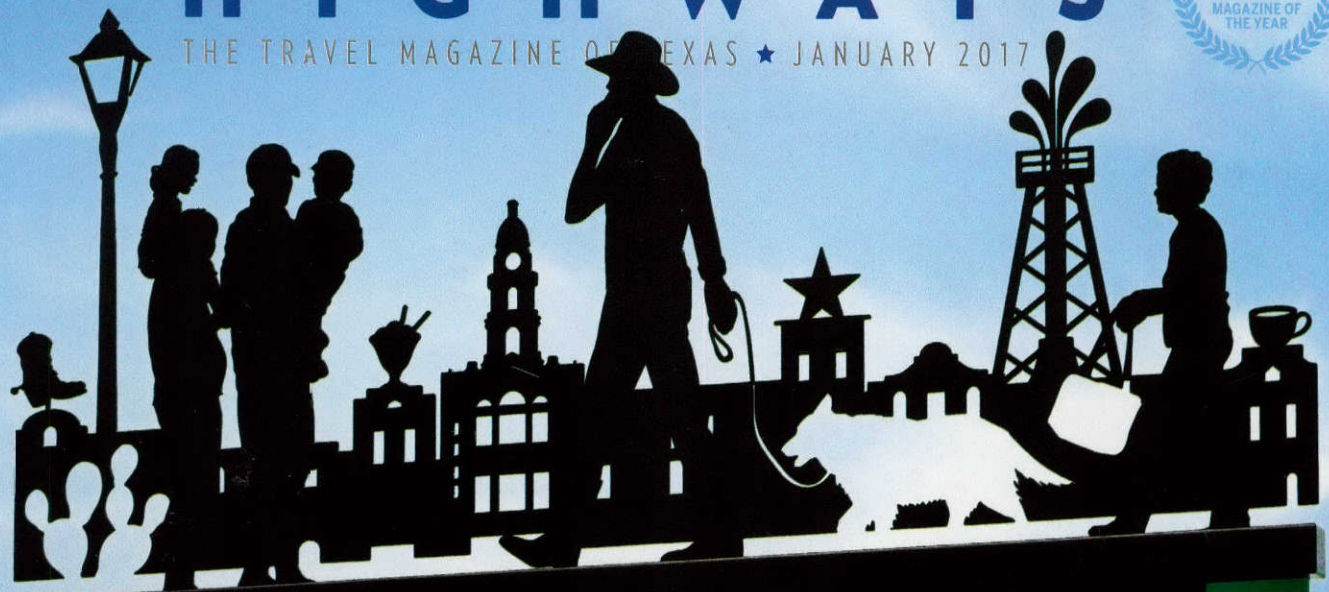


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EDITOR'S NOTE



The Heart *and* Soul of Town

TO KICK OFF 2017, WE'RE TAKING a look at some of Texas' classic main streets—avenues from Harlingen to Amarillo that offer concentrations of history, noteworthy dining, intriguing architecture, souvenir-worthy shopping and other travel treasures.

We owe you, our readers, a big “thank you” for weighing in about your favorites. We received hundreds of emails and notes praising streets like Boerne's Main Street, which received kudos for its “locally owned shops and restaurants,” and Broadway Avenue in Tyler, which one reader described as “the street that brings everyone to our downtown square, which is the heart and soul of the city.”

Though there was no clear consensus

about the “best” street, we noticed some trends: Readers responded favorably to historic preservation, amenities like shade trees and park benches for people-watching, and a mix of shopping and dining opportunities. Turn to page 34 for our in-depth coverage of some of Texas' most vibrant thoroughfares, then dig into our stories on fried pies, the not-so-sleepy town of San Saba, the rebirth of Dallas' Deep Ellum neighborhood, Texas prison bands of the 20th Century, and more.

Happy New Year.

LORI MOFFATT, *Interim Editor*

In towns such as Denton (shown here), the courthouse square still draws revelers and sightseers.



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JANUARY

26

Fried Pie—Oh My!

Fried pies have been a Texas treat since cattle-driving cowboys of the 1800s packed the hand-held sweets in their saddlebags. Around North Texas, numerous bakeries carry on the tradition with fried pies worthy of celebration.

Story by **JUNE NAYLOR**
Photographs by **ERIC W. POHL**

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Our Favorite Main Streets

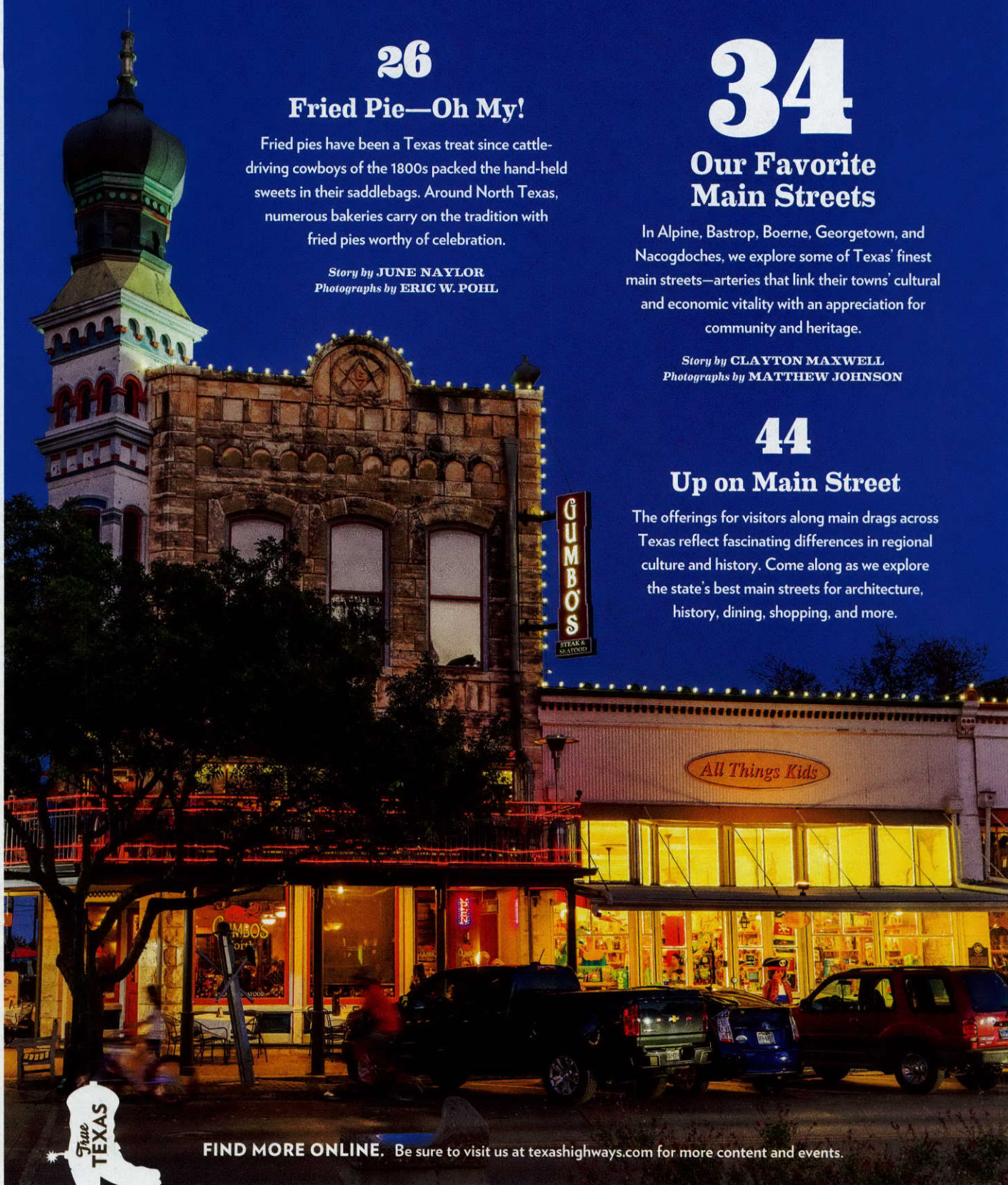
In Alpine, Bastrop, Boerne, Georgetown, and Nacogdoches, we explore some of Texas' finest main streets—arteries that link their towns' cultural and economic vitality with an appreciation for community and heritage.

Story by **CLAYTON MAXWELL**
Photographs by **MATTHEW JOHNSON**

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Up on Main Street

The offerings for visitors along main drags across Texas reflect fascinating differences in regional culture and history. Come along as we explore the state's best main streets for architecture, history, dining, shopping, and more.



FIND MORE ONLINE. Be sure to visit us at texashighways.com for more content and events.

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JANUARY

Super City

HOUSTON HOSTS THE SUPER BOWL

With Super Bowl tickets in hand, you either have the money to live it up in Houston or you emptied your entertainment budget for the experience. Either way, we'll share options across the economic spectrum for enjoying your time in Texas' largest city.

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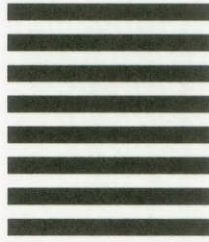
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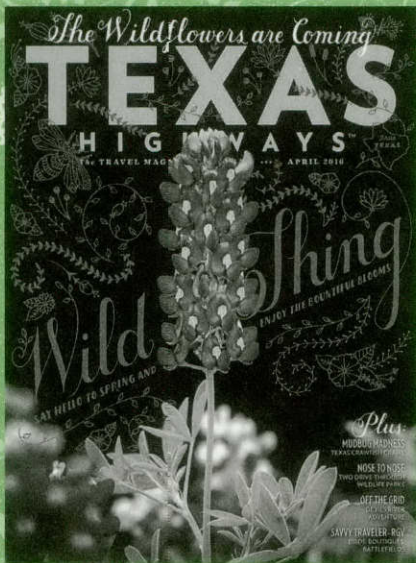
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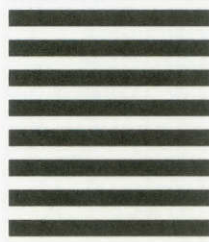
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JANUARY



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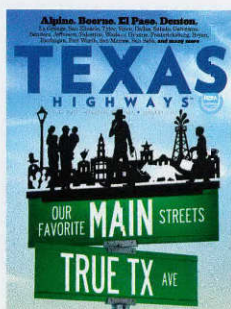
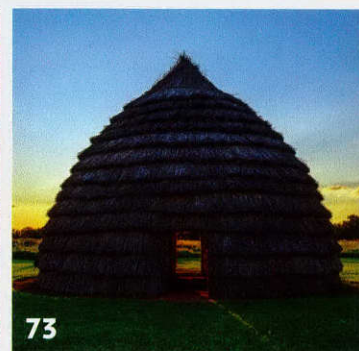
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Illustration by Austin-based Matthew Baldwin of MOLO and Scott Wetterschneider of Shinbone Creative.



SCENIC ROUTE

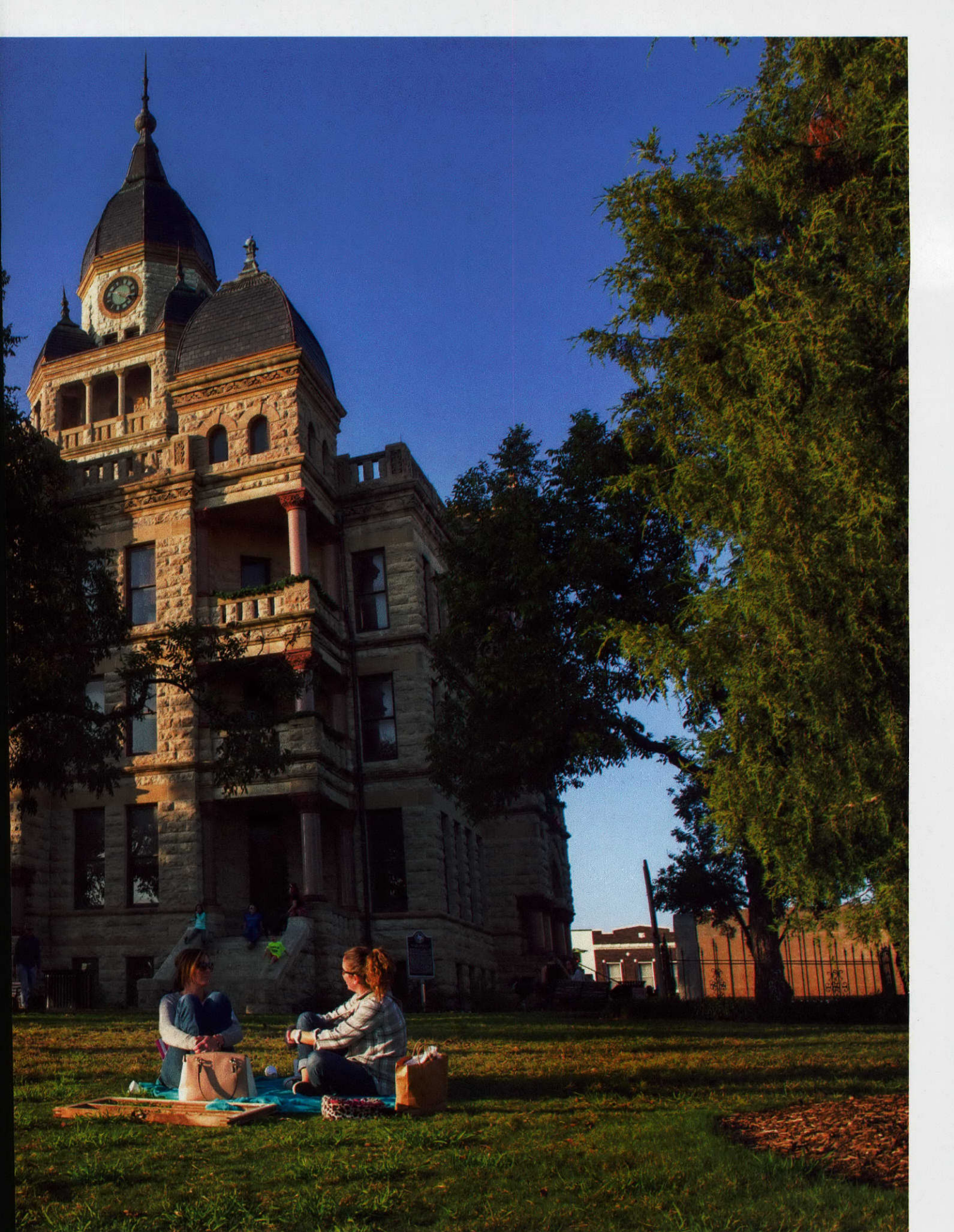
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THE DENTON COUNTY

Courthouse-on-the-Square sits east of the University of North Texas in downtown Denton. The 1896 Romanesque Revival structure, with influences from Second Empire style, was constructed of limestone, pink granite, and red and tan sandstone. Today, the building houses a museum with photographs and artifacts recalling Denton County's early days. For more information on the courthouse, visit cityofdenton.com/visitors/denton-history/courthouse-on-the-square.

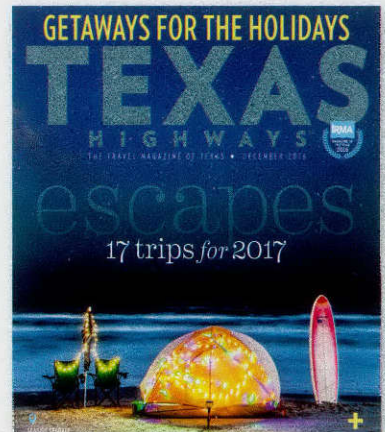




GOT
SOMETHING
TO SAY?

Wish I were there!

PAULA WARREN, TEXARKANA, ARKANSAS

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MONTH

I had a blast at the National Videogame Museum [November] and I'm not even into video games! Worth the trip!

JAMIE CROSBY
TUCKER,
AUSTIN

Think I gained a pound just looking at that Bevers chicken-fried steak picture [November]—a pound well worth it, I'm sure.

JULLEE GREEN



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Musical Pioneers

How can you write an article about Texas music [December] with no mention of the Vaughan brothers, one of whom is arguably one of the greatest guitar players in the history of this country?

Carl Smith, Garland

The absence of any reference to Harry James, the legendary trumpeter and bandleader of the swing era, was disappointing. James was a product of Beaumont.

Al Christensen, Granbury

Recipe Appeal

Funny story about heirloom recipes [November]: My ex-mother-in-law's cranberry bread was written in faded ink on an old index card and passed down through the family. After I was no longer part of that family, I missed that cranberry bread so much that I called my ex and asked her to read the recipe to me over the phone. Not

an easy thing to do, but I loved that bread. So, short story long, when I bought the Ocean Spray raw cranberries, there it was—the exact same recipe printed on the bag!

Richard Rigdon, Facebook

Girl Power

Once we spent a week with 21 Girl Scouts tent-camping between Pedernales Falls State Park, LBJ in Stonewall, and Inks Lake State Park. We went to Longhorn Cavern and Buchanan Dam, and then came back north to Dinosaur Valley State Park in Glen Rose. It was an amazing,

memorable trip. Those Girl Scouts are now in their early 20s and still talk about the trip today.

**Angela Walker Bryant,
Palo Pinto**

Directional Debate

There is no bigger irritant to a true Texan than when someone writes an article about a West Texas ranch and they are no more in West Texas than the moon! Graham [December] is not in West Texas. West Texas means west of the Pecos River.

Robbie Ann Burns, Alpine

READER'S
FAVORITE

More to San Angelo

You missed a couple of San Angelo icons in the November *Daytripper*. *M.L. Leddy's* has been on the scene for nearly 100 years. Their custom boots may take a year or more for delivery. My husband says the comfort is worth it! Another is *Cactus Bookstore*, and last but not least, *Eggemeyer's General Store* is a really fun shopping experience.

COOKIE MCCALL, Coppel

The San Angelo Visitor Center, 418 W. Ave. B, opens Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., and Sunday, 12 p.m.-4 p.m.
Call 325/655-4136; www.visitsanangelo.org.

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DRIVE

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Roll-and-Rock

Lace up your skates for
roller derby across Texas

story by Donna Marie Miller



WHAT BETTER WAY TO ESCAPE the winter doldrums than to watch outrageously dressed athletes on roller-skates race around a track, shoving and hitting each other along the way?

Roller derby leagues across Texas start their seasons with the new year, featuring energetic “bouts,” live rock bands, food and beer, and hundreds of fans—some dressed in crazy costumes—cheering on the skaters.

More than 15 roller derby leagues—most of them made up of women—call Texas home, from Beaumont to Stephenville and Austin, where a group of women revived the sport in the early 2000s and sparked a national trend with a cult following. The thrill of watching roller-skaters compete against one another, along with gravity and speed, attracts fans to the sport.

“For me it’s a lifestyle, it’s a family, it’s a sport,”

“I thought, ‘Oh, how hard can it be to hit people on roller-skates?’ Little did I know that it was extremely hard.”

says 26-year-old Kelsie Harlow, alias “Roxxi Revolver,” captain of the Hellcats in the Austin-based Texas Roller Derby league.

Texas Roller Derby bouts take place on a banked wooden track inside Austin’s Palmer Events Center, just south of downtown near Lady Bird Lake. The competitors—all women from age 21 to 40—dress theatrically in fishnet tights, short shorts, skimpy tops, and bold costume makeup.

Reflecting the sport’s irreverent attitude, the players compete under pseudonyms. Kate Robinson, who derived her “Hermione Danger” nickname from the Harry Potter book series, skates for the Holy Rollers in Texas Roller Derby. She took up derby after playing tennis at the University of Oklahoma.

“I thought, ‘Oh, how hard can it be to hit people on roller-skates?’ Little did I know that it was extremely hard,” Robinson says.

The Hellcats, in pink, take on the Cherry Bombs, in green, at the Palmer Events Center in Austin.

Each bout consists of two 30-minute halves with a 20-minute intermission. Five skaters from each of the two teams compete against one another in short “jams” that last 60 seconds. Players start on two lines—one for the “blockers” and another for the “jammers,” who score points by lapping the opposition on the track. Whether banked or flat, the oval tracks extend about 160 feet long. Eight referees assign penalties and eject aggressive rules violators.

No one wearing skates escapes bruises or rink rash during the bouts. Kate Tweedy, a retired skater also known as “Kate or Dye,” still competes occasionally for all-star bouts, but says her mother has never understood her roller derby obsession. Serious injuries often occur; Tweedy once broke her humerus—the bone between the shoulder and elbow.

Roller derby traces its roots to 1935, when Portland, Oregon, resident Leo Seltzer started the Transcontinental Roller Derby, a series of grueling, 3,000-mile races on an oval track with two-person, co-ed teams that raced all day.

In 1960, Seltzer’s son, Jerry Seltzer, took over the sport, which had developed into a contact sport on a banked track, and broadcast the games on TV stations across the United States and



TEXAS ROLLER DERBY

The Texas Roller Derby league season starts January 24 at the Palmer Events Center in Austin, www.txrd.com. The Texas Rollergirls league seasons starts February 13 at The Shed in east Austin, www.texasrollergirls.org.

Canada. Jerry Seltzer still attends Rollercan, the annual roller-derby convention held every July in Las Vegas.

“The concept of the ‘jam’ came about when a skater would want to pick up distance on another skater and would suddenly break from the pack, and come around the track to gain a lap on the others,” Jerry explains in a phone interview.

Roller derby had fallen off the map by the 1970s. Television shows in the 1980s and ’90s attempted to revive the sport, but it didn’t last. Then in 2001, a group of Austin women began practicing the sport at Austin’s Skateworld, followed by bouts at Playland Skate Center.

By 2003, Austin had become known as the home of resurrected roller derby, this time as a predominately female sport. In that year, the Austin skaters split into two leagues, Texas Rollergirls and Texas Roller Derby, citing “philosophical differences.” Texas Roller Derby raised funds to buy a banked track, while the Texas Rollergirls competed on a flat track. Both leagues have thrived ever since.

The Austin revival has contributed to a global count of more than 1,500 roller derby leagues and 35,000 teams in 40 countries, according to the Women’s Flat Track Derby Association and the Roller Derby Coalition of Leagues. Primarily self-owned and operated, most of the leagues compete on flat tracks because it’s more expensive to build and maintain a banked track.

Films, documentaries, and books have all contributed to roller derby’s mystique. In 2006, A&E Network broadcast the reality TV

show *Rollergirls*, chronicling the Texas Rollergirls league; and in 2007, former Texas Rollergirl Melissa “Melicious” Joulwan published *Rollergirl: Totally True Tales from the Track*. Hollywood took notice in 2009 with the film *Whip It*, a fictional Texas roller derby tale directed by Drew Barrymore and starring herself, Ellen Page, and Kristen Wiig.

At the Palmer Events Center, the Texas Roller Derby league delivers the sport in a bawdy spectacle that might best be rated as “PG-13.” Cross-dressing male cheerleaders called “The Flamers” cheer on the skaters, and a “penalty mistress” spins a wheel for penalized players with punishments such as “arm wrestle,” “long jump,” “judge’s choice,” “two-lap duel,” and “pillow fight.”

“I really pulled from drag queen culture, and some of the other girls pulled from punk rock cultures,” says April Ritzenthaler, aka “La Muerta,” one of the Austinites who revived the sport in 2001 and helped shape its image.

At the Texas Roller Derby league bouts, fans sit in portable bleachers and folding chairs or stand along the track’s periphery. Two announcers call play-by-play over a public-address system as large monitors display the action.

Nicole Foree, aka “Mardi Brawl,” a play-by-play announcer who also skates for the Holy Rollers, warns that roller derby can be habit-forming for fans and athletes alike. “Once you start skating, it’s kind of addictive,” she says. “It’s an incredible workout, and there’s so much strategy to it.”



FIND MORE ONLINE

See a full list of Texas roller derby leagues at texashighways.com.

