail rabbits clean up seeds under the feeders.

Along the wide trails, interpretive signs label the heart-leaved hibiscus, mistflowers, and other plants. The night-blooming cereus cacti drape like fainting Victorian ladies over the lower limbs of mesquite and ebony trees. Mockingbirds run through their repertoire, while whiptail lizards duck for cover in the prickly-pear thickets. Amazingly, this was the site of an illegal dump 25 years ago. Volunteers with Rio Grande Valley Texas Master Naturalists and the Arroyo Colorado Audubon Society have worked with the city to transform the 55 acres into a landscape alive with butterflies and birdsong.

THE SWEET SPOT

La Reyna Bakery,
304 W. Tyler Ave.,
keeps Harlingen
flush with *pan dulce*.



North on Loop 499, the Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum is home to three restored historic buildings—the home of town founder Lon C. Hill, Harlingen’s first hospital, and the Paso Real Stagecoach Inn. The latter, a two-story example of Texas frontier architecture,

Downtown Harlingen’s free walking tours take place at 9 a.m. Saturdays (except the first Saturday of the month) from mid-November through March. Tours start at Java Cafe, 204 E. Jackson.

operated from 1860 to 1904 next to the Arroyo Colorado ferry, several miles north of Harlingen. “Of 31 stage lines in Confederate Texas, no other was more vital nor more interesting to travel than this through the Paso Real,” reads the Texas Historical Commission marker, referring to encounters with bandits, deserters, and cotton smugglers.

Nearby, the Iwo Jima Memorial Monument features the original 1950s fiberglass-and-plaster mold from which the bronze sculpture at Arlington National Cemetery was cast. Sculptor Felix W. de Weldon donated the statue, which depicts 32-foot-tall figures raising the flag on Mount Suribachi, to the Marine Military Academy, a local boarding school. The scene has not lost the power to inspire awe and gratitude. An Iwo Jima survivor is among the volunteers at the adjacent Iwo Jima Museum. Don’t miss the 30-minute documentary film about the arduous, 36-day battle to secure the volcanic island.

A relaxing way to finish the day is back downtown on the patio at Colletti’s Italian Restaurant, located on the ground floor of the 1927 Reese building, originally opened as a hotel. Colletti’s salutes its repurposed home with a cocktail called The Reese, a refreshing mix of mint, vodka, and limoncello. Like Harlingen, the drink adeptly blends the past with the present. ★



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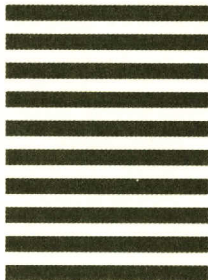
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You could argue that San Antonio had

a head start in *Texas Highways'* countdown of the Texas Top 40 travel destinations. As a historic frontier hub and the state's oldest big city, San Antonio has captured our collective imagination for centuries. San Antonio's heritage of fortitude, culture, and diversity embodies Texas spirit at its best—from the Alamo defenders to the Chili Queens to the NBA champion San Antonio Spurs.

When we surveyed readers about their favorite Texas travel spots, they invoked San Antonio's distinctive character, along with the city's wealth of activities and hometown hospitality. Reader Iris Ramirez of Garland put it succinctly: "The variety of cultural events, food, and historical sites makes the city a must-see experience." Voters like Iris put San Antonio at the top of the list.

We kicked off the Texas Top 40 countdown in January to celebrate the magazine's 40th anniversary. We called for reader input, and thousands responded, by letter, email, and Facebook. Given Texas' diversity of geography and culture, the Top 40 reader favorites literally have been all over the map—from the beaches of Port Aransas to the desert of the Big Bend, and from the charm of Fredericksburg to the glitz of Dallas.

As the countdown has unfolded, we've been fascinated by the characteristics that readers admire in their favorite getaways. Some travelers are looking for a quiet escape to remote parks and preserves. Others want to trace the steps of their ancestors and inspect relics of the past. Eclectic shops and small-town cafés are wildly popular, while metro art museums and theme parks also excite. Above all, travelers seem to be seeking an improbable mix of authenticity, modernity, enrichment, adventure, and comfort.

Perhaps this is why San Antonio is so broadly appealing. The Alamo City offers a remarkable range of tourism activities. A thousand different visitors can have a thousand different experiences, be they history buffs at the Alamo and the Mission Trail; art connoisseurs at the McNay Art Museum and the San Antonio Museum of Art; thrill-seekers at Six Flags Fiesta Texas; wildlife watchers at the San Antonio Zoo and SeaWorld San Antonio; or shoppers at La Villita Historic Arts Village and El Mercado. Oh yeah—there's also a popular River Walk on the San Antonio River and enough tasty restaurants, especially Tex-Mex, to feed you for years.

"San Antonio is so attached to her history. The city has preserved her soul," reflects Xavier de Richemont, the French artist who designed the breathtaking video art

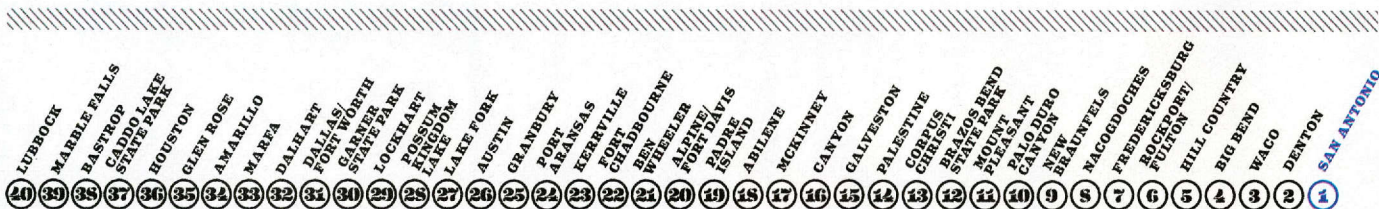
installation at San Fernando Cathedral, featured on the cover of this magazine. "I felt like I was related to the people I met here as if I had lived around for years. I have visited a lot of important cities in the United States, [and] San Antonio has succeeded in being in the top 10 cities of the country while remaining a village. This is an amazing source of inspiration."

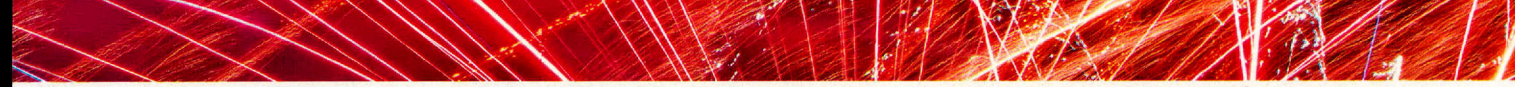
The small-town feeling in a big city, the blend of modern and historic, and the underlying current of art and culture are all qualities that distinguish San Antonio. You find it at places like the Witte Museum's South Texas Heritage Center, which displays Davy Crockett's fiddle in a state-of-the-art exhibit; at Taco Haven, where colorful Aztec murals loom over deliciously cheap Tex-Mex dishes; at the San Antonio Museum of Art, where a repurposed brewery boiler room holds millennium-old Roman sculptures; and at The Luxury, which serves up-to-the-minute craft brews in a beer garden overlooking the languid San Antonio River.

"It's such a historic city that there are so many interesting places to visit," says 87-year-old Frances Rios, who for three decades has been volunteering her time to demonstrate the craft of spinning raw cotton into string at the Institute of Texan Cultures. "And I've always found that the people of San Antonio are very friendly." —Matt Joyce

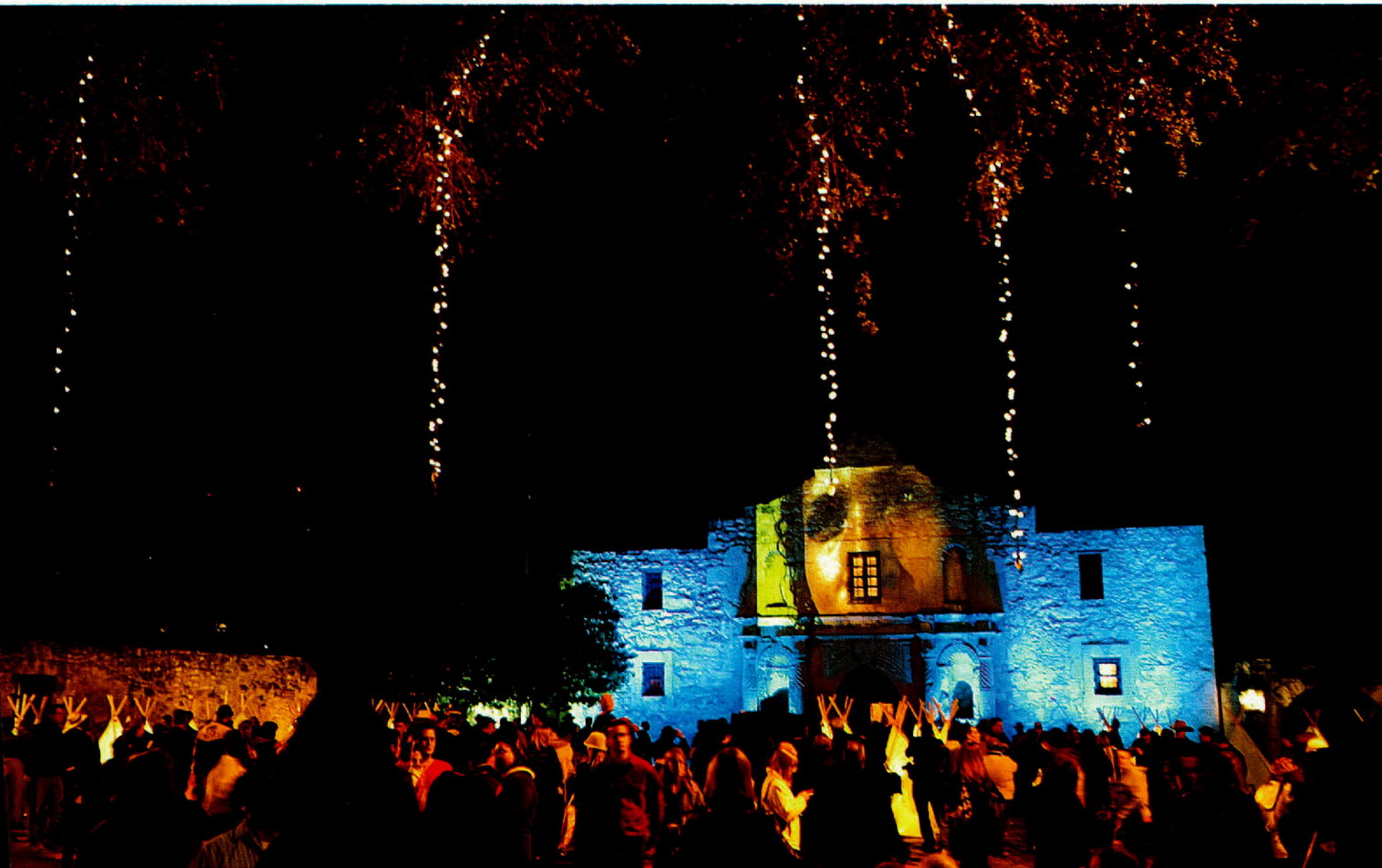
MORE INFO

Contact the
San Antonio Convention
& Visitors Bureau,
800/447-3372;
www.visitsanantonio.com.





**“THERE IS SO MUCH TO SEE AND DO IN SAN ANTONIO.
LOVE THE RIVER WALK, ESPECIALLY AT FIESTA AND AT CHRISTMAS. THE ALAMO.
THE MANY RESTAURANTS AND MUSEUMS. IT IS ENDLESS.” —LINDA GAARDER, SPRING**





Borderland *Yuletide*

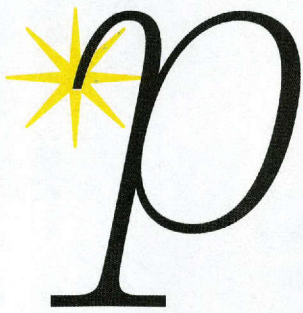
CHRISTMAS ON THE EL PASO MISSION TRAIL

Text by MATT JOYCE

Photographs by KEVIN STILLMAN

San Elizario presidio chapel





arishioners spill out of the heavy wooden doors of San Elizario presidio chapel and into the village plaza. The December night is cold and blustery, but twinkling lights, glowing luminarias, and tinsel Christmas trees warm the atmosphere. So do spicy bowls of *menudo* and steaming cups of *chamurrado*, a hot cocoa-and-cinnamon drink thickened with corn masa.

Their devotional duties accomplished for the evening, the revelers congregate among San Elizario's historic adobe buildings, celebrating the holiday spirit and taking pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus. When the pounding of drums sounds across the plaza, a crowd gathers around a group of dancers in Native American dress adorned with rattling bamboo fringe. The performers of a Danza Matachin group launch into a centuries-old dance honoring Christianity, stomping and spinning with passion.

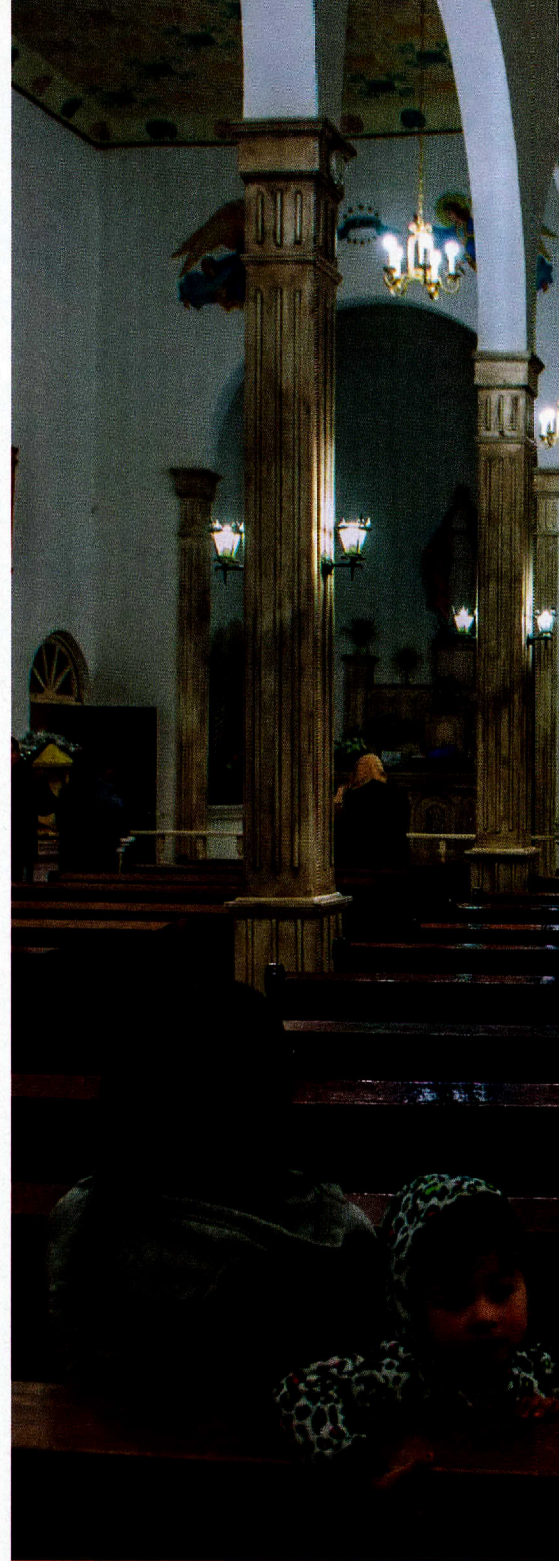
Welcome to the annual San Elizario Luminaria Festival—scheduled for December 20 this year—a centerpiece of the holiday season on the El Paso Mission Trail and a fitting example of the multicultural traditions at the western tip of Texas. The Mission Trail connects the communities of San Elizario, Socorro, and Ysleta along the Rio Grande on the outskirts of El Paso. While a visit here is interesting at any time of year, the holiday season provides a festive backdrop to explore the El Paso region's borderland blend of ancestry and customs.

