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September 2025



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Equestrian trails maintained by volunteers offer a stunning way to take in Texas.

By Anna Mazurek
Photo by Dave Shafer

Counting Down

Missile silo owners are fighting rust and ruin to preserve and repurpose subterranean Cold War relics.

By Samantha Bryant
Photos by Eric W. Pohl

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ON THE COVER
Mary Apple-Williams leads the way on a trail ride at soon-to-open Palo Pinto Mountains State Park.
Photo by Dave Shafer

ABOVE
Bruce Townsley at the launch control panel of his 1960s missile silo south of Abilene.
Photo by Eric W. Pohl



Pluck the Perfect Book

DO YOU LOVE being cooped up with a good book?

Central Texas author A.A. Davenport's *A Chicken Was There* collection aims to entertain while imparting history along the way—a perfect escape for National Read a Book Day on September 6.

Through the eyes of chickens, Davenport, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member, takes readers to colonial America, the Civil War, Wild West and more.

"I was watching a movie with my husband. He really likes Westerns, and I noticed that there were chickens everywhere—in town, out on the homestead, at the stagecoach station," says Davenport, a former English teacher at Smithville Junior High School. "That's when I thought that the chickens have been eyewitnesses to a lot of historical events."

Her sixth book in the series came out in July.



A Pioneer in Academia

June Brewer made history in 1950 when she became one of the first African American women to apply and be admitted to graduate school at the University of Texas.

Brewer, born 100 years ago this month in Austin, got her bachelor's degree at the college now known as Huston-Tillotson University. After getting her doctorate from UT, she taught English for 35 years at what was then Huston-Tillotson College.

TCP Contests and More

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Snakes Alive!

RECOMMENDED READING

Revisit our September 2005 issue to see how our Best of Co-op Country picks stand up to the test of time. Read it at TexasCoopPower.com.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE

My favorite football team is ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Here are some of the responses to our July prompt: **My favorite Fourth of July was ...**

The bicentennial celebration in 1976, with the huge regatta of tall ships in New York Harbor and the massive fireworks show over Lady Liberty.

STUART BERKOWITZ
PEDERNALES EC
MANCHACA

When my city relatives visited our farm, and for the first time I tasted soda pop and saw fireworks.

LORETTA BEDFORD
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC
SAN AUGUSTINE

When I came back from Vietnam in 1970.

LIONEL ROACH
CENTRAL TEXAS EC
BLUFFTON

When my husband and I had our first date and first kiss.

ELLEN HOLDCROFT
WOOD COUNTY EC
QUITMAN

Visit our website to see more responses.



Dressed for the Theater

When I was a student at Blinn Junior College in Brenham in 1977, I attended my first viewing of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* at the Simon Theatre [A Century of the Simon, July 2025].

A friend and I were driving by one night and saw a long line of people dressed in what is now common garb for the RHPS experience. Back then it was quite a shock to see some of my dormmates in that line wearing fishnet stockings and bustiers.

William Culver III
Farmers EC
Murphy

Rodgers' Influence

Jimmie Rodgers did not sell more records—10 million—than any other RCA Victor artist before Elvis Presley [*The Fast Track*, July 2025].

In a 10-year period before Presley's first release, Perry Como sold more



than 30 million records for RCA Victor.

Coy Prather
Trinity Valley EC
Montalba

EDITOR'S NOTE You're correct, and we'll regret this mistake "till the end of time." We have fixed the story online.

I wonder if the author is familiar with Bill Monroe, the Father of Bluegrass Music. Monroe played, sang and recorded many of Jimmie Rodgers' songs back in the mid-to-late 1920s, 1930s and very possibly into the 1940s.

Rodgers very likely influenced Monroe into occasionally adding yodeling to his own music.

Mike Adams
San Bernard EC
Magnolia

Family Love

Stepping Up [May 2025] brought tears to my eyes. As a stepparent, I related to this story. DNA isn't what matters in a blended family—it's the love.

Rosie Strode
Tri-County EC
Parker County

TCP WRITE TO US
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Austin, TX 78701

Please include your electric co-op and town. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.

 Texas Co-op Power

JULY 2025 A Century of the Simon

"I grew up in the late 1950s, early '60s spending Saturday afternoons at the Simon Theatre. Kids got money for the show and maybe popcorn and a soda."

TED KEMPER
SAN BERNARD EC
BELLVILLE

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Mounts in the Hills

Equestrian trails maintained by volunteers offer a stunning way to take in Texas

BY ANNA MAZUREK
PHOTO BY DAVE SHAFER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RYAN O'ROURKE

Mary Apple-Williams was riding her retired ranch horse, Slick, on the equestrian trails at Benbrook Lake south of Fort Worth in April 2016 when she noticed sections of two trails were closed due to storm damage.