Eyes on Emory

Bald eagles, history, and comfort food

story by Jan Adamson



LOCATED BETWEEN THE ANGLING HOTSPOTS OF Lake Tawakoni and Lake Fork, the northeast Texas town of Emory is like a favorite secret fishing hole for fishermen, who stop by to fuel up on comfort food and stroll the quiet courthouse square. The lakes and their abundant wildlife, including bass, catfish, and crappie, also draw a different and notably iconic type of angler—bald eagles.

Dozens of bald eagles call Rains County home, which prompted the Texas Legislature to name the county the Eagle Capital of Texas in 1995. Emory, the county seat, celebrates America's national bird annually with the Rains County Eagle Fest, taking place January 28-29 this year.

The festival includes eagle-viewing bus and barge tours of Lake Fork, where birders look for eagles on the hunt—they can fly at speeds of 30 miles per hour and dive as quickly as 100 mph in pursuit of fish—and for their large nests in the trees surrounding the lake. Along with birding tours, Eagle Fest also showcases

organizations that shelter and rehabilitate injured or orphaned hawks, owls, eagles, falcons, and vultures.

“The bird demonstrations offer a firsthand view of eagles and hawks in flight, which is amazing to see as they land on the ground right next to you, close enough to touch,” says Keeley Roan, Emory’s director of economic development.

Some eagles live here year-round, while others spend the winter here and head north during the summer. Similarly, Emory is a worthy getaway whether you’re visiting for Eagle Fest or at any time of year. As a resident of Canton, just 25 miles south, I like to visit with friends to enjoy the town’s heritage, comfort food, and fun boutiques.

The 1908 Rains County Courthouse anchors the downtown square and sets the stage for Emory’s historically rich atmosphere. Emory was named for Emory Rains, a delegate to the Texas Convention of 1845, which approved the state’s annexation to the United States. Rains also sponsored Texas’ first Homestead Act and helped carve Rains County out of Wood, Hunt, and Hopkins counties in 1870. The courthouse, which replaced one that burned down in 1879, is a Classical Revival-style building shaped like a Maltese cross with four projecting, two-story wings and a domed crown of reinforced tin slate. Its ginger color comes from the local clay, the source material for a brick factory in the early 1900s.

About a mile from the square, Emory Heritage Park (open by appointment) chronicles local history with an exhibition of early homes, businesses, and a church. The centerpiece is the 1912 George and Florence Lockett House, a two-story farmhouse where the Locketts raised 18 children. The home is furnished as if the massive family has just stepped out. Crystal stemware stands on the decorative buffet in the dining room, and a 1927 Home Comfort stove occupies the kitchen.

Also at Heritage Park, visitors can

The Cinnamon Bear Bakery is a tasty stop for treats like cinnamon rolls and blueberry cream-cheese coffee cake.



EMORY

is at the intersection of US 69 and Texas 19, about 60 miles east of Dallas. For tourism information, call the Rains County Chamber of Commerce at **903/473-3913**; www.visitrainscounty.com.

see the 1930 Shady Grove Missionary Baptist Church and the 1920 Point Service Station and Point Cotton Gin scales building. Other structures in the park include a bandstand, a steel jail cell, and a replica of the *Rains County Leader's* 1887 office, including a printing press and pieces of moveable type.

Emory's restaurants cater to classic Texas tastes. When the front door opens at Y'all Come Back Cafe, all heads swivel to see if the newest visitor is a friend from down the street. There's no gourmet fare here, but if you want meatloaf, a chicken-fried steak, or a plate of biscuits and gravy,

you'll be just fine. Just ask the regulars who congregate at the "Table of Knowledge."

"It's where the old geezers gather to talk about the weather, cows, and hay," owner Opal Baker says. "Y'all Come Back is a great place because we're a big family. The waitresses know everybody, and they know their families."

Another tasty stop is the Cinnamon Bear Bakery, which bakes treats like blueberry cream-cheese coffee cake, as well as kolaches and various breads. My favorites are the banana bread and the moist cinnamon rolls.

"The cinnamon rolls are made with a sweet yeast dough and are filled with butter, cinnamon, and sugar," says owner Tammy Kulp. "They are rolled up and iced when they come out of the oven."

In the winter, two welcome stops are Reka's Rise and Shine Coffee Co., which keeps the town caffeinated, and a Sweet Affair, a café serving

delectable soups and sandwiches.

If I have time to linger past lunch, I take a moment or two to browse through shops like Thrifty Chicks. The store features repurposed and redesigned furnishings and decorative items, as well as clothing. If I don't walk out with something new for my house, at least I leave with a new design idea or two.

It doesn't take much of an excuse for me to claim an hour or two off to share lunch with a friend in Emory. Just like the fishermen and the bald eagles, I'll keep coming back. **L**



RAINS COUNTY EAGLE FEST,

Jan. 28-29, features birding tours, raptor demonstrations, and food and craft booths. Call **903/473-3913**; www.visitrainscounty.com/eagle-fest-2017.



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Uncovering an Urban Relic

Houston's Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern

story by **Jennifer Babisak**

I'M HUDDLED WITH A HALF-DOZEN STRANGERS in Houston, shouting into the darkness. The echo, which turns our calls into an eerie, multi-tonal melody of high-pitched peaks and low moans, stretches for 17 seconds.

Though disconcerting, the scene is more magnificent than scary. Underneath a bustling section of Texas' largest city, we're touring the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern—an 87,500-square-foot architectural relic that served as a City of Houston underground drinking water reservoir for 80 years.

Now decommissioned and opened to the public for guided tours, the Cistern allows visitors to walk into these hidden depths, surrounded by concrete walls, dim strings of LED lights, and strategically placed emergency exits. But the stars of the show are the hundreds of 25-foot support columns. To landscape

Once designers glimpsed those stunning rows of columns inside the abandoned reservoir, they quickly halted its demolition.

architect Kevin Shanley of the firm SWA, who was the lead designer of Buffalo Bayou Park, the columns invited a comparison to Istanbul's Basilica Cistern; hence the new name.

Built in 1926, the reservoir was constructed in response to an 1878 fire that dealt a major blow to the Houston economy. In its aftermath, city leaders realized that they needed a more reliable source of water, both for firefighting and drinking. A series of missteps in water procurement led to critters in pipes, a sinking city from overuse of groundwater, and ultimately a 1904 Supreme Court ruling prohibiting the use of bayou water for the city water supply. After 50 years of folly, the reservoir opened and remained in use until 2004, when it sprung an irreparable leak. The reservoir was decommissioned in 2007.

The key to the Cistern's rebirth as a tourist attraction lies around us. Here, you'll now find 160-acre Buffalo Bayou Park, which was completed in 2015 and now buzzes with food trucks, a concert lawn, a nature playground, and bicycle and paddlecraft rentals. Located between Memorial Drive and Allen Parkway near downtown Houston, the urban setting originally lacked sufficient parking spaces, and developers with the Buffalo Bayou Partnership considered the abandoned water reservoir as a site for a parking garage.

However, once designers glimpsed those stunning rows of columns inside the abandoned reservoir, they realized that the site's historical and architectural importance outshone its potential for parking spaces, and they quickly halted its demolition.

"We discovered this incredible, magical site and decided we should treat it as an architectural relic," says Anne Olson, president of Buffalo Bayou Partnership. But first, Olson consulted with architecture and engineering firm Page to determine the feasibility of transforming the relic into a park attraction with public access.

Page Senior Principal Larry Speck

likened his initial descent into the cistern to discovering an ancient ruin. "Once we saw the space, we were hooked, and we knew we had to figure out a way to incorporate it into the park, and in a way that would keep it as intact as possible," he says.

To bring the space up to code and allow public access, Speck and his team approached the project conservatively, preserving the industrial beauty and haunting sparseness of the space. They added a ground-level entranceway, dim interior lights, and a six-foot-wide walkway with LED-illuminated guardrails around the perimeter of the space.

Visitors enter through that winding ground-level entranceway. The catwalk is the only part of the space accessible to visitors. Narrow stairs descend to the bottom of the Cistern, but those are only used by engineers and maintenance personnel.

Walking along the perimeter of the

Cistern, I feel a drop of water on my head. Looking to the bottom of the Cistern, I wonder if I'm imagining things. It certainly looks like a shimmer of water reflecting from the base of the room, and our tour guide affirms my observation.

Our guide says that engineers left six inches of water at the bottom of the space, reckoning it best for the space's structural integrity, as it had held water for eight decades. The sheen of water also contributes to the overall atmosphere, creating brilliant reflections that visually lengthen the columns.

"My favorite thing about the Cistern is that thin layer of water at the bottom; it's perfectly still and reflects the whole room completely," Speck says. "It doubles the scale of the space, and at the same time, makes you feel like you are in an M. C. Escher drawing, where it isn't clear what is up and what is down. It adds tremendous mystery and intrigue."



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(Click on "Cistern Tours").

Since the Cistern opened to the public in May 2016, thousands of visitors have observed that mystery and intrigue. And many more will flock to the space in the future with Buffalo Bayou Partnership's curated program of changing art installations.

The Cistern has quickly claimed status as an international attraction, drawing both visitors and artists from around the globe. And for Texans, the attraction affirms that there's little need to travel far to witness history's iconic architectural achievements beneath our feet. 📌

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Pancho Villa's Favorite Street

Shopping on South El Paso Street

text by Clayton Maxwell

EVERYONE LOVES A GOOD STORY, PARTICULARLY when it involves Pancho Villa, gunslingers, and border crossings. Such is the legend-soaked history of South El Paso Street in El Paso. Here, Pancho Villa once entertained admirers at the long-gone Roma Hotel, sharpshooters like the lawman Dallas Stoudenmire once gunned down four bad guys in five seconds, and jumbo speakers now pump Mexican hip-hop and Norteño tunes from the many stores serving shoppers up from Mexico for the day.

Dating to the 1800s, South El Paso is the oldest street in town, as well as the main thoroughfare linking downtown El Paso to the Paso del Norte International Bridge, the great concrete arc that shuttles thousands of people and cars between the United States and Mexico each day. Although the sunbaked adobe dwellings and loose cattle that once populated this dusty street have long been replaced by pavement and 21st-Century five-and-dimes, it is still the first strip many folks see upon entering the United States for the first time.

Dating to the 1800s, South El Paso is the oldest street in town, as well as the main thoroughfare linking downtown El Paso to the Paso del Norte International Bridge.

No legend on South El Paso is quite as weird as that of Pancho Villa's amputated trigger finger. Years ago, I'd heard about a pawnshop that claimed to own Villa's dismembered forefinger, priced at \$9,500—Dave's Casa de Empeños. When I road-tripped to El Paso recently to meet my friend Luis, a fellow traveler with his own lively tales of crossing borders, it seemed only appropriate that we seek out the alleged trigger finger.

Our quest is easy enough: As soon as we hit South El Paso Street, a 10-minute walk from our hip rooms at the Hotel Indigo, we see Dave's. With its neon red signs in both English and Spanish and a life-size singing Elvis statue out front, it's hard to miss. Dave's pawnshop, it turns out, is housed in the 1882 Montgomery Building; it is El Paso's only surviving false-front building, an architectural style emblematic of the Old West.

Luis immediately spots the finger in the window—gnarled and gray in a hammered bronze box next to shelves crammed with jewelry, its longish fingernail still intact. A typed message in a wood frame next to it explains that this is indeed the forefinger of a “notorious bandit” and “ruthless killer” who was also considered a local hero. That's a lot of human paradox wrapped up into one little crooked finger in an El Paso pawnshop.

But is this really Pancho Villa's? A guayabera-wearing gentleman just inside the door looks like the person to ask; he is speaking in a serious tone to other shoppers, telling them things like where to trade in their gold for cash at the back of the store. This is Rey, the soft-spoken gatekeeper to Dave's. He says he's been working there for 56 years, which seems almost



Photo: Dave's Casa de Empeños by Kevin Stillman

as incredible as the idea that this is Pancho Villa's finger. And when I ask him if it really is his finger, he says with no hesitation, "*Claro que si.*" We detect neither a twinkle of mischief or mirth in his eye.

Hmmm. We ask about certificates of provenance; Rey says there are none, just the faded message in the wood frame. Uncertain about how to push the question further, we check out a few of the other offerings at Dave's—a purple alligator-skin coat, a stuffed chupacabra, and a baby vampire heart. (These last two oddities Rey also insists are real, but we remain appropriately skeptical.) This is no average pawnshop, but rather a paean to the fantastical. After marveling at these wonders for as long as we can take it, we break out into the sunlight in search of something a bit less macabre.

Like a guitar. Luis, who is now resuming his life in the United States after a long stint in Vancouver, seeks that one familiar love to help him adjust to a new life back in Texas—a guitar to strum. And South El Paso Street, with its jumble of pawnshops and textile stores, is sure to have an inexpensive guitar in the mix.

Back on the street, we realize that just five blocks stand between us and the bridge to Mexico, and they're now thick with Saturday shoppers, families strolling with ice cream, and street vendors hawking Mexican *churros* and *helotes con mayonesa*. A plump lady beckons outside of her home-goods store calling, "*Pásale, pásale, tenemos cubrecamas!*" (Come in, come in, we have bedspreads!) South El Paso Street percolates with the buzz of a border zone—elements from both sides fuse vibrantly into a peculiar in-between identity.

We step into a nearby pawnshop called The Happy Store, which is a cheerful contrast to Dave's. It is a feast of brightly colored religious iconography—candles, statues of Jesus, nativity scenes—plus random items like Bluetooth speakers and reading glasses.

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But no guitar; for that, the chatty kid behind the counter directs us to yet another pawnshop on the corner. And when I ask him if he believes that it's really Pancho Villa's trigger finger at Dave's, he says, "Definitely. They have a certificate from Stanford. That's why it costs \$20,000." Like most good yarns, the tale of Pancho Villa's trigger finger varies depending on whom you ask.

Fred Morales, an El Paso historian who has written 33 books on the city and hosts walking tours of South El Paso Street, chortles when I call to ask him if the finger at Dave's was really Pancho Villa's. "No," he says. "I'm not into folklore and legends; I'm into real history." But, Morales says, this street was Pancho Villa's favorite. After he escaped jail in Mexico City on Christmas Day of 1912, Villa fled to El Paso and took up residence at the Roma Hotel on South El Paso. "He used to hang right next door at some bowling



DAVE'S CASA DE EMPEÑOS

is at 216 S. El Paso St. in El Paso. Call **915/533-3334**.

lanes and a restaurant called the Emporium," says Morales. "He didn't drink beer or smoke; he just drank strawberry pop."

Morales also confirms that Pancho Villa was well-regarded in El Paso. "People would come to see him, hundreds of people. He was very charismatic, and always fighting for the poor," he says.

The next pawnshop is our home-run; it is fat with musical gear ranging from used microphones to electric amplifiers and ukuleles. While a young clerk with a diamond earring shows Luis guitars, we ask him about Pancho Villa's trigger finger. This clerk is indifferent as to whose finger

it is. Clearly, not everyone is as captivated by the legends as we are. Luis purchases an acoustic guitar and we happily tote it back up the street for one last look at that finger.

Now we are emboldened. We want to know, will Rey sell us this relic if we ask to buy it? But he has disappeared, so Luis asks the woman behind the gold counter, "Hey, how much do you want for the trigger finger?" She nods gravely and disappears into the back of the store. After about five minutes, she returns to report that it's not for sale anymore. This is one legend that the owners of Dave's Casa de Empeños want to keep for themselves.

But we do have a guitar. Myth-making comes in many forms, and one of the most reliable ways is to weave a story into song. Perhaps, with some effort and a little songwriting talent, we'll turn our own adventures into legends worth passing on. **L**



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PLATES

TRAVEL + EAT + COOK

Eat to the Beat

Tunes and tastes
in Dallas' Deep Ellum

story by Michael Corcoran

The Free Man Cajun Cafe & Lounge, at 2626 Commerce Street in Deep Ellum, features live jazz, swing, or Dixieland daily.

MUSIC HAS DRAWN PEOPLE TO THE DEEP Ellum neighborhood of Dallas since the 1920s, when Leadbelly, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and other country-blues guitar greats played for tips on street corners, and ebony divas Bessie Smith, Ida Cox, and Lillian Glinn sang in the clubs and theaters.

Also called “Central Track” for the depot of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad that all the saloons grew up around, Deep Ellum was the Beale Street of Texas, where the nightlife jumped and juke to jazz and blues.

But the current stars of Deep Ellum, which takes its unusual spelling from how the blues musicians pronounced the main street Elm, are the chefs and owners of such eateries as Pecan Lodge, Luscher’s Red Hots, Tanoshii Ramen, Independent Bar & Kitchen, Café Salsera, Cane Rosso, Filament, and more.

Back in the early ’90s, when I frequented the neighborhood as a music critic for *The Dallas Morning News*, the main

These days, the current food boom gives this historic musical hotbed a new identity. Melody still feeds the soul, but the body has more options for sustenance than ever before.

cheeseburger competition was between Adair’s Saloon (which was birthing the “red dirt” country scene with Jack Ingram) and Angry Dog. But these days, beef-and-bunheads can also choose burgers at spots like Braindead Brewing, Twisted Root, Easy Slider, and On the Lamb. Or they can decide to take a culinary trip to Chicago at Luscher’s, which serves a tasty beef sandwich dipped in *au jus*.

Deep Ellum, which also has two fine late-night breakfast spots with Cafe Brazil and Buzzbrews, is now a dining district that also has live music and dance clubs on the side. Live-music mainstays Trees and Club Dada still rock on Elm, the Double Wide on Commerce provides a scene for hipsters in trucker hats, and a club called the Bomb Factory (at the site of a former munitions plant), blesses the neighborhood with a venue that can hold 3,000.

Several Deep Ellum restaurants, including Free Man Cajun Cafe, feature live sounds; on a recent Wednesday night, Free Man’s New Orleans-style funk band sounded really good, but the headliner was the Cajun brisket, served with creamy gravy over rice.



AllGood Cafe sources ingredients locally and offers regular live music. In business since 1895, Rudolph’s Market and Sausage Factory provides meats for many of Deep Ellum’s restaurants.

“The food scene here is exploding,” says Mike Snider, whose comfort-food haven, AllGood Cafe, also features live music. “You’ve got all these new restaurants with their own ideas and concepts springing up all over.”

Snider modeled his 17-year-old restaurant AllGood, in part, after the lamented Deep Ellum Café, which put the neighborhood on the culinary map in the mid-’80s with sensational chicken-fried steaks and a breakfast menu responsible for hour-long waits on the weekends. “It was right next door to Club Dada,” Snider says. “Deep Ellum Café introduced the idea that good food and live original music could thrive side by side.”

The exalted Pecan Lodge, which graduated from Shed #2 at the Farmers Market to a new 5,000-square-foot building at Main and Pryor streets in 2014, is one of the trailblazers in this current food renaissance. The lines are so long for the tender and tasty brisket, ribs, and homemade sausage that nearby restaurants benefit from the runoff. “All smoke, no mirrors” is the way the Lodge describes its simple, delicious style.

The area has seen its ups and downs: After Central Expressway was built in 1949, it created a barrier between Deep Ellum and downtown Dallas, which led to a state of decline for more than three decades. But as it did in the 1920s, in the 1980s music brought folks to the neighborhood for the first Deep Ellum revival. A flurry of alternative bands, led by Edie Brickell & New Bohemians, Shallow Reign, and Three On a Hill, created a music and art scene in that area between Fair Park and Central Expressway. And the new bands and fans had to eat.

“It’s not like there weren’t restaurants down here before,” says Snider, who mentions Baker’s Ribs and St. Pete’s Dancing Marlin as longtime Deep Ellum eateries that are still open.

“Rudolf’s Market [which services many restaurants in the area] has been open since 1895,” emphasizes Snider.



DEEP ELLUM

For more information about Deep Ellum, see www.deepellumtexas.com and www.visitdallas.com.

That was soon after Deep Ellum got a cotton gin factory and right before Henry Ford opened a Model T assembly plant on Canton Street, both of which brought job-seekers to the area. The trains brought in pickers of both cotton and guitars, which made for a party around the clock. Certainly there were places to eat in the ’20s, ’30s, and ’40s, but few people remember them.

Bohemians, new and old, saved Deep Ellum in the 1980s.

But by the early 2000s, the historic neighborhood was once again in a slump. Deep Ellum suffered a reputation as a high-crime area, and the area’s live-music clubs, active for only a few hours each night, couldn’t afford to stay open due to rising rents.

“After we opened in 2000,” Snider says of AllGood, “the clubs started dropping like flies. Club Clearview closed. Deep Ellum Live closed. Deep Ellum had a few rough years.”

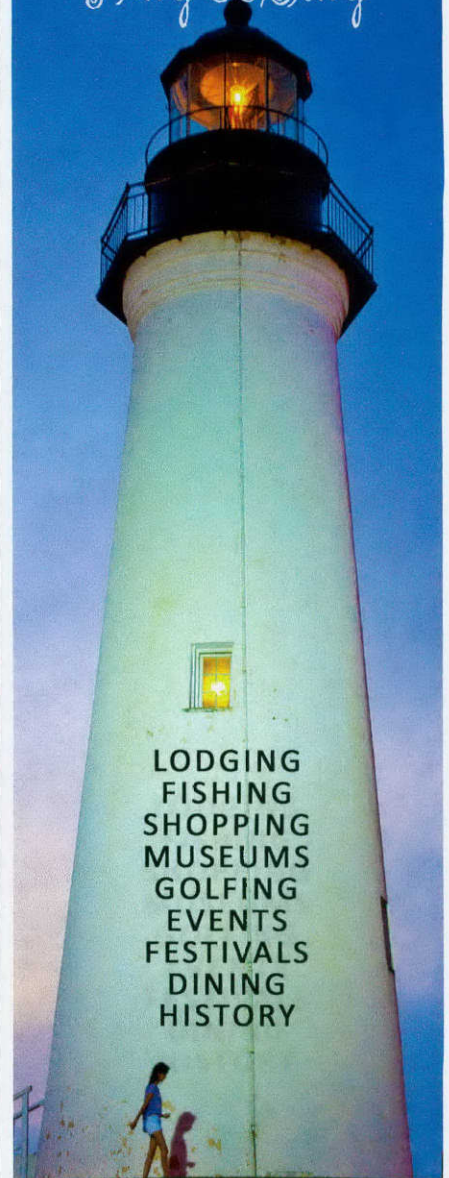
These days, the current food boom gives this historic musical hotbed a new identity. Melody still feeds the soul, but the body has more options for sustenance than ever before.

“Some [new restaurants] are gonna last and some are gonna sink,” says Snider, who’s seen three cycles of boom and bust. He worries that soaring real estate values might price out longtime Deep Ellumites, but for now, his café is too busy to dwell on such things.

Let’s take it back to the musician Leadbelly, who used to guide Blind Lemon Jefferson, the first national star of country blues, around Deep Ellum in the teens and ’20s. To paraphrase Leadbelly’s famous song “Where Did you Sleep Last Night,” the current theme song of Deep Ellum could be “Where Did You Eat Last Night?” 🍴

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More to Ponder

Ranchman's Cafe hews to tradition but keeps up with current tastes

story by **John Lumpkin**

MY DINING PARTY IS ENJOYING OUR COBBLER when a clang pierces the hum of lunch conversations at Ranchman's Cafe in Ponder, a small North Texas town 10 miles west of Denton. "He just got his bell rung," chuckles Dave Ross, the owner and patriarch of Ranchman's. He points to a nearby customer who is polishing off his chicken-fried steak. There is much to celebrate at Ranchman's, a restaurant also known as the Ponder Steak House.

The bell is a relic from a boxing ring; Dave found it at a garage sale in Wisconsin. A festive clanging generally commemorates birthdays—in this case, that of Bobby James, who's here from Hurst with his spouse, Kim.

It is not Bobby's first encounter with the Ponder Steak House, nor likely his last. "I started coming here when I was three or four years old," says Bobby. He and Kim got engaged here in 1982. We ask her: Does she remember what she ate that day? "Probably chicken-fried steak," says Kim, with a smile.