"Christmas definitely has a different feeling here," says Al Borrego, a painter who serves as board president of the San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society. "The mixture of different cultures that have grown in the area creates that."

The Mission Trail follows about nine miles of Socorro Road, which traces the route of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, the 16th-Century trail linking Spanish colonial interests from Mexico City to Santa Fe, New Mexico. To orient visitors, the El Paso Mission Trail Association runs the Mission Valley Visitor Center, a small museum in a restored 1870 adobe home. The center also serves as the starting point for a new Mission Trail shuttle bus, tentatively scheduled to begin service in spring 2015.

Established in the late 1600s, the Catholic missions on the El Paso trail are among the oldest settlements in the United States, preceding the San Antonio missions by 30 to 40 years. The two mission churches and presidio chapel—San Elizario was established as a chapel, not a mission—were originally built south of the Rio Grande. But a great flood in 1829 washed away the churches and changed the river's course. In the aftermath, the communities rebuilt their churches north of the river.

Across the street from the Visitor Center is Ysleta Mission, the heart of Ysleta

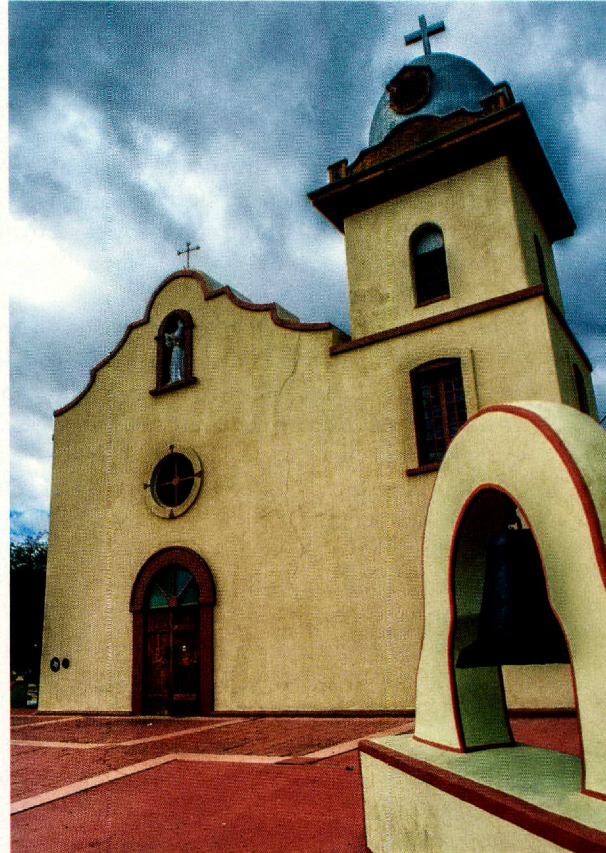


del Sur Pueblo, a historic Native American village. Spanish Catholic missionaries and Tigua Indians founded the town and the mission after they were expelled from northern New Mexico during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. About 2,000 Spanish colonists fled south and brought with them members of the Tigua and Piro tribes. The refugees established a string of new towns along the Rio Grande, including Ysleta and Socorro.



FESTIVE FRONTIER

From left: San Elizario presidio chapel, Ysleta Mission, and the San Elizario Luminaria Festival (Dec. 20). San Elizario also holds a ChristKindle Market Dec. 5-7.



Built in 1851, the current adobe church presides over a plaza that hosts ceremonial Tigua dancers on religious occasions, including a luminaria-brightened dance at midnight on Christmas Eve.

Inside the mission, the Tigua influence is evident in paintings on the white adobe walls: Patterns of blue mounds, red pyramids, and corn stalks are interspersed with portrayals of Jesus and La Virgen de Guadalupe. Tightly spaced wooden pews lead to an ornate altar, which showcases a sculpture of the crucifix in front of a mural of blue sky and white clouds. During the holiday season, Christmas trees and a Nativity scene flank the altar. Church members construct the rustic manger each year with wood and hand-formed adobe bricks.

Farther south on Socorro Road, the Tigua tribe exhibits its history and customs at the Tigua Indian Cultural Center. The brown adobe complex features a museum, native craft shops, and demonstrations of tribal bread-baking and dancing.

The Tigua museum recounts the tribe's expulsion from their original home of Isleta near Albuquerque, New Mexico, during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and the founding of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo two years later. Ancient *ollas* (ceramic jars) found in the Van Horn area illustrate the importance of pottery to the Tiguas. An 1862 black-and-white sketch represents the earliest known image of the rural pueblo, with pastures lined by adobe walls and wood fences backing up to the historic mission church.

The Tigua Cultural Center bustles on Saturdays when women gather early to light a mesquite-wood fire inside an adobe *horno*. After three hours of heating the oven, they sweep out the coals and push round pans of dough deep into the oven. The smell of sweet mesquite smoke and baking bread suffuses the grounds. Hot out of the *horno*, the bread has a crispy exterior crunch and a soft and chewy inside.

If you time it right, you can settle in with a \$4 loaf of fresh bread and watch a demonstration of the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Social Dancers, which takes place at 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. The folk dancers interpret traditional elements of tribal life—a girl waving turkey feathers represents a butterfly at harvest, a boy in a cape of eagle feathers flaps his arms and soars in religious ceremony. Ready yourself, because the demonstration closes with an invitation for spectators to join in a friendship dance.

Heading south on Socorro Road, the next stop on the El Paso Mission Trail is the Socorro Mission, a church founded by Spanish settlers and Piro Indians also displaced by the Pueblo Revolt of 1680.

Inside the church, built by the Piro in 1843, light streams through windows in the building's five-foot-thick adobe walls. Hefty wooden vigas salvaged from the church's 18th-Century predecessor support the ceiling. Patterns adorning the vigas—painted in traditional Piro red, yellow, black, and white—represent important tribal symbols, such as the sun and crossroads, says church member Eugene Trujillo.

"Piro means the hottest point of the sun, the heart of the sun," says Trujillo, who traces his Piro and Socorro roots to the pueblo's settlement. "We have not been federally or state recognized, because there are so few of us left, but we are still in the area where we were brought hundreds of years ago, and we will continue to be here."

At Christmas time, Socorro Mission parishioners decorate a tree inside the church and display luminarias around the church and neighboring cemetery. In the nine days leading up to Christmas, church members also put on traditional *Las Posadas* reenactments of Mary and Joseph's search for shelter on the eve of Jesus' birth.

SOCORRO MISSION

Inside the 1843 Socorro Mission, a Christmas tree adds seasonal flair to a sanctuary rich in Catholic and Piro Indian symbolism.





columns supporting the 40-foot textured-tin ceiling.

Outside, the chapel's broad façade looms over Veterans Memorial Plaza, where the Luminaria Festival takes place, and the Los Portales Museum and Visitor Center. The museum, which is set in an 1877 adobe home, chronicles local history and Spanish contributions to the New World.

The surrounding blocks constitute the San Elizario Historic Art District, a fledgling arts community with galleries, public sculptures, a couple of restaurants, and the newly opened Old El Paso County Jail Museum (billed as the only jail Billy the Kid ever broke *into*—as part of a jailbreak). Local artists and craftsmen have transformed about two blocks of historic, low-slung adobe buildings into studios and galleries. The offerings range from Alberto Escamilla's impressionist paintings to the Amado Peña Gallery's display of artworks by Peña and others inspired by the renowned Southwestern painter. A self-guided walking tour with informative signs navigates the district, which also hosts a busy schedule of art walks, ghost tours, gunslinger reenactments, and festivals throughout the year, including a Christ-Kindle Market in December.

During the Luminaria Festival, volunteers place luminarias around the district, casting a candlelight glow over the adobe-lined streets, weather permitting. The luminarias converge on Veterans Plaza, adjacent to the chapel. As evening fades to dusk, the *Las Posadas* reenactment commences. Actors portraying Joseph and Mary journey around the plaza, repeatedly turned away as they knock on doors seeking lodging in Bethlehem.

A small group of guitarists leads the crowd of spectators, bundled in coats and caps, as they follow the couple and narrate the Biblical tale with song. Eventually, an innkeeper relents and provides the expectant couple with shelter in his barn. Children in tinsel headbands and white garments arrive as angels, and shepherds in colorful robes join the Nativity scene to welcome Mary's newborn son. It's a story of charity and

The reenactment of *Las Posadas* (the inns) is also an important part of the San Elizario Luminaria Festival. San Elizario, located about 15 miles southeast of downtown El Paso, is the outermost point on the Mission Trail. Spanish explorer Juan de Oñate first ventured through the San Elizario area along the Camino Real in April 1598. In 1789, the Spanish established a presidio at the site.

The current adobe chapel, built in 1877 in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, is a cavernous room with arched

wonder that resonates warmly in this frontier crossroads, where residents honor a compelling heritage of first encounters, friendship, and faith. ★

December is an opportune time to visit El Paso, says TH Associate Editor Matt Joyce, because of the desert climate and holiday cheer. TH photographer Kevin Stillman says he enjoyed practicing his Spanish while taking pictures on the El Paso Mission Trail.



ESSENTIALS EL PASO MISSION TRAIL

The El Paso Mission Trail Association provides brochures, audio tours, and travel information at its **Mission Valley Visitor Center**, located at the SunMetro Transfer Center at 9065 Alameda Ave. in El Paso. Call 915/851-9997; www.visitelpasomissiontrail.com. Information for other sites mentioned in the story:

Ysleta Mission is at 131 South Zaragoza Road in El Paso. Call 915/858-4441; www.ysletamission.org.

The **Tigua Indian Cultural Center** is at 305 Yaya Ln. in El Paso. Call 915/859-7700; www.ysletadelsurpueblo.org.

Socorro Mission is at 328 S. Nevarez St. in Socorro. Call 915/859-7718; www.elpasodiocese.org/diocese/la-purissima-socorro-mission.

The San Elizario Genealogy and Historical Society operates the **Los Portales Museum and Information Center** at 1521 San Elizario Rd. and the **Old El Paso County Jail Museum** at 1551 Main St., both in San Elizario. Call 915/851-1682; www.sanelizariogenealogy.com.

For information about the **San Elizario Historic Art District**, call 915/851-0093; www.sanelizariohistoricdistrict.org.



THE LIGHT FANTASTIC



THE ILLUMINATING ART
OF JAMES TURRELL

TEXT BY HELEN ANDERS

THE COLOR INSIDE

James Turrell's Skyspace at The University of Texas at Austin Student Activity Center.

Gentle,

peach-toned light beams from a thin slice of roof hovering over the grass-covered pavilion on the campus of Houston's Rice University. We approach the glow in pre-dawn darkness, dodging sprays from the lawn sprinkler.

Eager to drink in the art installation, forged from light and the sky itself, we enter through a tunnel at the edge of a pyramid-shaped edifice designed by artist James Turrell, who calls it a "Skyspace." We take a seat on an inexplicably comfortable pink granite bench directly under a 14-by-14-foot square aperture in the roof.

At 5:40 a.m., the show, called *Twilight Epiphany*, begins. We gaze up at the dark sky through the square hole. As the peach-toned LED light at the edges of the roof changes to rose, then white, the square of sky above us begins to slowly take on different hues. It looks bluer or blacker, then a bit purple.

In the hands of James Turrell, the sky's color eludes definition. Our brains play with us as computer-controlled light slowly evolves through the entire color spectrum, playing off the light of breaking dawn. The sky we see through the square morphs from pink to violet to robin's egg blue. The closer we get to true sunrise, the more intense the colors become. After awhile, the square seems opaque: deep azure, forest green.

"I create the context of seeing," explains Turrell, who lives in Arizona. "I'm really interested in this elixir called light. We drink it as Vitamin D through our skin, so there's a physical quality. Then, there's a psychological and emotional quality where people respond to light almost like tone in music. Then there's the spiritual aspect." People talk about their response to *Twilight Epiphany*, he says, as a true epiphany.

As the sun peeks over the horizon, Turrell's dawn moves far beyond rosy-fingered into a deep mauve against blue LED light. Then the light itself turns rosy, and the square becomes vibrant turquoise. After about 40 minutes, as a bird flies over the aperture, the LED light returns to faint orange, the ceiling fades to white, and the sky, once again, is blue. The show is over for now.

