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# T E X A S Travel Log

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

## NOTICE!

We just learned that the current 512 area code will split into two geographic regions. A new **361 area code** will be activated on February 13 for the Texas Coastal Bend. A "permissive dialing period" will extend until September 18, when 361 becomes mandatory. We're already in the process of making changes in the *Texas State Travel Guide* and other TxDOT publications. Thought you might want to do the same with yours. For a comprehensive list of cities affected, key in [www.texascode.com/512](http://www.texascode.com/512).

## COMING UP

On January 1, 1993, the **Hill County Courthouse** in **Hillsboro** burned, reducing the Texas Historical Monument to a heap of ashes and a limestone shell. On March 23 of that year, Hill County native **Willie Nelson** staged "Blaze to Glory," a benefit concert that raised enough money to begin the restoration process. Six years later, the magnificent edifice stands once again as the centerpiece of the community. On April 24 Willie Nelson returns to Hillsboro with "**This Is Glory**," a final benefit featuring blues artist Mike Morgan and The Crawl, rockabilly king Jesse Dayton, rocker Wes Cunningham and Texas songwriter Pat Green. Reserved seats, \$100-150; general admission, \$25. Call the Chamber of Commerce at 1-800-HILLSBORO for more info.

**Dallas** and **Houston** are two of eight U.S. cities vying to host the **2012 Summer Olympic**

**Games.** *The Dallas Morning News* reports Dallas made its first pitch for grassroots support with an ad that appeared in the program at last month's Cotton Bowl game. Competing cities must submit formal bids to the U.S. Olympic Committee by March 2000.

In the 1930s, America's love affair with the automobile resulted in the demise of commuter trains in many parts of the country. That same attachment is ironically responsible for the return of train service between

**Fort Worth** and **Dallas.** *The Dallas Morning News* reports the Northern Texas Traction Company's Interurban electric train line that ran between Fort Worth and Dallas ceased operating in 1934 as people became more reliant on their own cars. Now overcrowded highways and congested freeways have many opting for public transportation, leaving their vehicles behind. When the **Trinity Railway**

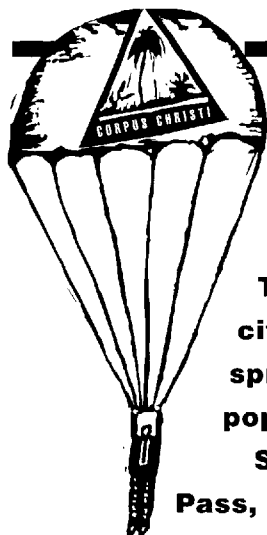
**Express** hits the tracks in the fall of 2000, commuters can hop aboard a modern diesel train for a 34-mile ride from the old Texas and Pacific Passenger Station in Fort Worth to Union Station in Dallas. In the meantime, a dozen or so volunteers are working feverishly to restore a few old cars from the early days that will become part of an electric rail service in Fort Worth. Officials hope the vintage trains will be restored in time for use in the ceremonial opening of the modern line. For more information, call **Lee Lavell**, Fort Worth Transportation Authority, at 817/820-0247.

reports that in its **silver anniversary year**, the airport serves an average of 165,000 passengers daily from 122 gates. An estimated 3.9 million international passengers a year fly to and from 27 foreign destinations. With an \$11.2-billion economic impact, the airport is responsible for creating 211,000 jobs. And sitting on 17,800 acres, it still has plenty of room to grow. Sometime next year, D/FW is expected to replace Chicago's O'Hare as the busiest airport in the world.

**Grapevine** began offering its own brand of public transportation with the recent arrival of the **Olde Tyme Carriage Company.** Every Friday and Saturday night (weather permitting), visitors can board horse-drawn carriages at the gazebo on Main Street for nostalgic rides through the city's Historic District. \$20 per ride for up to four people; \$5 for each additional person. Call 817/925-4993.