There is much to celebrate at Ranchman's, a restaurant also known as the Ponder Steak House.

Ranchman's has other stories, like that of a 1966 visit by actors Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, who dropped in while filming a scene for the movie *Bonnie and Clyde*. And then there were stretch limousines, which brought stars like Don Henley, Eric Clapton, and Meat Loaf.

Ranchman's is BYOB, though on our visit I didn't spot any midday imbibers among the mostly local crowd, some in oilfield work shirts and others in boots and jeans. Nevertheless, Ross recalls \$350 bottles of tequila, vintage Rothschild wine, and even a margarita machine brought in by visitors. Usually, though, diners bring in coolers of beer or bottles of wine.

Ranchman's offers items you might not expect to find in a small-town steak house: gluten-free items. Dave's gluten-free versions of staples like chicken-fried steak, cream gravy, and fried green tomatoes are available if you call in advance. For both the gluten-free and traditional CFS, Dave's crew trims the round steak in-house and then pounds the cutlet with a tenderizing mallet before dropping it in oil heated to 335 degrees. "A little cooler than most places," Dave explains, "to get the crust crispy and the meat still tender and juicy." A six-ounce portion (\$10.95) is more than enough with fries and a side; the 12-ounce option (\$15.95) may require a take-home container.

Though 800 chicken-fried steaks are served each month in the café's two cozy rooms, Ranchman's also offers weekday specials like chicken-and-dumplings, pork roast, and meatloaf. One loyal customer makes the hour-long drive from Whitesboro to Ponder for a weekly vegetable-only meal; options typically include butter beans, butternut squash, hominy-and-cheese casserole, or collard greens.

I often order a T-bone steak, which is carved from a beef loin in-house. Instead of grilling over a flame, Dave prefers what he calls "the griddle method" because it "chases the juices up into the meat instead of losing them onto hot

coals." Ranchman's regulars know to reserve a baked potato in advance, as that's tradition in these parts. But the French fries are a solid choice: Delivered in long strands, they're deliciously caramelized on the outside.

First-time visitors may be surprised at Ranchman's modest quarters—a shotgun-style house that hasn't changed much since it opened in 1948. The first owner, a grocer named Grace "Pete" Jackson, hired future owner Dave Ross in 1974 as a weekend cook and butcher. Dave returned to work in various capacities over the years and bought the place in 1992. Even the bell that rang for Bobby James' birthday harkens to Pete's years. The first birthday bell was the schoolyard variety, mounted on a stand, but two overly eager waiters pulled the rope simultaneously in 1986 and the bell cracked when it hit the concrete floor.

Ponder is changing as Fort Worth's expansion encroaches on Denton County. The massive Texas Motor Speedway attracts motorsports fans just 13 miles away, and Ponder High School is now big enough to support a 3A football team. But Ranchman's has mostly resisted the move to modernity, except to replace old plumbing and install central air and heat.

We appreciate the improved air conditioning on the warm day we visit, but not as much as the cobbler, the product of pastry cook Francisca Astudillo, a Ranchman's employee since 1994. But we face a dilemma: whether to order cherry, blackberry, or peach.

Waitress Marie Huber, a Ranchman's fixture for two decades, has a solution. She disappears behind the counter, returning with all three varieties, neatly divided in each bowl.

That's a triple treat if there ever was one. **L**



RANCHMAN'S CAFE,
also known as the Ponder Steak House, is at 110 W. Bailey St. in Ponder. Call **940/479-2221**; www.ranchman.com.

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A Story on Every Plate

Cooking at Das Peach Haus

story by **Cynthia J. Drake**

INSIDE DAS PEACH HAUS' WEATHERED WOODEN storefront off US 87 in Fredericksburg, the shelves lining the store's perimeter overflow with dozens of brightly colored jars of salsas, jams, and jellies. Overhead, old-fashioned roadside signs advertising fresh produce decorate the walls from floor to rafters.

The "sampling hub" of the food company Fischer & Wieser, which started in 1969 as a humble peach stand, Das Peach Haus has recently expanded its offerings with the new Fischer &

"It doesn't matter what you cook, it only matters that you cook."

Wieser's Culinary Adventure Cooking School. The classes began in September with themes such as Hill Country German Cuisine, Tuscan Feast, and Sunday Brunch. I'm here with a small group to learn how to make traditional German jägerschnitzel. We're gathering at the new instruction kitchen, which includes demonstration and cooking space for students, as well as several large tables for prep work, three ovens, and four cooktops. A door opens out to a deck with views of Fischer & Wieser's peach orchard and a small lake.

Wearing a white chef's coat, instructor John DeMers greets our group with a glass of wine. "There are 40 wineries within a grape's throw of this spot," DeMers says. So we start with a glass of viognier from nearby Hilmy Cellars, even if it does feel a bit indulgent at 10 a.m.

DeMers seasons his cooking classes



Cooking instructor and cookbook author John DeMers teaches classes at Fischer & Wieser's new culinary school in Fredericksburg.

with tales of his adventures and the history of Fischer & Wieser. He believes that the students who take the classes want to have a good time, in addition to adding a few new recipes to their repertoire. "When you feed people, something happens," he says. "It doesn't matter *what* you cook, it only matters *that* you cook."

DeMers grew up in New Orleans watching his parents cook together. When he was 16, though, his mother died, and he began preparing the family meals. "It was not a choice," he says. "When my mom died, my father completely lost interest in ever making dinner again."

DeMers later traveled across Europe as a freelance writer, and his frugal budget led him to street food and other inexpensive meals. "I realized that the best food was the peasant food," he says. "I started to realize that food tells the story of who we are. I'm a storyteller even more than a cook."

Over the course of his career as a journalist, DeMers has written more than 50 books, including a chef-focused mystery series that takes place in Texas. As most of his books are cooking-related, he continued to connect with the concept of telling stories through the lens of food. That mission led him to Fischer & Wieser, where he now serves as the company's first director of culinary hospitality.

In class, we turn our attention to the aroma of caramelizing onions, bacon, and mushrooms, which form the base of our gravy for DeMers' jägerschnitzel recipe. As we gather around the table, he demonstrates his simple process of dredging pork loin in seasoned flour, dipping it in an egg wash, then coating it with bread crumbs before pan-frying.

In the 1990s, DeMers wrote a magazine story about the late New Orleans

RECIPE

FRITO PIE FRITTATA

Courtesy of John DeMers, Fischer & Wieser

- ◆ 10 eggs
- ◆ 2 green onions, chopped
- ◆ 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- ◆ 1/2 tablespoon crushed red pepper
- ◆ 4 tablespoons taco or chili seasoning blend
- ◆ Salt and pepper to taste
- ◆ 1 1/2 pounds ground beef
- ◆ 3/4 cup chopped yellow onion
- ◆ 2 tablespoons water
- ◆ 1/3 cup Fischer & Wieser Salsa a la Charra
- ◆ 1/3 cup Fischer & Wieser Hot Habanero Salsa
- ◆ 2-3 tablespoons Fischer & Wieser Especial Pasilla Chile Sauce
- ◆ 1 cup Fritos corn chips
- ◆ 1 cup shredded Mexican four-cheese blend
- ◆ 1 Roma tomato, chopped

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a bowl, beat the eggs with the green onion, parsley, and red pepper. Lightly season with about half the seasoning blend, plus salt and pepper. Pour the eggs into a lightly oiled 9x16-inch ovenproof baking dish and place on the middle rack of the oven until top is set, about 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from the oven.

2. Meanwhile, cook the beef with about half the onion in a skillet; drain fat. Stir in the water and remaining seasoning blend. Add the salsas and pasilla sauce. Simmer for about 10 minutes.

3. Spread beef mixture over the top of the egg frittata, followed by the remaining onion and the Fritos. Top with the cheese and return to the oven until cheese melts and is golden brown on top. Serve warm, topped with chopped tomato. Serves 8.

chef Paul Prudhomme, and in the years following came to consider him a mentor. DeMers often quotes Prudhomme in class; for example: "When in doubt, season everything," he says. Then, adding some wine to the simmering sauce, he jokes, "If a half-cup is good, a whole cup is better."

Some classes are more demonstration-style, where DeMers has prepped most of the ingredients beforehand and assembles the dishes while students sip wines from nearby vineyards like Pedernales Cellars and William Chris Vineyards. Other classes are designed to be more hands-on, "where students get to chop and stir, and I'm giving advice and telling bad jokes," he says.

The recipes occasionally use Fischer & Wieser ingredients, but not always. When DeMers does use a prepared

sauce or ingredient, he does so because "it's quicker and it's important to achieve layered flavors."

Employees of Fischer & Wieser's research and development team take their cues from consumers, so in the early 1990s, when people reported they had started using fruit jams in their home recipes, the company developed new sauces to meet that demand. The famous raspberry chipotle sauce, which is practically a Texas party standard when served with a block of cream cheese, was born in the mid-1990s when chipotle peppers were not yet well-known in most culinary circles. "It's still our biggest seller in all 50 states," DeMers says.

That spirit of inventiveness inspires DeMers, too, as he experiments with new twists on familiar recipes. His Frito Pie Frittata combines the Tex-Mex favorite with an Italian-style egg dish, layering eggs, seasoned ground beef, and Fritos. "And because it's Texas, we cover it with cheese and throw it in the oven," he says. **L**



DAS PEACH HAUS

is at 1406 S. US 87 in Fredericksburg. For details about the store and upcoming classes and events, call **866/997-8969**; www.daspeachhaus.com or www.jelly.com.

COOKIES

FRIED

PIZZA

STORY
BY
JUNE MAYLOR

PIE

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY
ERIC W. POHL

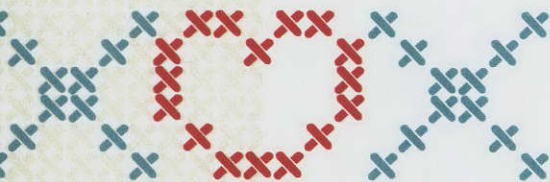
OR

CHOCOLATE

CAKES

THESE HAND-HELD
TREATS SPEAK OF
TRADITION AND TASTE





Browsing the stands at a new farmers market in Fort Worth, I was slowly making my way through produce and cheese offerings when a friend grabbed my arm. “Come look at this,” she said. “Lindsey has fried pies!”

Sweet Lucy's Pies sells its luscious fried pies (apricot shown here) at the Clearfork Farmers Market in Fort Worth.

Hoping I didn't knock anyone down in the process, I quickly navigated a crowd thick with dog-walkers and stroller-pushing shoppers to the table manned by Lindsey Lawing, the pastry chef and proprietress of Sweet Lucy's Pies.

There, just as my pal promised, was a pile of wax-paper sleeves bearing labels like Apricot and Blueberry-Goat Cheese. I peeked inside to see half-moon-shaped, golden-brown bundles with wide, hand-crimped edges.

“You're making fried pies?” I exclaimed, startling Lindsey and other patrons. “Do you know how exciting this is?”

That my hometown's favorite pie baker had

begun producing the single most delightful dessert I've ever known made this a landmark day. It had been a long, long time since I'd found a fried pie worthy of celebration. There are plenty of fried pies to be had, but very few that I believe are worth the calories and cholesterol.

Especially distressing about the lack of great fried pies in my part of North Texas is the loss of heritage I fear it represents: Fried pies were once a part of life here, particularly as Fort Worth lies on the old Chisholm Trail. The hand-held sweet was

a treasured treat among cowboys whose long, backbreaking days of work in the saddle contained few bright spots. When their chuckwagon cook could find wild fruit on the trail and time to whip up a batch in the cast-iron skillet, the cowpokes must have felt that Christmas had come early. If the cook could send his drovers off to a day of dusty work with fried pies in their saddlebags, the hours surely passed more happily.

Fried pies and their close cousin, the hand pie (identical in construction to the fried pie, with pie crust wrapped around fruit filling and baked)—didn't originate with cowboy cooks, however.

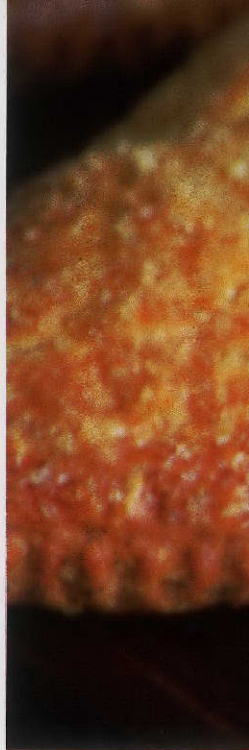
In fact, we Texans are hardly the first to embrace this sort of hand-held deliciousness. The Czechs, who were among the early Anglo settlers in Texas, brought with them their beloved kolache, a pillowy yeast roll filled with fruit. And our Latin-American neighbors to the south have made empanadas filled with pumpkin and other sweets for centuries.

And in the South, the personal-size pie, either fried or baked, has been a staple for many decades, its portability a plus for people working in the fields. Whether my Wichita Falls great-grandmother's apricot fried pie recipe came from her West Texas ranching neighbors or from her own kinfolk back in Tennessee is missing from our family history, but her passion for its purity and simplicity was handed down to me intact.

And because I judge all fried pies by those apricot pastries of my childhood,







the sensation I enjoyed while biting into the apricot fried pie I found at Sweet Lucy's was as close to a spiritual experience as I can have with food. The delicate crust, with its wide, fluted edges and feather-light texture, was nothing short of heavenly. Inside, the big, juicy pieces of fresh apricot in still-warm, slightly sweet filling spoke of a cooking tradition long past—and all but lost.

Quizzing Lindsey about her fried pies, I learned that she only makes hers with what's seasonal and locally available, as she does with her traditional pies. Apricot, peach, and various berry-and-goat cheese are popular through the spring and summer, as are butternut squash, pumpkin, and cranberry in the fall. She told me

that she simply taught herself to make them, aiming to offer something nobody else around here was doing.

"My sister, Jodi, and I worked and worked on our fried pies, testing recipes until we had it right. We thought it would be good to make something different; we tried them out on family and everyone loved them," she said, noting that she uses her buttermilk pie dough for the crust, as it's substantial enough to handle the heft of fruit inside.

Lindsey's fried pies inspired me to go on a search for other remarkable fried pies, those that I think would have impressed my great-grandmother, those that will meet the demands of a picky pie palate like mine. I kept my search to



Top, a pie at Natty Flat Smokehouse in Lipan. Right, Black Rooster Bakery in Fort Worth sometimes offers baked hand pies but more often serves a French version called a *galette*. Left, The Shed in Hudson Oaks serves more than 150 hand pies weekly.



near North Texas and just west of here, wandering not too far from the old Chisholm Trail.

As I roamed, I discovered that I'm a fan of those fried pies and hand pies found in small bakeshops, cafés, and barbecue or burger joints, because they're usually made by hand by someone using an old family recipe. More often than not, the ones found in convenience and grocery stores tend to be mass-produced, which usually means they feature canned fillings; one bite into stale pastry enveloping a cloying, artificially colored goo told me all I needed to know.

Asking friends about places they've found fried pies, I wound up with a list of nearly 20 places to try. To organize my research, I created a score sheet complete with criteria for crust (thick? thin? flaky? greasy? color? texture?); filling (real fruit? how much cornstarch? any artificial flavor or color?); and appearance (shape? handmade? edges?). The best pies could score as many as 25 points; any pie scoring less than 20 points wouldn't make my final list.

Striking out northward from Fort Worth toward the Red River, I rediscovered fried pie

nirvana at a most fitting place, The Fried Pie Co. & Restaurant in Gainesville. Unchanged since my first happy experience here some 20 years ago, this friendly café serves comfort food at breakfast and lunch and keeps its glass-front pie cases filled with fried pies made each morning starting at 6. I lost count at about 15 varieties, including blueberry, apple, pecan banana cream, pineapple cream, coconut, and chocolate, some of which are adorned with icing.

Because I'm a purist, I don't need enhancements on my fried pies—I want the crust to speak for itself. Beholding the Fried Pie Co.'s apricot fried pie, with its plump dome shape and carefully twisted edges, I noted a scant sprinkling of cinnamon and a tiny bit of coarse sugar on the buttery crust. The thin, flaky exterior cut easily to reveal an interior filled with mashed apricot and very little cornstarch; its flavor was true apricot, slightly sweetened, with not a hint of fake additives. My husband, who tried both blackberry and peach flavors, found near perfection in his choices, too.

Traveling around oil and cattle country, we

found fried pies in places like Muenster, a deeply Bavarian town where a little store called Bayer's Kolonialwaren is noted for its German beer selection and massive strudels, as well as iced fried pies in seven different flavors. In Decatur, Catfish O'Harlie's is a busy family restaurant that takes time to serve hot pies fresh from the fryer, pretty and golden with a crunchy crust and fruity filling bubbling through the fork-tined edges. In Lipan, Natty Flat Smokehouse makes its lightly frosted apricot, cherry, apple, chocolate, and buttermilk fried pies on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, serving them in wax-paper wrappers.

The best find west of home was at The Shed, a little café within David's Stove Shop, situated on the Interstate 20 frontage road between Aledo and Weatherford. Every day, chef Jeff Carr's mom, Alice Carr, creates generously sized hand pies, packed with apricot, peach, cherry, or apple filling. Each has a hand-turned crust edge, and no two pies look alike. The cherry pie gets a little turbinado sugar on its crust, the apple takes on a cinnamon sprinkle, and the peach and apricot are plain. With every bite, fresh, flaky crust gives way to real fruit—no wonder the little café sells more than 150 of these baked hand pies weekly.

A fellow connoisseur of homemade sweets sent me to Dallas to check out Blues Burgers, a hopping burger joint in a nondescript shopping center. I was thrilled at the tip, because I would never have guessed that fried-pie delights awaited inside. My family and I shared two oversize fried pies, one apple and one



Essentials

Sweet Lucy's Pies: Found year-round at Clearfork Farmers Market on Saturday morning, 4801 Edwards Ranch Rd., Fort Worth. See www.farmersmarket1848.com. You can also order pies by calling 817/727-6009.

Fried Pie Co. & Restaurant is at 202 W. Main St. in Gainesville. Call 940/665-7641; www.friedpie.net.

Bayer's Kolonialwaren is at 824 E. Division St. in Muenster. Call 940/759-2822.

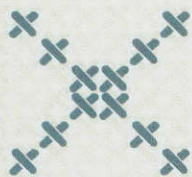
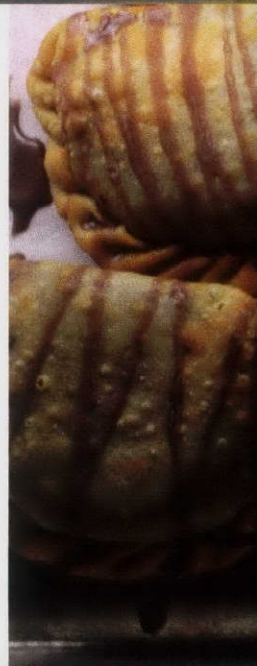
Catfish O'Harlie's is at 1019 N. US 287 in Decatur. Call 940/626-4595.

Natty Flat Smokehouse is at 19280 US 281 in Lipan. Call 254/646-3844; www.nattyflatsmokehouse.com.

The Shed is inside David's Stove Shop, at 4019 Fort Worth Hwy. in Hudson Oaks. Call 817/594-5533; www.lunchbreadpie.com.

Blues Burgers is at 1820 W. Mockingbird Ln. in Dallas. Call 214/750-9100; www.bluesburgers.net.

Black Rooster Bakery is at 2430 Forest Park Blvd. in Fort Worth. Call 817/924-1600; www.roosterbakery.com.



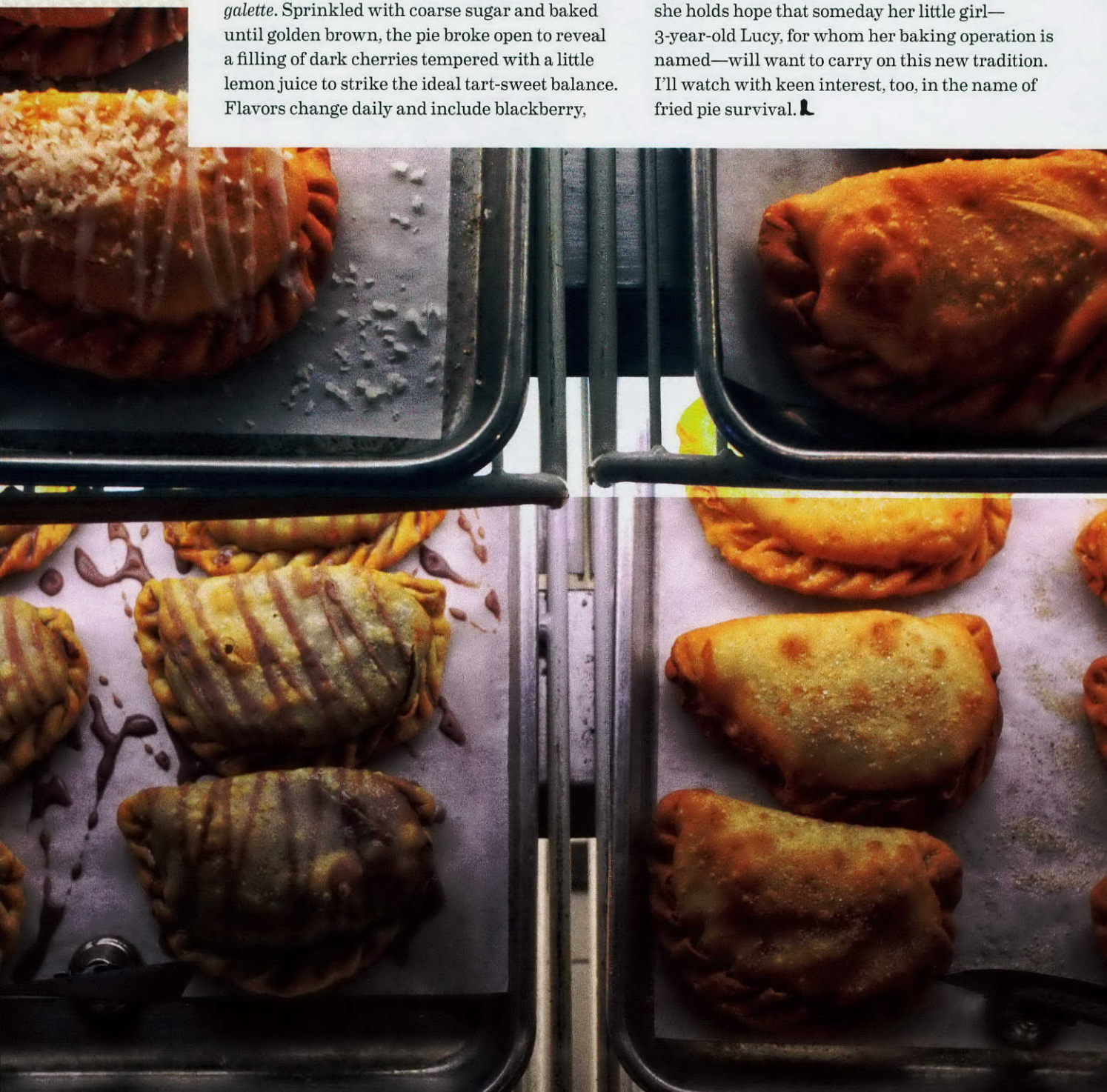
In Gainesville, the Fried Pie Co. & Restaurant specializes (of course) in fried pies, but also offers a comfort-food menu for breakfast and lunch.