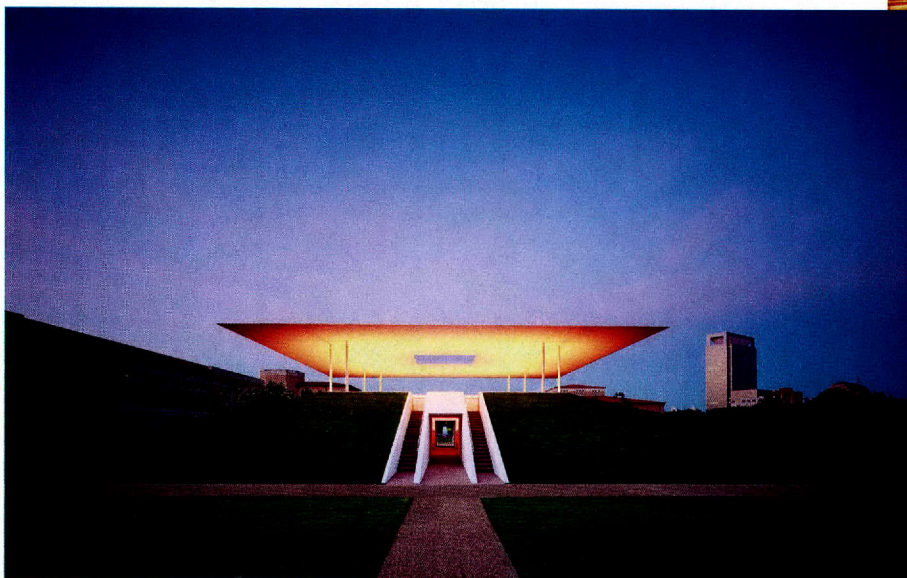
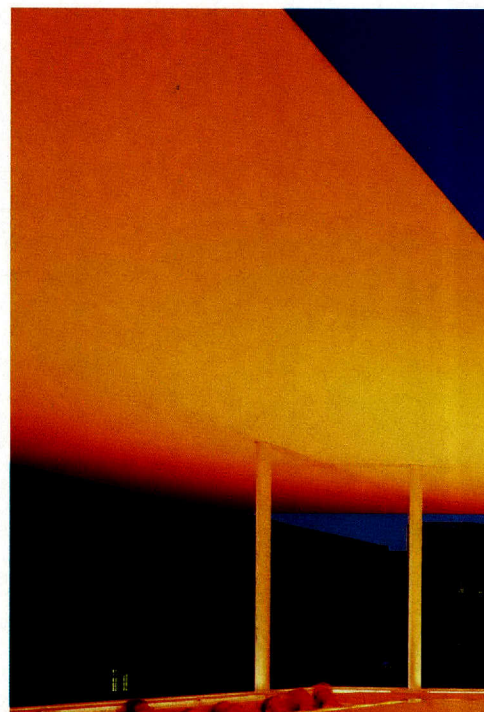
People talk about "experiencing" art all of the time, but, mostly, we just gaze at it. Turrell's Skyspaces—more than 80 of them awe audiences worldwide—truly present experiences. That might well be why the 71-year-old, white-bearded Turrell has become one of the most talked-about artists on the planet right now, and why, in July, President Obama awarded him the National Medal of Arts.

Texans are in luck: There are currently three permanent Turrell public



TWILIGHT EPIPHANY

Photos on this spread: James Turrell's Twilight Epiphany Skyspace, on the campus of Rice University in Houston, offers shows at daybreak and dusk.



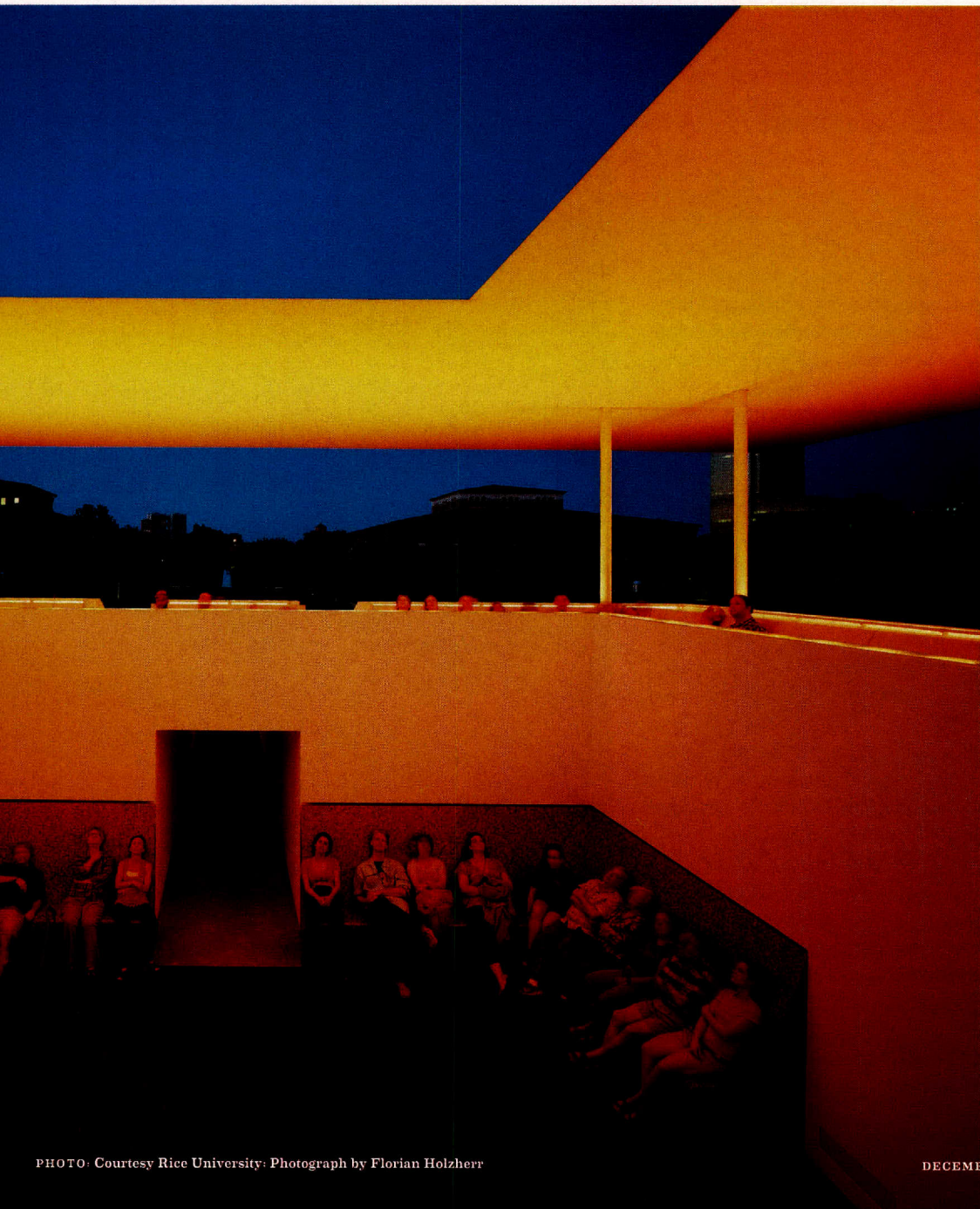
installations to visit—two in Houston and one in Austin.

The Rice University Skyspace offers its experience daily at sunrise and sunset, peak times for the sky's natural light show. Daybreak adds the advantage of quiet, with fewer people and cars about. Both spectacular shows cost nothing to see. Required reservations at the dusk show ward off overcrowding. *Twilight Epiphany* seats 120 on two levels, and acoustical engineering enables live or piped-in music to occasionally enhance a light show.

"People ask me if I get tired of going out there," says Hiram Butler, whose Houston gallery represents Turrell.

"I say, 'No,' because I see something different every time."

The weather, as well as cloud cover and even the proximity of the sun and phase of the moon, can affect a Skyspace experience. We saw evidence when a gentle rain fell during our visit to the second Texas Skyspace, called *The Color Inside*, on the University of Texas campus in Austin. The colors were muted, but still well-defined as we watched LED lights change the sky through the oval hole in this smaller Skyspace, which accommodates about 25 people on a circular bench. Light bounced off the droplets as they fell in a circular curtain, and a slight splash of rain added an organic



ESSENTIALS TURRELL IN TEXAS

Find more on artist James Turrell at jamesturrell.com.

Following are installations/shows included in the story; check the websites for hours, showtimes, and reservation requirements.

Twilight Epiphany, Rice University, next to The Shepherd School of Music, 6100 Main St., Houston; www.skyspace.rice.edu.

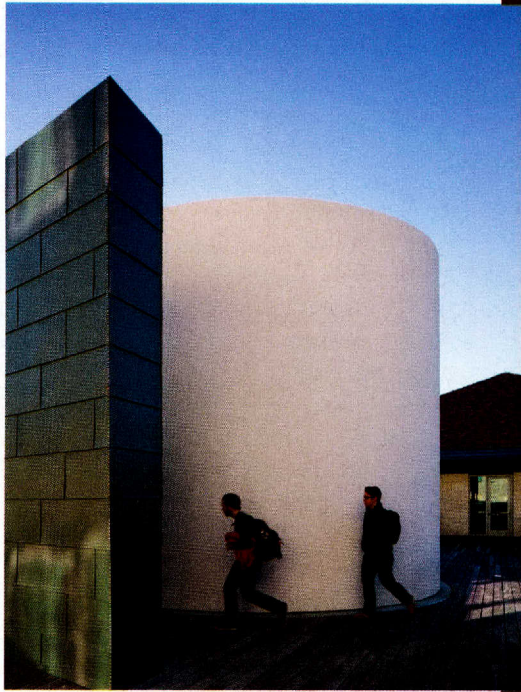
The Light Inside (tunnel), The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet St., Houston; www.mfah.org.

The Color Inside, University of Texas Student Activity Center, 2201 Speedway, Austin; www.turrell.utexas.edu.



THE COLOR INSIDE

The Color Inside Skyspace at UT Austin can accommodate up to 25 people for its sunset and occasional sunrise showings.



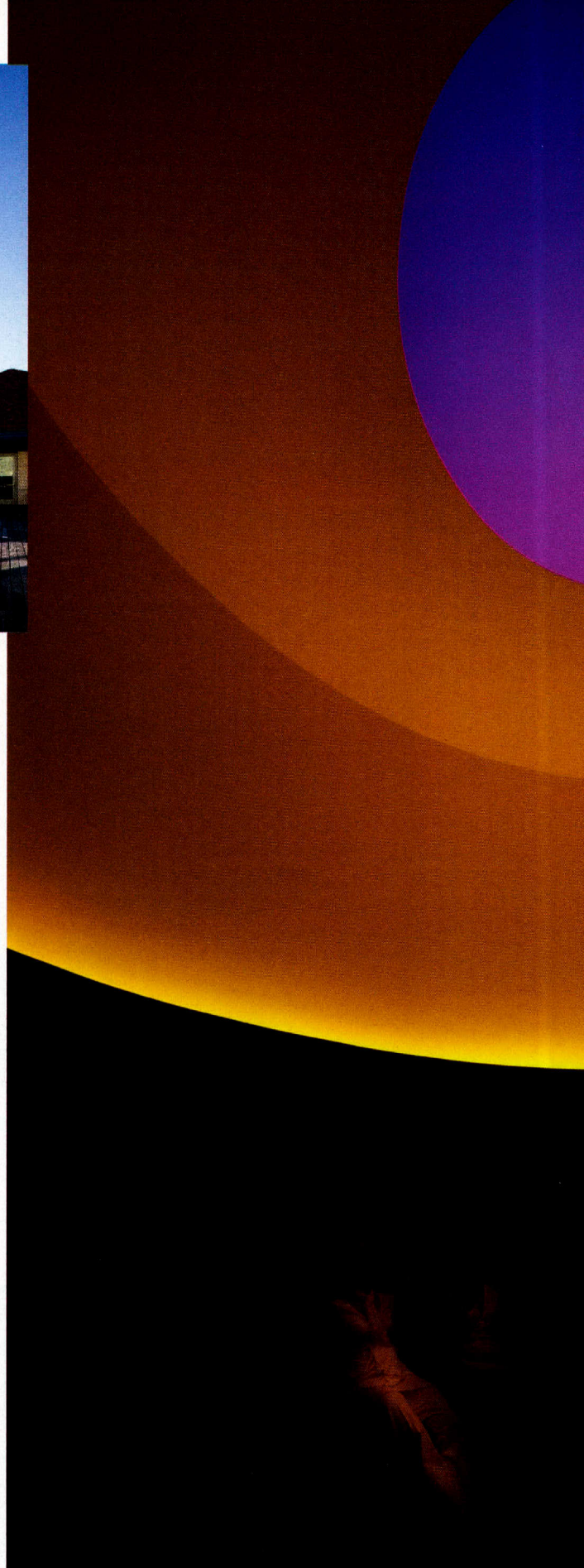
element to the experience, making us feel a part of the work.

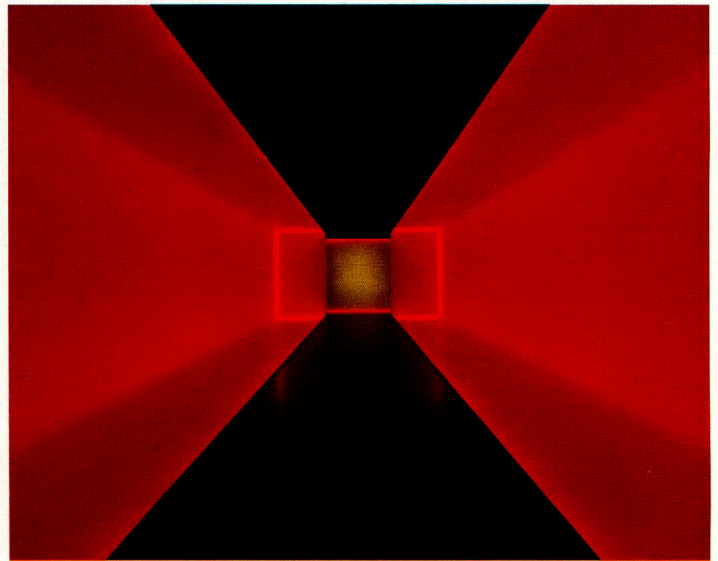
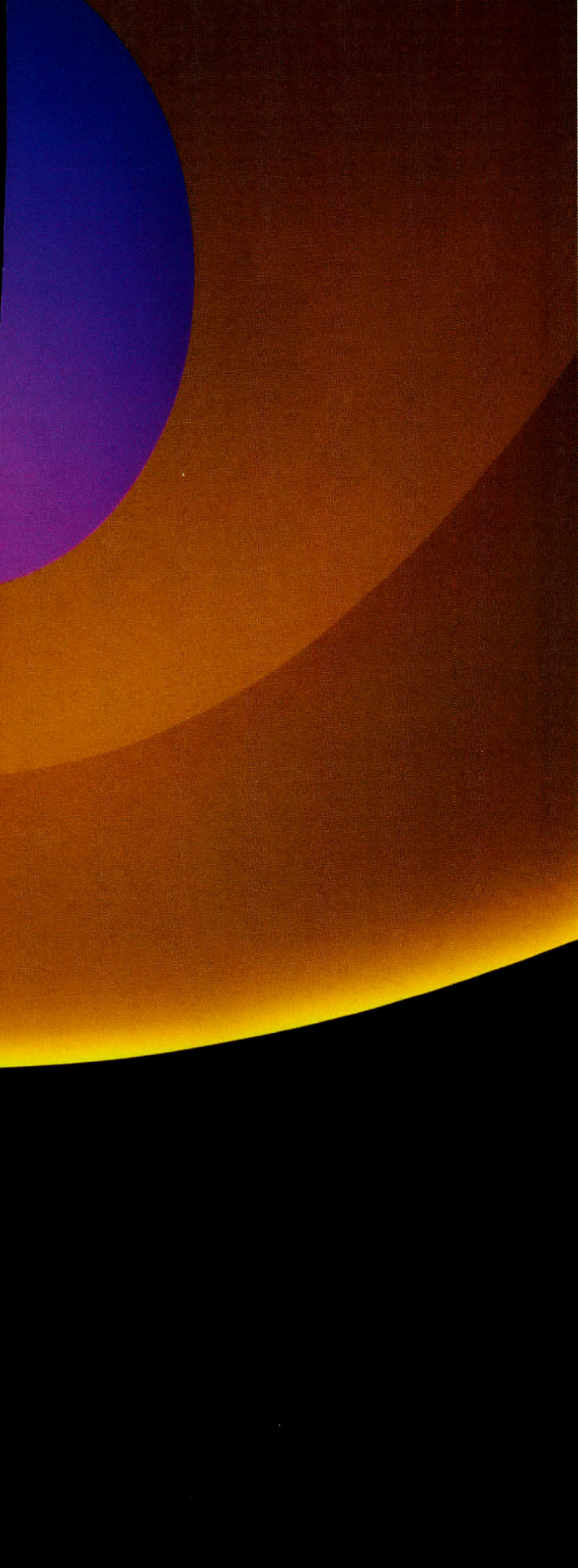
Perched atop the three-story UT Student Activity Center, this Skyspace was commissioned after UT students said they wanted a place for meditation. It's open for contemplation all day long, but its free, 40-minute light show, like Rice's but more intimate, occurs at dusk (and occasionally at dawn).

