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# T E X A S Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

## T x D O T

The **Texas Transportation Commission** approved \$124 million in funding for 126 projects designed to enhance scenic, historical, natural and cultural resources. The **Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program**, initiated through the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and administered by TxDOT, directs money toward nonhighway-related transportation projects, such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, landscaping and scenic beautification, and historical preservation. Nominations are submitted by local authorities from throughout the state. The next call for nominations is anticipated for 2001. For details, call program director **Doug Vollette** at 512/416-2783.

Just a reminder that TxDOT's **Texas Travel Information Centers** are just an e-mail away. Following is a list of current addresses:

<b>Amarillo</b>	aotic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Anthony</b>	aytic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Denison</b>	dnctic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Gainesville</b>	getic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Langtry</b>	lytic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Laredo</b>	lotic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Orange</b>	oetic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Texarkana</b>	tatic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Valley</b>	vytic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Waskom</b>	wmtic@dot.state.tx.us
<b>Wichita Falls</b>	wftic@dot.state.tx.us

## T E X A S T R A V E L

**Prices at the pumps** have jumped about 50 percent over the past year. Still, customers continue to fill up big cars and drive far. *The Dallas Morning News* reports

though some motorists are shopping around a little more to save a few pennies, they are still commuting long distances alone, many in gas-guzzling pickups and cars. The price hike seems to have primarily affected those who drive for a living, such as delivery drivers and truckers. The Energy Crisis of the 1970s pushed many toward smaller vehicles, car pools and buses. But according to *The News*, gas is taking a smaller chunk out of the household budget than it did in those days. **Jim Griffin**, economics professor at **Texas A&M University**, said in order for consumers to make the sacrifices of the '70s, they'll have to see the rise in prices as a permanent situation. Prices approaching \$2 a gallon will have to hold for six months or more before people start trading for more fuel-efficient vehicles, he said.

## COMING UP

A group of investors will build a \$30 million, 10,000-seat **indoor**

**arena** for world-class horse shows and other equestrian events along F.M. 428 north of **Denton**. The 578-acre site will include a multistory hotel and conference center, an 18-hole championship golf course, 104 homes and 58 acres of green space. Work is scheduled to begin early next year.

In 1986, the Hearne Heritage League signed a façade lease with Southern Pacific to paint and reroof the 1901 **Hearne Station Depot**. By mid-summer the depot will be relocated across the highway from its current site on Texas Highway 6 for a half-million-dollar face-lift, inside and out. Restoration should be complete in time for the structure's 100th birthday next year, when the depot will open as a visitor center and museum showcasing railroad and local history. For more info, call the chamber of commerce at 979/279-2351.

Three years ago **Amtrak** officials wanted to ground the financially

weak *Texas Eagle*. Now they have announced they will restore the Chicago-to-San Antonio *Texas Eagle* to daily service this summer, up from its current four runs a week. Plans also include adding a San Antonio-to-Mexico route, establishing Fort Worth as a key rail hub and rerouting its *Sunset Limited* train to include Abilene and Odessa. The downside would be loss of passenger service in Del Rio, Alpine and Sanderson. According to the *Austin American-Statesman* the renewed emphasis on Texas is part of a nationwide strategy to become financially viable by serving new passenger markets and filling a niche in the delivery business.

## P L A C E S

The West Texas town of **Plainview** is bracing itself for a stampede of **wild cows**. More than 40 wildly painted, 8-foot-long fiberglass dairy cattle, Herefords and Texas Longhorns will be grazing parking lots, front lawns,



**THE WEST SHALL RISE AGAIN** Eleven years after the original Gilley's burned in Pasadena, country singer Mickey Gilley is once again loaning his name. An upscale, \$18 million version of "The World's Greatest Honky-Tonk" will open in South Dallas in 10 months to a year. The entertainment complex will occupy two existing buildings and at least one new one on Lamar Street, south of I-30. A new building will seat 4,000 for concerts. "Gilley's Dallas" will include saloons, live music bars, restaurants, a Wild West show, and a shopping center selling Western wear and Texas novelties.

## TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

porches and other high-visibility locations by May 1. It's all part of a community-driven plan to draw attention to the town's second annual **Plainview Cattle Drive**, slated for September. Designs for the cows were solicited by the C&VB from local citizens and schoolchildren, with finalists selected by a "steering committee." The result? A herd of bovines painted with colorful wildflowers, the Lone Star flag, the Alamo, ears of corn and other Texas scenes. The cows will greet visitors through the September festivities, where they'll be auctioned off with a starting bid of \$2,000 each. Proceeds will go toward purchase of replacement cows for the 2001 event. For more info, call 806/296-7431. Or to see for yourself, key in [www.moocows.net](http://www.moocows.net).

