THE JOURNEY ABIDES

ROAD-TRIPPING US 90 ACROSS SOUTHWEST TEXAS

TEXT BY **MATT JOYCE**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **LANCE ROSENFIELD**

US 90 OVER THE PECOS RIVER

DEDICATED ROAD-TRIPPERS KNOW

that the greatest journeys enrich their final destinations—and sometimes even eclipse them. Famous sightseers from Robert Louis Stevenson to Jack Kerouac and Clark Griswold have shown us how an expedition's pleasures and pitfalls make the entire experience all the more memorable.

In Texas, the Big Bend region is a common inspiration for lengthy highway hauls, attracting far-flung visitors with desert mountains, borderland atmosphere, and curious small towns. There are several westward routes to Big Bend, but in search of a great road trip, we set out to explore one in particular: US Highway 90, focusing on the stretch from Brackettville to Sanderson.

US 90 traverses the prickly, sunbaked hills of Southwest Texas, crossing box canyons and dry creek beds as it links the occasional town, Border Patrol checkpoint, and roadside attraction. Though it may appear desolate at first, there's a rare beauty to this rugged countryside, which has supported human life since the end of the last ice age.

"It would have been a very hard life, but the native people clearly made it work for them," says Jack G. Johnson, park archeologist for Amistad National Recreation Area. "There are numerous seeps and springs in this area, in addition to the Rio Grande, the Pecos River, and the Devils River all converging here. We also have three ecological regions all coming together."

US 90 navigates this scenery, skirting the Edwards Plateau as it flattens into the South Texas brushlands and then tracing the Rio Grande across Lake Amistad and into the Chihuahuan Desert. Along the way, roadside museums illustrate the region's borderland history and culture, and a series of springs and rivers provides recreational oases for swimming, hiking, camping, and boating.

Harried travelers might overlook US 90 in favor of speedy interstate highways, but this route provides an adventure in its own right, one that sets the historical, cultural, and environmental stage for the Big Bend and points west. You won't regret tacking a couple of extra days onto your itinerary. The proof is in the journey.

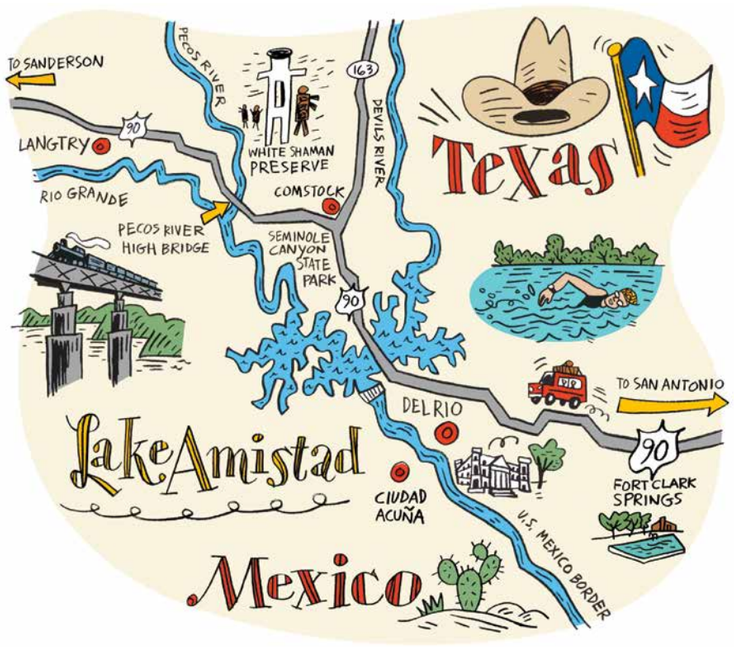


Illustration by Tim Carroll

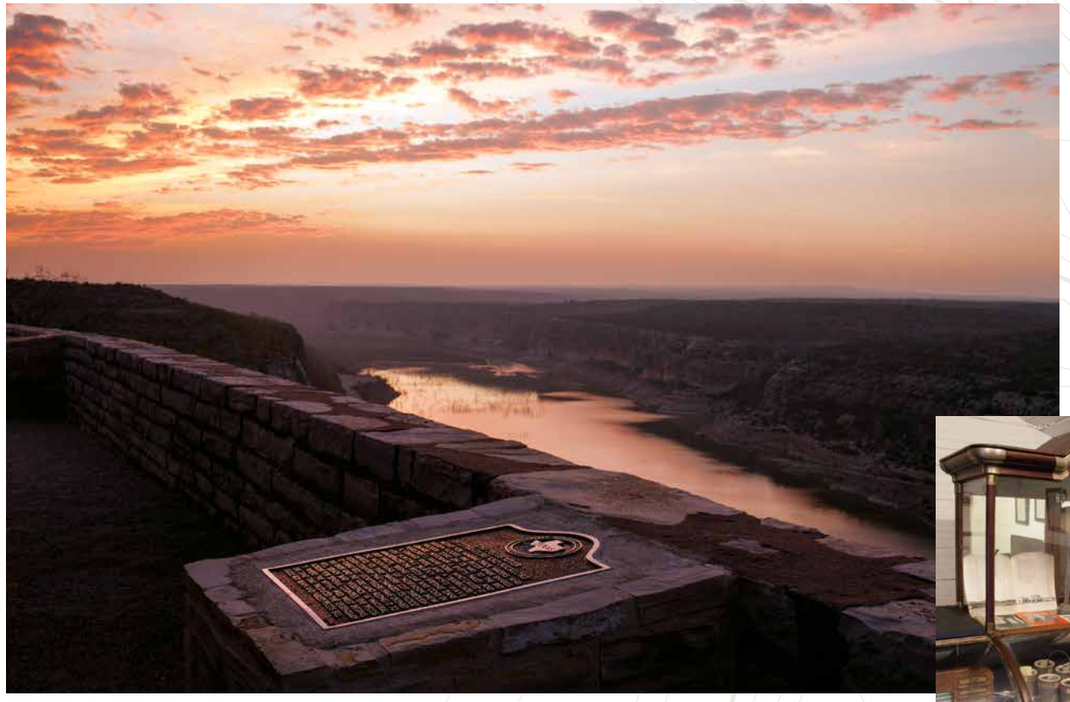
FORT CLARK SPRINGS

Located about 125 miles west of San Antonio, Fort Clark Springs grew up around Las Moras Spring. In the 1800s, Comanches camped at the spring along one of their raiding trails. The Army saw its strategic value and in 1852 claimed the site for a post, in large part to protect the stagecoach roads to El Paso—the predecessors of US 90.

The Army deactivated the post in 1946, and these days, Fort Clark Springs is a 2,700-acre resort and residential community with a motel (set in a renovated barracks), restaurant, golf course, RV park, hiking trails, and dozens of beautiful old limestone-and-wood buildings (all included in a walking-tour brochure). Don't miss the chance for a swim in the spring-fed swimming pool, which is surrounded by a verdant park of live oak, pecan, cypress, and mulberry trees. (*Las moras* is Spanish for mulberries.)

Fort Clark Springs' Old Guardhouse Museum, set in a stout 1870s structure, chronicles the fort's history. Vintage weapons, uniforms, and gear, along with photos, maps, and dioramas, recall the fort's cavalry era; such notable officers as General Jonathan M. Wainwright; and famous local units, including the Black Seminole Scouts, a key military detachment during the Indian Wars.

Particularly fascinating displays include a pastoral mural of a shepherd and his flock painted in 1944 by a Nazi prisoner of war held at Fort Clark; and in front of the building, a large metal megaphone—about four feet long and three feet in diameter on its wide end—which the bugler used to broadcast his musical signals.



ON THE ROAD *From top: The view south from the scenic overlook at the US 90 Pecos River Bridge; the* Border Radio *exhibit at the Whitehead Memorial Museum in Del Rio; the spring pool at Fort Clark Springs.*

THE WHITEHEAD MEMORIAL MUSEUM, DEL RIO

Natural springs are also a cornerstone of Del Rio, a city of about 36,000 located on the Mexican border, 30 miles west of Fort Clark Springs. The San Felipe Springs have long been a refreshment point for travelers, with historical mentions dating to the Spanish explorers. A popular swimming hole is located at Horseshoe Park, just off US 90.

An 1870s canal system distributes spring water to farms around the area and gives Del Rio's historic neighborhoods the feel of a tree-lined oasis. One of the irrigation canals runs across the grounds of the Whitehead Memorial Museum, a two-acre property circled by small buildings containing exhibits about various aspects of local history.

Visitors enter the Whitehead museum through the original wooden doors of the 1871 Perry Store, a limestone mercantile building. The exhibits

run the gamut, from ranching and pioneer life to the railroad, Laughlin Air Force Base, religion, and medicine. The winemaking exhibit displays 19th-Century presses used by Italian immigrants who grew grapes in the area. (Val Verde Winery, established in 1833, is a half-mile from the museum and offers tastings and tours.)