Because of Skyspaces' sensitivity to ambient light, Turrell works hard to choose sites with minimal invasion from other light sources. Sometimes, though, other buildings do rise after his works are finished. When a high-rise condominium with a highly reflective exterior went up directly next to Dallas' Nasher Sculpture Center, which offered a Skyspace in its garden, the resulting refraction rendered the piece ruined, in Turrell's estimation. Now closed, the small Skyspace has been redesigned with a raised, tilted roof that would ameliorate the problem, and it can be rebuilt and reopened to the public if the Nasher and neighboring condo developer can agree on who pays for the change, Butler says.

Another Skyspace at the Live Oak Friends Meeting House in Houston has been closed for more than a year because a plumbing leak damaged the wood floor. Himself a Quaker, Turrell has approved the new floor, but it hasn't yet been built. Once it is, the public will get to view this Skyspace again. This one doesn't feature an illumination with colored LED lights but is more of a stylized, square skylight with a retractable cover in the curved roof, designed to involve light in the experience.

Turrell's work involves more than his signature Skyspaces, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, owns more Turrell creations than any other museum in the nation. The museum occasionally mounts major Turrell shows, but it contains one permanent installation in the tunnel linking its two buildings beneath Main Street.





THE LIGHT INSIDE

The *Light Inside* tunnel at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, spans 118 feet and features constantly changing neon lights on a 24-minute cycle. The light provides the illusion of a wall.



Called *The Light Inside*, the tunnel—the first permanently installed, publicly accessible Turrell piece in the country—offers visitors a walkway through a neon-lighted, 118-foot passage whose color is constantly changing: a sort of light-bracketed catwalk. I stopped at its center, experiencing the change of energy in the tunnel—a blue light felt calming; a red, slightly agitating. Other visitors passed by, occasionally extending an arm to see if a wall existed on each side of the walkway. There’s no wall, but the light provides an illusion of a wall. Like other walk-through Turrell installations, this one can be a bit disorienting because of that effect. The light cycle lasts 24 minutes and, Butler says, is among the most popular works at the museum.

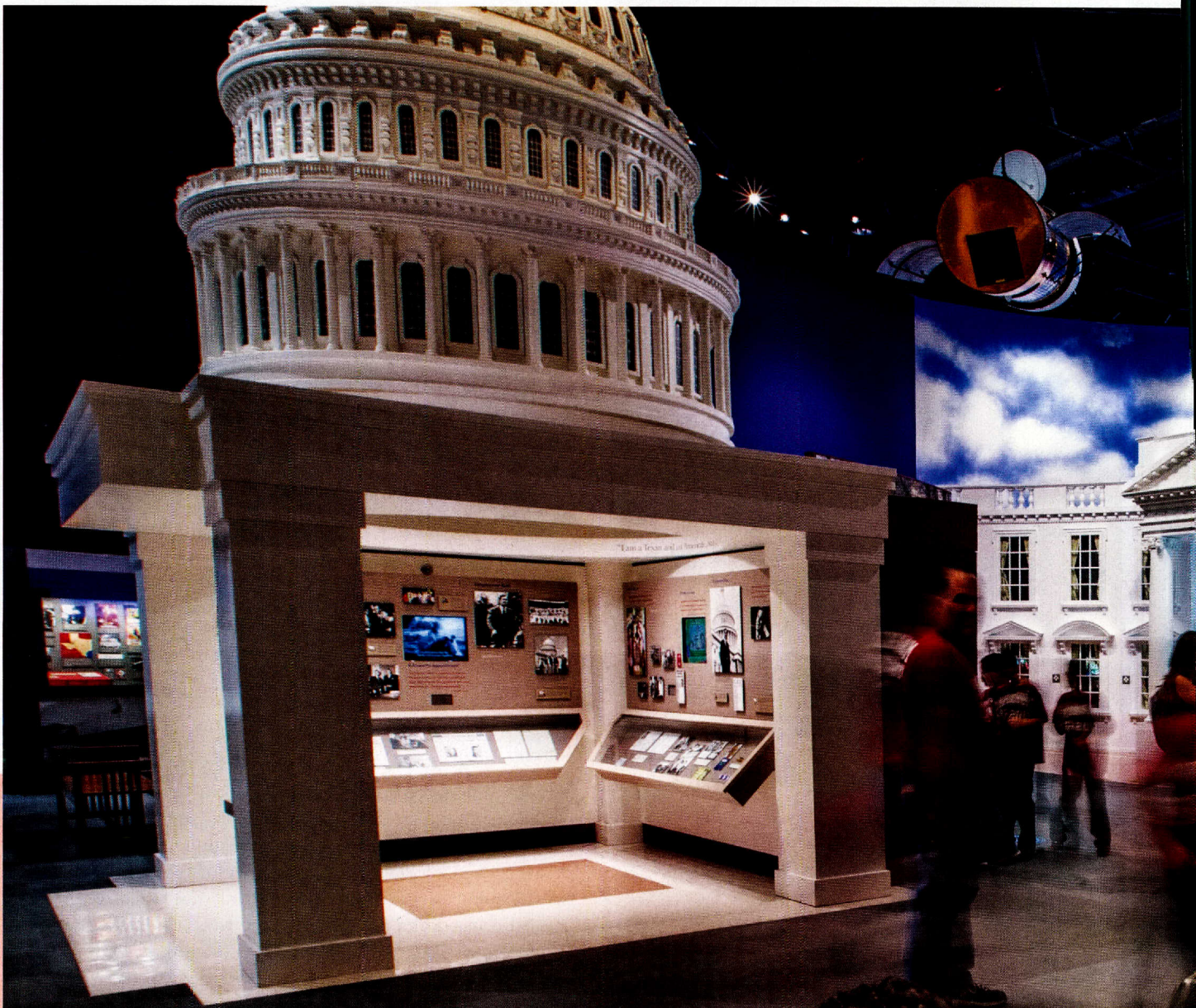
“Museums always say their toughest audience is adolescent boys,” Butler says. “Here, they flock to the Turrell tunnel.”

Butler calls my attention to the tall, glass rectangles at each end of the tunnel. The glass reflects the color as well, and after we’ve been in the tunnel for a bit, watching the colors change, the sides of those glass rectangles appear to shimmer with colors contrasting with their centers.

“They look like Rothkos,” Butler observes, referring to artist Mark Rothko, who used thinned paint to create floating rectangles of color on canvas. It’s all about perception, “using light as a material to explore the medium of perception.”

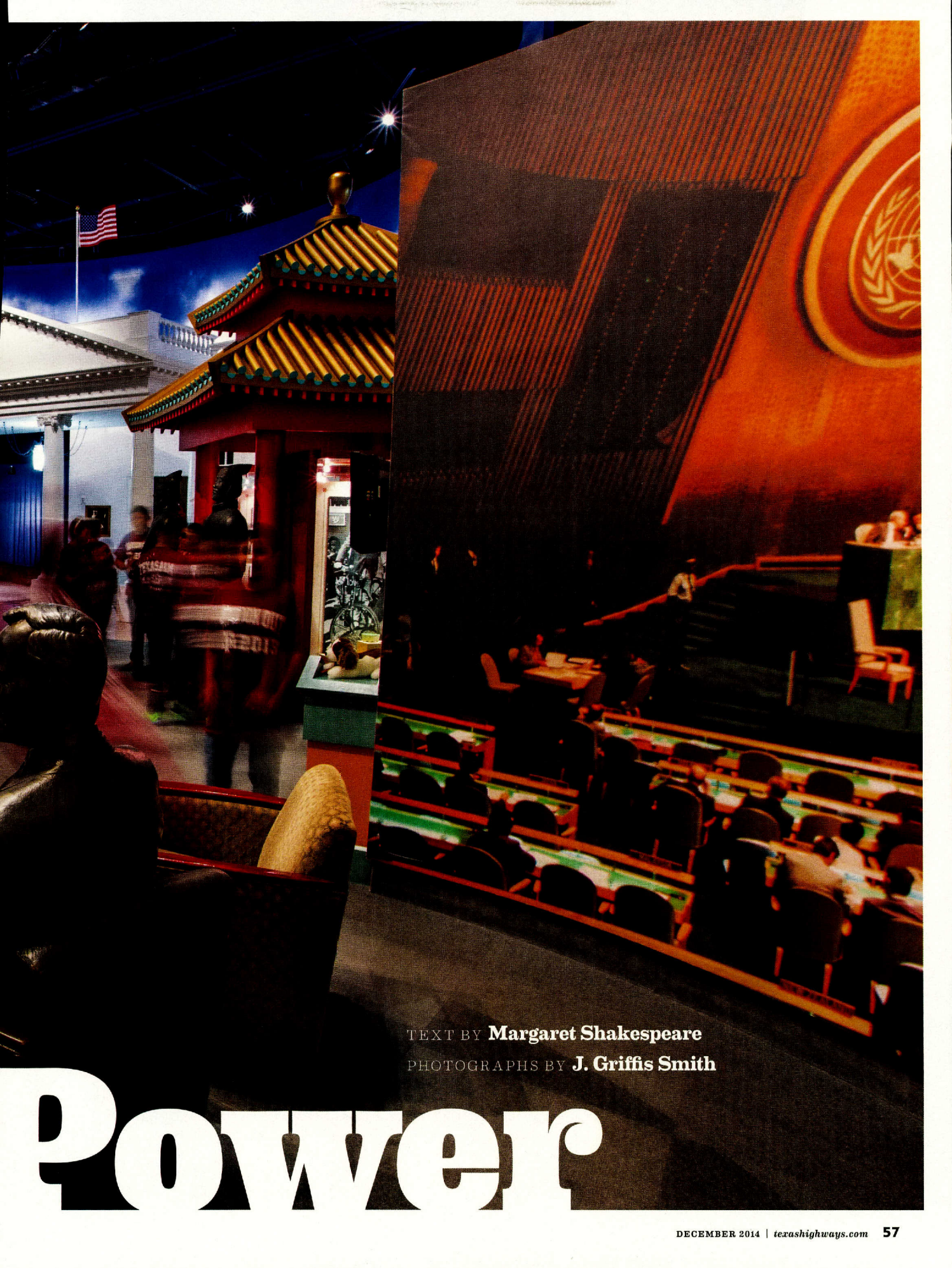
Our perception, then, becomes one of Turrell’s tools. If the sky is blue, “it’s our response that makes it blue,” the artist says. “We award it its color, and that is changeable.” ★

Austin-based writer Helen Anders has been a Turrell fan since she first encountered *The Light Inside* 13 years ago.



*Texas' three
presidential libraries
provide context to
the past and a window
into the future*

Portals of



TEXT BY **Margaret Shakespeare**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **J. Griffis Smith**

Power



When the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum

(or “Bush 43,” as it is called colloquially) opened on the Southern Methodist University campus in Dallas last year, it made Texas home to not one, but three presidential libraries. The first, Austin’s LBJ Presidential Library, opened on The University of Texas campus in 1971 and has recently undergone a major renovation; the second, College Station’s George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, opened at Texas A&M University in 1997. And because these museums chronicle not just the presidencies but also American history during those decades, I realized that a tour of these three sites could illuminate the ribbon of history that ties together most of my life.

As a weekend road trip sort of planned itself, I set aside any partisan agenda and set off on a presidential adventure that took me for some surprising personal turns along the way. My voting record or political allegiance didn’t matter. Neither did traveling in reverse chronological order.

I allowed most of an afternoon to wander through Dallas’ Bush 43 museum, a low-rise limestone building set in the middle of a wildflower meadow on the edge of the SMU campus, starting with lunch in the cheery Café 43. The presence of First Lady Laura Bush’s famous cowboy cookies (oatmeal cookies loaded with chocolate chunks and pecans) on the dessert menu gave me a hint of things to come: There would be personal vignettes from the whole Bush family entwined with the exhibits. Past the cases of extravagant

9/11 REMEMBRANCE
At the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas, a piece of steel from the World Trade Center dominates a rotunda dedicated to the September 11 tragedies.



gifts from foreign heads-of-state—a gold-filigreed clutch purse from the King of Morocco, white gold/diamond/tanzanite earrings and necklace from Tanzania, gleaming Russian samovars—an orientation video runs in the museum's formal entrance hall. Images of American landscapes and people, including portraits of all 44 U.S. presidents, flash by, setting up the strong theme of patriotism.

Among the dozen separate exhibits, I feel especially uplifted browsing through a section called Acting with Compassion, learning about Bush's quiet leadership dedicated to alleviating malaria and AIDS in Africa. Further in, as a prelude to an area devoted to the tragedies of September 11, 2001, there are summaries of very ordinary White House activities—from a September 5 state dinner for Mexican President Vicente Fox (guests were served pepita-crustad bison with California cabernet sauvignon) to a September 11 early-morning meeting between Laura Bush and Senator Ted Kennedy about a childhood-development conference. Still, I am not quite prepared for the emotional wallop—how viewing footage of the horror that unfolded in New York City, my hometown, brings back raw feelings of devastation, disbelief, and unrelenting sorrow. But there they are: a steel shard from the World Trade Center, a list of all who died, and the bullhorn President Bush used that day he stood on the rubble, visiting the rescue workers, his voice barking, "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you."