**Fiesta Texas in San Antonio** continues its multimillion dollar expansion with this season's addition of the **Superman Krypton Coaster**, the largest steel and only floorless coaster in the Southwest. The 4,025 feet of steel consist of three 32-passenger trains accommodating 1,600 passengers per hour. The Superman Krypton joins an already thrilling lineup of coasters, including the LIM-accelerated Poltergeist, the forward-and-backward Boomerang, the classic wooden Rattler and the

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**TEXAS TRAVEL LOG**

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Ann Kelton, Editor

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Layout: Jane Sharpe/Sharpe Design

**LAREDO TIC** On a recent Sunday, manager Leo Garza received a frantic call on the 1-800 line from someone who said he was stranded somewhere in the middle of Lake Austin! The man said his boat's outboard motor had shut down and he was floating about with no help in

sight. Leo quickly called Barbara Grove at the Austin C&VB, got the number for the Austin Lake Patrol and relayed the info to the "sailor."

**ORANGE TIC** Florida cowboy Glenn Hammond stopped in on his way to Houston, where he

was slated to compete in the top-ranked rodeo at the Houston Livestock Show. The young bull rider said he was named Rookie of the Year by the Tri-State Rodeo Assn. of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, and was in the running for National Rookie of the Year.

Road Runner Express. The rides complement the park's live show productions, cool water attractions and other family entertainment. For information, call 1-800-473-4378.

Life for Austin's 14 million visitors got easier with the launch of the **Austin C&VB's new on-line reservation service**. Internet users can book a hotel room sorting by price, amenities, location and dates, rent a car, and purchase tickets to events and attractions. To custom design a weekend getaway or a family vacation, key in [www.austintexas.org](http://www.austintexas.org). To speak with a reservation agent, call toll-free 1-888-667-8416.

A new Web site is filling a void for blacks in the Dallas area who are looking for a wide range of things to see and do. *The Dallas Morning News* reports within a little more than a year, **Dallasblack.com** has become a virtual magnet for blacks in search of myriad information and events. The community-based site includes roundups of cultural, heritage and sporting activities, music reviews, church, business and employment listings, financial tips, a literary cafe with columns, editorials and book reviews, and links to related sites.

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**F A C E S**

**John G. Prude** died on February 24 at age 95. In 1921, the Prude family began hosting guests on

their 28,000-acre ranch near Fort Davis. After the stock market crash of 1929, the family had to sell cattle and land, diminishing the ranch to its current 5,000 acres, and forcing them to choose between the guest business or the ranching business. Tourism came out ahead. Since then, five generations of Prudes have operated the guest and working cattle ranch in the Davis Mountains. Today the staff entertains more than 20,000 visitors each year. Up until three years ago, John G. Prude was up in the saddle, working his cattle and helping visitors enjoy their stay.

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**HISTORY**

Texas history students in **Victoria** recently traveled back in time using the latest Web site technology. They were the first to experience the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) **on-line video diary** of the excavation of **Fort St. Louis**, the ill-fated stronghold founded in 1685 by French nobleman Renè Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle. In 1996, THC ended centuries of debate about the location of Fort St. Louis, when the site was found and confirmed outside

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**BUILDING KNOWLEDGE**

**We've all done it. Driven through a town and wondered about that charming old building on the side of the road. When was it built? Who built it? Who owns it now? The Texas Historical Commission's Web site can answer all these questions and more. Key in [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us) then click on "Texas Historic Sites Atlas" to search for historic structures by county, address or name. The database includes construction dates, history, location, description and the historical significance of more than 200,000 buildings and sites.**



Victoria. The video zooms in on THC archaeologists, who explain the work in progress. The excavation can be followed by students and history buffs from throughout the world. For a firsthand look, key in [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us).

**W I L D L I F E**

Back in December, two **South American Antillean manatees** were rescued from the Maracaibo Zoo in Venezuela. After a two-month adjustment in new surroundings, the young sea cows became the newest exhibit at the privately owned **Dallas World Aquarium**, and the only ones on display in the United States. *The Dallas Morning News* reports the sea mammals, who were first rescued from fishermen's nets when they were babies, have been living in drinking troughs with two-and-a-half feet of water. Now they bask in 200,000 gallons of water, up to 18 feet deep, and have learned to swim. **Daryl Richardson**, director of the aquarium, said the manatees, who are listed as an endangered species, can grow up to 9 feet long and 1,500 pounds. After about three years, they will be released into the wild. For more info, call 214/720-2224.

**M U S E U M S**

Visitors can now relive the excitement of festival parades, dances and elaborate coronations from one of the state's longest-running events with the opening of the **Washington's Birthday Celebration Museum in Laredo**. The February event is saluted year-round with exhibits of sparkling gowns, old photos and other memorabilia from the past 103 years. Future exhibits will honor the country's first president, Native American culture and the contributions of area leaders. The 2,000-square-foot attrac-

tion is housed in La Posada Hotel/Suites at the corner of Zaragoza Street and San Agustin Avenue. Open by appointment by calling 956/722-0589. Regular operating hours coming soon.