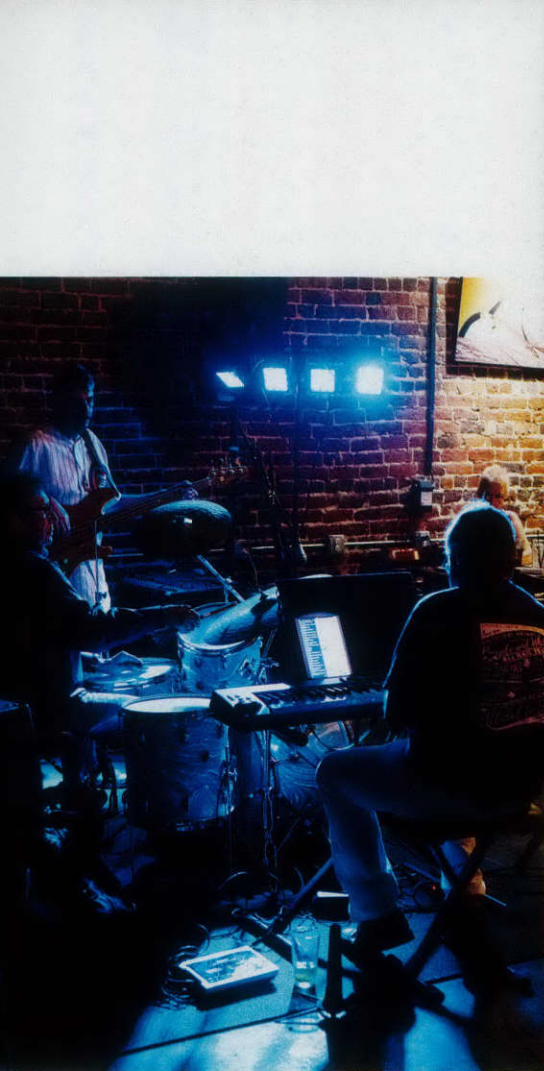
cherry, because I don't know how anyone could finish even one of these beauties. Made to order, they're served piping hot. Each pie had a burnished, sugar-dusted crust that flaked easily; fillings featured big pieces of fruit. Owner Catherine Duncan credits her Aunt Sharon with the East Texas recipe, saying it's a source of family pride.

Back home again in Fort Worth, I found a lovely hand pie at Black Rooster Bakery, a French-style bakery making European breads and myriad pastry options, including a pie variation called a *galette*. Sprinkled with coarse sugar and baked until golden brown, the pie broke open to reveal a filling of dark cherries tempered with a little lemon juice to strike the ideal tart-sweet balance. Flavors change daily and include blackberry,

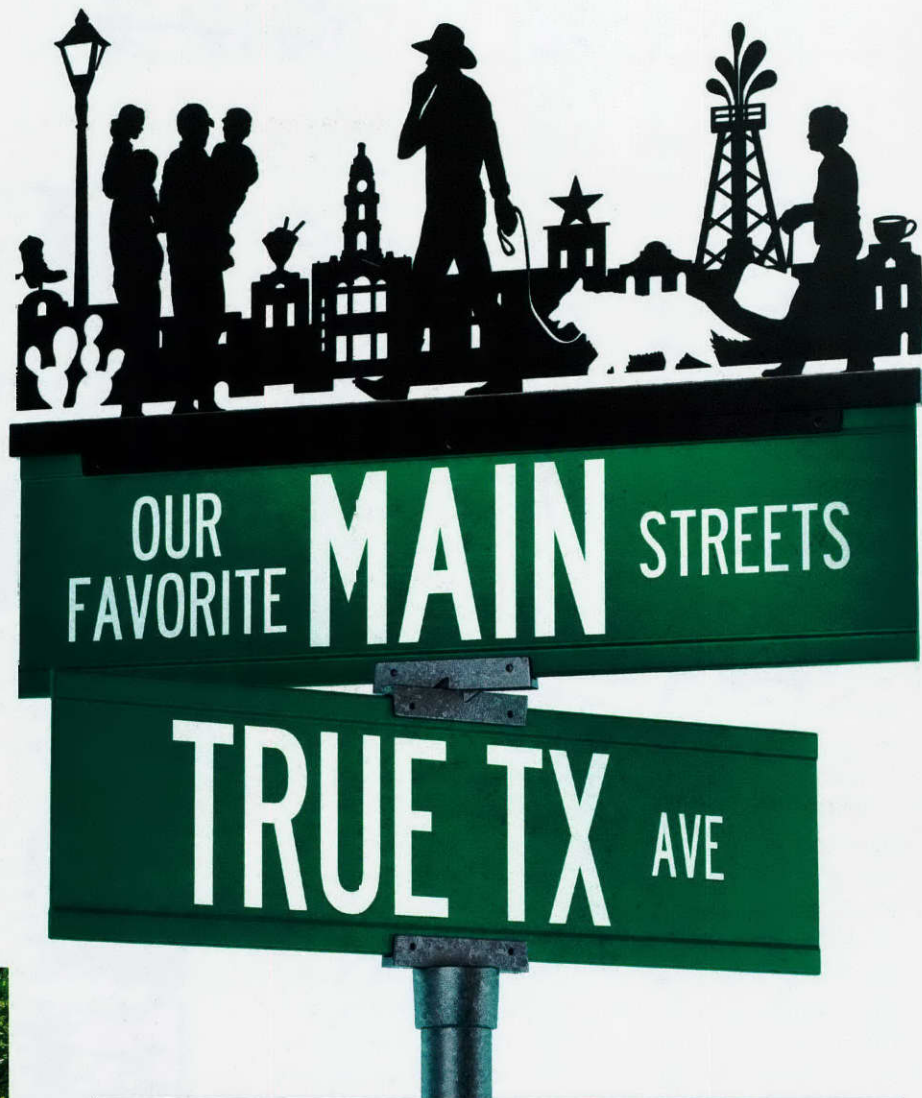
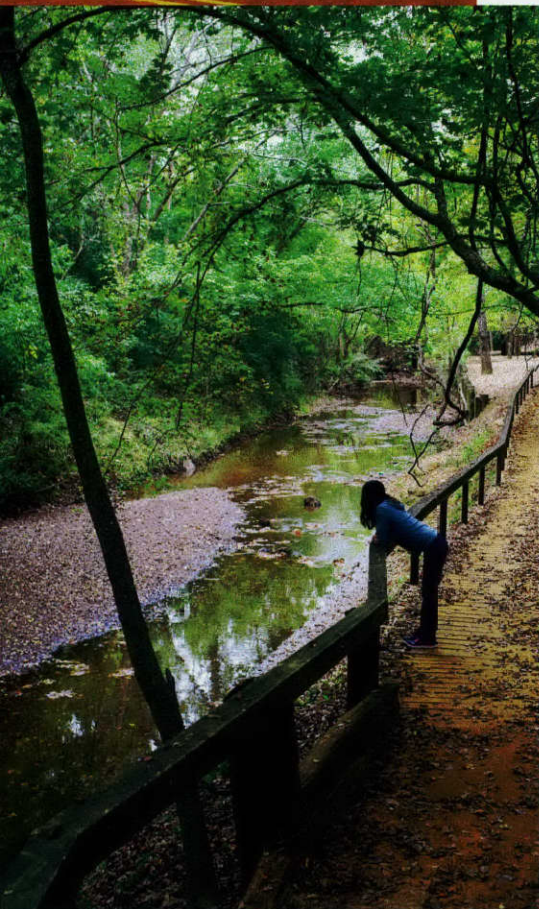
peach, and apple. Savory hand pie varieties at breakfast sometimes feature mushroom, feta and egg or bacon, and mushroom and Swiss cheese fillings, sans sugar on the crust.

After four months of pounding the pie path, I took encouragement that some bakers are upholding standards set forth countless generations ago. Interestingly, the apricot fried pie from Sweet Lucy's Pies that started the search remains my top pick. Though Lindsey didn't learn the craft from a great-grandmother or any cattle-drive ancestry, she holds hope that someday her little girl—3-year-old Lucy, for whom her baking operation is named—will want to carry on this new tradition. I'll watch with keen interest, too, in the name of fried pie survival. 🍥





In Nacogdoches, clockwise from top left: The Liberty Bell; the town square; Lanana Creek Trail; Steve Hartz of General Mercantile & Old Time String Shop; the Stephen F. Austin State University Homecoming Parade.



When you sit at the bar at The Liberty Bell on the brick-paved Main Street in Nacogdoches, many things could happen. You could strike up a conversation with locals about their homemade apple-pie moonshine or where to find Caddo Indian mounds on the back road to Crockett. You could saunter outside to Cole Art Center, formerly an opera house where the Marx Brothers once performed. And while you're at it, you could stop in to the Visitor's Center and ask the informed fellows behind the counter if Nacogdoches is really and truly the oldest town in Texas.

Story by **Clayton Maxwell** Photographs by **Matthew Johnson**



Because, while digging into your tacos and tequila at The Liberty Bell, you are in the midst of a phenomenon happening in small towns across Texas. You are part of a movement back to Main Street, where a renewed appreciation for local heritage and historic architecture, combined with an influx of new businesses, is igniting a spark of fresh energy. And by the look and feel of historic main streets like those in Nacogdoches, Bastrop, Alpine, Boerne, and Georgetown, this fresh energy is infectious.

Just ask Kati Kennedy, the owner of The Liberty Bell, who books touring bands that fill the house on weekends. "Before I opened this place, I was driving all the way to Houston for dinner and music," Kennedy says. "There were other people doing that too, so I knew there was a market. And now I feel like The Liberty Bell has become Nac's living room."

Kennedy is not alone in feeling fortunate to live and work on a Texas main street. Across the state in the college town of Alpine, Daniel and Jessie Brown-ing opened Plaine, a coffee shop and laundromat, after moving from Austin to raise their children in West Texas. Over a few years, Plaine, which is located on

Alpine's central thoroughfare of Holland Avenue, has grown into a community hub. Plaine complements a bustling strip that's home to the 1928 Holland Hotel, numerous art galleries, and the independent Front Street Books.

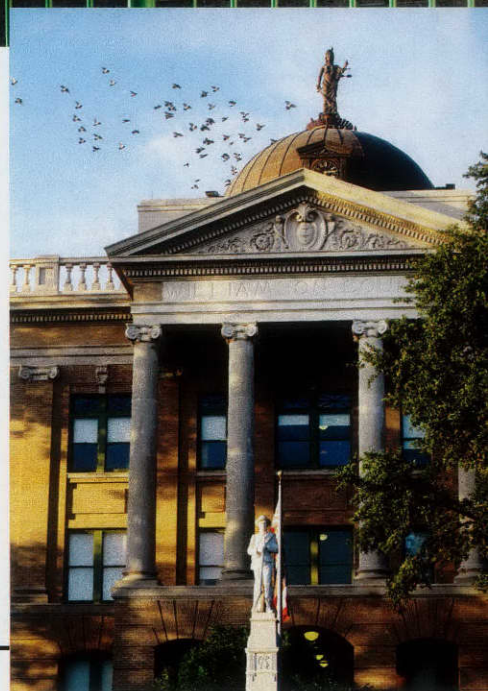
"There are definitely things happening here on Holland. Things really kicked off with the renovation of the Granada Theater and then the opening of the Saddle Club," says Daniel, referring to entrepreneur Karen Travland's redevelopment projects and their influence on Holland Avenue's vitality.

Sean and Abbie Neighbours, two Marine Corps veterans with Texas roots, moved from Nebraska to Bastrop in 2015 and bought Cripple Creek Wine and Gifts on Main Street. Now, their three daughters are growing up in the comfort of a culture where they know almost everyone in the neighborhood. They chat with customers in the wine shop, run over to the Main Street Bakery to "help" the owner there, hang out at the Back Porch Ceramics art studio across the street, or walk down to the library.

"It's a really close-knit community on Main Street,



The Georgetown Square, clockwise from top left: 600 Degrees Pizzeria; the 1900 Masonic Lodge building; storefronts on Main; the historic Williamson County Courthouse.



And by the look and feel of historic main streets like those in Nacogdoches, Bastrop, Alpine, Boerne, and Georgetown, this fresh energy is infectious.





and so laid-back,” Sean says. “The payoff of running our own business on Main Street is huge, and not just in financials, but in the mental rewards, as far as your self-worth goes. I think, ‘This is me, this feels like me.’”

A sense of community is central to Texas’ thriving main streets. Just like The Liberty Bell has become Nacogdoches’ living room, revived historic districts across Texas offer a satisfying dose of human connection, an antidote to being stuck at a computer screen all day. Unlike the planned get-togethers of city life, friends on main streets bump into one another, spontaneously stop by, or make new friends just by sitting at the counter of a restaurant or bar. During my hour-long visit with the Neighbours at Cripple Creek, where there are always bottles of hard-to-find wines to sample and freshly made coffee to sip, several people stopped in just to say hello.

And while many of the people launching new main street businesses are in their 20s and 30s, they respect the hard work their predecessors have done to preserve these historic areas. “We don’t want to change the established culture,” says Sean, who is 37. “We like the small-town feel and the way things are in Bastrop. We also know that millennials want certain things. We don’t want to walk into big-box stores where you have no interaction. We want to be

around real people and have a voice.”

And apparently, millennials want history, too. In Georgetown, Danny Solano and Cat Lawson, young newlyweds, recently opened a clothing shop by the historic square. They say the local regard for history encouraged their site selection. In their home state of California, they had seen main streets fall into disrepair and fizzle out, both architecturally and economically. Solano and Lawson even named their edgy little boutique Sincerely Yours 1848, a tribute to the City of Georgetown’s old slogan and the year the town was founded.

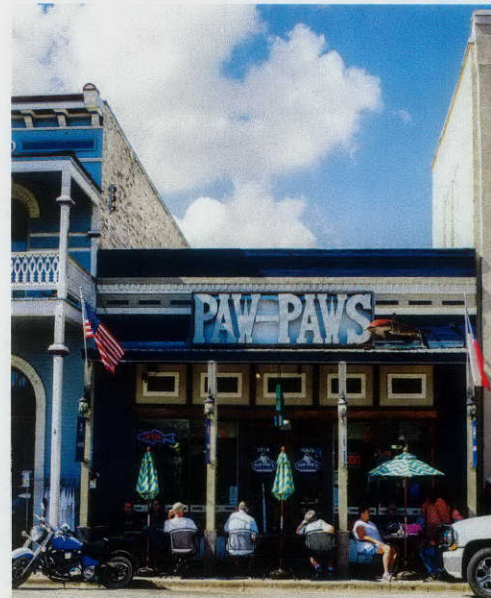
“The biggest reason we chose to open up here is that people take care of this part of town,” Solano says. “In downtown Georgetown, they understand the value of history. And the more you get involved, the more you see how active the community is. Plus, people are so welcoming; they are happy to have younger people here.”

Solano and Lawson’s shop is right around the corner from 600 Degrees Pizzeria and Draffhouse. When I stop in for a slice and a beer at 3 p.m. on a Thursday, the place is buzzing. Kids on the street peer in the kitchen window to watch muscular guys in aprons toss pizzas in the air. Locals sip beer and eat slices of pizza so large they flop over their plates. A sign over the door says “Friends Meet Here.”

As with all of the main



Downtown Bastrop, clockwise from top left: Paw-Paws Catfish House; the intersection of Chestnut and Main; Neighbor’s Kitchen and Yard; Maxine’s Cafe.







streets I visited, Georgetown's lively present is inseparable from an appreciation for the town's past. At the historic Williamson County Courthouse on the Georgetown Square, a newly-erected statue honors Dan Moody, a former Texas governor who's best known for being the first lawyer to successfully convict members of the Ku Klux Klan for aggravated assault. The 1923 trial gained national attention and heralded a turning point in emboldening people to stand up to the KKK.

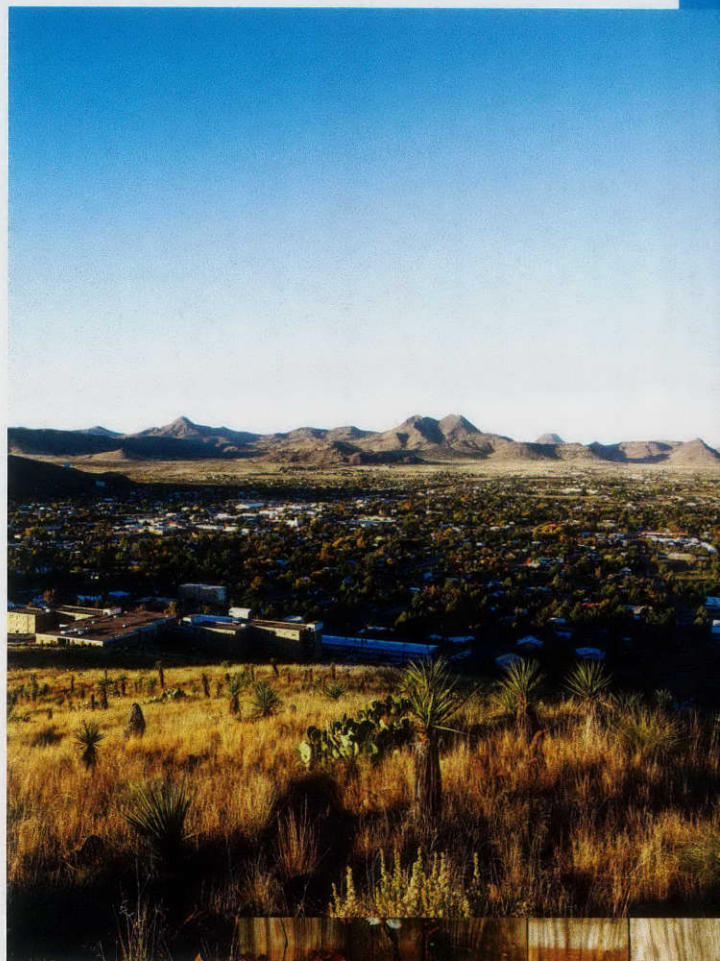
Danelle Houck, an educator at the Williamson Museum across from the courthouse, speaks with ease and admiration about the architectural styles and renovations of the Georgetown Square and courthouse, as well as the human stories that unfolded there. She can rhapsodize about the egg-and-dart molding that typifies the 1910 Beaux-Arts style of the museum, the day that the 11-foot Lady Themis Statue was placed atop the courthouse after its restoration in the mid-2000s, and about all of the ghosts and shootouts that enliven the square's history (paranormal crews have identified at least six active ghosts at the museum). And this is another reason people want to be on main streets—because

these buildings tell stories. Among them, we feel more connected to our past.

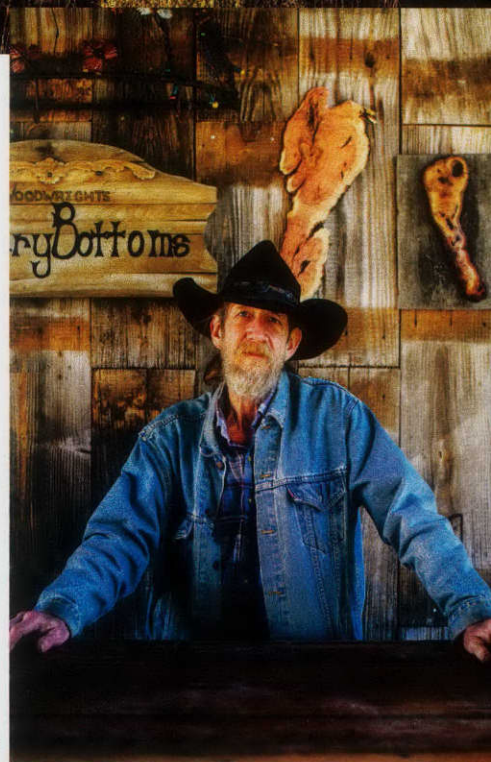
In Boerne, Raymond and Lisa Lunsford understand the importance of connecting to our past through caring for an architectural gem. Over the past few years, the couple has dedicated themselves to reanimating the 1884 Dienger Building on Boerne's Main Street. In collaboration with designer Michelle Ernst, they have renovated the abandoned, two-story landmark and transformed it once again into a community asset—a bookstore, a boutique, a café that serves a tasty club sandwich, and an events center. They've considered every detail, from the hexagon tiles in the café to the Filson boots and other finery in the boutique.

The Dienger Trading Co. is the grandest building to preside over Boerne's Main Street, recently rebranded as "The Hill Country Mile." This stretch of shops and restaurants loosely follows the cypress-lined Cibolo Creek, where families push strollers and friends stop in at hangouts like the Cibolo Creek Brewery.

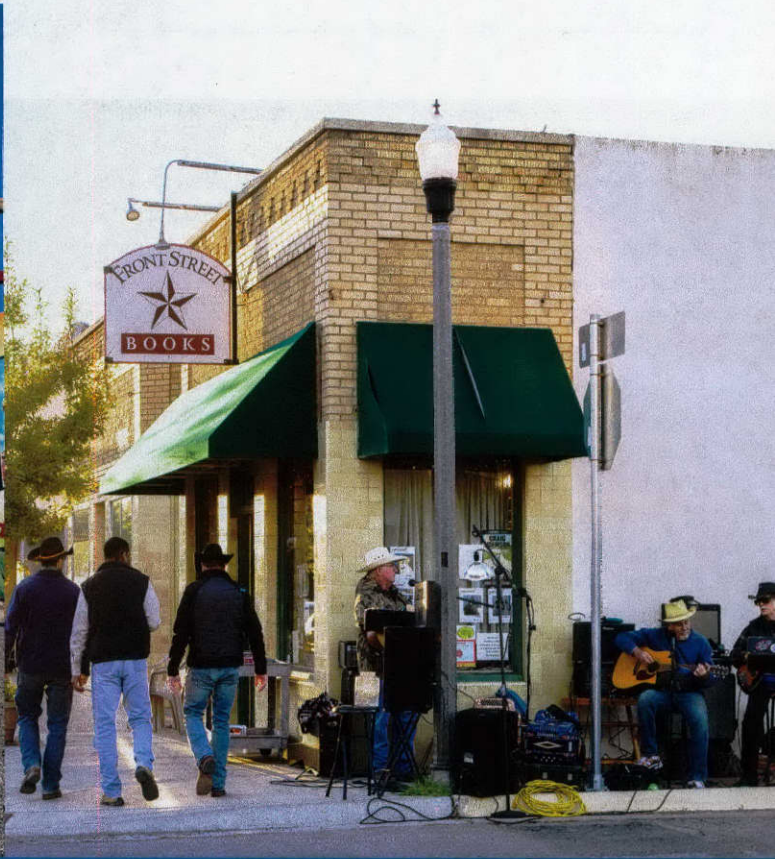
It's clear that Boerne's Main Street, as well as those in Georgetown and



Holland Avenue in Alpine, clockwise from top left: view from Hancock Hill; a mural on the Kiowa Gallery building; Front Street Books; Holland Avenue; woodworker Rick Miller during Alpine Artwalk.



Plaine complements a bustling strip that's home to the 1928 Holland Hotel, numerous art galleries, and the independent Front Street Books.





Bastrop, owe at least part of their latest surge of energy to the growth of nearby cities like San Antonio and Austin. City folks keep these smaller towns' main streets hopping on the weekends and help support restaurants like Peggy's on the Green in Boerne, the latest project by chef Mark Bohanan of Bohanan's Prime Steaks and Seafood in San Antonio.

Across the state, small-town main streets are gaining momentum. Boerne's Ye Kendall Inn, which is the home of Peggy's on the Green, has just expanded to open a contemporary offshoot, The William, a New Orleans-style row of sleek modern rooms all connected by a wraparound second-story porch. In Alpine, the shuttered Crystal Bar on Holland Avenue is getting a facelift and is expected to reemerge later this year. This spring in Nacogdoches, the restored

Fredonia Hotel, located two blocks off of Main Street, will open as a boutique hotel with a mid-century-modern bent. In Georgetown, new shops are opening on the square this year, including Mesquite Creek Outfitters, an outdoor-clothing shop with a bar, and Noble Sandwich Co. And in Bastrop, the rustic Neighbors Kitchen & Yard—a short walk from Main—keeps drawing live-music lovers to the banks of the Colorado River.