I recall that as we emerged from the numbness of that tragedy, the president traveled to New York again, to console, reassure, and unite by throwing out the first pitch of the 2001 World Series. And, sure enough, right in front of me are the ball and pitching rubber from Game 1 at Yankee Stadium. Before entering politics, George W. Bush was part owner of the Texas Rangers, so plenty of his baseball treasures are displayed, including a Cooperstown bat signed by Phil Niekro, Juan Marichal, Duke Snider, Orlando Cepeda, Tony Perez, and other National Baseball Hall of Famers; and balls signed by such players as Mickey Mantle, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Whitey Ford, Buck O'Neil, and Sandy Koufax.

Speaking of signatures, this president used Sharpie pens for annotating and signing official papers. A tray on his desk in the replicated Oval Office holds handfuls of Sharpies. The museum, to my surprise, invites visitors to sit at that desk or on any furniture in the office. I'm more interested in the art on the walls and books on the shelves, which were the president's personal choices. Bush 43's selections include

portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, a small bust of Dwight Eisenhower, Frederic Remington's *The Bronco Buster* sculpture, a leather-bound set of *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, written works of Benjamin Franklin, the journals of Lewis and Clark, and, on a table behind the desk, the Bible.

What did his father, Bush 41, surround himself with in that same Oval Office, I wonder, as I drive south on I-35 toward the Waco turn-off to College Station. For his library and archives, the senior Bush chose a sprawling 90-acre site on the Texas A&M campus, which now also includes the Bush School of Government and Public Service, a conference center, and a plaza with a sculpture of horses leaping over remnants of the Berlin Wall.

In 1947, after serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II and graduating from Yale with a degree in economics, George H. W. Bush transplanted himself and his young family from the northeastern United States to Odessa. "This West Texas is a fabulous place," he wrote in a 1949 letter to a friend.

Bush had been first baseman and team captain at Yale, and one possession that traveled with him all the way to the Oval Office was his first baseman's mitt. During my tour of the Bush 41 museum, I open a drawer on the left-hand side of the president's desk and see it, beaten up and weathered, but still recognizable. At the dedication of this library in 1997, he paraphrased another first baseman, Yankee Lou Gehrig, saying, "I am the luckiest man in the world." The elder Bush's personal Oval Office library includes works by Teddy Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln; a small sculpture of Teddy Roosevelt on horseback, and the same Remington *Bronco Buster* sculpture that later graced his son's office. Family photos—in plain plastic frames—fill the table behind his desk. Poignantly, alone on his desk, sits a picture of Robin Bush, the three-year-old daughter he and Barbara lost to leukemia in 1953.

Very much a family man, he has corresponded prolifically

BREAKING DOWN WALLS

In College Station, visitors can strike a presidential pose in a re-creation of the Oval Office. A graffiti-covered, 12-foot section of the Berlin Wall, which fell in 1989, helps tell the story of the Cold War during Bush 41's presidency.



The miniature cameras, hand sensors, and other spy tools from the mid-1970s, when Bush served as CIA director, seem colossal by today's standards.



And the people
let out a loud shout
and the wall fell
down and the people
entered the city.
(Joshua 7:20)

WALLS ARE NOT
EVERLASTING.





LBJ ALL THE WAY
On display in Austin: LBJ's 1968 limousine was equipped with a television and phone. Lady Bird Johnson designed this blue-bonnet plate. Archival boxes contain official documents from Johnson's presidency.



with his five kids. On December 31, 1990, he typed a personal letter to them, adding in red pen, “ ... at Christmas I loved seeing you all together ... I hope I didn't seem too moody.” And then, perhaps

as explanation for his mood, he

turns to world politics, summarizing the situation then between Kuwait and Iraq as “Good vs. evil ... yes, it is that clear.”

He cultivated a wide circle of friends: Visitors can listen to an ad-libbed phone conversation between the president and *Saturday Night Live* comedian Dana Carvey, who was famous for his presidential impersonations. In a replica of the Camp David office, a place seldom glimpsed by the public, the president's voice narrates a tour, pointing out a stash of dog treats and a photograph of himself playing tennis with champion Chris Evert. His daughter Dorothy's wedding took

place here; but so did quiet negotiations with foreign leaders.

Amid reminders of momentous world events—George and Barbara Bush's notes from Chinese language lessons they took when he served as chief of the Liaison Office (and then Ambassador) in China; his scribbled notes aboard the unscheduled flight from Austin back to Washington, D.C., after a would-be assassin shot President Ronald Reagan in 1981—I peel back layers of my own memory. And I quickly measure how far we have come—and how fast—by advances in electronics. The miniature cameras, hand sensors, and other spy tools from the mid-1970s, when Bush served as CIA director, seem colossal by today's standards, and the Camp David desk computer looks downright clunky, certainly impossible for one person to carry.

What, then, was life like way back in the Lyndon Johnson White House? On the scenic drive from College Station to Austin, I start to recall: the Cold War threat of the Soviet Union, the inescapable roil of social change, and a deep-in-the-bone Texas politician suddenly, in crushing anguish, made leader of the free world.

The LBJ Presidential Library, a stark 10-story monolith thrusting above campus greenery, has plenty of lively pop culture artifacts to shed light on the era. I hum along with the Doublemint gum jingle and tunes from *West Side Story*. Fun! But more fun, for me anyway, is listening to telephone conversations that the president had with friends, enemies, and especially, First Lady Lady Bird Johnson. From their marriage in 1934 and through his lengthy political career, he relied on her judgment, opinions, and wisdom. In one call, she offers him advice on delivering a speech in a 1964 press conference: "Read it with more conviction and change of pace. ..." Visitors can hear him discuss foreign policy with Richard Nixon and civil rights with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and sweet-talk *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham.

Johnson's presidency began at one of the 20th Century's turning points, the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas. Lady Bird's voice narrates that exhibit. Johnson took the oath of office aboard *Air Force One* and, upon landing at Andrews Air Force Base, delivered the short speech he had drafted during the flight. He revised the typed version: "I ask God's help—and yours" to a handwritten "I ask only for your help and God's."

LBJ served during the tumultuous '60s—the years of Civil Rights, Voting Rights, the Great Society, the Vietnam War, and the space race. An exhibit about the Voting Rights Act of 1965, complete with the desk used for signing, traces how that bill became law through a date-line, memos, phone calls, news articles, and Congressional addresses (our American process for passing any bill

into law). The National Endowment for the Arts, car seatbelts, the Head Start program, Frisbees, Julia Child's *Mastering The Art of French Cooking*, and Trix cereal's silly rabbit were new around then, too—as illustrated by artifacts displayed in the Great Society room.

The president—and all the rest of us—kept up with fads, student demonstrations, war reports, and everything else on the fast-changing globe with only three television networks. You can step into a replica of LBJ's Oval Office to see the evidence—three television sets (one each for NBC, ABC, and CBS); plus two tickers for news feeds from United Press International and Associated Press. As for history important to LBJ, I see that he chose bound public papers of Kennedy and Eisenhower, writings by Washington, and the Bible for bookshelves; plus portraits of Washington and Franklin Roosevelt for the walls.

It has been an intensive learning experience seeing snapshots of presidential lives and achievements, and reliving momentous national ups-and-downs. Leaving the LBJ museum, I pause in the Great Hall and glance up at four glass-enclosed floors stacked with red archival boxes, a vivid reminder that museum displays tell only some of the story. All presidential libraries hold the official documents of the respective administrations, resources overseen by the National Archives and Records Administration—which scholars, researchers, and historians can access. As presidential archives continue to be examined and studied, they'll help future generations understand the leaders Americans have chosen over the decades and the world events in which we all play a role. ★

Writer Margaret Shakespeare lives in New York City and the farmlands of Long Island. Our new book, On the Road with Texas Highways, showcases images taken by J. Griffis Smith over his 30-year career promoting travel in Texas.



ESSENTIALS TEXAS' PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES

The **George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum** is at 2943 SMU Blvd. in Dallas. Call 214/346-1650; www.georgewbushlibrary.smu.edu.

The **George Bush Presidential Library and Museum** is at 1000 George Bush Dr. West in College Station. Call 979/691-4000; <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu>.

The **LBJ Presidential Library** is at 2313 Red River St. in Austin. Call 512/721-0200; www.lbjlibrary.org.



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The Landing of *La Belle*

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HISTORY MUSEUM REBUILDS
A STORIED FRENCH VESSEL

Text by LARRY WILLOUGHBY



COMPACT CRAFT

The La Belle exhibit includes a one-twelfth model of the 17th-Century vessel. Glenn Greico, a model-ship maker at Texas A&M University, built it based on historical documents and archeological evidence.

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HANDLE WITH CARE
La Belle's hull gets a preservation treatment in 200...
at the Texas A&M Conservation Research Laboratory
in College Station

A

AFTER A 330-YEAR JOURNEY, the legendary French ship *La Belle* has landed at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin. Wrecked in Matagorda Bay in 1686, *La Belle* lay in a murky grave until 1995, when archeologists made the heralded discovery and carried out a painstaking excavation. Now, the Bullock Museum is showcasing the careful reassembly of the ship's hull in preparation for making *La Belle* the permanent centerpiece of its Texas History Gallery.

In the exhibit *La Belle: The Ship That Changed History*, museum visitors can watch as archeologists piece together the remnants of the 52-foot-long hull, and they can explore the dramatic tale of René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, the French explorer whose New World misadventure had far-reaching consequences for the development of Texas.

La Belle was one of four ships in La Salle's fleet when he arrived with 300 colonists in Matagorda Bay in 1684, missing his intended destination—the mouth of the Mississippi River on the Gulf of Mexico—by 400 miles. Crisis after crisis plagued La Salle's expedition, which, despite its failure, prompted Spain to quickly advance its influence over the territory it called *Tejas*.



THE BULLOCK TEXAS STATE HISTORY MUSEUM

is at 1800 Congress Ave. in Austin. Hours: Mon-Sat 9-5, Sun 12-5. Call 512/936-8746; www.thestoryoftexas.com.

A nocturnal time calculator found on *La Belle*

"La Belle is a great historical icon: a sunken ship that accidentally charted a grand new direction for the state's history," writes James Bruseth, guest curator of the Bullock exhibit, in his book, *From a Watery Grave: The Discovery and Excavation of La Salle's Shipwreck*. "Millions of Americans now understand France's contributions to the Lone Star State's beginnings."

The Bullock Museum's exhibit provides a theater-in-the-round setting for visitors to observe archeologists reconstructing the hull, a process described as a "600-piece jigsaw puzzle." The exhibit also displays more than 125 artifacts (over 1 million were recovered from the shipwreck), including weapons, cooking utensils, glass beads, and personal effects such as combs and rings. Interviews with archeologists, film footage documenting the discovery and excavation of *La Belle*, and computer touch-pad games related to French imperialism round out the exhibit.

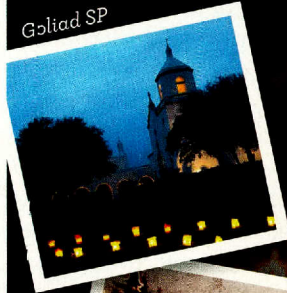
Born in Rouen, France in 1643, La Salle first arrived to the New World in Canada in 1666. He traveled the Great Lakes and eventually sailed partway down the Mississippi River, giving the entire river watershed the name *La Louisiane*. In 1684, King Louis XIV commissioned La Salle to establish a settlement at the mouth of the Mississippi.

La Salle and his men sailed from the



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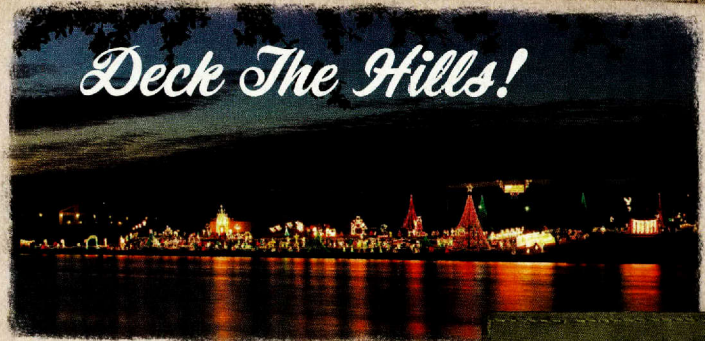
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Visit texashighways.com to watch the Bullock Museum's web broadcast of the *La Belle* reassembly (9-5, Wed-Sat) and other *La Belle* footage.

French port La Rochelle in July of 1684 and headed for the Gulf of Mexico with four ships to solidify the French claim to the Mississippi Valley. After losing three of their ships in the Gulf, the colonists established a small settlement on Garcitas Creek in present-day Victoria County. When La Salle decided to head overland to reach the Mississippi, colonists who remained at the settlement continued explorations of the coastline. In the winter of 1686, *La Belle* ran aground during a strong storm, and it sank in the southern end of Matagorda Bay, a quarter-mile offshore. Soon thereafter, La Salle was murdered by some of his men between the Navasota and Trinity rivers.

For 300 years the location of *La Belle* was unknown. Most historians and archeologists were more concerned with finding evidence of the site where La Salle was murdered and the location of his settlement, referred to in most history books as Fort Saint Louis. But in the 1970s, archeologist Kathleen Gilmore pinpointed some potential shipwreck sites. Several attempts to find *La Belle* failed over the next few years until a 1995 underwater survey by the Texas Historical Commission located a ship that met the theorized location and size of *La Belle*. Divers verified the discovery when they found a bronze cannon with the crest of King Louis XIV and a serial number that dated the cannon to the 1680s. The wreck was found about 12 miles northeast of Port O'Connor—submerged under 12 feet of water and another 10 feet of mud.