On November 22, 1963, **Abraham Zaprunder** perched on a concrete pedestal in downtown Dallas to film the visit of **President John F. Kennedy**. His Bell & Howell home-movie camera captured the entire assassination sequence.

**? TEXAS TRIVIA**

**Which "educated and accomplished lady" was known as the "Bandit Queen"?**

Myra Maybelle Shirley graduated from Carthage Female Academy in Missouri, where she studied grammar, arithmetic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, music and deport-ment. But somewhere along the way things went sour for Belle, and she was dealt a tragic destiny. After the family moved to near Dallas in 1864, the Younger Gang and outlaw Jesse James used the Shirley home as a hideout. In 1866, Belle married desperado Jim Reed, who was killed by a deputy sheriff in Paris, Texas, in 1874. His obit read, "Soon after the Civil War he married a Miss Shirley, a highly educated and accomplished lady." In 1880, Belle married Sam Starr. The couple was soon charged with horse stealing, the first record of any lawbreaking on Belle's part, and she was dubbed the Bandit Queen. When Belle was killed in 1889, she was largely unknown. But when a 25¢ novel based loosely on her life was published the year of her death, the legends began. No doubt you've heard she was a crack shot, fearless and other such tales. But no records exist that point to Belle Starr as an accomplice in murder, cattle rustling or the robbery of stagecoaches, banks or trains.

**TEXAS TRIVIA**



**SIGNS OF LIFE** The Natural History Museum of El Paso opened its doors on January 16 as the city's newest attraction. A 30,000-

square-foot facility in Northgate Center mall presents more than 300 permanent and traveling exhibits spanning the wonders of the universe, the progression of life on earth, and the dawn of civilization. Included are treasured collections from the Royal Ontario Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, the American Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Egyptian Museum, and the national museums of Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. Call 915/545-4257 for more info.

Survivors of Mr. Zaprunder gave their last original duplicate of the famous 26-second film and its copyright, along with hundreds of related items, to **The Sixth Floor Museum** at Dealey Plaza in **Dallas**. Officials say it's the most important and most generous gift ever received. Abraham Zaprunder ordered three first-generation copies of the film when it was processed the day of the shooting. The original film and two copies are stored at the National Archives. The third copy now belongs to The Sixth Floor. The donation represents a potential windfall in licensing income, which, in part, will go toward the collection's preservation and research programs. Open daily at 411 Elm Street. Call 214/747-6660.

**E V E N T S**

Around 18 years ago, **George Strait** and his family started a

small roping event in Kingsville. It turned into a world-renowned rodeo competition that infused more than \$1 million a year into the town's economy. The *Austin American-Statesman* reports the country music star has announced he is moving the **George Strait Team Roping Classic** to the Rose Palace northwest of **San Antonio**. Strait, who lives in San Antonio, said the Alamo City is easier to reach for competitors and fans. And since he wants to focus attention on the event, he will discontinue the traditional concert held after the rodeo. This year's competition is set for July 7-8. **Joe Cisneros III**, executive director of the **Kingsville Chamber of Commerce**, said losing the event came as a blow, but that the famous ranching town would survive. Plans are already in the works to bring two youth baseball tournaments to the city in July to help offset the loss.

<b>TRAVEL CENTER</b>	<b>Month Visitors</b>	<b>Percent Variation*</b>	<b>Visitors Year-to-date</b>	<b>Percent Variation*</b>
<b>Amarillo</b>	13,956	-7.83	30,975	-1.06
<b>Anthony</b>	14,094	+10.36	34,329	+4.00
<b>Denison</b>	27,714	+20.36	65,616	+19.52
<b>Gainesville</b>	36,660	-4.49	83,862	-5.66
<b>Langtry</b>	11,547	-7.68	27,168	-2.00
<b>Laredo</b>	9,144	-14.53	23,412	-13.01
<b>Orange</b>	48,528	+0.23	117,057	-9.09
<b>Texarkana</b>	31,647	-12.03	78,474	-7.99
<b>Valley</b>	29,421	-39.44	101,145	-39.30
<b>Waskom</b>	48,558	+9.00	101,319	+6.08
<b>Wichita Falls</b>	18,693	-0.62	47,046	+0.33
<b>Capitol Complex</b>	11,052	-30.40	22,827	-30.02
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	301,014	-7.30	733,230	-10.41

	<b>This Mo.</b>	<b>Y-T-D</b>
<b>Mail Services</b>	164,645	294,276
<b>Literature Distributed at Trade Shows</b>	0	0
<b>Automated Attendant Road Condition Calls</b>	10,347	82,675

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

Internet address: [www.traveltex.com](http://www.traveltex.com)  
[www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)  
[www.dontmesswithtexas.org](http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org)

Data as of March 31, 2000  
\*Compared to last year

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