These towns represent the renewed relevance of main streets across the state. As entrepreneurs of all ages embrace the value of historic places and architecture, we flock to these central gathering places, drawn by our shared desire for human connection and enterprises with soul. Texas main streets are now, more than ever, very good places to be. **L**



Boerne's Main Street, clockwise from top left: The Dienger Bistro; 259 Brantley's Bistro; Cibolo Creek Trail; crab cakes at Peggy's on the Green; Flashback Funtiques.



ESSENTIALS



For tourism information for cities mentioned in the story, contact the local visitor's bureaus: **Nacogdoches**, 936/564-7351, www.visitnacogdoches.org; **Alpine**, 800/561-3712, www.alpinetexas.com; **Bastrop**, 512/303-0904, www.visitbastrop.com; **Georgetown**, 800/436-8696, www.visit.georgetown.org; **Boerne** 888/842-8080, www.visitboerne.org. Information for sites mentioned in the story follows:

The Liberty Bell, 422 E. Main St. in Nacogdoches. Call 936/622-6425; www.libertybellbar.com.

Plaine, 215 E. Holland Ave. in Alpine. www.tumbleweedlaundry.com.

Cripple Creek Wine and Gifts, 928 A Main St. in Bastrop. Call 512/332-2477; www.cripplecreektx.com.

Sincerely Yours 1848, 809 S. Main St., Suite B, in Georgetown. Call 831/588-4249; www.facebook.com/sincerelyyours1848.

The Dienger Trading Co., 210 N. Main St. in Boerne. Call 830/331-2225; www.thediengertradingco.com.





Designs Across Time

The signature architectural styles of Texas' main streets. *Story by Heather Brand*

The architectural styles found along Texas main streets stack together like a timeline of the state's historical development and shifting tastes. In four towns in particular—San Elizario, Tyler, Waco, and Dallas—building shapes and facades illustrate specific chapters of Texas history, from the early 1800s to the present. From squat adobe structures to towering glass skyscrapers, the buildings on these central thoroughfares resonate with distinctive aesthetics of time and place.

“The buildings of main street tell us who we were and what we will be,” says Stephen Fox, an architectural historian at Rice University. “San Elizario, with its plaza-centered Mexican urbanism, contrasts with the predominant type of Anglo-American main street, punctuated by a public square containing the county courthouse, as in Tyler and Waco. In Dallas, they built their square over the freeway.”

MAIN STREET, San Elizario

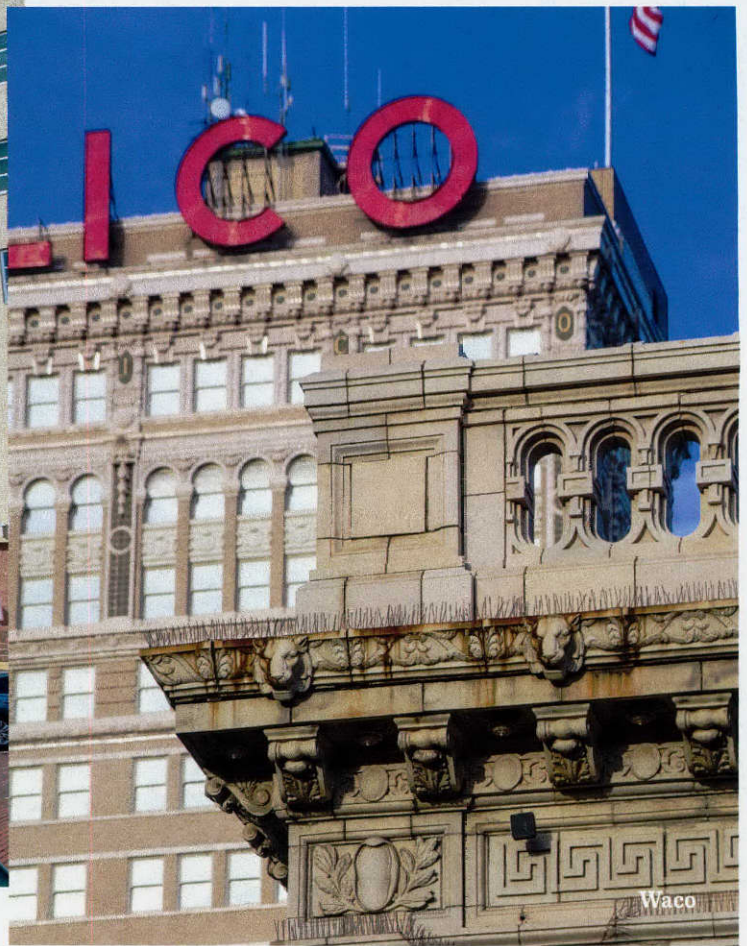
One of Texas' earliest main streets is in the border town of San Elizario, on the outskirts of El Paso. Here, numerous white adobe structures gleam against the desert landscape

and wide-open skies. These constructions, which feature thick, mud-brick walls and exposed wooden rafters known as *vigas*, are prime examples of the Territorial architectural style dating to when Texas was part of New Spain and Mexico.

In 1789, the Spanish built a presidio here, enclosed within a massive wall. In the subsequent century, local builders reused the wall's adobe bricks in new buildings. Many of the older edifices in the historical downtown district contain these appropriated bricks, and a few of those on Main Street may incorporate sections of the original wall. One of these, the L-shaped Mercantile Building (built about 1830), now harbors a cluster of artists' studios and the Veterans Memorial Museum. Another, which currently serves as the Old El Paso County Jail Museum, once



Tyler



Waco

held up to six prisoners at a time in its two wrought-iron cells.

On the adjacent San Elizario Road stands Los Portales (Spanish for “the portals”), named for its long, columned gallery. The building’s exact age is uncertain, but it served as a family residence in the mid-1800s and later as El Paso County’s first public school. Today, it houses Los Portales Visitor and Information Center, with exhibits relating to local history and Spanish contributions to the New World. Across the street, you can see the graceful curves of the presidio chapel, constructed between 1877 and 1882 in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Its *espadañca*, or bell gable, was added in the early 20th Century in the California Mission style.

www.sanelizariohistoricdistrict.org

BROADWAY AVENUE, Tyler

In East Texas, Tyler features several structures built in the Art Deco style along Broadway Avenue and nearby streets. This forward-looking

aesthetic, characterized by decorative motifs of angular geometric shapes and streamlined forms, first became popular in the 1920s and was flourishing by 1930, when the East Texas oil field was discovered. In that decade, Tyler boomed as a hub of the petroleum industry.

Art Deco design is evident in the 15-story People’s Petroleum Building, which rises in three setback tiers and retains its original black granite entrance and expansive lobby with period details. Developers built what was then known as People’s National Bank Building in 1932 to meet the oil industry’s demand for office space. Located a block west of South Broadway, the building was renovated in 2012.

The six-story Blackstone Building followed in 1938, its brick facade ornamented with fluted limestone spandrels that draw the eye upward. Located on North Broadway, it was also

designed as an office building and today houses the Tyler Chamber of Commerce.

Another addition of the 1930s was the Liberty Theatre (now Liberty Hall), on East Erwin Street near its intersection with South Broadway. This venue entertained audiences for about 50

years before shuttering. Restored to its Art Deco roots and reopened in 2011, it continues to draw audiences with classic films and performing

arts events touted on its vintage neon marquee. www.visitt Tyler.com

One of the few downtown Waco structures to survive the 1953 tornado was the 1911 ALICO Building, which at 22 stories was the tallest building in Texas when it was built.

AUSTIN AVENUE, Waco

Along Austin Avenue in downtown Waco postwar modernist architecture is testament to this Central Texas town’s shifting economic fortunes in the decades following World War II. Modernism embraced materials such as steel, glass, and



Klyde Warren Park, Dallas

concrete, as well as brave new forms that followed function.

The single-story Sedberry Furniture building, with its simple lines and eye-catching, red-and-turquoise corner pylon, got its start as an H-E-B grocery store in the early 1950s, when Waco's population was thriving due partly to a robust manufacturing industry. In 1953, one of the deadliest tornadoes in Texas history barreled through downtown. In its wake, some of the salvageable buildings were given mid-century facelifts. Some damaged buildings were razed and replaced with new constructions that embraced the aesthetics of the age. Erected in 1962 directly across from the Sedberry building, the Waco-McLennan County Library was built as a modernist flat-roofed pavilion clad with spandrel panels of pink marble. A 2013 remodel retained the library's modernist characteristics.

One of the few structures to survive the 1953 tornado was the 1911 ALICO Building, which at 22 stories was the tallest building in Texas when it was built. In 1966, thanks to an urban-renewal effort aimed at stemming

suburban migration, renovators added a cast-concrete facade with a design of faceted diagonals at street level, giving the original architecture a modernist twist.

www.wacoheartoftexas.com

KLYDE WARREN PARK, Dallas

Flashy, modern-day skyscrapers demand attention with their height and imaginative designs, but innovations are also happening at ground level. Consider Dallas' Klyde Warren Park. Linking the Dallas Arts District and the Uptown neighborhood, this park sits directly above the recessed tunnel of Woodall Rodgers Freeway—an entirely different kind of “main street.” Opened in 2012, the park offers more than five acres of lawns, tree-lined pathways, and playful water features.

Flanking the park on one side is the Dallas Museum of Art, Nasher Sculpture Center, and Museum Tower, a 42-story residential tower completed in 2013 that resembles a column of reflective glass. A short distance north, the AT&T Performing Arts Center, which

opened in 2009, beckons audiences with two different venues: the 2,200-seat Winspear Opera House, with its distinctive seven-story, red-glass oval protrusion and surrounding louvered metal portico, and the adjacent Wyly Theatre, a boxy, 12-story playhouse with a shiny exterior of vertical aluminum rods.

On the other side of the freeway, south of the park, stands the Perot Museum of Nature and Science, completed in 2012. This 180,000-square-foot building has a cube-like form sheathed in cast-concrete panels; a glass-encased escalator on the building's surface pierces the building diagonally. The base of the museum merges into an undulating structure topped by an eco-friendly “green roof” of drought-resistant native flora.

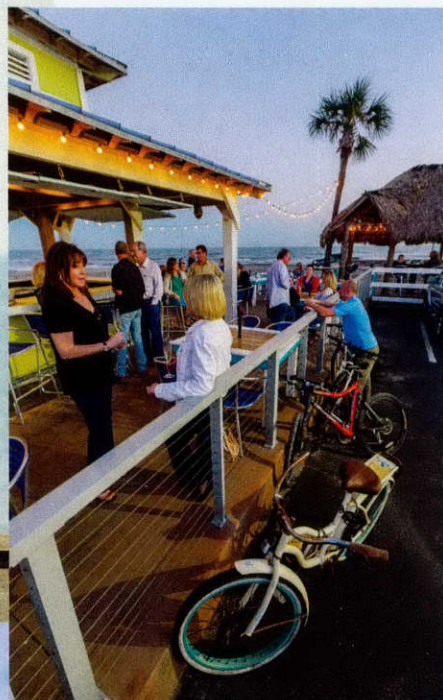
Overall, the concentration of cultural venues and cutting-edge architecture around this section of freeway reflects Dallas' dedication to urban engagement. While other main streets provide a trip back in time, this Dallas Arts District artery offers a glimpse into the future.

www.klydewarrenpark.org



Seawall Boulevard

History and recreation along the Gulf of Mexico. *Story by Lori Moffatt*



Galveston's Seawall Boulevard stretches for more than 10 miles along the Gulf of Mexico, offering access to hotels, resorts, restaurants, and attractions, as well as beaches for swimming, stand-up paddleboarding, kite-flying, boogie-boarding, and other activities. Between the road and the waves, a sidewalk known as the Seawall Urban Park is the country's longest continuous sidewalk; it's a great place for walking, jogging, bicycling, and people-watching.

Construction of the Seawall itself began in 1902 in response to the Great Storm of 1900, a Category 4 hurricane that killed at least 6,000 people and signaled the end of Galveston's reign as Texas' preeminent port city. To protect the island from future hurricanes, engineers designed a behemoth concrete barrier between the sea and the island, and they also commenced a complicated grade-raising project that

Construction of the Galveston Seawall began in 1902 in response to the 1900 hurricane.

eventually lifted about 500 city blocks. Together, these projects were recognized by the American Society of Engineers as one of the most brilliant feats of civil engineering in the history of the nation.

A drive or stroll along the Seawall is a rewarding introduction to Galveston Island. For starters, a historical marker at 21st and Seawall designates the site of the famous gambling hot-spot the Balinese Room, a mini-museum in the basement of the 1911 Hotel Galvez chronicles the island's



tourism history, and the Pleasure Pier carries on the tradition of a long-gone amusement park that thrilled visitors in the 1940s. And a new, 15-block stretch of beach called Babe's Beach offers plenty of sand for sunbathing, shell-seeking, swimming, and other watersports. www.galveston.com.

Time Warp

Take a stroll through history
on Texas main streets.

Story by Melissa Gaskill





Main Street. For many Texans, these words evoke memories of Saturday shopping trips, favorite lunch counters, and afternoon movies with friends. In the old days, every town had a main street or main drag, those few blocks where a town's social, cultural, and economic threads wove together—the community's heart and soul.

As Texas' cities grew, small-town main streets fell on hard times. Some main streets weathered the turbulence, while others bounced back when communities recognized what they had lost. Today, these streets work a bit like time machines, taking us back to a different era, rich in history yet full of life. For a time warp experience, here are five Texas main streets that offer a nostalgic step into the past along with contemporary fun.

POSTOFFICE STREET, Galveston

In 1885, Galveston reigned as the largest and richest city in the state. The Strand, its banking, retail, and shipping hub, was widely known as the Wall Street of the Southwest. Galveston had the state's first hospital, grocery store, opera house, medical college, and public library. It also had Texas' first post office, part of the 1861 Customs House on Postoffice Street, which today is home to renovated buildings full of art galleries, shops, restaurants, and residences.

Set in a three-story, red-brick building, René Wiley Gallery offers Wiley's timeless paintings of Galveston's historic East End, harbors, landscapes, and seabirds along with Rachel Wiley-Janota's sky-dominated landscapes and James D. Phillips' wood sculptures, many from local trees that died in Hurricane Ike.

On a self-guided tour of The Grand 1894 Opera House, check out the re-created carved stone arch entrance, replica painted canvas curtain, and beautifully stenciled box seats. The theater survived the 1900 Storm, ensuing hurricanes, and years of neglect before its restoration.

www.galveston.com/postofficestreettour

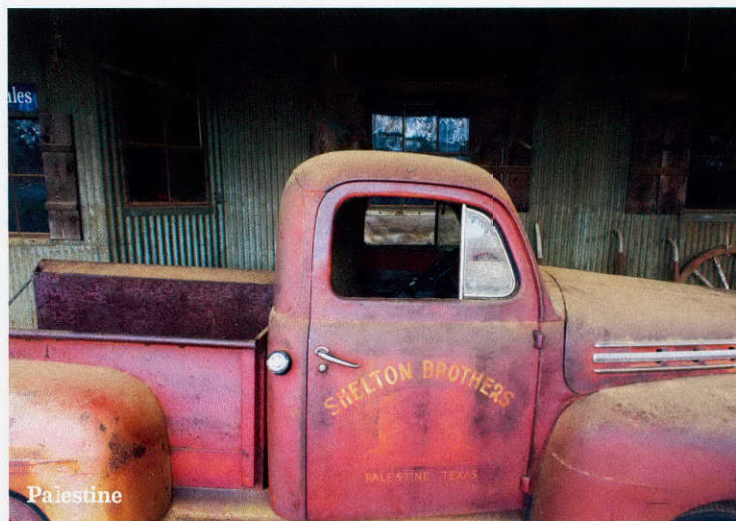
MAIN STREET, Bandera

Back in the day, working cowboys came to main streets to stock up on essentials, have a hot meal, and two-step with the ladies. Here in the Texas Cowboy Capital, they still do, and so can you.

Bandera General Store's 1907 building sports original wood floors and tin ceilings. Previously a saddle shop, feed store, and movie theater, it boasts an operational 1950s soda fountain and sells boots, books, and Texas-themed gifts.

Head downstairs to Arkey Blue's Silver Dollar for live bands on Fridays and Saturdays, including occasional performances by Arkey himself, and jam sessions on other days.

Cowboys have been chowing down at the OST Restaurant, named for the Old Spanish Trail and set in an 1870 building, since it opened in 1921. The menu runs the gamut from all-day



breakfast to burgers, steaks, seafood, Tex-Mex, sandwiches, and salads. Grab a seat in one of the saddles at the bar or in the John Wayne Room, adorned with photos of the actor.

Historical markers at Main and Hackberry detail Bandera's history as a staging point for the Great Western Cattle Trail, an early influence on Main Street's cowboy culture.

www.banderacowboycapital.com

AUSTIN STREET, Jefferson

The fifth-oldest town in Texas, Jefferson served as the state's largest and most significant river port in the mid-1800s. Steamboats arrived from New Orleans, and many passengers headed to Austin Street's Excelsior House Hotel. You can still stay at the Excelsior, where the rooms exude Victorian elegance with period furniture and carry the names of former guests like President Ulysses S. Grant. Nearby, the Jefferson General Store occupies an 1866 building that once housed the town's first hardware store. The General Store features an old-time soda fountain and a world of sweet treats and gifts.

Also on Austin Street, the Historic Jefferson Hotel

occupies an 1851 building just blocks from the riverfront. Previously used as a cotton warehouse and a dance hall, the hotel features Victorian antiques and purportedly a few ghosts.

Steep yourself in Jefferson's history with one of Lone Star Carriage Company's 30-minute history tours by horse-drawn carriage and a visit to the Jefferson Historical Society & Museum, also on Austin Street. Its 1888 building, which was once used as a federal courthouse and post office, contains Victorian fashions, period furnishings, farm tools, antique firearms, and Caddo artifacts.
www.visitjeffersonstexas.com

CRAWFORD STREET, Palestine

Established in 1846, Palestine thrived on commerce from paddle-wheel steamers on the Trinity River and, beginning in 1872, from the International-Great Northern Railroad, later the Missouri-Pacific. Trains carried lumber,

cotton, cottonseed oil, and fruit from Palestine to Houston and points beyond.

The current, and fourth, Anderson County Courthouse anchors the town's main drag. Built in Beaux-Arts style, it features giant order Ionic columns, pedimented porticoes on each facade, and a dome topped by Lady Justice.

On East Crawford, Pint and Barrel Drafthouse serves burgers and pub grub, including a popular pulled-pork sandwich, plus a selection of local craft beers.

On West Crawford, the Spanish Colonial-style Texas Theater, opened in 1930, now houses Palestine Community

Theatre, which presents local dramatic productions. Nearby, the Redlands Historic Inn, built in 1914 as a hotel for railroad travelers and employees, today offers a variety of suites. Embark on a time-travel trip by booking a room and taking a ride on the Texas State Railroad, a tourist train that runs between Palestine and Rusk. www.visitpalestine.com

TEXAS BOULEVARD, Weslaco

The plans that established the Rio Grande Valley town of Weslaco in 1919 designated Texas Boulevard the town's main street—and it still serves that purpose today. The four-story Hotel Cortez, built on the corner of Texas and Third Street in 1928, launched a Spanish Mediterranean architectural theme for downtown, bolstered by local architect R. Newell Waters' efforts in the 1930s to resurface surrounding buildings with stucco and roof tiles.

That look still adorns Lionel's Western Wear, between Third Street and Fourth Street, a family-owned clothier since 1959. It also remains on the former Edelstein Furniture Store, now the Weslaco Museum, which covers the area's complex history and presents exhibitions of local artwork.

Waters also designed the historic Spanish Mediterranean Skaggs House—between Tenth Street and 12th Street—which was built for local bankers and citrus growers Lester and Florence Skaggs. Currently under renovation, the Skaggs House marks the entrance of the Frontera Audubon Center. The center's 15 acres of Tamaulipan Thornscrub forest and ponds provide habitat for resident birds such as green jays, chachalacas, and great kiskadees, as well as occasional rarities like blue buntings.

Texas Boulevard closes the third Thursday of each month for Alfresco Weslaco, which features live music, art, sidewalk sales, and food.

www.weslaco.com





Shopping & Strolling

Boutiques, antiques stores, and galleries for a perfect souvenir. *Story by Celestina Blok*

Brick-paved roads, family-run businesses, cozy eateries, and revitalized buildings are among the charming images that come to mind when picturing quintessential Texas main streets. Here, boutiques, gift shops, and antiques stores draw visitors from across the state and sometimes the globe, whether for a pair of custom snakeskin boots such as those found on Exchange Avenue in Fort Worth, or a piece of hand-blown glass art from Main Street in Salado.



Jackson Street, Harlingen

GRUENE ROAD, Gruene

The triangular intersection of Gruene Road, Hunter Road, and New Braunfels Street make up the Gruene Historic District, an area flanked by the Guadalupe River. Many people come for music at Gruene Hall, but then they explore to find dozens of shops and boutiques offering antiques, pottery, souvenir T-shirts, local artwork, and gifts. At the Gruene General Store, a soda fountain offers root beer floats, hot cocoa, and homemade fudge. Anglers and other outdoors enthusiasts patronize Gruene Outfitters, a landmark for Hill Country fly-fishing gear, outdoor wear, and fly-fishing lessons. Save space in your bag to take home a jar of sweet and savory pickles from Fickle Pickles.

www.gruenetexas.com

MAIN STREET, Fredericksburg

A multi-day visit is a must for one of the widest Main Streets in Texas, offering more than 150 individually owned shops, restaurants, art galleries, and wine-tasting rooms. Fredericksburg's celebrated German heritage is evident by the prevalence of bratwurst and Bavarian pretzels, European imports and antiques, and "willkommen" signs hanging on shop doors. Visitors find a sprawling selection of home décor, pet supplies, vintage fashion, Western wear, handmade art, sporting goods, kitchen supplies, and wine accessories.

www.visitfredericksburgtx.com

EXCHANGE AVENUE, Fort Worth

The Old West comes to life daily at 11:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the Longhorns of the Fort Worth Herd mosey down Exchange Avenue in the Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District. The mesmerizing sight is worth a pause from shopping for cowboy boots at Fincher's White Front Western Wear (where materials range from cowhide leather to exotic skins like snake and alligator) or browsing the jewelry, belts, hats, and apparel at Maverick Fine Western Wear. Visitors also flock to the shops at Stockyards Station, which include a general store, hot-sauce retailer, leather trading company, spice and tea store, children's gift shops, and a vintage record store.

www.fortworthstockyards.org

JACKSON STREET, Harlingen

The picturesque, palm tree-lined Jackson Street of downtown Harlingen's historic business district, with its colorful murals and locally owned eateries featuring regional cuisine, has served as the South Texas city's eclectic "main street" for more than a century. Antiques are a big draw here, especially at the popular Antique & Artisans Emporium, where nearly 20 vendors sell collectible toys, glassware, and vinyl records. When refueling is required, patrons can enjoy handmade shakes and ice cream sodas on red vinyl barstools at Ol' D's Soda Shop. An open-air market takes place the first Saturday of each month on Jackson, featuring more antiques purveyors, crafts, collectibles, and gifts.

www.visitharlingentexas.com

MAIN STREET, Salado

Home to painters, glassblowers, sculptors, potters, and carvers, Salado has a creative spirit evident in many of its Main Street shops, boutiques, and galleries. At Classics on Main, works from featured artists include oil paintings, black-and-white photographs, and bowls made from native Texas wood. Salado Glassworks is a working glassblowing studio that doubles as a gallery and gift shop. "Blow your own" events give patrons a chance to experience the interactive art. The Shoppes on Main offer more than 25 boutiques featuring home goods, handbags, jewelry, pet toys, and kids' gifts under one 5,000 square-foot roof.

www.salado.com

Oh, What A Night

These streets across Texas provide some of the best food, music, and drinks to make for invigorating nightlife. *Story by Amanda Ogle*





Nightlife in Texas means a local craft beer on a dimly lit patio, a rockin' concert in a small venue, a glass of wine and conversation in a quiet wine bar, or an unforgettable late-night burger. Whatever you choose, these towns and cities across the state provide some of the best streets for nightlife.