## PLACES

On January 13, 1974, **Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport** opened with four terminals and 66 gates in anticipation of serving 25,000 passengers a day. *The Dallas Morning News*



**DO DROP IN** Mark your calendar for April 11-15, when Texas travel professionals will converge at the **Omni Bayfront Hotel in Corpus Christi** for the **44th Annual Texas Travel Counselors Conference.** Travel counselors and other folks from TxDOT, AAA, city C&VBs and Texas Parks and Wildlife gather each spring for hospitality training, guest speakers and the popular **Texas Travel Industry Association Travel Fair.** Study tours in **Corpus Christi, Port Aransas, Aransas Pass, Rockport-Fulton and Kingsville** will give counselors a firsthand look at area beaches, attractions and hotels.

**For details, call TxDOT's Travel Services office at 512/486-5800.**

**For info on the TTIA Travel Fair, call 512/476-4472.**

TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

**Star Station One**, a multi-year exhibition focusing on the International Space Station, debuted at 62 museums, science centers and planetariums nationwide. **Space Center Houston** and **The Science Place in Dallas** were tapped to become part of this impressive public education program. The exhibit will parallel construction of the International Space Station and the scientific research that will take place aboard its orbiting laboratories. Each of the 62 venues will receive a high-fidelity display model of the space station and a hands-on, build-as-you-go model. Descriptive and interpretive materials will focus on the assembly sequence and the scientific and research aspects of the International Space Station program. Release of materials will be synchronized with actual construction and research schedules. The kickoff of Star Station One coincides with the first element launches of the International Space Station at Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakstan, Russia, and at Kennedy Space Center, Florida. Call Space Center Houston at 281/244-2105, or The Science Place at 214/428-5555.

The **Fort Worth Zoo** is celebrating the **birth of an**

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Ann Kelton, Editor  
Contributing Editors: Jane McNally, John Russell, Mike Talley  
Layout: Jane Sharpe/Sharpe Design

**DENISON TIC** More than once during his years of travel counseling, manager Joe Paz has been asked, "How do they get the deer to cross the road at the yellow sign?" Straight off a list entitled "Joe's Favorite Odd Questions" we also read, "Why are there interstate highways in Hawaii?" and "Why are there flotation devices under plane seats instead of para-

chutes?" So, Joe. Exactly how do they get deer to cross the road?

**GAINESVILLE TIC** Jack and Viola Carter of Oklahoma stopped in on their way to West Texas to visit relatives in Kermit. Manager Cheryl Cash said Viola was quick to point out they weren't just any old visitors, but the proud parents of Cynthia Kosel, special projects

manager at *Texas Highways* magazine in Austin.

**WASKOM TIC** Have you heard about Heard? In between running the TIC and overseeing construction of the new center, manager Melissa Heard met soul mate Randy Wilson. Melissa said wedding bells could ring as early as June.

**elephant**, the first in the zoo's 90-year history. Rasha, a 25-year-old Asian elephant, became the mother of a 259-pound female calf on December 16. The birth was one of five captive Asian elephant births in the U.S. in 1998 and a major triumph for the highly endangered species. Elephants residing at the Fort Worth Zoo are part of an international Species Survival Plan. Officials hope to move Rasha and baby to a public viewing area sometime this month. Open daily at 1989 Colonial Parkway. Call 817/871-7050 for more info.

niently located across from Bayfront Plaza Convention Center and between Heritage Park and the Asian Cultures Museum. The center serves as a launching point to some of the city's hottest attractions, houses the C&VB's 1-800 phone lines and offers meeting planners a full range of convention services. Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at 1823 N. Chaparral Street. Call 1-800-678-6232 for more info.

Greater Houston C&VB recently created **Dine Around Houston** to promote this reputation at home. Monthly restaurant tours help city dwellers and visitors discover the superb assortment of cuisine in the nation's fourth largest city. Each tour focuses on a different dining area, with cost covering transportation, food and tips. For a 1999 schedule or to book your space, call 713/621-2504.