The museum also tells the story of Judge Roy Bean, the opportunistic 19th-Century saloon owner and lawman of nearby Langtry (more on Bean later). Bean is buried on the museum grounds, and a series of dioramas and artifacts relates his Wild West tale, including the 1910 traveling piano of the English actress Lillie Langtry, for whom Bean professed a proud infatuation.

LAKE AMISTAD

Traveling north out of Del Rio on US 90, drivers come quickly upon Amistad National Recreation Area. The Amistad Visitor Information Center, located six miles from town, provides advice on exploring the scrubby hills surrounding Lake Amistad, along with the picnic sites, campgrounds, hiking and biking trails, swimming coves, and boat ramps that access the water. Angling for bass and catfish is the most popular activity on the lake, rangers say.

The Visitor Center houses exhibits on the native people who inhabited the area and their various styles of rock art. A large reproduction of the Panther Cave pictograph site in Seminole Canyon offers a close-up view for those unable to make the boat trip that's required to see the remote site in person.

A few miles west on US 90, the road makes its first pass across Lake Amistad. Depending on the weather, the water shimmers with every shade of blue imaginable, from bright cobalt under a brilliant afternoon sky to a marbled blue-gray under morning clouds. Amistad Dam, a joint project of the United States and Mexico, collects the water of three rivers: the Rio Grande, the Pecos, and the Devils. The two nations built the dam in the 1960s, spurred to action by Hurricane Alice of 1954, which caused catastrophic flooding on both sides of the border.

Located a couple of miles west of the Visitor Center, the Diablo East area has a boat ramp, restrooms, and a 1.5-mile loop trail with a cliff view overlooking the water. If you've got a boat, Amistad's Pecos River boat ramp—another 30 miles to the west—provides a serene opportunity to paddle under the towering US 90 bridge and limestone canyon walls, and to explore tranquil hidden coves. Watch for kingfishers, coots, osprey, and herons, and listen for the odd shouts of free-range goats bleating across the canyon.

SEMINOLE CANYON STATE PARK/WHITE SHAMAN PRESERVE

West of Del Rio and the main body of Lake Amistad, US 90 enters vast desert-like terrain, punctuated by spindly sotol and lechuguilla stalks, and softened by the grays and greens of cenizo and huisache. The road undulates with the landscape, passing through stratified road-cuts that reveal 100 million years of geologic history. When the highway crests above the surrounding desert, its vistas extend across boundless rolling hills and to distant Mexican mountain ranges.

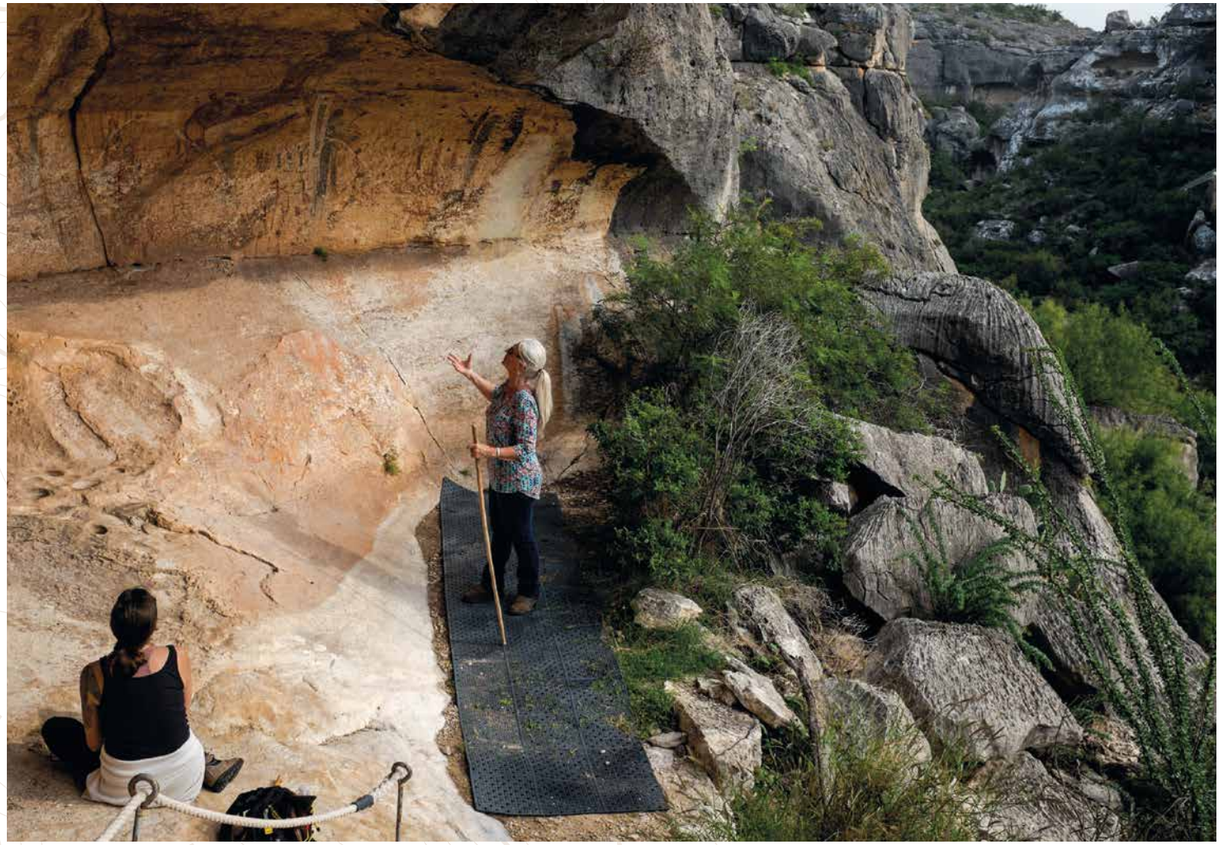
The drive creates a sense of timelessness and isolation that's fitting for a visit to Seminole Canyon State Park and the Rock Art Foundation's White Shaman Preserve, where colorful 4,000-year-old paintings on canyon walls illustrate the art, symbolism, and lifeways of the Lower Pecos people. About 300 Lower Pecos pictograph sites have been recorded within a 60-mile radius of the juncture of the Pecos River and the Rio Grande.

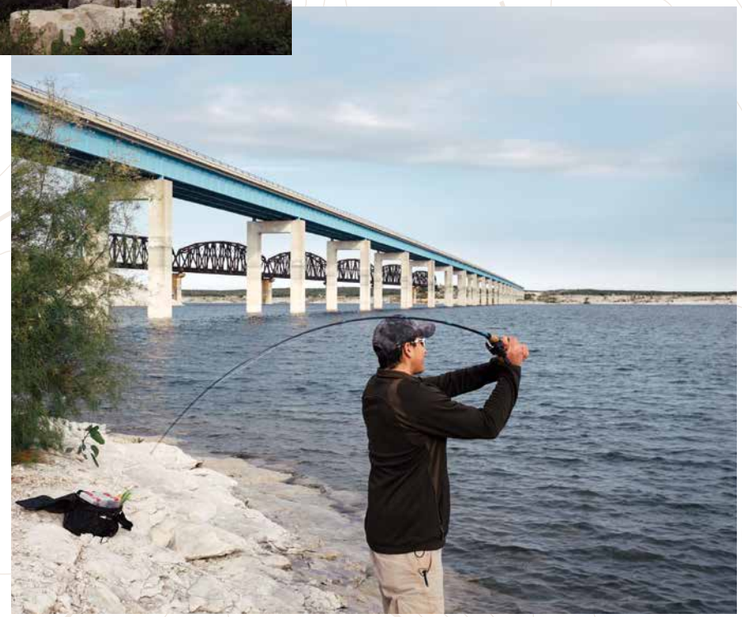
At the White Shaman Preserve, located about 10 miles west of Comstock, the nonprofit Rock Art Foundation offers tours to the oldest of these sites every Saturday at 12:30 p.m. (September through May). The 1.5-mile, round-trip hike descends into a side canyon overlooking the Pecos River and the dramatic US 90 bridge over the Pecos. Along the way, guides like Jack McDonald, a foundation board member, describe the hunter-gatherer lifestyle of the Lower Pecos people and how they survived in such a tough environment. For example, the ubiquitous sotol plants provided food—its roots were baked in earthen ovens—and fiber for weaving material.

The White Shaman Pictograph Site is set in a sheltered grotto. Tour participants get a breathtaking view of the mysterious figures, including the namesake White Shaman, a human-like figure with deer horns and an atlatl spear, a serpent figure, and a person on a boat.

"What we're looking at right here is the oldest book in North America," McDonald says. "For the people who drew this 4,500 years ago, it is their belief of the genesis of mankind. All over this you see death and rebirth. It's no different that any other belief system. It's just not written in words. It's written in pictographs."