Denton

Two universities, a lively arts community, and a reputable music scene make this North Texas city a major player when it comes to nightlife, especially on the streets around the courthouse square. For a glimpse into the art scene, check out West Oak Coffee Bar on West Oak Street, which provides a space for local artists to display their work. Everything about West Oak Coffee Bar supports the community, including the leather coasters and the wooden pie boards made nearby. Although West Oak stops serving its main menu at 3 p.m., baked goods are available until 10:30, along with beer and wine, including 10 Texas beers on tap. Don't miss the Chocolate Cold Brew Pie, made with a signature cold-brew coffee cream, a layer of chocolate ganache, then topped with espresso whipped cream. For dinner, walk down to Elm Street and check out Agua Dulce, which specializes in Tex-Mex plates and margarita flights.

For a live show at the venue that helped put Denton on the music map, head to Industrial Street to check out Dan's Silverleaf. Nearby, in an old house on Oak Street, Oak St. Drafthouse & Cocktail Parlor serves more than 70 beers on tap (with 24 taps dedicated to Texas beers), plus another 100 or so in bottles. Rooms in the house are furnished with sofas and chairs, creating a cozy meeting place.

www.discoverdenton.com

San Marcos

While San Marcos is popular for river-floating and shopping, the town's true sweet spot is the downtown area, which is filled with places to kick back and enjoy an evening. On North LBJ Drive, Root Cellar Café serves microbrews created on site. Just a few steps away on Hopkins Street is Taproom, a pub with 42 beers on tap and 60 bottled options. There are nine flat-screen televisions here, making Taproom a great place to catch a game. Locals love "The Works" burger with melted Swiss and American cheese, grilled mushrooms, jalapeños, onions, and bacon. Also on Hopkins Street is Zelik's Icehouse, a former 1930s gas station where you can play washers, corn hole, and horseshoes while enjoying Texas craft beers and specialty cocktails.

Looking to do some dancing? Consider The Marc on San Antonio Street. Complete with a large dance floor, three bars, and an upper-level balcony, The Marc is a hot spot for live music. For a quieter evening, head about a half-mile southeast to Patio DOLCETTO on Cheatham Street. This wine lounge, beer garden, and artists' gallery offers more than 50 wines and 40 craft beers, as well as wine flights and flatbread pizzas. For a sweet treat, try the Cinnamon Dolce flatbread pizza with olive oil, butter, cinnamon, brown sugar, and a drizzle of white chocolate.

www.toursanmarcos.com

Bryan

If you're in downtown Bryan on the first Friday of the month, you'll find the downtown sidewalks abuzz with street music, magic acts, art vendors, and food trucks. On Thursday nights, Murphy's Law on Main Street has trivia night to go alongside Irish fare. Just down the street is the Grand Stafford Theater, a 400-capacity live-music venue in a century-old building. A full bar offers classic cocktails. Steps away, in yet another historic building, you'll find a restaurant called Proudest Monkey, which serves plenty of Texas beer. While the menu offers unusual French fry varieties ("dirty" fries are seasoned with salt, pepper, and sugar while "yuppy" fries feature olive oil, garlic powder, and Parmesan), Proudest Monkey is most famous for its ice cream martinis. Try the Arnold Palmer, which combines Deep Eddy Sweet Tea Vodka, Triple Sec, fresh lemon juice, lemonade, tea, and lemon sherbet.

Interested in learning some new dance moves? Head northwest to 26th Street, where you'll find the Village Cafe. On Wednesday and Saturday nights, the dance floor heats up with salsa lessons. For a great place to catch up with friends, head next door to Downtown Uncorked, a wine bar complete with couches and outdoor seating—and cheese plates with crackers, fruit, and several types of cheese.

www.visitaggieland.com

Dallas

For a plethora of bars, live music, and delicious eats in Dallas, you can't go wrong with a trek down Lower Greenville Avenue. For great live music, head to the Art Deco Granada Theater, built in 1946 as a movie house and later renovated to host live bands. About a mile south on Greenville Avenue is HG SPLY Co., where you'll find dishes such as mussels, stir-fries, and grains-and-greens combos, plus a rooftop patio with city views. Try the bison-chili Frito pie with poblano, jalapeño, and ancho chiles.

For more variety, check out the Truck Yard on Sears Street, about two minutes away. The Truck Yard offers a rotating list of food trucks with everything from Greek to Texas cuisine, as well as three bars (one is in a treehouse). A permanent kitchen here also offers cheese-steaks, and live music takes the stage Friday through Sunday nights. Weekenders should arrive early, as seating goes fast.

For some of the best DJs in Dallas, head to the Beauty Bar on Henderson Avenue, just around the corner, about a half-mile from Greenville Avenue. At Beauty Bar, patrons can get a martini and a manicure and dance the night away in the retro-salon setting, complete with vintage hair-dryer chairs.

www.visitdallas.com

MORE HOT SPOTS AROUND THE STATE: ❶ Austin—South Congress Avenue ❷ Lubbock—Buddy Holly Avenue/Depot District ❸ Galveston—Seawall Blvd. ❹ Houston—Washington Avenue



Ketzler's Schnitzel Haus & Biergarten, Granbury



Eats on the Street

These streets across Texas provide some of the best eats. *Story by Jennifer Babisak*

GRANBURY

Pearl Street forms the southern boundary of Granbury's historic town square, which surrounds the Second Empire-style Hood County courthouse. The courthouse's prominent clock tower keeps shoppers and diners punctual as they explore the square's 30 stores and more than a dozen eateries.

Located one block west of the square, a 1933 Sinclair gas station has been reborn as the café Pearl Street Station, which now welcomes customers with a wide porch outfitted with picnic tables and ceiling fans. The café's menu focuses on barbecue and Cajun cuisine, with daily specials like smoked brisket, crawfish étouffée, and blackened catfish.

Another iteration of regional cuisine comes in the form of Ketzler's Schnitzel Haus & Biergarten, also on Pearl Street. Owned by German natives, the restaurant offers traditional fare like schnitzel, bratwurst, and potato pancakes, which you can enjoy inside or outside on the cozy patio with a trickling rock fountain.

Or, savor a bit of Pearl Street's high-end dining at Eighteen Ninety Grille and Lounge. Try the Texas Trilogy—a plate featuring free-range chicken, bacon-wrapped quail, and tenderloin. For a spicy spin on comfort food, savor shrimp and jalapeño cheddar grits topped with a white wine cream sauce. The restaurant's Marketplace offers specialty spices, oils, and vinegars available for purchase.

www.visitgranbury.com



AMARILLO

The portion of historic Route 66 that runs through Amarillo still thrives with culinary and creative culture in the form of Sixth Avenue. Located on the southwest side of Amarillo, between Georgia Street and Western Street, this stretch of Sixth Avenue is lined with buildings dating to the 1920s, many of them bearing a mix of Art Deco and Pueblo architectural styles that locals call Pueblo Deco.

GoldenLight Cafe, established in 1946, still draws travelers on the open road. The low-slung brick building's cantina hosts a variety of live music performers, including regional and national acts. Classic burgers and fries nod to the cafe's original menu,

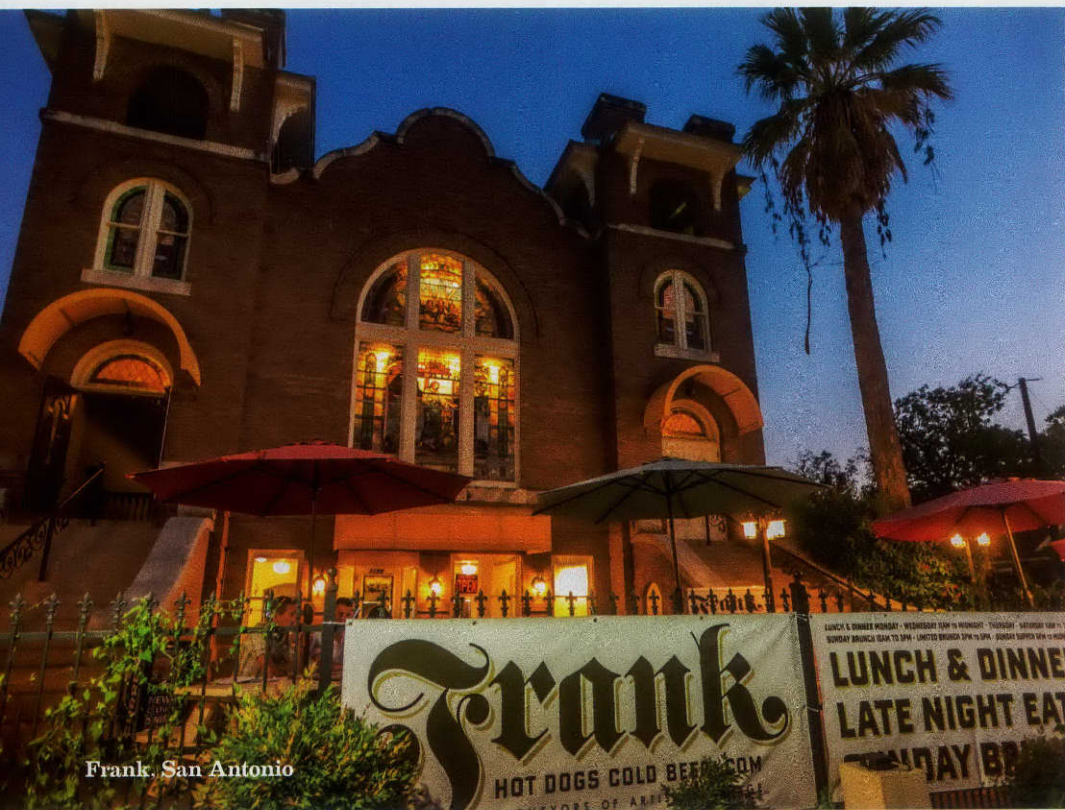
In Rockport, the Boiling Pot and Moondog Seaside Eatery offer seafood with waterfront views; In Granbury, Ketzler's specializes in German fare.

while a spicy bowl of Route 66 Chili, served with crackers and topped with chopped onions and cheddar cheese, remains a perennial favorite.

Wild Bill's Fill'n Station, located in a former gas station on the Mother Road, evokes old-school charm thanks to vintage neon signs, a jukebox, and umbrella-shaded patio tables. In addition to burgers, steaks, and burritos, the restaurant offers an extensive weekend breakfast menu starring plump omelettes, migas, and chicken-fried steak with eggs.

For lighter fare, locals rave about the fish tacos at Braceros Mexican Bar & Grill. Owned by Mexican natives, the restaurant proudly proclaims "No Tex-Mex" and features traditional Mexican specialties such as grilled cactus and seafood soup with crab, fish, and shrimp. The restaurant also features the largest selection of tequila in Amarillo, making the top-shelf margaritas here, which are served in salt-rimmed terracotta cups, very popular.

www.visitamarillo.com



Frank, San Antonio

SAN ANTONIO

Located in the Southtown district just south of downtown San Antonio, South Alamo Street brims with creative culture. In 1986, the Blue Star Arts Complex, housed in then-vacant warehouse buildings on South Alamo, opened across the San Antonio River from the King William Historic District. Blue Star quickly became an anchor for San Antonio's arts community and now houses the Blue Star Contemporary art museum, apartments, restaurants, a theater, and art galleries. To accompany its hearty pub

menu, Blue Star Brewing Company makes a rotating menu of beers, including sour beers and a barley wine, and also hosts weekly jazz concerts.

On South Alamo across the river from Blue Star, the restaurant Frank entices diners to "Come Have a Hot Dog!" Frank features artisan sausages made of meats such as antelope, rabbit, and pork. Accents like cranberry compote, blueberry-habanero-esspresso BBQ sauce, and popcorn crawfish make it clear that these aren't your average ballpark dogs. A sausage board includes a trio of German sausages along with sauerkraut, braised red cabbage, mustard, and pretzel sticks. Vegan franks, portobello cheesesteaks, a hummus sampler trio, and gluten-free buns ensure that there's a little something for everyone in your party.

A few blocks north, find Rosario's, a color-splashed eatery that puts a contemporary twist on traditional Mexican dishes, resulting in combinations like shrimp nachos and quinoa-stuffed chiles rellenos. For dessert, select from creative options like *cajeta* crepes, sweet tamales, and sweet-cream dipped churros.

www.visitsanantonio.com

ROCKPORT/FULTON

Fulton Beach Road hugs the coast of Aransas Bay, where winter brings white pelicans to gather on rocks along the side of the road. Charlotte Plummer's Seafare Restaurant has been a staple along this stretch of road since the mid-1970s. The restaurant serves a bounty of fresh seafood, including crowd-worthy seafood platters, and offers a BYOF (bring-your-own fish) option. Overlooking the bay, the restaurant's decks give diners views of shrimp and oyster boats bringing in fresh catch.

A couple of blocks away on the waterfront, Moondog Seaside Eatery features a spacious deck and patio overlooking the bay and hosts live music each weekend. While enjoying the view, you can satisfy your hunger on traditional surf-and-turf fare, as well as po' boys, burgers, and smoked brisket.

And if the po' boys create a hankering for more Cajun fare, try the Boiling Pot for Cajun-spiced seafood. Leave formality at the door: customers are given bibs to wear and are encouraged to use their bare hands to dig into seafood piled on sheets of butcher paper.

www.rockport-fulton.org

FORT WORTH

Located in Fort Worth's trendy Near Southside district, just south of downtown, Magnolia Avenue's early 20th-Century architecture projects a youthful vibe, hosting a multicultural array of up-and-coming restaurants. Amidst the warm elegance of Lili's Bistro, diners enjoy live jazz and savor the restaurant's "unpretentious global cuisine" ranging from tilapia tacos to crawfish étouffée-topped chicken.

The "global cuisine" label suits most restaurants along Magnolia Avenue, which offer a taste of the world within the reach of a few bike-friendly blocks. Shinjuku Station serves fresh Japanese fare served in small-plate portions. The restaurant's name and design are nods to the world's busiest train stop, Shinjuku Station in Tokyo, which logs more than 2 million passengers a day. Dinner specialties include baby octopus and rib-eye sashimi seared on a river stone. At the other end of Magnolia, King Tut Egyptian Restaurant offers a tantalizing array of exotic fare, including vegetarian selections like falafel along with gyros and sirloin moussaka for meat-loving patrons.

www.fortworth.com



Main Street Remake

La Grange's restoration success story. *Story by Matt Joyce*

It's a weekday morning in La Grange, and the courthouse square bustles with activity.

A roundtable of retirees deliberates current events over mugs of hot coffee at Latte Café. A few doors down, customers pick up cuts of beef and pork at Prause's Meat Market. Across the street, locals come and go from the Fayette County Courthouse. Nearby, a bus rolls to a stop in front of the Texas Quilt Museum and drops off a passel of tourists.

With its spreading oak trees and architecture from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the scene is what you might expect to see in a cinematic depiction of Texas small-town life before interstate highways, strip malls, and big cities wrested rural downtowns of their vitality. But this is no time warp. Thanks to public and private restoration efforts, a strong local economy, and a convenient location between Houston and Austin, La Grange's downtown square thrives with a charm that feels both vital and vintage.

"It has an authentic feel to it. You can't re-create that," says Stacey Norris, La Grange's Main Street and Tourism Manager. "It's a healthy mix. On the weekends when the services are closed, the tourism is still there. You've got your shops and boutiques, your museums, your places to eat."

La Grange's concerted efforts to improve the courthouse square began in 1996 when the city joined the Texas Historical Commission's Main Street program, which provides technical expertise and resources for historic revitalization projects.

Since then, private investment of \$6 million and public investment of \$7



Sights and bites on the La Grange square, clockwise: The 1891 Fayette County Courthouse; Latte Café; Bistro 108; Prause's Meat Market.

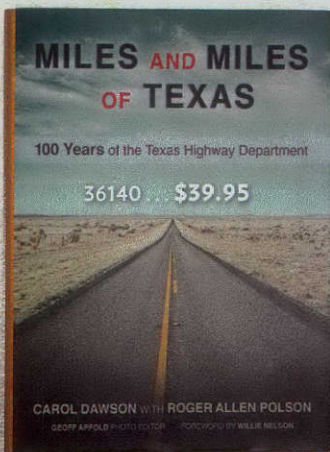
million have contributed to rehabbing most of the square's historic buildings—including the 1891 courthouse—along with building a small new park and rebuilding the sidewalks. As a result, the square's occupancy rate has grown from 70 percent in the mid-'90s to 90 percent today, Norris says.

Prause's Meat Market is among the oldest businesses on La Grange's square. Arnold Prause opened the market on the square in 1904; it moved

to its current location in 1953.

"When Main Street first came into being, the square was run down. One by one people came in and businesses came in, and they remodeled the fronts of their stores to make the square look like it did 50 years ago, 100 year ago," says Gary Prause, part of the fourth-generation of family ownership. "If you look at the before and after, it's mind-blowing how much it has changed. And the buildings are full now. The square is thriving again."

www.visitlagrangetx.com



**MILES AND MILES
OF TEXAS**

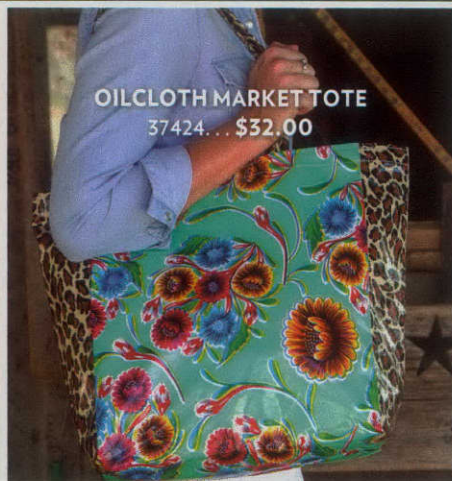
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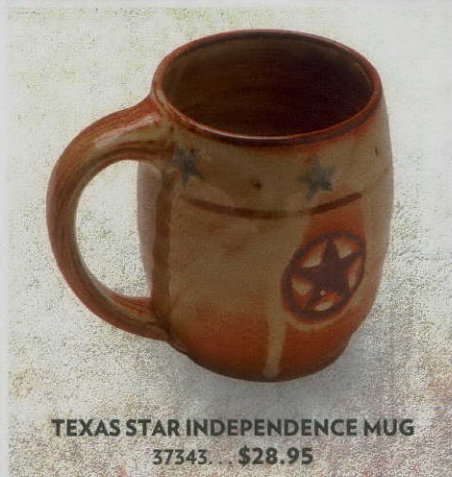
OILCLOTH MARKET TOTE
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DESTINATION: SAN SABA



Beyond Pecans

Restorative fun in historic San Saba

text by **Sofia Sokolove**



- Dofflemeyer Hotel {+ Oliver & Co.}
- JC Campbell & Co. Mercantile
- Wedding Oak Winery tasting room
- Alamo Pecan & Coffee

AS MY FRIEND AND I PULL INTO THE PARKING lot of the newly renovated Dofflemeyer Hotel in downtown San Saba, the first thing we notice is a weathered mural across the street from the parking lot on the whitewashed back wall of R.B. Bagley & Sons Pecan Company. “Buy Pecans Here,” it declares. And we know, officially, we’ve arrived in the right place.

We have big plans for our weekend getaway in this Central Texas town nicknamed the “Pecan Capital of the World”—especially because there’s more to San Saba than pecans these days. And the Dofflemeyer, located at the central crossroads of US 190 (Wallace Street) and Texas 16 (High Street),



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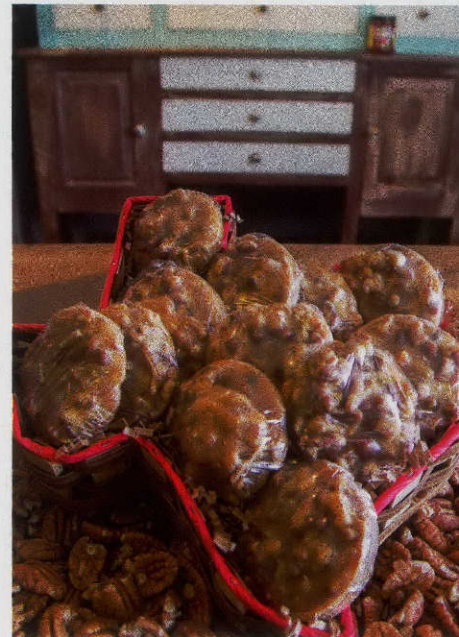
is an ideal base for exploring the town’s offerings both classic and new, from shops and eateries to a winery and verdant natural parks along the San Saba River.

Originally built by W.C. Dofflemeyer as a bank in 1913, the Dofflemeyer Hotel building had long been vacant when local attorney Clay Nettleship and his business partners, Hughes and Betsy Abell, bought it in 2011. Their restoration project, completed in 2015, combines design elements of rustic Hill Country and industrial chic, while preserving features like the original bank vaults on the first floor. Historically, the second floor was the San Saba Club, a gala venue and society gathering



THIS PAGE,
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
 San Saba River Nature
 Park, San Saba County
 Courthouse, Alamo
 Pecan & Coffee Co.,
 and Oliver & Co.

OPPOSITE PAGE:
 Wedding Oak Winery
 and Harry's Boots.



spot for card-playing; it now holds five rooms and one suite, each distinctively decorated.

“San Saba’s buildings have so much potential,” says Clay, a San Saba native who laid out the plans for the building’s renovation. Clay’s involvement in the Dofflemyer is his sixth renovation project in recent years. He’s also involved in Wedding Oak Winery and the 1910 Campbell-Hagen building, which now houses J.C. Campbell & Company Mercantile.

Clay attributes San Saba’s surge of architectural renovations and restorations to the town’s wealth of early 20th-Century buildings, along with “tremendous buy-in from the community”

and “a progressive city council.” Or, as one woman we meet puts it: “We’re bringing our old buildings back. It’s a lot of fun.”

With a large window centered on a wall of exposed brick, our room at the Dofflemyer is a fine example of Clay’s vision. Above our beds hang two framed black-and-white prints of pecans, artfully illustrated. And nestled on our colorful, gold-stitched pillows in lieu of chocolate? You guessed it: two bags of San Saba’s finest nuts.

Eager to begin our day, we stow our bags, grab our pecans, and head out on foot, taking a right on Wallace Street toward our first stop: Harry’s Boots—a sprawling shop featuring 15,000 square

feet of all things Western wear. As we near the shop, the smell of leather hits us before we even step inside.

Founded in 1939 by Ike Shapiro (whose son, Harry, later joined him in ownership), Harry’s passed through three owners and various renovations, gradually expanding to five buildings, including an 1885 building that was once the local hardware store. While nearly all of the buildings have been restored, a remnant of the hardware store remains. On a back wall, beyond rows of boots, belt buckles, and tack, a handwritten data chart records the history of the town’s important weather events since the 1920s.

After a quick trip upstairs to the



oak tree just outside of town, is a convenient skip away from the Dofflemyer. (Legend holds that the tree has been a symbolic site for weddings since Native American times.) The winery opened its tasting room in 2012 in a 1926 building that connects to the 10,000-case production facility. Owner Mike McHenry, who offers us Goldfish crackers between tastings (“the best palate cleanser!” he attests), is committed to making wine from Texas grapes. Wedding Oak’s winemaker, Penny Adams, uses grapes grown in Wedding Oak’s estate vineyards, as well as other Hill Country and High Plains vineyards.