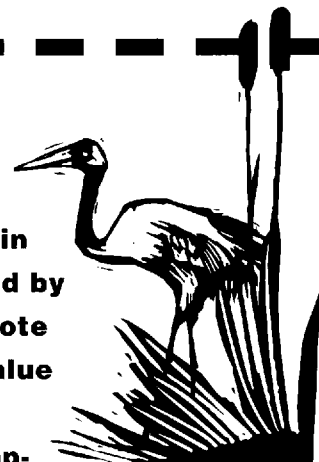
Houston is recognized nationally as a great restaurant city. The

If you're wild about Austin and want to show it, T-shirts, caps, magnets and other souvenirs are

The **Fort Worth C&VB** opened its newest **visitor information center** at the entrance of Will Rogers Memorial Center. The center stands in the midst of the Cultural District, where more than three million people a year converge for museum exhibitions, the Fort Worth Stock Show, cattle and horse shows, and other special events. A full-time manager and a host of volunteers provide information on attractions, hotels, restaurants and transportation. Open daily at 3401 W. Lancaster Avenue. For information, call 817/882-8588.

A restored depot from the days of the Tex-Mex Railroad has opened its doors as a **visitor information center** for the **Corpus Christi C&VB**. The downtown facility is conve-

**WALK THE WALK** The **Demonstration Garden and Wetlands Pond at the Texas 35 rest area in Rockport** was developed by the community to promote understanding of the value of plants as a natural resource and the development of low maintenance landscapes that provide food for birds. Visitors can learn about area birds, plants and wildflowers at 19 stops along the new .8-mile Interpretive Nature Trail that leads to **Fulton Beach Road**, where freshwater enters into the saltwater bay. For more info, call 512/729-6445.



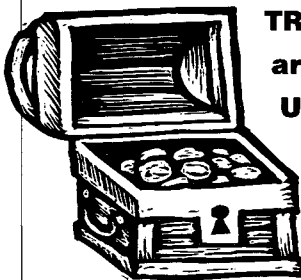
just a click-click away. The new **Austin C&VB Shop Austinet** store offers advanced on-line shopping, complete with product photos, secure credit card transactions, and the ability to send customized notes with gifts from the store. Whether you're in Austin or Boston, London or Rome, key in [www.austintexas.org](http://www.austintexas.org) for a shopping spree in the Live Music Capital of the World.

A major new exhibit at the **Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center** at Big Bend Ranch State Park in **Lajitas** opened December 5. **Una Tierra—One Land** interprets 570 million years of geological history and the five biological landscapes of the Chihuahuan Desert. The exhibit addresses 44,000 square miles of the desert region, including parks and protected lands on both sides of the Rio Grande. **Una Tierra** is the result of an international partnership of state and national park experts in Texas and Mexico. For details, call 915/229-3416.

A magical oasis in the Chihuahuan Desert awaits overnight and daytime guests at the recently reopened **Chinati Hot Springs** near **Ruidosa** in Presidio County. The nonprofit resort and educational center offers monthly environmental and health programs in a serene atmosphere. Thus far the facility has hosted workshops on desert plants, photography and African drumming. Accommodations include a guest room with a hot mineral tub, adobe cabins, group rooms and camping. Visitors can enjoy the luxury of private hot mineral baths or take to the creek flowing with cool mineral water. In the future, Chinati will add meeting facilities, more guest rooms to allow for larger groups and possibly invite healers and artists

for extended stays. Closed to day visitors on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Call 915/229-4165 for reservations and information.