At Seminole Canyon State Park, located 1.5 miles east of the White Shaman Preserve, park rangers and volunteers lead tours to the Fate Bell Shelter (Wednesdays-Sundays). Tours depart from the park headquarters, and it's worth arriving early to check out the museum, which chronicles regional history from the arrival of humans about 12,000 years ago to the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad in the





DESERT ART *Clockwise: "The Maker of Peace," a bronze sculpture by Bill Worrell at Seminole Canyon State Park; the White Shaman pictograph at the White Shaman Preserve; fishing on Lake Amistad.*

ABOUT 300 LOWER PECOS PICTOGRAPH SITES HAVE BEEN RECORDED WITHIN A 60-MILE RADIUS OF THE JUNCTURE OF THE PECOS RIVER AND THE RIO GRANDE.

1880s and the sheep- and goat-ranching industry of the 20th Century.

The two-mile, round-trip hike to Fate Bell Shelter navigates a steep limestone staircase to the floor of Seminole Canyon, where pictographs in red, yellow, white, and brown depict human-like figures, a feline with a tail that arches over its back, and what appears to be a sotol plant. Yucca and sotol were paint ingredients, Park Ranger Tanya Petruney notes, as the Lower Pecos people mixed the plants' saponin extract with colored ochre from crushed rocks and deer bone marrow.

Departing the canyon, a Texas earless lizard skitters across the path. Archeologists say the Lower Pecos people would have eaten such lizards. So would the red-tailed hawk circling above the canyon, its underwings radiating a bright-white translucence against the desert sun.

LANGTRY

Perched on a dusty ridge overlooking the Rio Grande, the tiny town of Langtry lies in the thick of the Lower Pecos Canyonlands, about 18 miles west of the Pecos River. Langtry sprang up in 1882 as a railroad camp during the construction of the Southern Pacific line. Among the profiteers following the railroad was Roy Bean, a tent-saloon operator who would come to symbolize Langtry's Wild West roots.

In an effort to quell the lawlessness in area railroad camps, the Pecos County Commissioners Court appointed Bean as the Justice of the Peace in August 1882. The grizzled Bean relished the position, branding himself "The Law West of the Pecos" and holding court in his saloon alongside the railroad tracks.

The Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center (a TxDOT Travel Information Center) preserves Bean's 120-year-old wooden saloon and his adobe home. Visitors can walk inside both structures to see the wooden bar and period furnishings. Other Bean artifacts are displayed inside the Visitor Center, including his weathered copy of the 1897 *Texas Revised Statutes* book and his 2.5-foot ornately carved walking stick.

Inside the saloon's billiard hall, newspaper clippings and historical photos chronicle what was perhaps Bean's most famous exploit—hosting the Fitzsimmons-Maher heavyweight world-title boxing match on the Mexican bank of the Rio Grande in 1896. Violating both Texas and Mexican bans on the fight, Bean built the ring and a footbridge across the river for the boxers, spectators, and reporters who had come to Langtry by train. Visitor Center staffers can point you to a nearby historical marker overlooking the river-bottom site of the bout, tucked against jagged yellow limestone cliffs.

"These eastern sportswriters had never seen a character like Roy Bean," says Jack Skiles, a Langtry native who wrote the book *Judge Roy Bean Country*. "When I was growing up, all the old-timers referred to him as 'that old reprobate.' But he was good in lots of ways too. He saw to it that local widows had wood to keep them warm during the winter and to cook with, and that the local school got help when it needed it."

SANDERSON

Roadside development thins beyond Langtry as US 90 pierces the Chihuahuan Desert. About 60 miles west of Langtry, the little town of Sanderson also owes its existence to the Southern Pacific Railroad.

As the halfway point between San Antonio and El Paso, the railroad located a division office here in 1882. Roy Bean opened a saloon here, too, but he left soon after local competitor Charlie Wilson spiked Bean's whiskey barrels with kerosene, says Bill Smith, a walking encyclopedia of Sanderson history who runs the Terrell County Memorial Museum and the Terrell County Visitor Center.

Most of Sanderson's historic railroad structures are gone, but the town retains its 1930 Mediterranean-style Terrell County Courthouse and several stops rich in local history. The 2.2-mile Cactus Capital Hiking Trail (named for Terrell County's abundance of cactus) climbs a flattop mesa and provides a bird's-eye view of the town, including Sanderson Canyon, the normally dry arroyo that flash-flooded on June 11, 1965, wiping out much of the town and killing 26 residents.

Memories of the flood are still fresh at the Visitor Center, which carries books and pamphlets about the tragedy and which this summer opened a Heritage Garden, its esperanza and pride-of-Barbados flowers memorializing the flood victims. The Memorial Museum, which is set in a 1907 home, displays the June 18, 1965, edition of the *Sanderson Times*, the first edition published after the flood, among its collection of artifacts covering a wide swath of local history.

Down US 90 from the Visitor Center, the Outback Oasis Motel offers clean and comfortable lodging, as well as a lesson in herpetology at The Snake House, a display of 35 different snakes in a room adjacent to the front lobby. The collection includes a gray-banded kingsnake—an elusive, non-venomous snake striped orange, gray, black, and white and found only in this region—and several kinds of rattlesnakes.

Kept in secure glass tanks, the rattlers are prone to vibrating their tails when visitors step close. With multiple people in the room, the symphony of rattles seems to emanate from every direction.

Some might find this unnerving. But it's worth hearing if for no other reason than to be alert while walking the rugged countryside of Southwest Texas and the Big Bend. Owner Roy Engeldorf notes that it's easy to avert danger if you encounter a rattlesnake in the wild—simply take a step back and walk away.

There's plenty of ground still to cover, anyway. The journey abides. ★

TH Associate Editor Matt Joyce feels most natural headed west. Says photographer Lance Rosenfield, who recently returned to Austin after three years in Washington, D.C., "This trip was the perfect reintroduction to my home state."

WILD WEST *Clockwise from top: Sanderson from the Cactus Capital Hiking Trail; the Jersey Lilly Saloon in Langtry; an albino Western Diamondback Rattlesnake at the Outback Oasis Motel.*

ESSENTIALS

US 90 DESTINATIONS

Fort Clark Springs, Call 830/563-2493; www.fortclark.com.

Whitehead Memorial Museum, Del Rio. Call 830/774-7568; www.whiteheadmuseum.org.

Amistad National Recreation Area, Call 830/775-7491; www.nps.gov/amis.

Seminole Canyon State Park, Call 432/292-4464; www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/seminole-canyon.

The Rock Art Foundation, Call 210/525-9907; www.rockart.org.

Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center, Langtry, Call 432/291-3340.

Terrell County Visitors Center, Sanderson, Call 432/345-2324; www.facebook.com/Terrell-County-Visitor-Center-902145083149049.

Terrell County Memorial Museum, Call 432/345-2936; http://terrellmuseum.info.

The Snake House at the Outback Oasis Motel, Call 432/345-2850; www.outbackoasismotel.com.

Of *Pork* and *Posterity*

BUTCHERING AND CURING A HOG AT GRAPEVINE'S NASH FARM

Text by **MATT JOYCE**

TIP TO TAIL
Scraps from the butchered hog are ground, wrapped in cornhusks, and hung in the smokehouse to make breakfast sausage.

PHOTO: Brandon Jakobeit

CUT HERE

Below: Nash Farm Manager Jim Lauderdale, center, explains how to butcher a hog. Opposite page: Lauderdale and volunteer teacher Mike Franklin scald the hog's body in steaming water.

LIKE MOST TEXANS, I GREW UP LOVING PORK: BACON, bratwurst, ham, carnitas, chops, loin, hot dogs, baby-back ribs, breakfast patties, chorizo, and so on. But also like most people in this urbanized state, my primary contact with pork has been the plastic-wrapped products in grocery stores. When my grandpa tells one of his favorite stories about growing up on a farm in Wharton County—the one about chasing down a fugitive hog that had somehow escaped his father's initial slaughter attempt—I'm struck by my ignorance of the nitty-gritty of raising, butchering, and preparing meat for the dinner table.

That's why I'm here at Nash Farm in Grapevine on a brisk January morning, gathered with about 30 other people around a pig carcass, notebooks and cameras in hand. The Hog Butchering and Curing Workshop is part of the heritage farm's historic foodways program, a series of classes demonstrating how farm families of 19th-Century Texas made staples like canned produce, bread, and cheese. The hog workshop takes place annually on the third weekend of January.

"These skills are in danger of being lost, much like blacksmithing and many other heritage skills, if people don't continue to use and teach them," says Farm Manager Jim Lauderdale, decked out in a full-brimmed felt hat and brown overalls. "The workshops serve as good reminders to people of where we came from and where we're going, and to teach skills that people can still incorporate into their lives today."

NASH FARM
is at 626 Ball St. in Grapevine. Hours vary seasonally. Call **817/410-3558**; **www.nashfarm.org**.

FIND MORE ONLINE
For more photos of Nash Farm, visit **texashighways.com/true**.

In a yard between the restored 1905 barn and 1869 farmhouse, volunteers stoke a fire at the base of a steel drum filled with hot water, puffing smoke and steam into the dry winter air. Lauderdale pulls on leather work gloves and motions to the 200-pound cinnamon-colored hog, a Duroc breed, hanging upside down from a stout mesquite tree branch. (Lauderdale had killed the sow with a .22 rifle that morning before the workshop.)