To control the muddy waters of Matagorda Bay, the [continued on page 78 »

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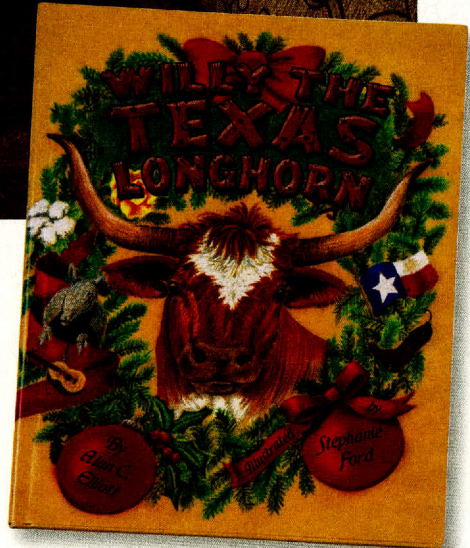
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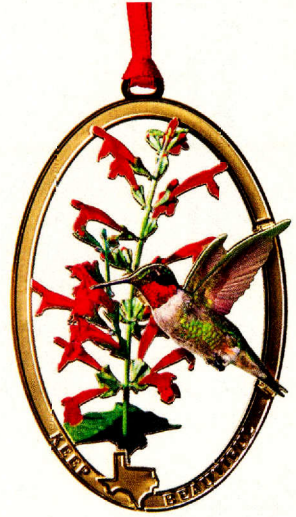
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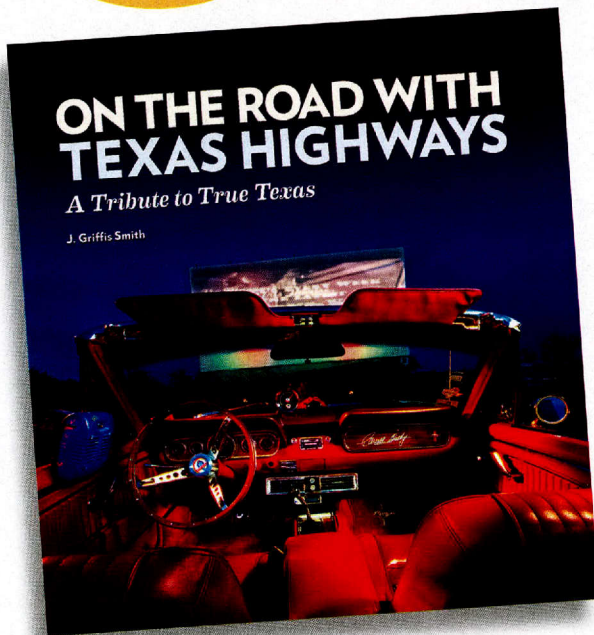
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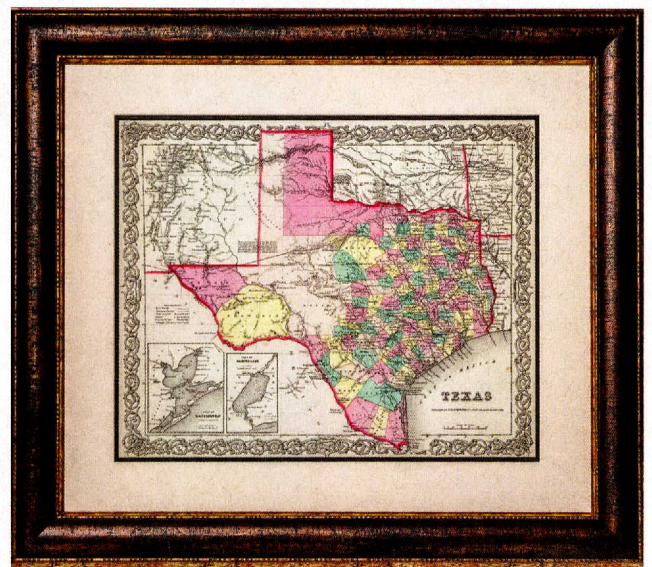
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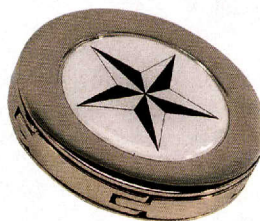
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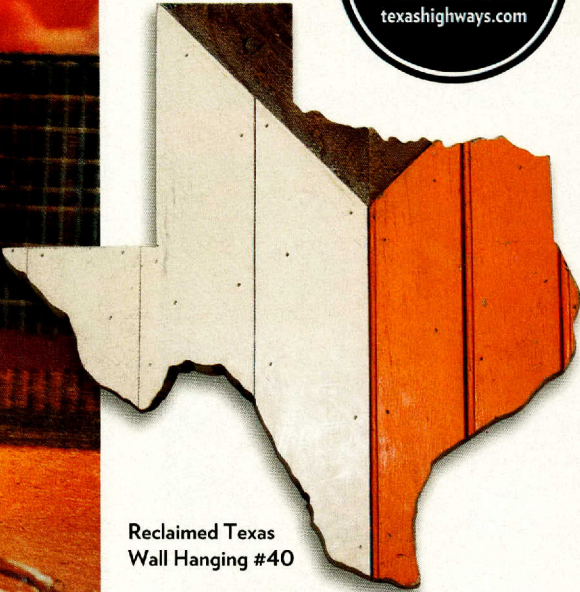
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DETOUR

The Drover's Dream

« continued from page 21] A rolling cylinder inscribed with definitions of ranching terms provides historical hilarity. "Hornswoggling," for instance, refers to the dodging and wiggling movement by which a roped steer throws off the rope. An "owlhead" is a horse that can't be trained, and a "pie-biter" is a steed that munches on chow in the camp kitchen. A "hassayampa," named for the river in Arizona, is a tale-spinner who excessively redecorates the facts. To "mustard" the cattle is to excite or stir up the herd, and "fuzzy guzzy" was a game cowboys played with a small top.

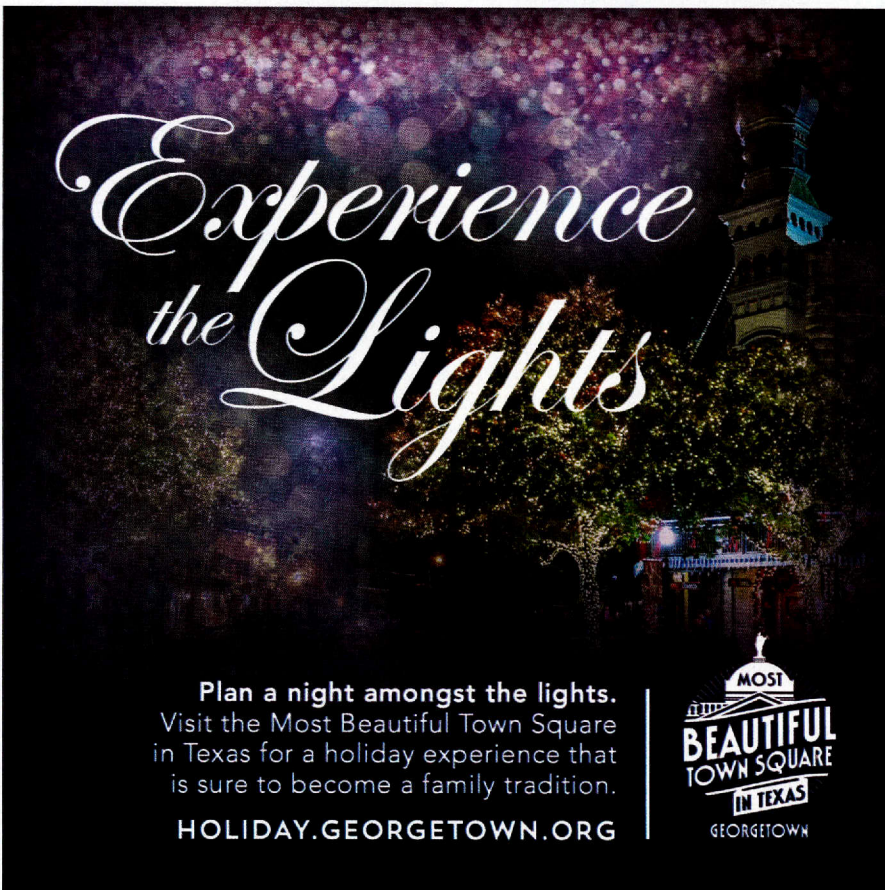
The Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum is also home to the fascinating *Horsemen of the Americas: Tinker Collection*, amassed by Dr. Edward L. Tinker (1881-1968) and on permanent loan from the University of Texas at Austin. Artifacts from the collection, such as fine silver spurs, exquisite saddles, and carved stirrups, represent Latin American *gaucho* gear.

Another of the museum's memorable artifacts is the .41 caliber double-action Colt revolver that an El Paso sheriff took from gunslinger-turned-lawyer John Wesley Hardin shortly before Hardin was gunned down in a saloon in 1895.

While Hardin's Wild West days and the Chisholm Trail are both long gone, the cowboy way is alive and well in places like the Guadalupe River Valley. *The Cowboy's Legacy* exhibit showcases contemporary ranching life with displays of working tools and short videos about Cuero spur maker Jimmy Koranek and saddle maker Tod Slone, along with videos of local cowboys at work.

About four miles north of Cuero on US 183, a historical marker recalls the significance of Cardwell Flats. Looking across the South Texas plains, you can practically hear the cattle lowing and the cowboys around the campfire singing: "I woke up one morning on the old Chisholm Trail; Rope in my hand and a cow by the tail. Com-a-ti-yi yippi yippi yea, yippi yea; Com-a-ti-yi yippi yippi yea." ★

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E V E N T S

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December's travel spotlights:



PRAIRIES AND LAKES > *Washington*

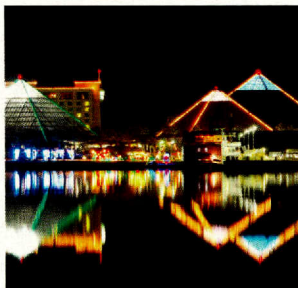
Frontier Holiday

See the holidays from a pioneer perspective at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site's Christmas on the Brazos celebration December 13. Located at the site where Texas declared independence from Mexico in 1836, the park will offer Christmas stories, "make-and-take" period crafts, music, and food. The day culminates with the Candlelight Christmas at Barrington Living History Farm. Guided tours of the working farm include a historic home decorated in 1850s style, a band of rowdy Texian revelers, and a barn dance. www.wheretexasbecametexas.org.

GULF COAST > *Galveston*

Icy Galveston

Outdoor ice skating in Galveston? You got it. The skating rink is just the tip of the iceberg at the 13th annual Moody Gardens Festival of Lights. The event, which runs November 15 to January 3, features a trail of more than 100 light and animated displays, complete with sound and music. You can also plunge down the Arctic Ice Slide, a 100-foot-long inner tube slide. A new addition to this year's event is *ICE LAND: Ice Sculptures with SpongeBob SquarePants*, featuring 900 tons of ice creations in a tent kept at nine degrees. www.moodygardens.com.



PANHANDLE PLAINS > *Anson*

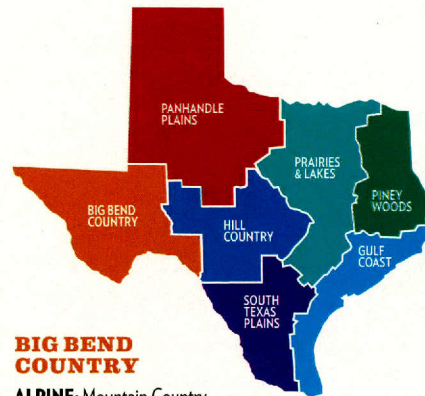
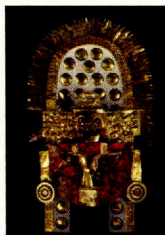
A Cowboy Christmas

For 80 years straight, the residents of Jones County have been kicking up their heels in holiday celebration at the Texas Cowboys' Christmas Ball in Anson (December 18-20). Modeled after an 1885 dance at the Star Hotel in Anson, the traditional event so inspired country-western musician Michael Martin Murphey that he developed an annual Cowboy Christmas tour, now in its 21st year, that carries the holiday tradition to performance halls across Texas. This December, Murphey will play 11 Cowboy Christmas shows in Texas, wrapping up at the Anson ball on December 18. www.ansoncowboyschristmasball.com; www.michaelmartinmurphey.com.

PRAIRIES AND LAKES > *Irving*

Peruvian Gold

The golden treasures of Peru's pre-Inca heritage take center stage at the Irving Arts Center through December. Presented in partnership with the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C., *Peruvian Gold: Ancient Treasures Unearthed* showcases gold ceremonial and funerary masks, textiles, ceremonial ornaments, ceramics, and jewelry. The museum opens every day in December, except for Mondays and Christmas Day, and is holding a series of lectures, film screenings, and other activities to complement the exhibit. www.irvingartscenter.com.



BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE: Mountain Country Christmas December 6-7. www.gfwcwomansclubofalpine.vpweb.com

EL PASO: Celebration of the Lights December 6. www.visitel Paso.com

EL PASO: Sun Bowl December 27. www.sunbowl.org 800/915-2695

MARATHON: Fiesta de Noche Buena December 6. www.marathon-texas.com 432/837-3915

MIDLAND: Christmas at the Mansion December 4-January 4. www.MuseumSW.org 432/683-2882

MONAHANS: Christmas and Chili Market December 6. www.monahans.org 432/943-2187

ODESSA: Starbright Village December 4-31. www.odessa-tx.gov

TERLINGUA: Barton Warnock Visitor's Center Christmas Party December 16. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/barton-warnock 432/426-3533

VAN HORN: Trans Pecos Big Buck Tournament November 28-December 15. www.transpecosbigbuck.com 432/283-2682

GULF COAST

ALVIN: Home for the Holidays December 5-6. www.alvintexas.org 281/585-3359

BAYTOWN: Christmas on Texas Avenue December 6. www.christmas-on-texas-avenue.com 281/674-5163

BEAUMONT: Junior League of Beaumont's Main Street Market December 4-6. www.juniorleaguebeaumont.org/msm 409/832-0873

BEAUMONT: John Jay French Christmas Candlelight Tour December 7. www.jjfrench.com 409/898-0348

BROWNSVILLE: Celebrating Space Exhibition November 8-March 6. www.brownsvillemfa.org 956/542-0941

BROWNSVILLE: Holiday Village November 24-January 1. www.holidayvillage.cob.us 956/546-3721

GALVESTON: Dickens on The Strand December 5-7. www.dickensonthestrand.org

HOUSTON: *Ground Zero 360: Never Forget* September 11-January 11. www.hmh.org 713/527-1640

HOUSTON: CraftTexas 2014 September 26-December 24. www.crafttexas.org/exhibition/crafttexas-2014

HOUSTON: *Beyond Planet Earth: The Future of Space Exploration* September 27-January 4. www.spacecenter.org 281/244-2100

HOUSTON: *Treasures from Korea: Arts and Culture of the Joseon Dynasty, 1392-1910* November 2-January 11. www.mfah.org 713/639-7300