Panoramic views in **Big Bend National Park** are often obstructed by a cloudy haze of pollution. The *Austin American-Statesman* reports the United States and Mexico have agreed to conduct a \$6-million study, financed by the U.S., on the extent and sources of the pollution. A 1996 study points to a



**TREASURE TROVE** This month, archaeologists at Texas A&M University in College Station will begin reconstruction of French explorer La Salle's ship *La Belle*. The ship, which ran aground off Matagorda Peninsula in the 17th Century, was found in 1995. The Texas Historical Commission has recovered one-third of the ship's hull and close to one million artifacts, including a Roman coin, dated 69 A.D. Artifacts will be on display within the next five years. The *La Belle* conservation project represents the largest of its kind in North America. For updates, call 512/463-7096.

**TEXAS TRIVIA**  
Which empresario established French colonization in Texas?

You don't hear much about early French settlement. The Spaniards and Native Texans saw to that. We all know about La Salle - the bold fellow who in 1685 planted the French flag in Spanish territory, then was murdered by his own men. Poor guy. Enter Henri Castro, born in France of Portuguese-Jewish descent, who, after the fall of Napoleon, immigrated to the U.S. On his return to France in 1838, he became a partner in the banking house of Lafitte and Company, where he was active in trying to negotiate a loan for the Republic of Texas. Out of gratitude, President Sam Houston appointed Castro consul general for Texas. In 1842 Castro entered into a contract with the Texas government to settle a colony on the Medina River. Between 1843 and 1847 he chartered 27 ships, which brought to Texas 485 families and 457 single men. The villages of Castrowille, Quith, Vandenburg and D'Hanis were born. As empresario, Henri Castro was second only to Stephen F. Austin in his success. The education, culture and business ability of his French minority helped tame the Texas frontier.



variety of causes, including coal-fired electric stations on both sides of the border. The recent agreement reaffirms a 1993 bilateral accord to address the haze, but does not bind either country to pollution-reduction measures. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency credits environmental groups in Texas for encouraging officials in Mexico and the U.S. to address the Big Bend issue.

**FACES**

**Ann Bracher Vaughan** made her way to the sunny Texas coastline on November 30 to take the reins as executive director of the **Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce Tourist and Convention Bureau**. Vaughan was selected by the bureau's board of directors after a three-month search. She brings to Port A an extensive background in public relations, economic development, marketing and promotion, grant administration and the arts.

Vaughan was a member of the Uvalde City Council from 1984 to 1986, former president of Financial Women International, and former board member and president of the Uvalde Area Development Foundation and Uvalde Chamber of Commerce. Give her a call at 512/749-5919.

**THC**

The Texas Historical Commission has designated **Gatesville, Gladewater, Shiner, Taylor** and **Whitewright** as **1999 Official Main Street Cities**. A Main Street resource team will offer short- and long-term recommendations for rehabilitating buildings, attracting new businesses and promoting tourism. Each city will receive technical assistance, design assistance and training. Since its inception in 1981, the successful downtown revitalization program has helped 125 communities. For information, call 512/463-6092.



**Texas Department of Transportation**

TRAVEL DIVISION  
P.O. BOX 149249 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78714-9249

**SECOND NOTICE!**

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 (8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, Central Time)  
 Internet address: <http://traveltex.com>  
<http://www.texashighways.com>  
<http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org>

TRAVEL CENTER	Month	Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation
Amarillo	7,692	+11.97	7,692	+11.97	
Anthony	10,134	-28.45	10,134	-28.45	
Denison	16,086	+6.28	16,086	+6.28	
Gainesville	24,120	-5.10	24,120	-5.10	
Langtry	7,005	-10.05	7,005	-10.05	
Laredo	8,643	-40.68	8,643	-40.68	
Orange	40,002	+42	40,002	+42	
Texarkana	24,654	-16.81	24,654	-16.81	
Valley	54,384	+7.51	54,384	+7.51	
Waskom	24,021	-34.45	24,021	-34.45	
Wichita Falls	12,819	+12.92	12,819	+12.92	
Capitol Complex	7,659	+19.63	7,659	+19.63	
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	237,219	-8.19	237,219	-8.19	

Y-T-D	This Mo.	Y-T-D
	49,431	49,431
	3,600	3,600
	120,252	120,252