"Butchering is a skill that has been used since civilization began," Lauderdale says, relating the skill to 1800s frontier farm life. "A lot of times we think of Texas as a beef state, but in this time period, your average rural family would be much more likely to eat pork."

And with that, Lauderdale calls for helpers to hoist the hog's body using ropes and a pulley into the steel drum's scalding water—a technique used by 19th-Century farmers to help them scrape the hog's hair before butchering. (Farmers of that time didn't skin the pigs, as modern hunters would do, because the hide contributed to the meat's preservation in the curing process.) With the steaming sow stretched out on a worktable, I step forward and grab one of the bell scrapers. Though I scrape with all my might, I dislodge only a small patch of the coarse hair before yielding my scraper to another workshop participant. It's hard work: The pig is scalded several times, and it takes the group about 90 minutes to scrape the carcass clean of hair.

With the naked pig again hanging upside down from the mesquite branch, Mike Franklin, an experienced wild-game butcher, eviscerates the animal, demonstrating how to carefully excise the organs without tainting the meat. The rank smell of fresh animal guts wafts across the yard as the organs and intestines are collected in a bucket. Franklin then handsaws down the backbone, splitting the hog into two symmetrical halves. Franklin and Lauderdale then coach participants through the process of butchering the halves. The resulting cuts start to resemble the packaged products I'm accustomed to seeing in the supermarket.

The Hog Butchering and Curing Workshop is part of the heritage farm's historic foodways program, a series of classes demonstrating how farm families of 19th-Century Texas made staples like canned produce, bread, and cheese.

It's an eye-opening start to the workshop, a two-day, step-by-step lesson in the methods our ancestors used to process and preserve hog meat to feed their families throughout the year. On day two, the class covers making link sausage and breakfast sausage with the meat trimmings; rendering the lard in a cast-iron pot for future use in cooking or to make soap; frying cracklings with fat and skin; coating the meats in sugar cure to withdraw moisture for preservation; cold-smoking the meats in the smokehouse to repel insects; and aging the hams for flavor and preservation.

"You don't have to have any formal training to do this," Lauderdale says as he rubs Morton's sugar cure (a blend of salt, sugar, and food preservatives) into one of the hog's 25-pound hams. "When I first started doing this program, all I had was a curing guide and an interest."

Located less than a mile from historic downtown Grapevine, Nash Farm traces its roots to 1859, when the Nash family emigrated from Kentucky and bought the original 110-acre spread. The Nash family sold the farm in the 1920s, and by 1995, the property was targeted for development as multi-family housing. That's when the Grapevine Heritage Foundation stepped in and bought the farm, beginning a years-long process of restoring the barn and farmhouse to their historical specifications.

In 2008, Nash Farm opened to the public as a 5.2-acre heritage farm with the mission of "preserving, protecting, and visually reflecting" 19th-Century

PHOTOS: Brandon Jakobeit

Breakfast sausage

farm life in Tarrant County. The farm hosts events throughout the year, such as the "Spring into Nash" festival on April 16, monthly "First Friday" workshops on skills like weaving and campfire cooking, and a "Frugal Farm Wife" series that focuses on domestic duties like preserving, candle-making, washing, and gardening. The farm grounds also open daily to visitors for self-guided tours of the crop fields, the barn with Gulf Coast sheep, and the chicken coop with heritage speckled Sussex hens. (The buildings, including the farmhouse and the smokehouse, are open during guided tours and special events).

Nash Farm schedules the Hog Butchering and Curing Workshop in January because in the 1800s farmers would butcher hogs when the temperature was below 44 degrees. A farming family's diet was seasonal, and pork is a prime example. In the hours and days after butchering, the family would eat the cuts that are best fresh—tenderloin, ribs, and chops.

"If you butcher when it's cold and nature is your refrigerator, you can eat those fresh cuts while they're still fresh, and then the meat that's being cured and preserved, you eat that later in the year," Lauderdale says. "When it comes to our tradition of eating picnic hams at Easter and baked ham at Christmas, the timing truly does come from the preservation of the meat."

Attendees tend to be a mix of back-to-the-basics foodies, dedicated home cooks, hunters, and the occasional doomsday prepper.

Cold temperatures also allow the scalded hide and butchered meats to chill overnight; the next morning, farmers would start curing the preserved cuts—the belly as bacon, the hindquarter as country ham, the shoulder as Boston butt or picnic ham, and the scraps as sausage. Kept in a dry place under 90 degrees, cured and smoked bacon, sausage, and picnic hams can last for months, while aged country hams can last for a year or longer.

Unfortunately for participants, food-safety regulations prohibit Nash Farm from serving the workshop's meat products. Rather, the farm uses the meat as part of its foodways demonstrations throughout the year. For example, at its First Friday foodways program in February, the farm fires up its vintage wood-burning stove to prepare a typical 1800s Texas farmhouse meal: fried pork chops, cornbread, and seasonal collard and turnip greens from the garden.

But the workshop participants don't come to eat, anyway. Attendees tend to be a mix of back-to-the-basics foodies, dedicated home cooks, hunters, and the occasional doomsday prepper.

"Cooking is my primary hobby, and I'm interested in doing some curing," says Danny Owen from Colleyville, wearing a T-shirt with a diagram of pork cuts. "I wanted to start to get some experience with that and understand what it's about."

Charles Manning, who lives near Sanger, says he doesn't trust the practices of agribusiness, especially when it comes to raising and preparing meat. "I like the traditional way of doing things," Manning says. "I'm interested in possibly raising hogs where I live, and this would be a part of it. I want to learn how to process them."

Me? I depart Nash Farm hungry for a plate of pork chops with a side of bacon and sausage, as well as a renewed appreciation for pigs and the endless labor of my farming ancestors. They had no choice but to toil from dawn until dark just to put food on the table. ★

BUTCHERING BASICS

Nash Farm's Hog Butchering and Curing Workshop is January 16-17 ($20 per day). Register online at **www.nashfarm.org**. Participants must be 16 or older.

Other winter hog-butchering workshops will be held at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site near Navasota on January 9-10 and at Green Gate Farms in Bastrop on January 17.

PHOTO: Brandon Jakobeit

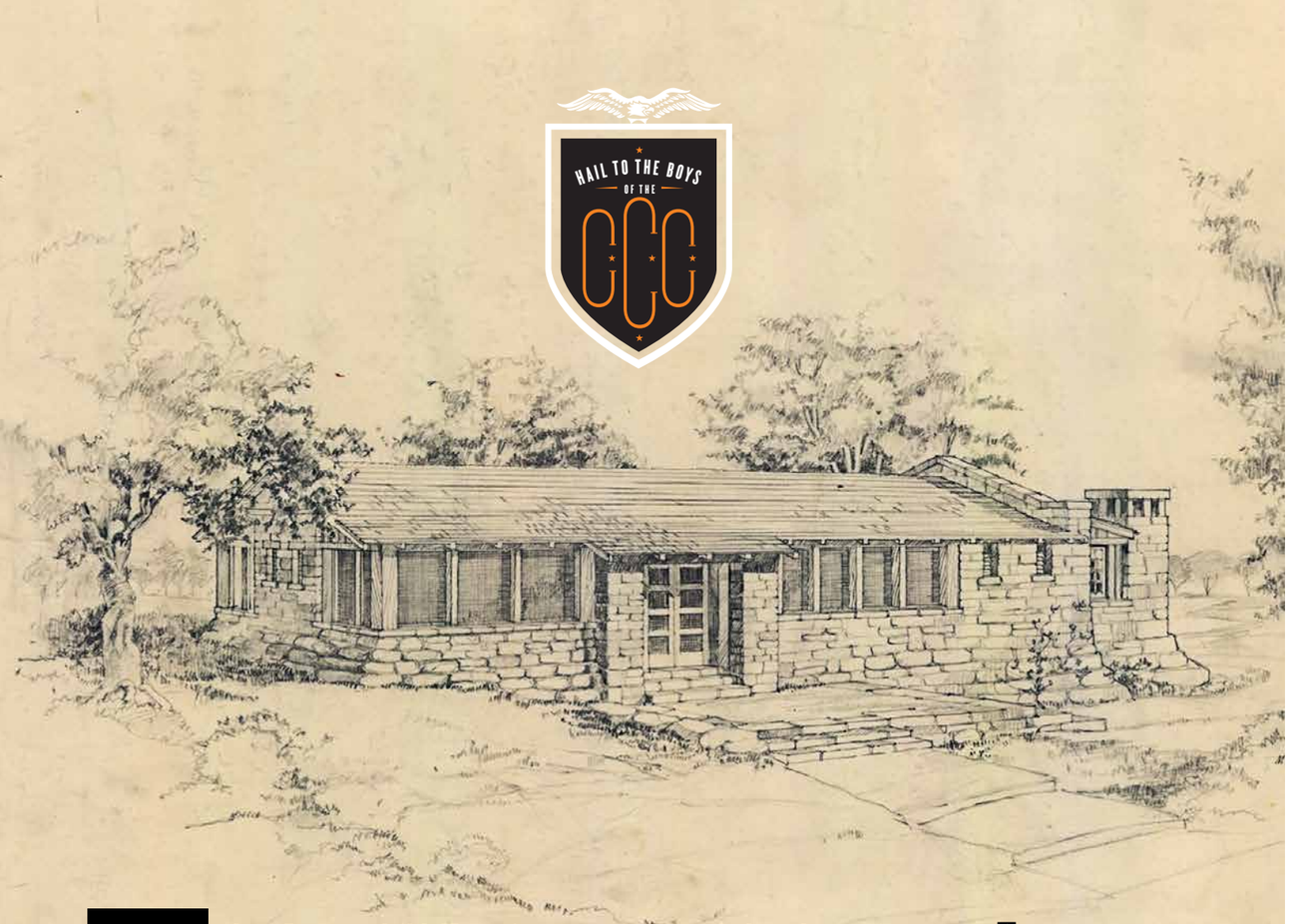
Stone overlook shelter, Skyline Drive, Davis Mountains State Park