2015

APRIL						
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

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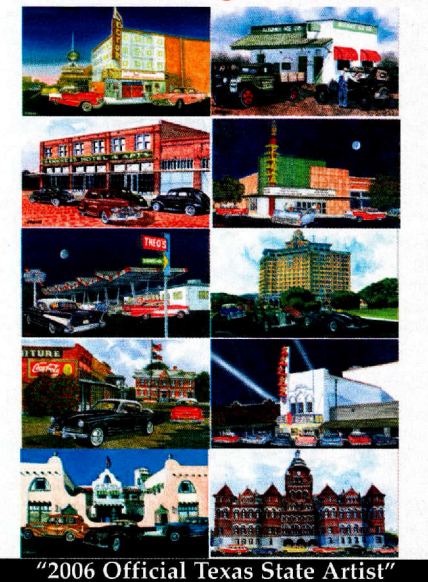
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HOUSTON: Mayor's Holiday Celebration and Tree Lighted December 5. www.houstontx.gov/mayorsholiday

LEAGUE CITY: League City Christmas Lane Boat Parade December 13. www.clearlakearea.com 281/488-7676

ORANGE: *Women, Art and Social Change: The Newcomb Pottery Enterprise* December 1-January 3. www.starkmuseum.org 409/886-2787

ORANGE: Annual Christmas Parade, Tree Lighting, and Festival December 5. www.orangetexas.org 409/883-1011

PORT ARANSAS: Carolers Afloat/Boat Lighting Parade December 6. www.portaransas.org 361/749-5919

PORT ISABEL/SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Christmas Lighted Boat Parade December 6. www.portisabelchamber.com 956/943-2262

PORT O'CONNOR: Lighted Boat Parade December 6. www.portoconnorchamber.org 361/983-4510

ROCKPORT: Rockport-Fulton Tour of Historic Homes December 6-7. www.aranashistorycenter.com

SAN BENITO: Longest Lighted Christmas Parade and Bazaar December 13. www.cityofsanbenito.com

TOMBALL: German Christmas Market and Festival December 12-14. www.tomballgermanfest.org 281/379-6844

VICTORIA: "Sharon Kopriva: Gothic Green" November 13-December 21. www.navemuseum.com 361/575-8227

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: *The Making of 'Gone With the Wind'* September 9-January 4. www.hrc.utexas.edu

AUSTIN: Blue Genie Art Bazaar November 28-December 24. www.bluegenieartbazaar.com 512/222-7303

AUSTIN: Trail of Lights December 7-21. www.austintrailoflights.org 512/974-6700

AUSTIN: Armadillo Christmas Bazaar December 16-24. www.armadillobazaar.com 512/404-4500

AUSTIN: Austin's New Year December 31. www.austintexas.gov 512/974-6700

BANDERA: Holiday Parade December 5. www.banderacowboycapital.com

BOERNE: Oma's Christmas Craft Fair December 6-7. www.kcfa.org 830/249-2839

BOERNE: Cowboy Christmas at Enchanted Springs Ranch December 20-21. www.enchantedspringsranch.com 830/249-8222

BROWNWOOD: Christmas Under the Stars Festival December 5-6. www.visitbrownwood.com 325/646-9535

BURNET: Main Street Bethlehem December 5-7, 12-14. www.fcburnet.org 512/756-4481

BURNET: Christmas at Old Fort Croghan December 13. www.fortcroghan.org 512/756-8281

FREDERICKSBURG: Light the Night Christmas Parade and After Glow December 5. www.fredericksburg-texas.com 830/997-6523

FREDERICKSBURG: Pearl Harbor Day Observance December 7. www.pacificwamuseum.org 830/997-8600 ext. 205

GRUENE: Pony Express Ride and Town Lighting December 6. www.gruene-texas.com

JOHNSON CITY: Lights Spectacular, Hill Country Style November 28-January 1. www.johnsoncity-texas.com 830/868-7684

JOHNSON CITY: Timeless Christmas at the LBJ Boyhood Home and Johnson Settlement December 6. www.nps.gov/lyjo 830/868-7128 ext. 231.

LLANO: Llano Christmas Market Day, Lighted Parade and Home Tours December 6. 325/247-5354

LUCKENBACH: Luckenbach Christmas Ball December 20. 830/997-3224

MARBLE FALLS: Walkway of Lights November 21-January 1. www.marblefalls.org 830/693-4449

NEW BRAUNFELS: Christmas Tour of Homes December 6. www.nbrw.com 830/822-0620

OZONA: Crockett County Museum Wool and Mohair Style Show December 6. www.crockettcountymuseum.com 325/392-2837

SAN MARCOS: *Cormac McCarthy: Unveiling a Literary Legend* September 2-December 19. www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu 512/245-2313

SAN MARCOS: Sights and Sounds of Christmas December 3-6. www.sights-n-sounds.org

SAN SABA: Sip 'n' Stroll Wine Tasting Event and Lighted Christmas Parade December 13. www.sansabachamber.com 325/372-5141

STONEWALL: 45th Annual LBJ Tree Lighting December 21. www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/lyndon-b-johnson 830/644-2252 ext. 222

TAYLOR: Parade of Lights and Christmas Bazaar December 6. www.taylorchamber.org 512/365-8485

WIMBERLEY: Trail of Lights November 29-December 31. www.emilyann.org 512/847-6969

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: City Sidewalks December 2. www.abilene-downtown.com 325/676-2556

AMARILLO: *Her Art: Women Artists in Panhandle Collections* December 1-28. www.amarilloart.org 806/371-5050

AMARILLO: Christmas Garden of Lights December 1-14. www.amarillobotanicalgardens.org 806/352-6513

BIG SPRING: Comanche Trail Festival of Lights December 15-31. www.visitbigspring.com 432/263-8235

EASTLAND: One Starry Night December 6. www.eastlandchamber.com 254/629-2332

LEVELLAND: Christmas on the Square December 4. www.levellandtexas.org 806/894-9079

SAN ANGELO: Christmas at Old Fort Concho December 5-7. www.fortconcho.com 325/481-2646

VERNON: Christmas on the Western Trail December 31. 940/553-3766

WICHITA FALLS: *Christmas Toys and Christmas Joys* November 22-January 3. www.museumofnorthtexas.history.org 940/322-7628

PINEY WOODS

HUNTSVILLE: Journey Through Bethlehem December 5-6. 936/295-7459

HUNTSVILLE: Huntsville for the Holidays December 6. www.huntsvillemainstreet.com 936/291-5920

JEFFERSON: Candlelight Home Tours December 4-6, 11-13. www.jeffersoncandlelight.com 903/665-7064

JEFFERSON: Rail of Lights Christmas Train December 4-7, 11-14, 18-21. www.RailofLights.com 866/398-2038

KILGORE: Christmas Under the Stars November 20-December 15. www.VisitKilgore.com 903/984-5022

LIVINGSTON: "A Night in Bethlehem" December 6-7. www.fbclivingston.org 936/327-4417

LONGVIEW: Trade Days December 13-14. www.greggcountyfair.com/Trade_Days 903/753-4478

MAGNOLIA: Hometown Christmas and Parade December 13. www.MagnoliaTexas.org 281/356-1488

NACOGDOCHES: Nine Flags Festival November 21-December 13. www.nineflagsfestival.com 888/653-3788

PALESTINE: The Polar Express Train Ride November 14-December 30. www.TexasStateRR.com 903/683-3451

TEXARKANA: Main Street Christmas Parade December 1. www.mainstreettexarkana.org 903/792-7191

THE WOODLANDS: High Noon Countdown December 31. www.woodlandschildrensmuseum.org 281/465-0955

THE WOODLANDS: Winter Wonderland and the Woodlands Ice Rink November 22-January 19. www.holidayinthewoodlands.com 877/963-2447

TYLER: Holiday in the Park and Bazaar December 12-13. www.cityoftyler.org 903/531-1214

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ARLINGTON: Texas Christkindl Market November 28-December 21. www.texaschristkindlmarket.com 817/461-3888

ATHENS: Athens Christmas Parade and Holiday on the Square December 6. www.AthensTX.org 888/294-2847

BASTROP: River of Lights November 28-December 31. www.bastropchamber.com 512/303-0558

BASTROP: Christmas in the Pines Lighted Christmas Parade and Street Market December 13. www.bastropdba.org/christmas 512/303-0904

BELLEVILLE: Small-Town Christmas December 5-6. 979/865-3407

BELTON: Christmas on the Chisholm Trail December 6. www.beltontexas.gov 254/933-5861

BOWIE: Fantasy of Lights December 6. 940/872-6246

BRENHAM: Christmas Stroll and Lighted Parade December 5. www.downtownbrenham.com 888/273-6426

BRYAN: New Year's Eve Celebration December 31. www.messinahof.com 979/778-9463 ext. 234

CALDWELL: Old-Fashioned Christmas on the Square December 5-6. www.BurlesonCountyTx.com 979/567-0000

CHAPPELL HILL: Country Christmas Home Tour December 13. www.ChappellHillHistoricalSociety.com 979-836-6033

CLEBURNE: Whistle Stop Christmas December 1-31. www.whistlestopchristmas.com 817/645-2455

CLIFTON: Norwegian Country Christmas Tour December 5-6. www.cliftontexas.org 254/675-3720

CUERO: Christmas in the Park December 1-January 1. www.christmasincruero.com 361/275-8178

DALLAS: *2theXtreme: Math Alive!* September 27-January 4. www.perotmuseum.org 214/428-5555

DALLAS: *Bouquets: French Still-Life Painting from Chardin to Matisse* October 6-February 8. www.dma.org

DALLAS: "The 12 Days of Christmas" November 16-January 4. www.dallasarboretum.org

DALLAS: Children's Medical Center Holiday Parade December 6. www.childrens.com/parade

DALLAS: Big D NYE December 31. www.bigdnye.com

DECATUR: Moonlight Madness December 6. www.decaturtx.com 940/627-3107

DENTON: Holiday Lighting Festival of Denton December 5. www.DentonHolidayLighting.com

ELGIN: Holiday by the Tracks December 6. www.elgintx.com 512/281-5724

ENNIS: Christmas Parade of Lights and Christmas Block Party December 4. www.visitennis.org 972/878-4748

FAYETTEVILLE: Country Christmas and Homes Tour December 13. www.fayettevilletxchamber.org 979/378-4021

FORT WORTH: *Navigating the West: George Caleb Bingham and the River* October 2-January 18. www.westmuseum.org

817/989-5067

FORT WORTH: *Faces of Impressionism: Portraits from the Musee D'Orsay* October 19-January 25. www.kimbellart.org 817/332-8451

FORT WORTH: Christmas in the Stockyards December 6. www.stockyardsstation.com 817/625-9715

GARLAND: Christmas on the Square December 4. www.christmasonthesquare.com 972/205-2750

GLEN ROSE: Holiday Around the Rim Sunset Safari Dinner and Tour December 6. www.fossilrim.org 254/897-2960

GRANBURY: Granbury—A Candlelight Tour December 5-6. www.granburycandlelighttour.com

GRAND PRAIRIE: Prairie Lights November 27-January 4. www.prairielights.org 972/237-4569

GRAPEVINE: *ICE!* and *Lone Star Christmas Exhibits* November 13-January 3. www.GaylordTexan.com

GRAPEVINE: Christmas on Main November 28-30, December 5-7, 12-14, 19-21. www.GrapevineTexasUSA.com 817/410-3185

GRAPEVINE: North Pole Express November 28-30, December 5-7, 12-14, 19-23. www.GrapevineTexasUSA.com 817/410-3185

LA GRANGE: Schmeckenfest Wassail Tasting and Christmas Extravaganza December 4. www.visitlagrangetx.com 979/968-3017

MCKINNEY: Third Monday Trade Days December 12-14. www.tmtcd.com 972/562-5466

MESQUITE: Christmas in the Park December 4-6. www.cityofmesquite.com 972/216-6260

NAVASOTA: Home for the Holidays December 13. www.navasotatx.gov 936/825-6475

PLANO: Dickens in Historic Downtown Plano December 6. www.planoparks.org 972/941-7250

ROUND TOP: Christmas at Winedale December 13. www.visitbrenhamtexas.com 979/278-3530

SALADO: Christmas Stroll December 5-7, 12-14. www.salado.com 254/947-5040

SAN FELIPE: Christmas Caroling, Hayride and Breakfast with Santa December 13. 979/885-3613

SEALY: Fantasy of Lights Festival and Parade

December 5-6. www.sealycommunityfoundation.org

SHERMAN: Sherman Christmas Parade, Snowflake Festival and Tree Lighting December 5. www.shermanchamber.us 903/893-1184

SMITHVILLE: Festival of Lights December 6. www.smithvilletx.org 512/237-2313

SPRINGTOWN: Christmas on the Square December 13. www.cityofspringtown.com 817/220-4834

TEMPLE: *America's Road: The Journey of Route 66* September 20-December 31. www.rhm.org 254/298-5172

THE COLONY: The Colony Christmas Spectacular December 6-January 3. www.visitthecolonytx.com 972/625-1106

VAN: Derrick Lighting and Spirit of Christmas Celebration December 6. www.vantx.com 903/368-4015

WACO: Waco Wonderland December 6-13. www.wacoheartoftexas.com 254/750-8696

WACO: Christmas in the Village December 13. www.maybornmuseum.com 254/710-1110

WAXAHACHIE: Candlelight Home Tour December 6-7, 13-14. www.waxahachiecvb.com 972/937-2390

WYLIE: Wylie Arts Festival December 6. www.wylietexas.gov 972/516-6016

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

BEEVILLE: *Made in Texas: Art, Life & Culture 1845-1900* September 20-January 10. www.bamtexas.org 361/358-8615

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TO SUBMIT EVENT INFORMATION: www.texashighways.com and go to Events, Event Submission form; email: texasevents@txdot.gov; or mail: *Texas Highways* Events Calendar, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. Listing deadlines: Spring (Mar., Apr., May) Dec. 1; Summer (Jun., Jul., Aug.) Mar. 1; Fall (Sep., Oct., Nov.) Jun. 1; Winter (Dec., Jan., Feb.) Sep. 1.

EAGLE PASS: Christmas/Festival de Luces December 5. 830/773-4343

GOLIAD: Christmas In Goliad December 5-6. 361/645-8767

MCALLEN: Danville Chadbourne Recent Works Exhibit December 18-April 12. www.imasonline.org 956/682-0123

SAN ANTONIO: *Intimate Impressionism from the National Gallery of Art* September 3-January 4. www.mcnayart.org 210/824-5368

SAN ANTONIO: *Texas Art Quilts and Modern Masterpieces* September 5-January 11. www.texancultures.com

SAN ANTONIO: Holiday Boat Caroling December 5-21. www.thesanantonio riverwalk.com

SAN ANTONIO: Tamales at Pearl December 6. www.atpearl.com/calendar/tamales

SAN ANTONIO: 110th Traditional German Christmas Celebration December 14. weihnachtsfeiersa@gmail.com 210/534-4481

SAN ANTONIO: La Gran Posada December 21. www.sfcathedral.org

SAN ANTONIO: Celebrate San Antonio December 31-January 1. www.saparksfoundation.org/celebrate_sa.html 866/517-7779

WESLACO: Mid-Valley Christmas Parade December 18. www.facebook.com/WeslacoEDC 956/969-0838

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Dec 4: *Denison Christmas Parade (Downtown)*
Dec 6: *Historic Downtown Tour*



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The Landing of *La Belle*

« continued from page 68] excavators built a double-walled, steel cofferdam around the shipwreck. The structure enabled the crew to pump the water out of the excavation site without removing the ship from its resting place.