We enjoy our taste of the 2014 Tre Vi (a blend of three white grapes) so much that we each decide to buy a glass and head outside to Wedding Oak’s patio, where a band is playing, and where we quickly realize that we’re the only people who do not know everyone at this local hangout. No matter. A friendly couple welcomes us to their table and

The Dofflemyer Hotel is an ideal base for exploring the town’s offerings both classic and new, from shops and eateries to a winery and verdant natural parks along the San Saba River.

invites others over to meet us, introducing us as “their new friends from Austin.” By the end of our glass, it feels as if we are honorary members of San Saba’s close-knit extended family. We might have stayed all evening had we not made dinner plans at Digg’s Restaurant and Club, about a mile-and-a-half east of the Dofflemyer on US 190.

We grab a booth in Digg’s packed, cozy dining room and order the specialty of the house—a mesquite-grilled steak. Served with a perfectly baked, buttery potato wrapped in tinfoil, my steak is one of the most tender and well-seasoned sirloins I’ve had in a long time. As we eat, the restaurant

dedicated hat floor, where I narrowly avoid blowing my weekend budget on a silver felt Stetson that fits like a glove, we head back out onto Wallace Street.

We happily spend the afternoon wandering in and out of San Saba’s shops, which range from gift boutiques like the charming Madeline & Me to the spacious J. C. Campbell & Company Mercantile, which brings together 12 or so vendors of antique treasures, apparel, and gift items. Where Wallace meets Live Oak Street, we admire San Saba County’s Classical Revival-style courthouse, with its two-story columns and domed clock tower. Built in 1911, the courthouse greets visitors with a saying carved over the brick-and-sandstone entrance: “From The People To The People.”

At this point, we decide we’ve earned ourselves a glass of wine. Wedding Oak Winery, named after a 400-year-old

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begins to empty out as diners head through the bar and into the connected pool hall. When we finish our meal, we follow suit. Over the pulsing of pop music, a game of pool, and two Lone Star longnecks, we toast our successful San Saba adventure.

Our weekend itinerary has somehow overlooked the town's cash crop. We decide to make a detour to what we've heard is San Saba's most magnificent pecan grove.

We're scheduled to head out the next morning, but not before breakfast at Oliver and Co., located in the Dofflemyer building next door to the hotel. We order coffee and gooey, delicious cinnamon rolls. Next, we stop at Alamo Pecan & Coffee to pick up pecan brittle for the road. Then it hits us: Our weekend itinerary has somehow overlooked the town's cash crop. We decide to make a detour to what we've heard is San Saba's most magnificent pecan grove.

When we get to Risien Park, we're immediately disappointed we don't have an entire day to spend there. The 80-acre park features rolling open green space, volleyball courts, grills, and an old stone amphitheater. The park connects with the San Saba River Nature Park, giving visitors 38 additional acres of greenbelt along the San Saba River.

We wander toward the river, pass over an old railroad trestle, and find ourselves in the sun-speckled shade of a lush canopy of pecan trees. Despite having bought it "for the road," we break into our perfectly sweet pecan brittle and promise the trees we will return to their capital city soon. 

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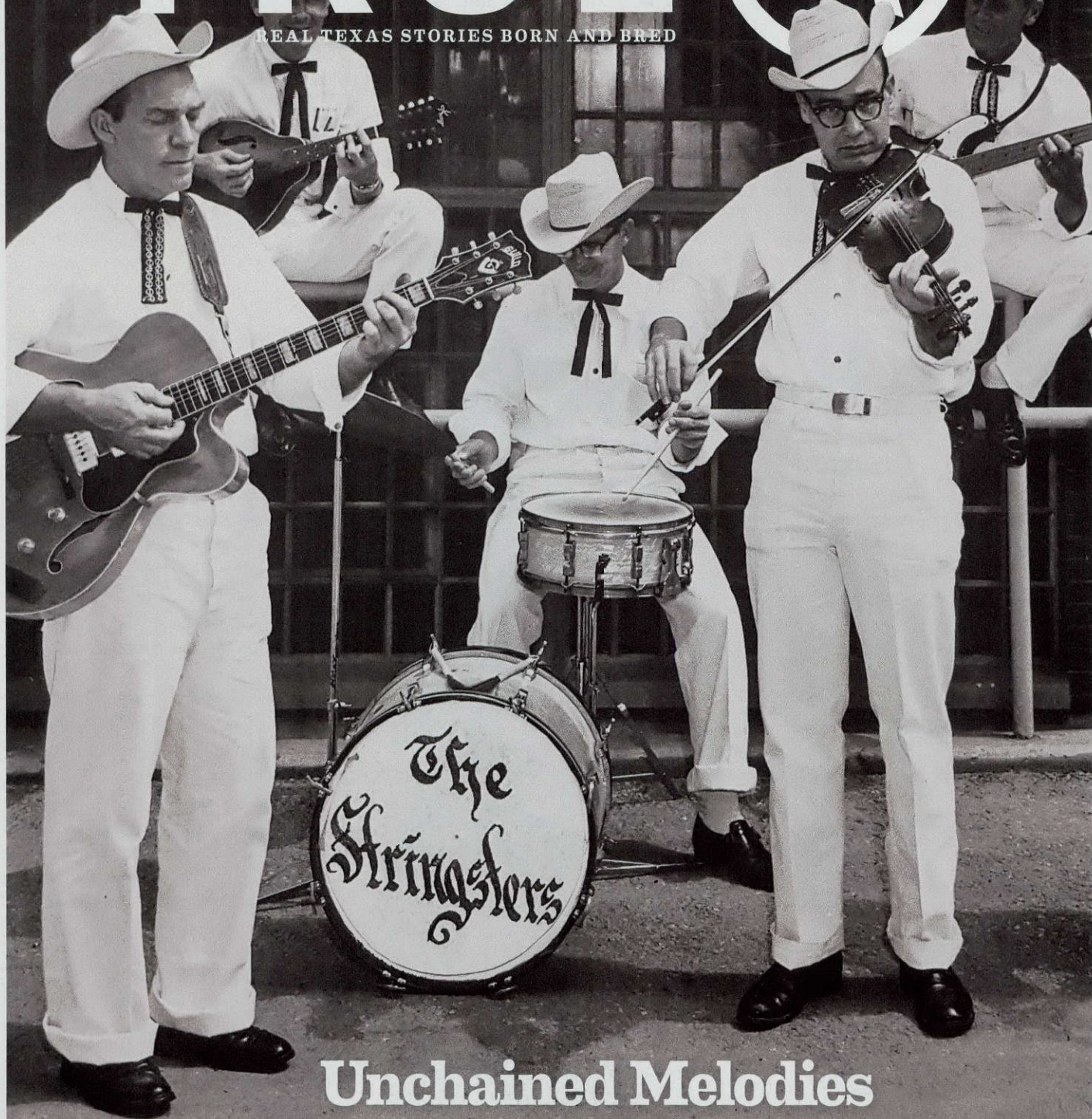


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Unchained Melodies

Jailhouse music and the Texas Prison Museum

Story by **Caroline Gnagy**

A circa 1960 photo of the Stringsters, a prison band that performed at the Texas Prison Rodeo and on *Thirty Minutes Behind the Walls*.

INSIDE THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND ARCHIVES office of the Texas Prison Museum in Huntsville, I thumb through old photographs and booklets that archivist Sandra Rogers has pulled for me to examine. One photo from 1941 shows more than a hundred people—men, women, and children—waiting in line to enter an imposing red-brick building.

Another photo from 1944 depicts a well-dressed audience in an auditorium, smiling and laughing at whatever's happening onstage. Still more photos reveal the performers, dressed in white: an all-female string band, a comedy duo, hymn-singing quartets, Mexican string orchestras, hot jazz bands, blues singers, tap dancers, spoon players, and brass quintets.

For decades, the Huntsville unit of the Texas penitentiary had a rich tradition of inmate musical groups that were immensely popular in their time.

One might assume that these photos were taken at a college or community theater. In fact, it was a much more ominous location: the Texas State Penitentiary in Huntsville. And the white-clad men and women on stage were all convicted felons.

Although music isn't typically associated with the "Texas tough" image of the state prison system, the Huntsville unit of the Texas penitentiary—nicknamed the Walls Unit—for decades had a rich tradition of inmate musical groups that were immensely popular in their time.

From the early 1930s through the mid-1980s, the Walls Unit allowed and even encouraged inmates to play music and perform as a tool for rehabilitation and public relations. Today, the Texas Prison Museum explores the history of the prison system and its music with displays of photographs and vintage instruments, as well as with its archival collection of photos, recordings, and programs.

Prison bands first captured the public's imagination with the launch of the *Thirty Minutes Behind the Walls* radio program on March 24, 1938, through 50,000-watt WBAP in Fort Worth. Beset with public criticism over reports of brutality, prison officials aired the musical variety show, featuring their most talented inmates, to burnish the prison system's image. WBAP broadcast the shows live from Walls and other units, sometimes in front of a live audience. The reaction from Texans—who were trying to pull themselves out of the Great Depression—was immediate and overwhelmingly positive. *Thirty Minutes Behind the Walls* aired for 10 years and even won broadcasting's prestigious Peabody Award in 1940.

Black-and-white photographs in the museum document the radio program, including pictures of the Goree All-Girl String Band, a group of young women musicians. Led by prison matron Mrs.



The Texas Prison Museum's display of inmate instruments includes a guitar made from cardboard, pencils, and string.



TEXAS JAILHOUSE MUSIC BOOK

Caroline Gnagy is the author of *Texas Jailhouse Music, A Prison Band History*, published in 2016 by Arcadia Publishing & History Press.

Heath, the Goree Girls, as they were known, were among the most popular acts on *Thirty Minutes Behind the Walls*. The photos show the band posed in portraits with their instruments and performing at the Texas Prison Rodeo.

Held between 1931 and 1986 in an arena at the Walls Unit, the rodeo provided another venue for prison musicians to perform. The museum's exhibit includes a large horse-drawn buggy from the rodeo. Painted maroon and labeled "Texas Prison Rodeo" in block letters, the wagon transported musical acts and prison officials to microphones set up in the center of the arena. Bands would perform during intermissions between rodeo events featuring inmates riding broncs and bulls.

Across the room from the Texas Prison Rodeo wagon, more of the prison's musical history shares a large display case with baseball uniforms, team photographs, and game programs from the prison baseball team, the Huntsville Prison Tigers. Prison officials organized the team and built a ballpark in 1924. The team played area semi-pro teams until they disbanded in 1943, a casualty of budget-tightening during World War II.

The display case's music section features photographs of prison inmate acts from the 1930s through the '70s, including an early male country-and-western band called the Rhythmic Stringsters. Another photo shows an African American gospel quartet, while others show orchestra and pop combos from the Ramsey Farm in Brazoria County and the Wynne Farm in Walker County.

Also on display is a 1978 souvenir LP recording of the Eastham Unit band. In the '70s, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice recorded a series of

prison-band albums and sold them as souvenirs at the prison rodeo. Each year's souvenir album featured original music, mostly country-and-western, from the male-only prisons. Next to the LP are several musical instruments, including an old wooden guitar and a well-worn saxophone. Particularly eye-catching is a banjo made from a cereal bowl, a paper towel roll, and string.

"I mean, just picture it—some inmate sitting around in his bunk somewhere, playing this banjo," says Rogers, who notes that the instrument's history is mysterious—like so many other items in the museum's collection.

The Texas Prison Museum chronicles not only music in the penitentiary, but also other elements of life behind its walls in the 20th Century, from the uplifting to the macabre. Some inmates passed the time making artwork, including items on display like leather purses and wallets, and a large white saw blade, once used at the Ellis Unit, painted with images of Texas Prison Rodeo participants.

A mock jail cell inset into a long wall gives visitors a sense of prison living conditions in the early 20th Century, while another display showcases decades of prisoner-made contraband in the form of crude-looking shanks, files, corkscrews, and razors. A detailed exhibit chronicles the histories of notorious death row inmates such as Karla Faye Tucker—a murder convict who was executed in 1998—and Ray Hamilton and Joe Palmer, members of Clyde Barrow's outlaw gang. Another case displays the handgun retrieved from the body of Bonnie Parker after police in Bienville Parish, Louisiana, killed her and Barrow—aka Bonnie and Clyde—in 1934.

Perhaps the museum's premier attraction is a re-created death chamber, complete with Old Sparky, the infamous electric chair that put 361 inmates to death between 1924 and 1964. The high-backed wooden chair with leather straps and buckles shines under harsh

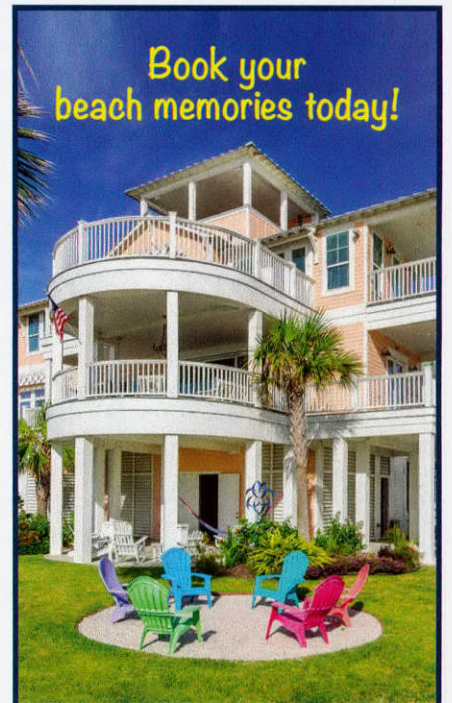


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spotlights, making an ominous shadow on the wall behind it.

Back in the administrative office, Rogers, the museum's curator of collections, shows me one of her favorite artifacts: a yellowed booklet with Art Deco typeface dated July 4, 1923. "It's a vaudeville program," she grins, "for a show that was put on by the inmates at the Walls Unit, which is fascinating to me. It was very beautifully done and full of interesting information."

The prison museum archives also house a bound book of radio transcriptions and a handful of souvenir programs from *Thirty Minutes Behind the Walls*. These artifacts contain treasure troves of information about the radio show and its stars, including photographs and detailed information on inmate acts.

One compelling photograph shows an African American inmate looking earnestly into the camera as he plays




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his harmonica into a WBAP microphone. The caption reads, "A.B. Johnson, carefree harmonizer on the harmonica, specializes in novelty numbers and imitations which make him one of the most unique speciality [sic] entertainers on the program."

Rogers says former prison officials and musical directors donated some of the museum's musical paraphernalia, while she collected some with the help of Texas Prison Museum Director Jim Willett—himself a former warden at Huntsville—when they both joined the museum in the early 2000s. Occasionally, the descendants of former

inmates or prison officials add to the museum's collection with information and artifacts.

Not long ago, Willett says, the daughter of a former warden shared enlightening information about the Goree Girls. "She came out and interviewed with us and brought pictures," Willett says. "Suddenly we went from peeking through a little peephole in a fence to getting a whole board knocked out—to where we could really see some things."

The Texas Prison Museum's research has become even more important in recent decades as inmate musical groups have all but disappeared from the prison system—a result of legislative changes and a general shift in policing and prison culture. The museum's extensive archives, fascinating ephemera, and rare artifacts provide a rare glimpse of the historical importance of music to the many inmates who once played "behind the walls." 

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9:30 A.M. Almost as soon as I exited the busy highway, I found myself cruising Tomball's quaint **Main Street** marked by colorful storefronts and vintage street lamps. I walked among the little shops selling goods of every kind, both new and old. From **Granny's Korner** to **Relics by the Railroad**, I counted almost a dozen antiques shops in as many blocks.

10:30 A.M. Down the street I discovered the renovated 1907 **Railroad Depot**, home of a small museum dedicated to the history of the railroad and how it put Tomball on the map. Come to find out, this rural farm community was known as Peck until 1907, when residents decided to rename their town "Tomball" after Thomas Henry Ball, who brought the railroad to town. The restored waiting area, Morse code machine, and caboose gave me new insight into this lost era.

11:30 A.M. To learn even more about Tomball's past, I cruised to the

Tomball Museum Center, a collection of historic buildings, including a church, log cabin, barn, and farmhouse. My favorite was the Oil Camp House, which in the 1930s housed roughnecks during Tomball's oil boom.

1:00 P.M. Ready for lunch with a historical flair, I headed to the

Whistle Stop Tea Room,

which serves Texas-size sandwiches, soups, and desserts. My chicken sandwich with avocado and jalapeño pimento cheese certainly hit the spot. While I didn't think I had room for dessert, I managed to squeeze in a taste of delicious croissant bread pudding.

2:15 P.M. To spend some time outdoors, I visited the **Kleb Woods Nature Preserve**. I felt insulated from the bustling world around me as I trekked through this mystical and serene park filled with over a hundred acres of cedar, oak, and pine trees.

Most curious was the home of the late Elmer Kleb, who managed to live free of electricity on this land until the 1990s. What a perfect retreat!

4:00 P.M. I drove a short distance through the countryside to **New Kentucky Park**, located a few miles outside of town. While this park is small, its historical markers memorialize a big moment in the Texas Revolution known as the "fork in the road." At this location, General Sam Houston and the Texas Army faced a critical decision between turning left to follow the path to safety in Louisiana or turning right to face Santa Anna's army head-on. Well, Sam took a right, and the rest is history!

5:30 P.M. After a long day of exploring, I was ready to relax, so I headed to **Mel's Country Cafe**, where the line was already stretching out the door. I had plenty of time to survey the plates of homemade country cooking but couldn't pass up the "Mega Mel," a behemoth burger towering over a foot tall. Patrons who finish the burger within two hours get their names on the wall and immortal fame. I puffed out my chest and put in my order.

About 30 minutes later, and less than half-way through, I was so full I thought burger was going to start squeezing from my eyes. Needless to say, I did not make the wall.

7:00 P.M. I wasn't ready to call it a day, so I wandered back to Main Street and joined the crowd gathering at **Main Street Crossing**, an intimate "listening room" with a laid-back feel that draws big-name musical acts. I grabbed a cold beer and found a table as the band took the stage.

I toasted with the locals as the band told stories and played tunes as sweet as Texas. After a day like this, I understand why they say, "Tomball is Texan for Fun." So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path, I hope to see you on the road. **L**

Chet Garner is the host of *The Daytripper*® travel show on PBS; www.thedaytripper.com.

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LITTLE JOE Y LA FAMILIA

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country-western, which is part of my DNA. And at about 4:30 in the morning, when my dad got up early to go work on the railroad, the radio would play Mexican music. There was a lot of music in my childhood. My siblings and parents all had an appreciation for music and played records—jazz and crooners. If you can get the soul of jazz, then you can apply that to all genres, it doesn't matter if it's salsa or ranchero. Growing up, I was exposed to some really beautiful music, which I try to incorporate in my own repertoire. I mix the genres and styles.

Q: *What are some of your favorite venues in Texas?*

A: I still like to go to small-town dance halls like Club Westerner in Victoria. The population there is small, but the turnout is huge. In '56 I played there for the first time. It was family-owned, and still is today, and it's where all the great country artists performed, like Ray Price and Willie Nelson. There aren't many dance halls left in Texas, but the music here is as diverse as the landscape. Those Czech polka bands in Central Texas, with that oompah beat, accordions, and fiddles—it's amazing how close it is to the sounds of Norteño and conjunto. No matter who you are in Texas, music is a key part of our lifestyle.

Q: *What do you appreciate about Texas when you are on the road on tour?*

A: I love the desert of Big Bend and the hills, rivers, and lakes of the Hill Country, the rolling grasslands. East Texas is beautiful, and so is the Valley. I've crisscrossed the state from El Paso to Beaumont, and from McAllen to Amarillo. You know the old song "I've

Been Everywhere?" Well, I've been everywhere. I've been on the road for over half a century. When I have time off, I enjoy staying home. I love all that about Texas, but certainly mostly the people, Texas people.

Q: *What's next for you?*

A: A documentary of my life [*Recordos: The Life and Music of Little Joe*] is underway, and I just wrote a new album of Spanish rock. The business of recording and promoting has changed so much with technology. In the past, I'd drive into any town, and walk into the radio stations with my record, and they'd play it on the air. Now it's corporate. But all music evolves. I believe each generation brings its own musical ideas to the table.

Q: *What's the documentary about?*

A: The documentary is really about a struggle, a cause, and about the people. It starts with the farmworkers, because I came from the fields myself. I joined the movement and met Cesar Chavez and became part of the struggle that unites all of us. It's going to shine a light on a lot of things that Chicanos are not recognized for. Ultimately, I hope [the documentary] will bring encouragement to the next generation, that you can make it if you try, and that we as Americans have offered a lot to our country.

Q: *How does your music help bring people together?*

A: I keep an open mind to all music. For me, it's like food—if you prepare it well, I'll eat it. I hope my music, and all music, can be appreciated by everyone, and when you listen to it, you can forget about the things that bring you down. We should all appreciate the good things in life, like family and music. **L**

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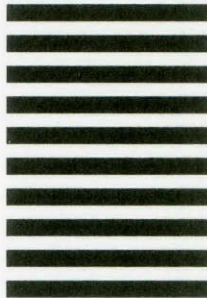
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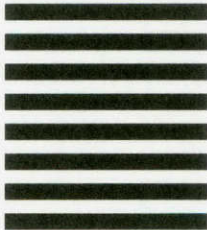
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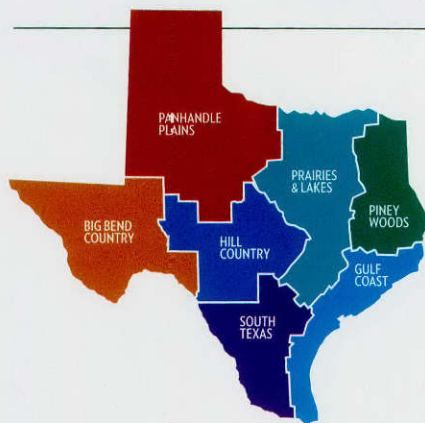
PANHANDLE PLAINS > Canyon

When Georgia Was Here

THOUGH MANY ART FANS ASSOCIATE GEORGIA O'KEEFFE with Santa Fe, it was in the Texas Panhandle town of Canyon that the influential painter fell in love with Western landscapes and honed her colorful, abstract style. The Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum marks the centennial of O'Keeffe's two years in Canyon, where she taught art at

West Texas A&M University from 1916 to 1918, with *When Georgia Was Here*. The exhibit adds context to O'Keeffe's experience and development by featuring prominent American artists from the time period and styles such as European Modernism, Art Nouveau, and American Impressionism. Through February 2018. www.panhandleplains.org.

Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at texashighways.com.



BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE: *A Feeling of Humanity: Western Art* from the Ken Ratner Collection Through Mar. 26. museumofthebigbend.com 432/837-8143

FORT STOCKTON: Pecos County Livestock Show Jan. 13-14. pecos.agrilife.org 432/336-2541

MIDLAND: Joe Dan Harper in Recital Jan. 27. mypbo.org 432/688-7777

MONAHANS: Resolution Run Jan. 7. monahans.org 432/943-2187

VAN HORN: Culberson County Stock Show Jan. 20-21. vanhornetexas.us 432/283-8440

GULF COAST

ARANSAS PASS: *Always Patsy Cline* Dec. 31, Jan. 6, 8, 13-15, 20-22. rialtotheater.tix.com 361/758-0383

BROWNSVILLE: *Mé Amigo Taste of La Frontera* Jan. 16. mramigo.com 956/546-3890

CORPUS CHRISTI: Winter Lecture Series Jan. 11-Feb. 22. stxbot.org 361/852-2100

CORPUS CHRISTI: Blacklock's Introduction to Birds of South Texas Jan. 24. stxbot.org 361/852-2100

EDNA: Brackenridge Winter Carnival & Snow Day Jan. 21. brackenridgepark.com 361/782-5456

FREEPORT: MLK Day Parade and Celebration Jan. 16. mlkcc.org 979/297-2801

GALVESTON: Festival of Lights Through Jan. 8. moodygardens.com 409/797-5124

GALVESTON: *Ice Sculptures, A Caribbean Christmas* Through Jan. 8. moodygardens.com 409/797-5124

GALVESTON: Galveston Symphony Orchestra Concert Jan. 8. thegrand.com 409/765-1894

GALVESTON: Dinosaur Zoo Live Jan. 17. thegrand.com 409/765-1894

GALVESTON: *Everybody's Hero: The Jackie Robinson Story* Jan. 18. thegrand.com 409/765-1894

GALVESTON: The Oak Ridge Boys Jan. 21-22. thegrand.com 409/765-1894

GALVESTON: *Pippin*, The Grand Jan. 29. thegrand.com 409/765-1894

HOUSTON: *Best if Used By...* Through Jan. 15. craftthouston.org 713/529-4848

HOUSTON: *Picasso: The Line* Through Jan. 8. menil.org 713/525-9400

HOUSTON: *Craft Texas 2016* Through Jan. 8. craftthouston.org 713/529-4848

HOUSTON: *Emperors' Treasures: Chinese Art from the National Palace* Through Jan. 22. mfah.org 713/639-7300

HOUSTON: *You Are Here: Maps of Texas* Through Jan. 7. heritagesociety.org 713/655-1912

HOUSTON: *Ancient Luxury and the Roman Silver Treasure from Berthouville* Through Feb. 5. mfah.org 713/639-7300

HOUSTON: *The Book of Mormon* Jan. 3-15. visithoustontexas.com

HOUSTON: *Coral Kingdoms and Empires of Ice* Jan. 10. houstonstx.org 713/224-7575

HOUSTON: Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* Jan. 12, 14-15. houstonstx.org 713/224-7575

HOUSTON: Chevron Houston Marathon Jan. 15. chevronhoustonmarathon.com

HOUSTON: MLK Grande Parade Jan. 16. mlkgrande.parade.org 713/953-1633

HOUSTON: Gershwin & Rachmaninoff Jan. 27-29. houstonstx.org 713/224-7575

HOUSTON: Super Bowl LIVE Festival Jan. 27-Feb. 5. housersbowl.com

JONES CREEK: S.F. Austin Funeral Re-enactment Jan. 7. 979/248-5961

LA MARQUE: Magical Winter Lights Through Jan. 8. magicalwinterlights.com

LAKE JACKSON: Bird Banding Jan. 21. gcbo.org 979/480-0999

LAKE JACKSON: David Sanborn with the Brazosport Jazz Orchestra in Concert Jan. 21. clarion.brazosport.edu 979/230-3156

ORANGE: *Preserving the Past* Through Jan. 14. starkculturalvenues.org/whstarkhouse 409/885-0871

ORANGE: *Collecting Conversations* Through Jan. 7. starkmuseum.org 409/886-2787

ORANGE: *Pippin* Jan. 28. luther.org 409/886-5535

PORT ARANSAS: Port Aransas Home Tour Jan. 28. portaransasgardenclub.org 832/372-0193

PORT ARTHUR: Martin Luther King Brunch Jan. 16. 409/543-3727

ROCKPORT: Gospel Music Festival Jan. 5-8. gospelforce.org/festival.html 361/729-6445

SAN BENITO: Third Thursday Conjunto Nites at the Chicho Jan. 19. 956/244-0373

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: 19th Annual Polar Bear Dip Jan. 1. sopadre.com 800/657-2373

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Winter Outdoor Wildlife Expo Jan. 24-28. spibirding.com 956/761-6801

SUGAR LAND: Sugar Land Holiday Lights Through Jan. 8. sugarlandholidaylights.com

SUGAR LAND: *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley Jr.* Jan. 6-8. inspirationstage.com

SUGAR LAND: Jerry Seinfeld Jan. 14. smartfinancialcentre.net

SUGAR LAND: Don Henley in Concert Jan. 15. smartfinancialcentre.net

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: *Xu Bing: Book from the Sky* Through Jan. 22. blantonmuseum.org 512/471-7324

AUSTIN: *Symphonic Evolutions* Jan. 7. thelongcenter.org 512/474-5664

AUSTIN: *Odd Squad LIVE!* Jan. 15. thelongcenter.org 512/474-5664

AUSTIN: City-Wide Garage Sale Jan. 28-29. cwgs.com 512/441-2828

AUSTIN: Anton Nel in Concert Jan. 29. thelongcenter.org 512/474-5664

BANDERA: Cowgirl Round-up and "ShowDeo" Jan. 1. banderacowboycapital.com 830/796-4413

BANDERA: Cowboy Capital Opry Jan. 3. silversagecorral.org 830/796-4969

BOERNE: Boerne Market Days Jan. 14-15. visitboerne.org/calendar/boerne-market-days-100 210/844-8193

BULVERDE: Chamber Rodeo Jan. 28. bulverdespringbranchchamber.com 830/438-4285

FREDERICKSBURG: First Friday Art Walk Fredericksburg Jan. 6. ffawf.com 830/992-2044

FREDERICKSBURG: Fredericksburg Music Club Miro Quartet Jan. 15. fredericksburgmusicclub.com 830/990-2886

FREDERICKSBURG: Fredericksburg Trade Days Jan. 20-22. fbtradedays.com 210/846-4094

FREDERICKSBURG: Hill Country Gem and Mineral Show Jan. 21-22. fredericksburgrockhounds.org 806/638-5706

FREDERICKSBURG: Hill Country Indian Artifact Show Jan. 28. hillcountryartifacts.com 830/626-5561

GRUENE: Hair of The Dog Day Jan. 1. holidaygruene.com 830/629-5077

KERRVILLE: Harpeth Rising Jan. 21. 830/896-9393 x 303

LUCKENBACH: Luckenbach Blues Festival Jan. 21. luckenbachtexas.com 830/997-3224

NEW BRAUNFELS: New Braunfels Antique Show Jan. 13-15. heritageeventcompany.com 830/221-4011

STONEWALL: Black-Eyed Pea Festival Jan. 1. torredipietra.com 830/644-2829

TAYLOR: Martin Luther King Jr. Day March and Program Jan. 16. taylormadetexas.com 512/296-6109

WIMBERLEY: Ray Wylie Hubbard in Concert Jan. 19. wimberleyumc.org/susannas-kitchen 831/601-2395

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: *Spanish Texas: Legend and Legacy* Through Mar. 11. thegracemuseum.org 325/673-4587

ALBANY: *Cell Series: Dan Phillips* Through Feb. 11. theojac.org 325/762-2269

ALBANY: *Texas Moderns: Sallie Gillespie, Blanche McVeigh, Evaline Sellors and Wade Jolly* Through Feb. 11. theojac.org 325/762-2269

AMARILLO: *Top Secret: License to Spy* Through Jan. 8. dhdc.org 806-355-9547 x 110

AMARILLO: *Saturday Night Fever* Jan. 25-26. panhandletickets.com 806/378-3096

AMARILLO: The Impressionist Collection of Montie Ritchie Jan. 29-Mar. 26. amarilloart.org 806/371-5050

LUBOCK: Disney's *Tarzan* Jan. 6-8, 13-14. lubbockmoonlightmusicals.org 806/638-5706

SAN ANGELO: *John Raimondi: Drawing to Sculpture* Dec. 9-Feb. 5. samfa.org 325/653-3333

SAN ANGELO: *Jose Arpa: Spanish Painter in Texas* Dec. 9-Feb. 5. samfa.org 325/653-3333

SAN ANGELO: Chamber Music Series Concert Jan. 15. samfa.org 325/653-3333

SAN ANGELO: Cactus Market Day Jan. 21. 325/949-6200

SAN ANGELO: Salmon Sculpture Competition Through Aug. 7, 2017. samfa.org 325/653-3333

PINEY WOODS

CROCKETT: Crockett Trade Days Jan. 7-8, 21-22. 936/204-0731

JEFFERSON: Jefferson Flea Market Jan. 6-7, 20-21. jeffersonfleamarket.net 903/431-0043

JEFFERSON: *Quilts on the Bayou* Quilt Show Jan. 27-29. jeffersonquiltshow.com 903/926-6695

LUFKIN: *Erth's Dinosaur Zoo Live!*—Family Funday Jan. 15. angelinaarts.org 936/633-5454

LUFKIN: The Pines Presents: Tenore Jan. 17. 936/633-0359

PALESTINE: Art Tracks Through Oct. 31, 2017. visitpalestine.com 903/729-6066

TYLER: Jackie Evancho Jan. 21. cowancenter.org 903/566-7424

TYLER: Gem and Mineral Show Jan. 27-29. etgms.com 903/795-3860

TYLER: *Pippin* Jan. 31. cowancenter.edu 903/566-7424

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ARLINGTON: *Pablo Picasso: Ceramics* Through Feb. 12. arlingtonmuseum.org

ARLINGTON: Goodyear Cotton Bowl Classic Jan. 2. cottonbowl.com

BASTROP: January Art Walk Jan. 6. bastropdowntown.com 512/332-8996

BELTON: *The President's Photographer* Through Jan. 28. bellcountymuseum.org 254/933-5243

BELTON: City-Wide Garage Sale Jan. 7-8. cwgs.com 512/441-2828

BELTON: Sami Show Marketplace Jan. 21-22. samishow.com 512/441-7133

BONHAM: Sam Rayburn Day and New Exhibit Unveiling Jan. 7. samrayburnhouse.com 903/583-5558

BRENHAM: Uptown Swirl Jan. 14. downtownbrenham.com/swirl 979/337-7200

CLEBURNE: *Man with the Pointed Toes* Jan. 5-28. plaza-theatre.com 817/202-0600

CLEBURNE: Harpeth Rising Jan. 27. songbirdlive.com 817/489-4840

CLIFTON: Stan Irvin Pottery Exhibit Jan. 20-21. bosqueartscenter.org 254/675-2274

CLIFTON: *Doublewide, Texas* Jan. 28-Feb. 11. bosqueartscenter.org 254/675-2278

COLLEGE STATION: *Driven to Drive: Defining our Identity* Through Jan. 8. bush41.org 979/691-4000

DALLAS: *Giant Cems of the Smithsonian.* Through Jan. 17. perotmuseum.org

DALLAS: *Clay Between Two Seas: From the Abbasid Court to Puebla de los Angeles* Through Feb. 12. crowdcollection.org 214/979-6430

DALLAS: *Still Life* Through Jan. 7. sarahatlee.com

DALLAS: *Birds of Paradise* Oct. 8-Jan. 8. perotmuseum.org

DALLAS: *The Trains at NorthPark* Through Jan. 8. thetrainsatnorthpark.com

DALLAS: *Art and Nature in the Middle Ages* Through Mar. 19. dma.org

DALLAS: *Day 1 Dallas* Jan. 1. day1dallas.com

DALLAS: *Monsters Dance Dallas 2017* Jan. 13-15. monstersdancedallas.com

DALLAS: *Junie B. Jones Is Not a Crook* Jan. 23-Feb. 26. dct.org

DALLAS: NCA Senior and Junior High School Nationals Jan. 21-22. nca.varsity.com

DALLAS: *Bridgman/Packer Dance* Jan. 27-28. atpac.org 214/880-0202

DENTON: Denton Black Film Festival Jan. 27-29. dentonbffc.com 469/573-0799

ELGIN: Sip, Shop & Stroll Jan. 12. elgintx.com

ELGIN: *Martin Luther King, Jr. County Wide Walk* Jan. 16. elgintx.com 512/229-3227

FARMERSVILLE: *Farmers and Fleas* Jan. 7. farmersvillex.com 972/784-6846

FORT WORTH: *Monet: The Early Years* Through Jan. 29. kimbellart.org 817/332-8451

FORT WORTH: *KAWS: Where the End Starts* Through Jan. 22. themodern.org 817/738-9215

FORT WORTH: *Southwestern Exposition Livestock Show and Rodeo* Jan. 13-Feb. 4. fwssr.com 817/877-2420

FORT WORTH: *Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra* Jan. 27-29. fwsymphony.org 817/665-6000

GARLAND: *Tantalus* Jan. 12-Feb. 4. garlandartsboxoffice.com 972/205-2790

GARLAND: *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade* Jan. 14. garlandtxaaacp.org 972/381-5044

GLEN ROSE: *Noian River Kennel Dog Show* Jan. 6-8. 254/897-4509

GLEN ROSE: *Somervell County Youth Fair* Jan. 12-14. 254/897-4509

GLEN ROSE: *Dir osaur Classic Barrel Race* Jan. 26-29. 254/897-4505

GRAND PRAIRIE: *Lunar New Year Festival* Jan. 20-22, 27-29. asiaticsquare.com 682/808-0756

GRAPEVINE: *Butchering & Curing Workshop* Jan. 14-15. nashfarm.org 817/410-3185

HALLETTSVILLE: *Texas Antique Tractor Show & Pull* Jan. 13-14. ttractorpull.com

HALLETTSVILLE: *State Championship Domino Tournament* Jan. 22. kchall.com 617/98-2311

MCCKINNEY: *Dinosaurs Live!* Through Feb. 19. heardmuseum.org 972/562-5566

MCCKINNEY: *Third Monday Trade Days* Jan. 13-15. tmttd.com 972/562-5466

MESQUITE: *MISD Faculty Art Exhibit* Jan. 1-31. mesquiteartscenter.org 972/216-6444

MESQUITE: *Cole Risner* Jan. 6. mesquiteartscenter.org 972/216-6444

MESQUITE: *String Theory* Jan. 27. mesquiteartscenter.org 972/216-6444

MESQUITE: *Opal Lawrence Historical Park Tours* Jan. 28. historicmesquite.org 972/216-6468

MESQUITE: *Peeler & Rose, Just for Kids Series* Jan. 28. mesquiteartscenter.org 972/216-6444

PLANO: *Fairy Tale Ballet* Jan. 6-21. planometballet.org 972/769-0017

PLANO: *Things My Mother Taught Me* Jan. 12-Feb. 4. roverdramawerks.com 972/849-0358

PLANO: *Blithe Spirit* Jan. 19-22. planochildrens theatre.org 972/422-2575

PLANO: *Dallas Area Train Show* Jan. 21-22. dfwtrainshow.com 469/438-0741

PLANO: *Rubber Stamp, Paper Craft and Scrapbook Show* Jan. 28-29. stampscraparttour.com 727/644-0590

RICHARDSON: *Charlotte's Web* Jan. 15. eisemanncenter.com 972/744-4650

RICHARDSON: *The Texas Tenors* Jan. 21. planosymphony.org 972/473-7262

RICHARDSON: *The Original Stars of American Bandstand* Jan. 27. eisemanncenter.com 972/744-4650

ROUND TOP: *2017 Round Top Chili Cookoff* Jan. 21. ilovetoread.org 979/249-2700

ROUND TOP: *Texas Guitar Quartet* Jan. 21. festivalhill.org 979/249-3129

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

GOLIAD: *Goliad Market Days* Jan. 14. goliadcc.org 361/645-3563

LAREDO: *Washington's Birthday Celebration* Jan. 20-Feb. 20. wbcalarado.org 956/722-0589

MCALLEN: *McAllen Marathon* Jan. 15. mcallenmarathon.com 956/681-3333

SAN ANTONIO: *National Geographic Presents Earth Explorers* Through Jan. 22. wittmuseum.org 210/357-1900

SAN ANTONIO: *Telling Tales Contemporary Narrative Photography* Through Jan. 8. mcnayart.org 210/824-5368

SAN ANTONIO: *Fool For Love* Dec. 20-Feb. 12. theplayhousesa.org/shows/fool-love-cellar-theater 210/733-7258

SAN ANTONIO: *Mozart Festival* Jan. 6-Feb. 11. sasymphony.org 210/223-8624

SAN ANTONIO: *U.S. Army All-American Bowl* Jan. 7. usarmyallamericanbowl.com 210/207-3663

SAN ANTONIO: *The Illusionists* Jan. 10-15. majesticempire.com 210/226-5700

SAN ANTONIO: *San Antonio Cocktail Conference* Jan. 11-15. sanantonicocktailconference.com 210/472-2211

SAN ANTONIO: *From Gospel to Soul to Broadway* Jan. 20-21. sasymphony.org 210/223-8624

SELMA: *Holiday Magic Festival of Lights* Dec. 1-Jan. 8. holidaymagic festivaloflights.com 210/492-1437

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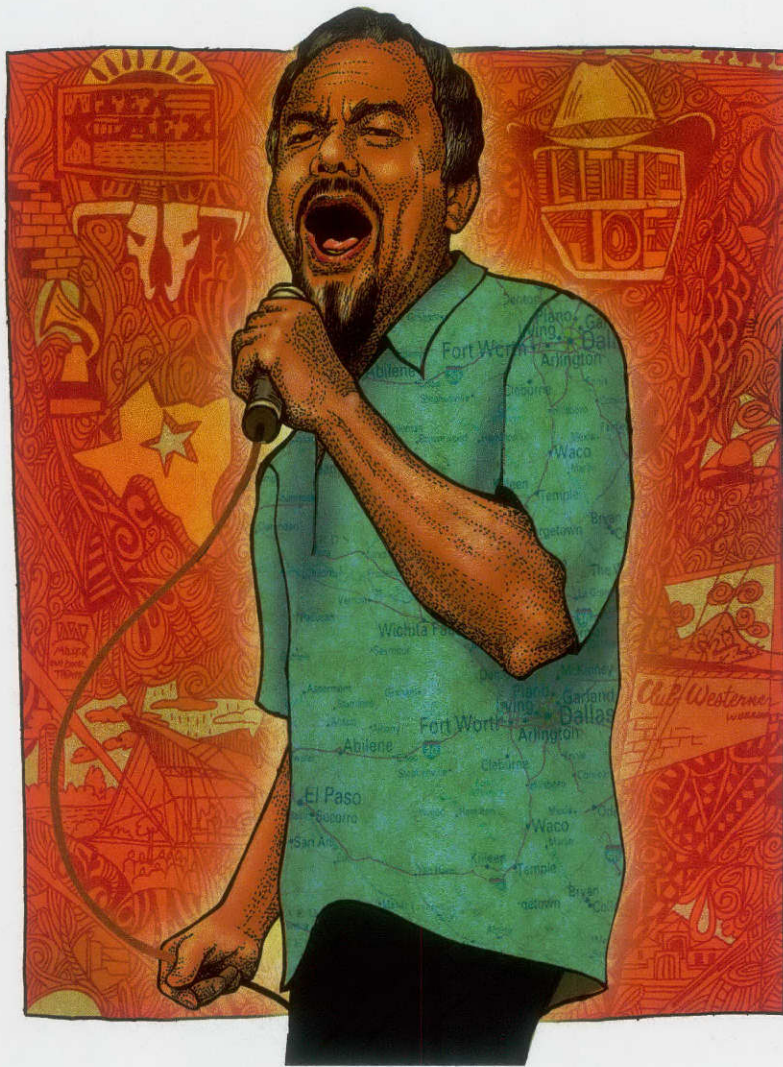
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Little Joe's Big Life

Little Joe Hernández and his musical journey

story by **Heather Brand**

AT AGE 76, "LITTLE JOE" HERNÁNDEZ HAS SPENT MORE THAN half a century performing his personal brand of Tejano music on stages across the Lone Star State and well beyond. A lifetime resident of Temple, he grew up the seventh of 13 siblings in a family short on money but rich in music. He picked cotton and worked odd jobs before joining his cousin's band as a guitarist at the tender age of 15. Several years later, in 1959, he took over the band, eventually changing the name to "Little Joe y la Familia" in 197C.

Hernández's homegrown sound blends traditional Mexican Norteño, American country-western, and jazz—spiced with rock and Latin beats. The songs incorporate both English and Spanish lyrics and a variety of instruments ranging from horns and accordions to fiddles and pedal steel guitars. Hernández has released more than 50 albums, racking up Grammy Awards for Best Mexican-American Album for *16 de Septiembre* (1991), and for Best Tejano Album for

Hernández's homegrown sound blends traditional Mexican Norteño, American country-western, and jazz—spiced with rock and Latin beats.

Chicanísimo (2005), *Before the Next Teardrop Falls* (2007), and *Recuerdos* (2010), as well as a Latin Grammy for *Recuerdos*.

Over the years, Little Joe has played alongside fellow Texas greats like Willie Nelson and Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top, and he continues to perform about 100 shows a year. He plays annually in October at Houston's Miller Outdoor Theatre for the Festival Chicano (which he helped establish), and he's a frequent performer at fundraising events for causes close to his heart, such as farmworker rights, education, and diabetes awareness. When he's not on the road, Hernández can often be found at his office along Interstate 35 in Temple, where photographs and memorabilia on the walls document his eventful career. (A museum within the office is currently closed for renovation.)

Q: Why have you stayed in Temple all these years?

A: My music has taken me to every part of the world, but I always come back to Temple. I tried living in Los Angeles for about 10 months in 1974, but it didn't work out. Family is my home, and my base of operations. My office is right along I-35 in a former bowling alley. On the walls are all the wonderful gifts that I've received over the years—awards, keys to the city, hundreds of items; and the Grammys, of course.

Q: How did growing up in Temple affect your sound?

A: I was raised in a black neighborhood, so my musical experience was what I heard there, in lounges and in my friends' homes. I never heard black artists on the airwaves, but I heard > continued on page 68

SIGHTSEER

GO. SEE. DO—TAKING IN TEXAS



WHAT: A NEW CADDO GRASS HOUSE **WHERE:** CADDO MOUNDS STATE HISTORIC SITE, ALTO **WHEN:** TUESDAY-SUNDAY, 8:30 A.M.- 4:30 P.M.

Caddo Mounds Grass House

Built with local materials, the grass house adds a new dimension to the site's interpretation of prehistoric Caddo life.

Caddo Mounds State Historic Site protects and interprets the remnants of a Neches Valley village occupied by the Caddo people for about 500 years starting in the ninth century. Last summer, site staff members, volunteers, and Caddo tribal members built a 25-foot-diameter traditional grass house using locally harvested pine poles, willow branches, and switch grass. One or two families may have occupied a house of this size, archeologists believe, and the village could have contained up to 40 of the beehive-shaped grass houses at any given time. www.visitcaddomounds.com

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INFO**



COAST INTO VACATION

THERE IS SOMETHING MAGICAL ABOUT A VISIT TO "THE COAST." ALL CARES AND WORRIES ARE WASHED AWAY WITH THE TIDE, AND THE ONLY REQUIREMENTS ARE TO RELAX AND ENJOY THE VISIT. There are plenty of places to embrace this feeling because the Gulf Coast region offers hundreds of miles of shoreline, stretching from Orange near the Louisiana border to towns like Galveston and the Mexican border. Often the hardest decision to make is whether to lie on the beach or play in the waves, fish, or kayak. While there are plenty of fun activities, the region is not without a serious side. Museums and historical sites tell the state's fight for independence and other significant aspects of local, state and national history. Other places offer explorations of science, art and nature. So come to the Texas Gulf Coast to discover, unwind and enjoy.

HIT THE BEACH

Beaches, of course, are popular destinations for travelers. There are many options along the coast. From the sandy marsh grasses at Port Aransas State Park to the white, sandy beaches of Isla Blanca Park on the southern coast with Padre Island, Matagorda Beach, Matagorda Beach in Bay City, Bryan Beach, Galveston Beach and Quintana Beach in the Port Area; and Sylvan Beach in Laguna Vista. Some of the popular beaches along the coast are Corpus Christi, Galveston Island, Port Aransas and Rockport. Get up early in the morning to watch the sand underfoot as the sun rises over the ocean. Seashell hunters can comb the beach while others relax on the sand. Padre Island, take a lesson to learn to shape surf. Also available at Surfside Beach, Padre Island, Galveston Island, Hidden getaways. The Flower Ranch Sanctuaries land offers a variety of massive mud, waterfalls.

The SIGHTS

- 1 PADRE ISLAND NATL. SEASHORE
- 2 NASA SPACE CENTER HOUSTON
- 3 COASTAL BIRDING TRAILS
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