PHOTOS: © Laurence Parent; Courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife

TEXT BY JULIA ROBINSON

HAIL TO THE BOYS OF THE CCC

The CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS LEFT *an* ENDURING LEGACY *on the* TEXAS LANDSCAPE



When I was a child, Texas' state parks were beloved vacation destinations. I became intimately familiar with the ubiquitous brown-and-yellow signs, the stoic stone buildings, rustic cabins, and cement picnic tables that dotted the state.

They were all similar, yet unique to each site. The large limestone foundations of Central Texas gave way to adobe flair in the west, Spanish mission influence in the south, and piney log cabins in the east. I passed the plaques at the interpretive centers and didn't give a second thought to the grainy black-and-white photos of men in rolled-up shirtsleeves posing on rock piles, or smiling from the roof of a dining hall, hammer in hand.

I became interested in these photos again as an adult. As a photojournalist and student of history, I like to comb through old images looking for moments and stories. The men who built the state parks of Texas were part of a program at a watershed in American politics and culture. Progressive politics, early environmentalism, and the biggest financial crisis the world had ever seen opened a window of opportunity for big ideas to take root.

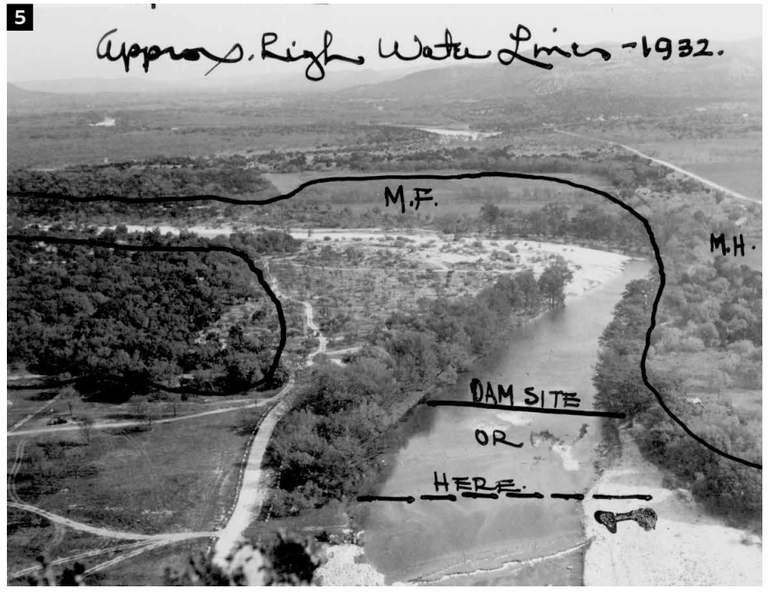
↑ **"Fishermen's barrack," Lake Brownwood State Park, 1935**

1 "Dam footing," Fort Parker State Park, c. 1935

2 The CCC boys at Tyler State Park, c. 1937

3 4 "HQ Activities"

5 Garner State Park site, 1932



Courtesy Texas State Archives

PHOTOS: Courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife

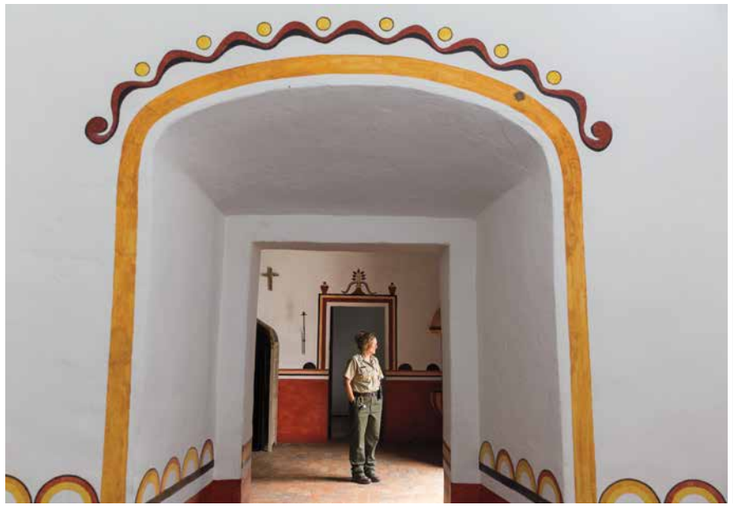
During the Great Depression, as unemployment rose to a staggering 25 percent and a nine-year drought ushered in the Dust Bowl in the Midwest and Southern Plains, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed the Civilian Conservation Corps as a massive plan to put millions of young men to work in the conservation of America's natural resources. From 1933 to 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps left an enduring legacy on the Texas landscape and in the lives of more than 50,000 Texans. Dubbed "Roosevelt's Tree Army," the program gained wide bipartisan support, laid the foundation of our current parks system, and provided financial relief to millions of Americans.

At the start of the Great Depression, Texas seemed insulated from the wider financial stress of the stock market crash. Oil money and a diversified network of cotton, food crops, and wool kept the economy afloat until the early 1930s, when the prices of cotton and oil dropped and the drought worsened.

At the time, Texas had an anemic state parks system with 14 parks that together covered just over 800 acres. (By comparison, Texas state parks comprise more than 600,000 acres today.) The new state parks board struggled for land donations and legislative funding to develop and maintain the parks. Just weeks after Roosevelt announced the CCC, proposals flooded into Austin from communities all across Texas, each

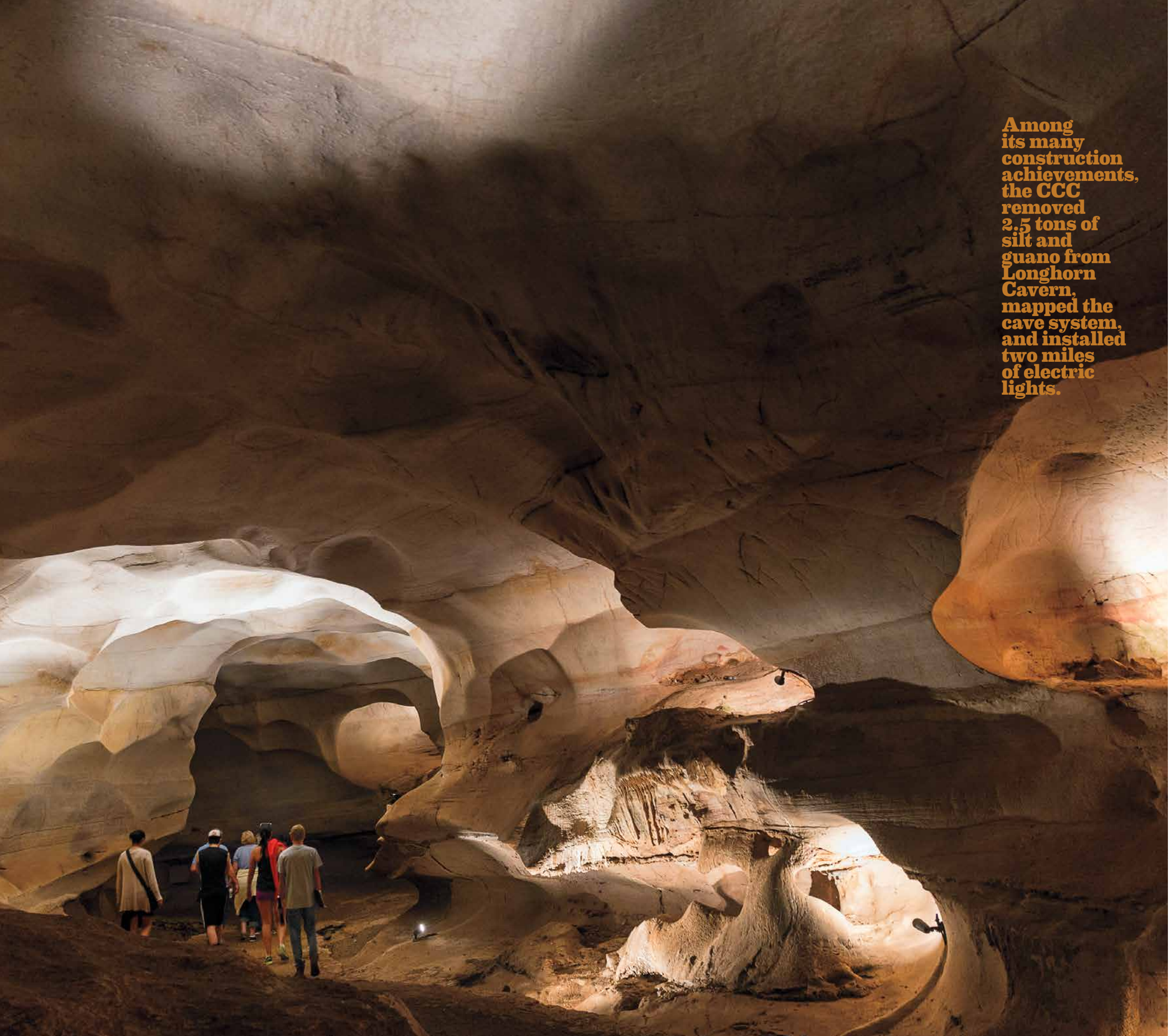
Comprised of World War I veterans, CCC Company 3822 reconstructed the 18th-Century mission structures at Goliad State Park and Historic Site, including the church, granary, cloister, and workshop.