More than 20 archeologists supervised the diving operation, which recovered weapons like muskets and swords, and decorative combs, pins, and rings adorned with Catholic markings and symbols. Ceramic cooking utensils, pewter plates, bronze pots, wooden barrels, and tin-glazed jars that most likely served as medicine containers numbered in the hundreds. Divers also found hundreds of thousands of colored glass beads in the ship and the soil sediment surrounding the wreck. Remains of sheep, buffalo, goats, pigs, turtles, ducks, and deer provided insight into the staples of the colonists' diet. One human skeleton and the partial remains of another were preserved in the wreck.

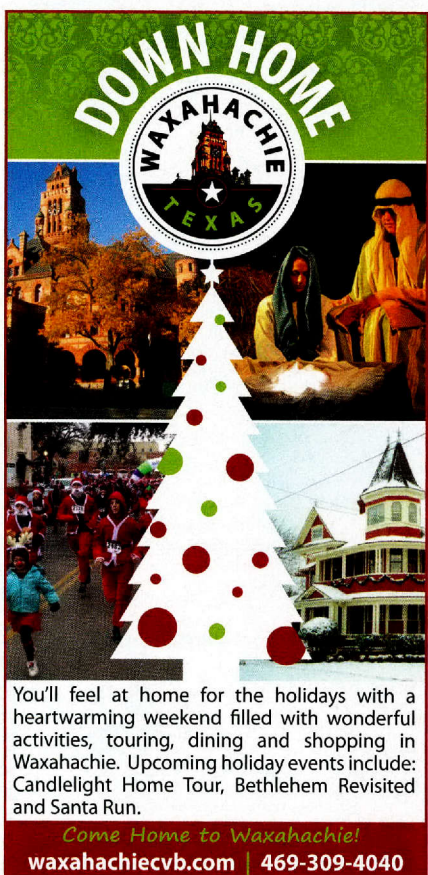
After all the artifacts were removed,

the archeological crew began the excavation of the ship itself. The hull was disassembled and sent to the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History, where the materials were cleaned and prepared for scholarly study. Over the last few years, the Texas Historical Commission has worked with seven museums along the Gulf Coast and in South Texas to display artifacts from the wreckage in a joint project called the La Salle Odyssey.

At the Bullock, the timber-by-timber reassembly of *La Belle* is expected to take about seven months. In November 2015, the museum will open its newly renovated first floor, anchored by the ship and thousands of *La Belle* artifacts. The museum has also debuted a new movie, *Shipwrecked*, in its Texas Spirit Theater, chronicling the experience of a 10-year-old La Salle expedition survivor named Pierre Talon. Billed as a "4D" movie, *Shipwrecked* combines 3D visuals with sensory effects in the seating and theater environment.

Historians disagree about the details of La Salle's voyage. Did he purposely sail into Spanish territory seeking easy access to the silver mines of northern Mexico? Was he blown off course by Gulf storms and merely a victim of poor navigation? Or, as noted La Salle biographer Robert Weddle claimed, the French explorer could have been confused about the location of the Mississippi, based on faulty maps and his limited understanding of the Gulf's geography.

Whatever the truth, the Spanish government took quick action when it learned that French colonists were intruding on New World territory Spain claimed as its own. The Spanish had previously shown little interest in the region in far northeastern *Nueva España*, but with a perceived French threat, they set about expanding the mission system in eastern and southern Texas. The consequences of these imperial rivalries would continue to influence the development of Texas for centuries to come. ★



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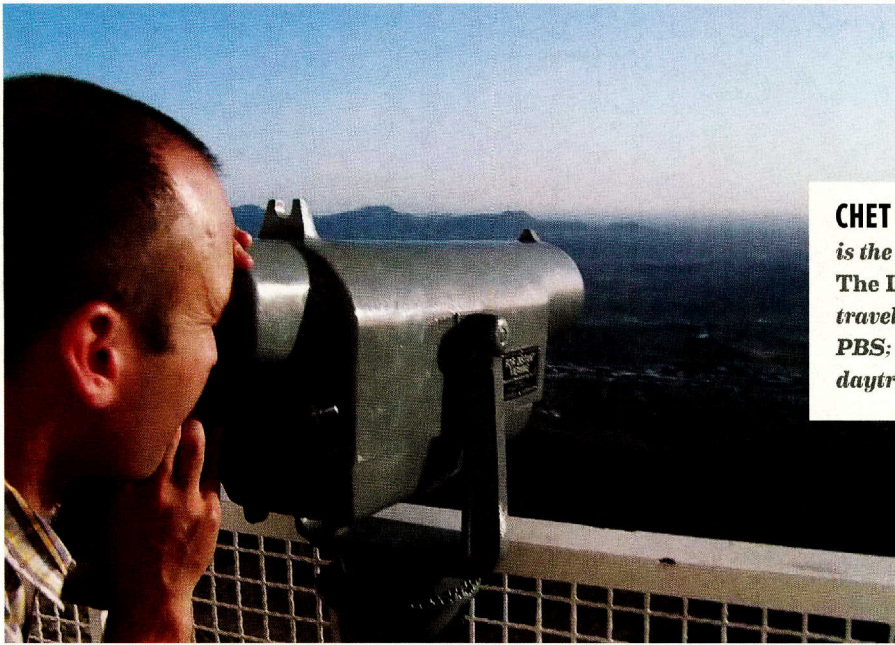
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3:30 P.M. While the U.S. border mostly follows the Rio Grande in Texas, just before New Mexico it deviates from the river and heads west to the Pacific Ocean. After a brief check-in with border patrol,

I headed to the point of demarcation at **Border Monument No. 1**. I stood at the stately obelisk and pondered what the border means for residents of both sides. I looked up as a bird flew overhead, paying no attention to the boundary below.

4:00 P.M. For more on border history, I stopped at the **National Border Patrol Museum**, which honors the men and women who keep our border secure. I found the history of this ever-changing job fascinating as I viewed the cars, weapons, and helicopters used by these brave men and women.

5:15 P.M. As the daylight faded, I hightailed it to **Tom Lea Upper Park** to watch the sun set over El Paso. The reds and oranges of the sky beautifully complemented the rocky landscape and city skyline. It confirmed everything I've ever heard about the beauty of a West Texas sunset.

7:00 P.M. For dinner, I headed to the classic **Los Bandidos De Carlos & Mickey's**. While menu items such as tacos and enchiladas may look familiar, don't make the mistake of calling this "Tex Mex," as this establishment serves up El Paso-style Mexican food favoring chile peppers high above *chili con carne*. I savored my plate of green chile enchiladas, relishing in the culinary diversity of our great state.

While Texas can officially claim El Paso as its own, it's truly a city that defies all borders, offering visitors a one-of-a-kind mix of tasty flavors, historical experiences, and jaw-dropping adventures. So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. ★

 **Contact Destination El Paso at 915/534-0600 or 800/351-6024; www.visitelpaso.com.**

Border Bound in El Paso

While the westernmost city in Texas may be outside the "day-trip zone" for many Texans, a trip to this border-bound metropolis is an experience as rewarding as Texas is wide. So saddle your horses and head west.

8:00 A.M. I started the day at **Crave Kitchen & Bar** with a massive sandwich—two bacon-flecked waffles stuffed with sausage, egg, and cheese. Needless to say, my side dish of fresh fruit was a laughable afterthought.

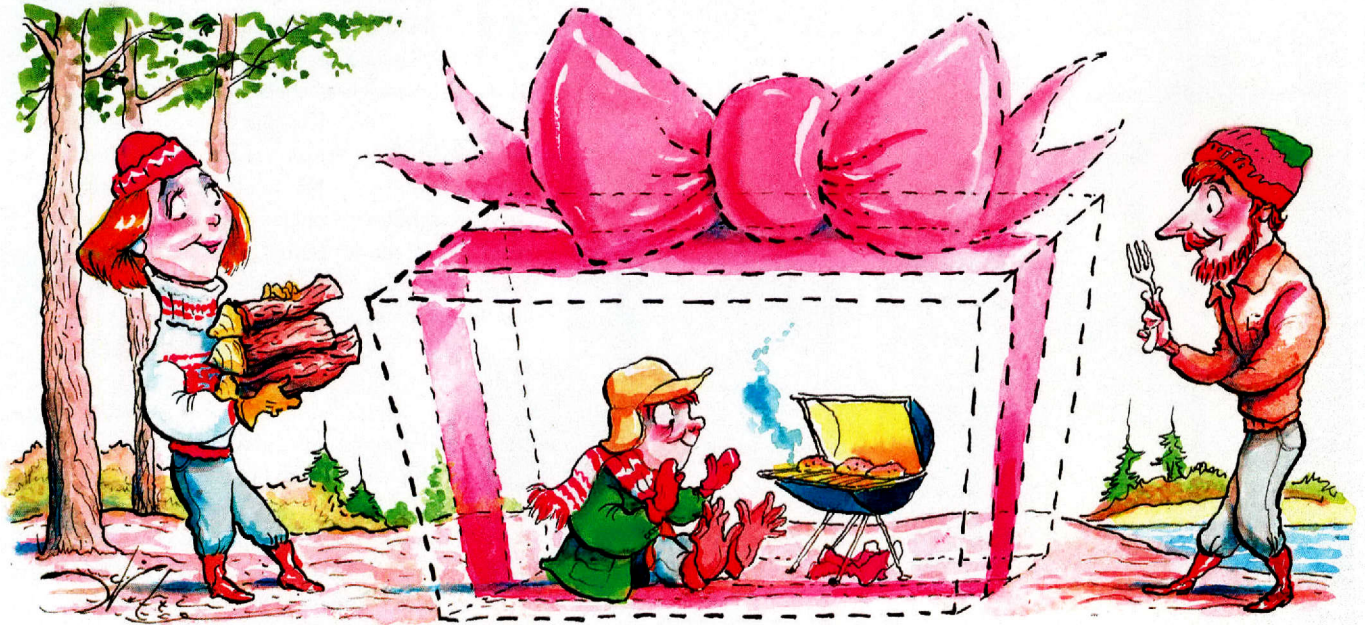
9:15 A.M. Before the sun came out in full force, I headed to **Franklin Mountains State Park** in search of a challenging, but survivable, hike. While this park covers an astonishing 40 square miles within the El Paso city limits, I set off on a .6-mile uphill journey to the Aztec Caves. I reached the top and turned around to a jaw-dropping, Chihuahuan Desert panorama of jagged mountains and heat-scorched valleys. While Aztecs never inhabited this area, I could have easily made this shady cave my home.

12:00 P.M. For an even higher view, I hopped aboard the **Wyer Aerial Tramway**, which offers rides up to Ranger Peak on Swiss-made gondolas. The view from the top, which covers two countries (the United

States and Mexico) and three states (Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua), was good enough to make this Texas boy yodel.

1:00 P.M. I drove to **Chico's Tacos** for deep-fried "tacos" swimming in thin tomato sauce and smothered with cheese. In all my travels, I've never encountered a restaurant that impassions locals quite like Chico's. Whether for breakfast or midnight munchies, odds are this local chain will be packed. As I polished off my second order, I could easily see what keeps 'em coming back.

2:30 P.M. El Paso is truly a city that blends cultures and countries. I headed to the **Chamizal National Memorial** to roam the park, which commemorates a 1963 treaty that settled a 100-year-old border dispute between the United States and Mexico. It began when the Rio Grande shifted southward, leaving a portion of Mexican farmland on the Texas side of the river. Through skilled diplomacy, the countries peacefully settled their differences.



Christmas Wild

A HOLIDAY ESCAPE REGENERATES THE SPIRIT

text by **Barbara Rodriguez** illustration by **Michael Witte**

MORE AND MORE I TRY TO travel during the Christmas season. Even if it's just a daytrip, I like to blast away from the clatter and take a few deep breaths somewhere the trees don't have lights on them. I first discovered how meaningful such a journey could be on a daytrip to Meridian State Park, northwest of Waco, when my son was 7. I invited my brother Jim, whose eccentric education in anthropology, fishing, and bartending makes him an ideal camp companion.

As we settled in at our shelter a few steps from the lake, I realized that I had been so fixated on keeping the planning minimal that I had packed no chairs, no plates, no knife. Fortunately, I did bring a plastic fork—and layers of clothing for Elliott. Thanks to the waterside chill, within minutes of our arrival Elliott was wearing all the clothing I'd brought for him and some of mine.

My brother was undaunted. Before I had even discovered I'd forgotten the firewood, he had the chicken seasoned and cooking nicely on his portable grill—gamely making do with the plastic utensil. While Elliott sang a song about melting forks to a couple of ducks, I headed to a nearby store for firewood.

When I returned, my son was barefoot. He had cast his rod into the lake, then waded in after it—soaking socks and shoes. He appeared delighted to be wearing leather work gloves on his feet, like some giant splay-footed bird cozied up to the grill.

All this time I'd scarcely noticed that Uncle Jimmy was wearing a pink, Rastafarian-like stocking cap. The hat was familiar—and comforting. It had been knitted by our mother, who was monumentally successful in opening our eyes to the natural world.

After eating, we hiked to a spectacular scenic overlook. While Jim and I gasped at the view, Elliott goat-footed his way to the edge of a broad-backed and sloping stone to dangle his legs above the precipitous drop. Stunned, I encouraged him to shimmy backwards on his bottom and tried to calmly impress upon him that rubble, even leaves, can mean a slip.

Keeping a close eye now on Elliott, I realized it was I who needed the lessons of this day. Bobbing through the woods in his pink hat, sharing happy memories over coyote scat—that was

my brother's Christmas gift to me, along with the reminder to be the mother to my son that our mom had been to us. ★

I like to take a few deep breaths somewhere the trees don't have lights on them.

Find Babs Rodriguez's full adventure at texashighways.com/matters.



Rear **VIEW**

ONE LAST THOUGHT

“When I started counting my blessings,
my whole life turned around.”

—Willie Nelson

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS add a seasonal glow to Haw Creek Church at Round Top's Henkel Square Market.

PHOTO: Will van Overbeek

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