The corps hand-finished some 30,000 square feet of stone to build Balmorhea's pool, once billed as "The World's Largest Open Air Swimming Pool."



PHOTOS: © Julia Robinson

Just weeks after Roosevelt announced the CCC, proposals flooded into Austin from communities all across Texas, each offering sites for new parks and asking for help with erosion, flood control, and farming practices.



Among its many construction achievements, the CCC removed 2.5 tons of silt and guano from Longhorn Cavern, mapped the cave system, and installed two miles of electric lights.

offering sites for new parks and asking for help with erosion, flood control, and farming practices.

Over the next nine years, CCC workers created 56 national, state, and local parks in Texas, growing the total acreage from 800 acres to 60,000 acres. Texas Parks and Wildlife still manages 29 of these state parks today.

All were crafted according to an architectural esthetic influenced by Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York's Central Park, and the Arts & Crafts movement that favored traditional craftsmanship and simple design over industrial production. Architects at the state and national level sought to minimize the silhouettes of buildings and use native materials to blend into the natural surroundings. The style came to be known as "National Park Service Rustic." They built structures using pioneer methods of manual labor and rough-hewn materials. The resulting buildings, roads, and landscape improvements have stood the test of time.

Visitors to Texas state parks will immediately recognize the rustic style. The scenic lookout of Skyline Drive in Davis Mountains State Park rises from the cliff as a natural extension of local stone. Architects crafted the refectory of Goose Island State Park with a concrete mix of locally available sand and oyster shells. The reconstruction of 18th-Century Spanish Mission Nuestra Señora del Espíritu Santo de Zúñiga in Goliad State Park and Historic Site used quarried local stone and a kiln from the original settlement to fire thousands of floor tiles.

The CCC was tasked with hiring young, often unemployed or otherwise idle young men. To hire as many as possible, the CCC remained an unskilled labor force, utilizing hand tools and the strength of numbers rather than complex machinery. Among its many construction achievements, the CCC removed 2.5 tons of silt and guano from Longhorn Cavern, mapped the cave system, and installed two miles of electric lights. Company 1856 built the world's largest spring-fed pool at San Solomon Springs in Balmorhea, creating a travel destination for

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More on the CCC

For further reading on the CCC in Texas, look for *Texas State Parks and the CCC: The Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps*, by Cynthia Brandimarte with Angela Reed (Texas A&M University Press, 2013). The visually rich book covers the corps' formation and building of the parks, along with stories of the CCC camps and ongoing management of the sites.

Another excellent resource is *Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal*, by James Wright Steely (University of Texas Press, 1999), a comprehensive history of the creation of Texas' state park system.

PHOTO: © Julia Robinson

early automobile tourists in West Texas.

Some CCC workers learned refined skills from "Local Experienced Men," or LEMs, who supervised more technical aspects of the construction. Electricians, engineers, architects, surveyors, plumbers, foremen, and artisans all contributed to the park sites. Specialized units for furniture and ironworks cropped up out of dedicated CCC camps in White Rock Lake, Bastrop, and Palo Duro Canyon.

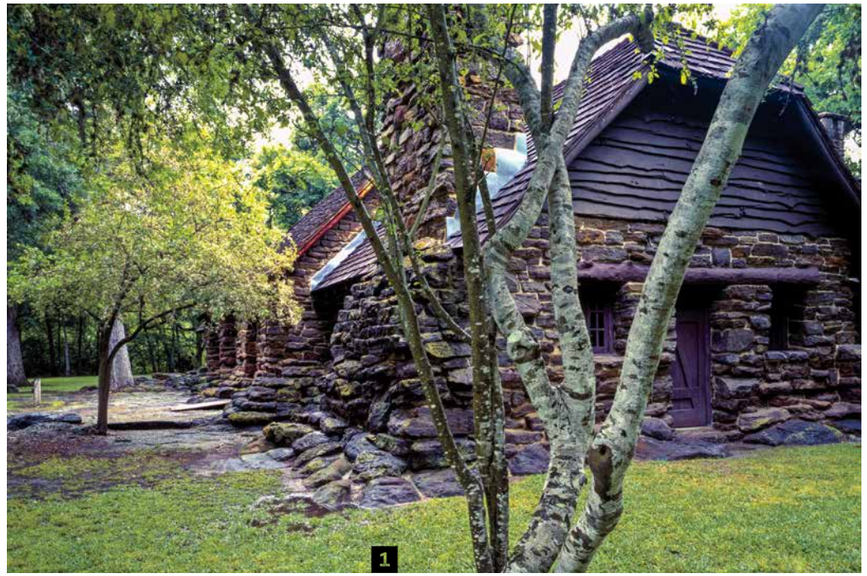
Although the CCC's work in state parks is best known to the public, many of the CCC camps in Texas provided help with soil conservation, erosion, and flood control, and worked with 5,000 farmers to update their agricultural practices. Private landowners would pay for materials and the CCC provided the labor. Bill McDonald, who worked at soil conservation camp 3805 in Bartlett, recalled in a 2004 interview for a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department oral history project to commemorate the work of the CCC: "Right off, in very short order, I got my Ph.D.—Post Hole Digger!" CCC workers laid out miles of fencing, terraced farm fields, sodded grass, and built small earthen dams over the eastern and central parts of the state.

By the 1930s the timber industry had denuded many of East Texas' natural pine forests. Retus Williams worked in Company 880 in an area that became Sabine National Forest.

The CCC conserved the landscapes of Texas, but also conserved the human spirit of Texans.

A picture window frames panoramic views from the stone overlook shelter at the top of Skyline Drive, Davis Mountains State Park.

PHOTO: Brandon Jakobeit



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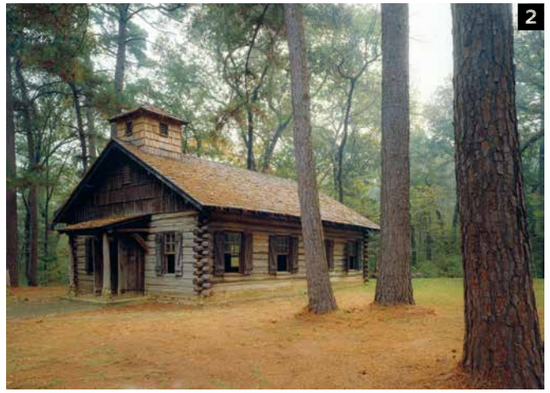

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“We planted pine trees by the thousands,” he said in a 2003 interview with Texas Parks and Wildlife. “We did that for a long, long time.”

All told, the CCC planted 3 million trees on private and public lands in East Texas and developed four national forests with a total of more than 600,000 acres.

The CCC conserved the landscapes of Texas, but also conserved the human spirit of Texans. A high percentage of Texas CCC men came from families on relief—more than 80 percent— even after the relief requirement for enrollment was lifted in 1937.

Men ages 18 to 25 (later expanded to 17 to 28) enrolled in the program for six-month stints and up to two years of work. The average CCC enrollee had an eighth-grade education and had been unemployed for seven months before joining the Corps. The “CCC boys” earned $1 a day and were required to send $22-$25 home to their families or dependents each month. In this way, the CCC helped redistribute roughly $2 billion in wages nationwide.

Roosevelt forbade discrimination based on religious or racial grounds, but in practice many of the local agencies in charge of enlisting men in the program did just that. African Americans were never enrolled in the numbers that FDR envisioned, even though many were in more dire straits than their white counterparts.

1 3 The CCC’s sandstone structures at Palmetto State Park blend with the lush landscape.

2 The log replica of Mission San Francisco de los Tejas, Mission Tejas State Park.

Blanco State Park’s stone buildings, dams, and other structures were among the CCC’s earliest park projects in Texas.

PHOTOS: © Julia Robinson; © Laurence Parent (this page)


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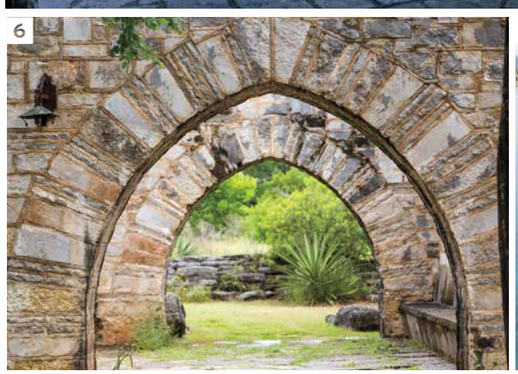
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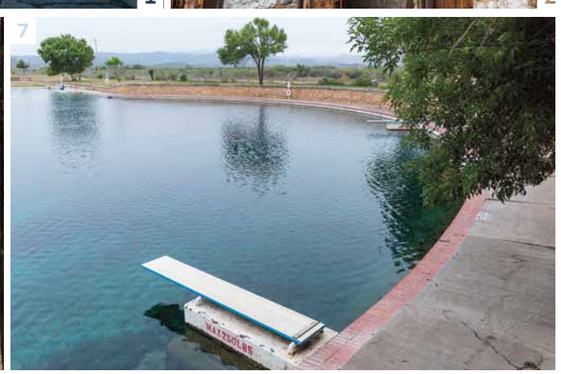
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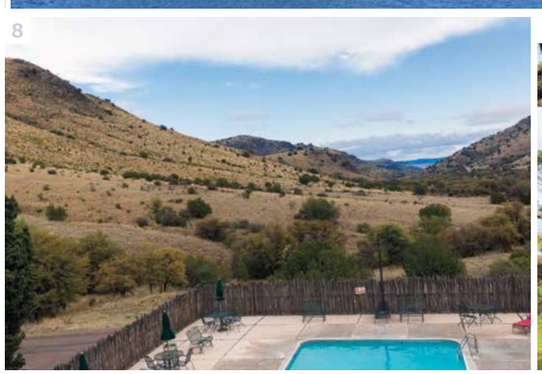
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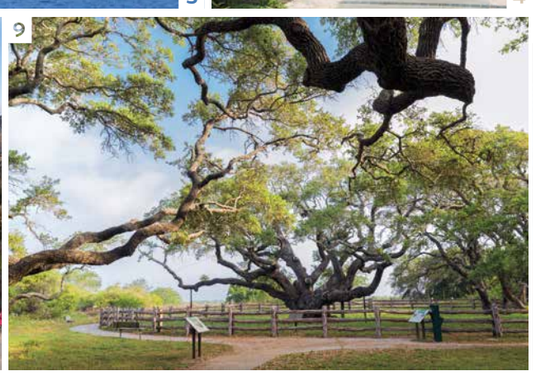
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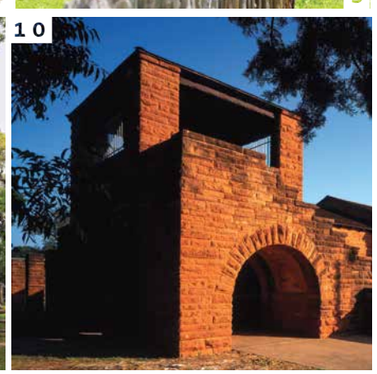
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1 Mother Neff State Park

2 Longhorn Cavern State Park

3 Meridian State Park

4 Indian Lodge, in Davis Mountains State Park

5 Old Fort Parker

6 Longhorn Cavern State Park

7 Balmorhea State Park

8 Indian Lodge, in Davis Mountains State Park

9 Goose Island State Park

10 Abilene State Park

Despite that, some CCC camps were integrated in the early years of the program, though the men had segregated mess halls, living quarters, and latrines. Starting in 1935 the camps became fully segregated with all-white, all-African American, and some all-Native American camps distributed around the nation. Other camps were made up of older World War I veterans.

In Texas, one of the first all-African American camps re-created Fort Parker, a historic replica of the place where Comanches captured Cynthia Ann Parker in 1836. The fort was part of the Texas Centennial celebration in 1936, and the men from Company 3807 rebuilt the stockades and a 423-foot dam across the Navasota River, creating Fort Parker Lake. The lake is now part of Fort Parker State Park, while the replica fort is a privately owned tourist attraction.

For M.F. Rutherford of Mexia, working at Fort Parker was a blessing. In a 2003 Texas Parks and Wildlife interview, Rutherford explained that after the Great Depression hit there was no farm work or paid employment to be found. By 1933, "we didn't have anything, and finally wound up in a soup line."

After joining the CCC in 1938, Rutherford was stationed eight miles from home at Fort Parker, where he worked in the rock quarry and as a truck driver. The workers built the fort on the ruins of Springfield, an African American freedmen's colony from the mid-19th Century. After the park was completed, African Americans were, ironically, barred from entry, a relic of Jim Crow laws, until the 1960s.

"Now, mind you, now we're talking about a time of segregation," said Rutherford. "But yet, I didn't have no problem with it because of what the President had did for me and my family. And not only for my family, but millions and millions of other families."

Over his two years in the CCC, Rutherford sent his wages home to his parents, six siblings, and two cousins in Mexia. "You can just visualize how many people that paycheck reached and helped out," he said.

Another success story, Dolores "Lolo" Baeza grew up on a family ranch just outside of Presidio on the Rio Grande and dreamed of traveling to far-off places when he joined the CCC in 1935. He was instead stationed in Big Bend working on park roads and later helped build Indian Lodge in the Davis Mountains.

His work on those sites began a two-decade career in carpentry. Later, he opened a chain of grocery stores in Fort Davis, Alpine, and Presidio. Lolo's great granddaughter Berta Duarte works at Indian Lodge today and takes pride in her family's legacy in the area.

Many Texans employed by the CCC went on to enlist in the armed forces during World War II. They credit their time in the CCC as preparation for their time in the military. "When I got that letter that says, Uncle Sam pointing at you, 'We want you in the Army,' I didn't hesitate, because I was ready to go," said Rutherford. Many of America's Greatest Generation got their start in the CCC.

Collectively, the Texans of the CCC contributed more than 100 million hours of labor to conserving the landscape of Texas. Whether you smile cruising down a curving park road, or admire the arches of a visitor's center or the towering quiet of a mature pine forest, you have to thank the Texans of the Civilian Conservation Corps for their herculean effort almost a century ago. ★

Austin-based photojournalist Julia Robinson was intrigued by the sheer manpower of the CCC camps and the "unique political and economic circumstances that made their work possible," she says. "I'll never run my hands along a rock wall or a state park cabin in quite the same way."

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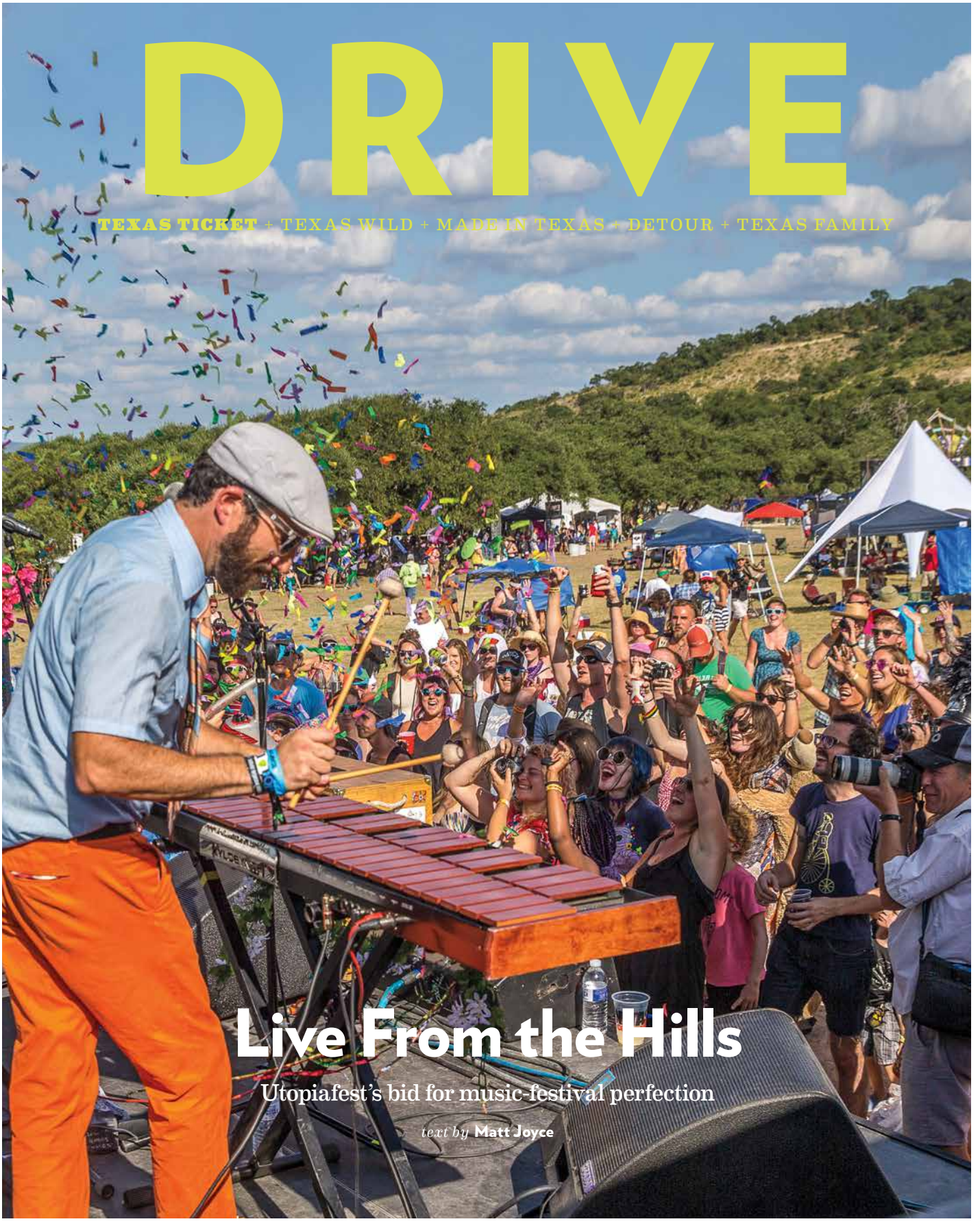
Essentials

CCC in Texas

For an online interactive database and map of the 29 Civilian Conservation Corps state parks in Texas, go to **www.texascccparks.org**. For a complete list of Texas' state parks, go to **www.tpwd.texas.gov**. For an interactive database and maps of CCC projects nationwide, go to **https://livingnewdeal.org**.

PHOTOS: © Julia Robinson; © Laurence Parent (1, 3, 10)

DRIVE



Live From the Hills

Utopiafest's bid for music-festival perfection

text by **Matt Joyce**

Calliope Musicals performs on the Cypress Stage at last year's Utopiafest. The band returns this year.

Photo: © George Trent Grogan

FROM A RISE OVERLOOKING THIS Hill Country valley, the elements that create Utopiafest's celebration of music and place come into focus: A band rocks a stage to the cheers of a bobbing crowd. Nearby, mountain-bikers saddle up for a ride and disc-golfers navigate a rocky hillside course. Hemming the festival grounds, campers lounge around their tents in live-oak groves that stretch to the valley's edge.

Utopiafest strives for music-festival bliss worthy of its name, which it takes from the neighboring hamlet of Utopia. Happening September 29-October 2 this year, the festival features about 25 bands on two stages over two days (along with a Thursday night pre-party). The eclectic lineup showcases independent bands in genres ranging from rock to hip-hop, folk to funk, and bluegrass to soul. This year's performers include virtuosic jazz-jam bassist Victor Wooten, San Francisco indie-folk rockers Thao & the Get Down Stay Down, baritone rapper Chali 2na (from Jurassic 5), and Austin standouts like The Deer, Golden Dawn Arkestra, Balmorhea, Warren Hood, and Ruby and The Reckless.

"We want it to be as seamless and enjoyable and stress-free as possible for everyone here. That's our main goal."

"I don't know of a genre we wouldn't have, as long as they have a great, positive-thinking crowd and a live show that floors you," says Aaron Brown, the festival's director. "We want the live show aspect to be paramount, and we want to book bands that fit our vibe, which is thoughtful and caring, and that leave audiences with an experience they'll never forget."

To prevent the hassles sometimes associated with music festivals, Utopiafest caps ticket sales at 2,000 weekend passes. The results are navigable crowds, accessible stages, short or nonexistent lines for concessions and bathrooms, and plenty of camping space. The schedule alternates bands between the two stages to prevent overlaps, so fans can watch each performance without sound bleeding between them and without having to choose between acts. Also, the festival allows campers to bring their own food and beverages.

"We want it to be as seamless and enjoyable and stress-free as possible for everyone here," says Travis Sutherland, who founded the festival in 2009 on his family's century-old ranch, called the Four Sisters Ranch. "That's our main goal."

Sutherland, Utopiafest's "chief experiential architect," produces the festival with Brown and his brother, Jamie Brown, the principals of Austin-based Onion Creek Productions. Located in Bandera County about six miles northwest of Utopia, the ranch is part of the Sabinal River Valley, characterized by rugged peaks thick with sotol and juniper, grassy valleys, and rocky limestone creek beds.

"The setting is the start of everything," Aaron Brown says. "When we create a vibe, location is the most important thing to begin with. We have the best. It all has to fit here, but irony is a huge part of what we do, because you can bring [rapper] GZA from Wu-Tang Clan and put him in the middle of the Hill Country—and it works.

"We're rooted in this Texas music scene," he adds. "But it's not your typical cookie-cutter Texas lineup. We want bands coming in from Mexico, Australia, Japan, and Europe. It's amazing to get those bands to Utopia, and then you mix in the Austin scene. A lot of the bands we have out here, it's their *quinceañera*—let's introduce you to the core Texas music-lover audience, and then from there it's a springboard."

During last year's festival, the crowd grew in size and energy on each day as the blazing sun waned and eventually set over the hills. Highlights of the weekend included a revelational rock-and-roll blast from Canadian band the Sheepdogs (as the Sheepdogs played, a prop plane flew over and dropped festival panties, koozies, T-shirts, and bandanas); Colorado-based Leftover Salmon's sizzling bluegrass-rock jams, which hit a fever pitch when Austin fiddler Ruby Jane jumped on stage; an unannounced 30-minute surprise performance by breakout indie-troubadour Shakey Graves of Austin; a hillside wedding ceremony for two festival regulars, followed by their on-stage first dance during a performance by Austin band Wild Child; and a hypnotic sonic journey with Explosions in the Sky (famous partly for their songs on the *Friday Night Lights* soundtrack). During Explosions in the Sky, a laser-light show illuminated the hills encircling the amphitheater and culminated in a finale of fireworks over the stage.

The music gets underway in the early afternoon on Friday and Saturday, which leaves time in the morning for activities and exploration of the surrounding countryside. In the shade of a spacious event tent, yogis gather on their mats for morning yoga, complete with the soothing tones of a gong. Meanwhile at Camp REI, which occupies a

A prop plane riles the crowd at Utopiafest's Arrowhead Stage during sunset.

Photo: © George Trent Grogan

corner of the festival grounds, the REI Outdoor School leads free guided hikes and mountain-bike rides (bikes and helmets provided). The two-mile hike ascends a nearby hill for a scenic view of the festival valley. (Watch out for errant frisbees from the disc-golfers on the nine-hole course!) The five-mile bike excursion follows an old two-track road that ventures into the hills, over rocky Spring Branch Creek, and across grassland pastures dotted with sotol, flameleaf sumac, mountain laurel, and prickly-pear cactus.

Spring Branch Creek flows into the Sabinal River, whose headwaters emerge about 14 miles north of the festival near Lost Maples State Park, a prime destination for hiking and camping. Flowing south to Utopia, the Sabinal provides a convenient opportunity for a refreshing dip in town at Utopia Park, where a dam corrals the river into a deep, clear swimming hole shaded by bald cypress and live oaks. Also nearby, about 20 miles west of Utopiafest, Garner State Park is a picturesque haven for a hike along the Edwards Plateau and a swim in the Frio River.

Utopiafest schedules children's activities throughout the festival, such as a fossil hunt and a hula-hoop jam, as well as informative presentations, including a tree talk by the Texas A&M Forest Service and a lesson on the history of the Four Sisters Ranch presented by the four sisters who own the ranch. Founded in 1918 by Sutherland's great-great grandparents, Will and Mattie Fisher, the ranch raised angora goats historically but now runs cattle and is branching into ecotourism, including two rental cabins, primitive campsites, and—beyond what the Fishers could ever have imagined in 1918—Utopiafest.

"Frankly, we were a little taken back with the idea of a festival," says Diane Causey, Sutherland's aunt and one of the ranch's namesake sisters. "The first festival, we were pretty sure terrible things were going to happen, but none of them did, so we've been very pleased with the crowd that's come and how they've treated our ranch. We've found that people are very appreciative of us sharing this beautiful spot."

UTOPIAFEST takes place Sep. 29-Oct. 2 at Four Sisters Ranch, 1555 Lemond Rd., about six miles northwest of Utopia. Tickets range from $169-$199, including parking and tent camping; car-camping passes are $79; RV passes are $109. A ticket to the Thursday night pre-party is $49. Tent rentals available. Check out **www.utopiafest.com** for a full schedule of bands and activities.