After talking with a park ranger, she discovered the nonprofit Texas Equestrian Trail Riders Association helped maintain the trails. She immediately joined the organization, reached out to her region's manager and led efforts to reopen the trails, which are now maintained by TETRA continually.

For her and many others who find great joy in trail riding, this is important work.



From right, Mary Apple-Williams on Cutter, Brenda Laing on Sunshine, Staci Barnes on Shadow and Matt Barnes on Lily depart the equine campground at Palo Pinto Mountains State Park in North Texas. The park is expected to open in 2026.

Panhandle, TETRA helped prevent a section of the trail built along a former railroad from being shut down in May 2022. That's despite the group's aging and dwindling membership, declining from 2,000 members when it was founded in 1997 to fewer than 300 statewide today.

"We were out there replacing boards off of the railroad trestle, and that was hard work," Apple-Williams says. "When you look at our volunteers, the average volunteer age of our organization—we're not spring chickens anymore."

Many state parks and other natural areas are supported by nonprofit organizations founded by volunteers, including TETRA members, who enjoy using and maintaining the outdoor spaces. "We support those groups with labor, expenses [and] grants," Apple-Williams says. "We'll do a benefit ride out there where any funds we collect ... we turn back into that group to help maintain that park."

Since equestrian trails are often multiuse trails, TETRA's restoration efforts also benefit hikers and mountain bikers at state parks, where attendance has topped 9 million each year since 2021, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Apple-Williams is now a manager for TETRA's Region 4, which encompasses a section of North Texas that includes the soon-to-open Palo Pinto Mountains State Park. To assist construction

efforts, TETRA held trail rides at the site in 2017 and 2018 and donated proceeds to the park's nonprofit, Palo Pinto Mountains State Park Partners, which advocated for trail riders during the park design process.

In November 2024, she volunteered at an on-site workday.

"To me, that day wasn't a workday but a preview of what riders would experience for years to come—beautiful streams, winding trails through large boulders [and] high plateaus where you can see for miles," she says.

If you ask Apple-Williams about her favorite place to ride in Texas, she can't pick one because there are too many amazing and diverse trails.

"I think the best place to ride in Texas," she says. ■



Ready to ride?
Turn the page to explore five state parks that are top picks among trail riders.

"For equestrians, riding is more than a hobby; it's a profound connection with nature," Apple-Williams says. "From the fragrance of spring blooms to the thrill of mountain trails, every ride is a celebration of the natural world."

Apple-Williams, who went on to serve as TETRA president from 2022 to 2024, says the nonprofit's goal is to develop and maintain riding trails across the state.

"We're a voice for equestrians in the state of Texas, and that is needed so much more today than it has been in the past," Apple-Williams says.

TETRA members and volunteers maintain more than three dozen trails, including some at Army Corps of Engineers lakes and many at state parks, through fundraising rides and scheduled workdays during the spring and fall. Volunteers put in a combined 800–1,000 hours a year doing trail maintenance, Apple-Williams says.

At Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway in the

Across the Lone Star State, there are 19 equestrian trails in state parks (all of which require proof of a current Coggins test, which screens for potentially fatal equine infectious anemia). These are some of trail riders' favorites.



Palo Pinto Mountains State Park

Tucked halfway between Abilene and Fort Worth,

Palo Pinto Mountains State Park will be Texas' first new state park in 17 years when it opens. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has not set an opening date. The park will comprise nearly 5,000 acres of former ranchland with a rugged landscape of scenic plateaus, sheltered canyons and crisscrossing waterways, including Palo Pinto Creek near the northern boundary. The 90-acre Tucker Lake will be the park's star attraction for fishing, boating, swimming and birding, and there will be several multiuse trails, including 11 miles of equestrian trails with substantial trailhead parking for trail riders. Each of the 10 equestrian campsites will be equipped with a two-horse corral, water and electrical hookups.



Caprock Canyon State Park and Trailway

Home to the Texas State Bison Herd, this 15,000-acre park has 90 miles of trails, including the equestrian-friendly 64-mile-long multiuse trailway built on a former freight and passenger railway that operated from the early 1920s until 1989. The trailway has a variety of access points and passes through Clarity Tunnel, home to a half-million Mexican free-tailed bats. The Panhandle park also has a dozen primitive equestrian campsites with two corrals each.



Cooper State Park

Located on Jim Chapman Lake in northeast Texas, this park is an angler's paradise with an abundance of water activities and trails to explore. The park consists of two areas—the northern Doctor's Creek Unit and the equestrian-friendly South Sulphur Unit on the southern shore. The challenging Buggy Whip Equestrian Trail is a 10-mile adventure through dense forests and creek ravines. A dozen equestrian campsites have electricity but no stables.

Davis Mountains State Park

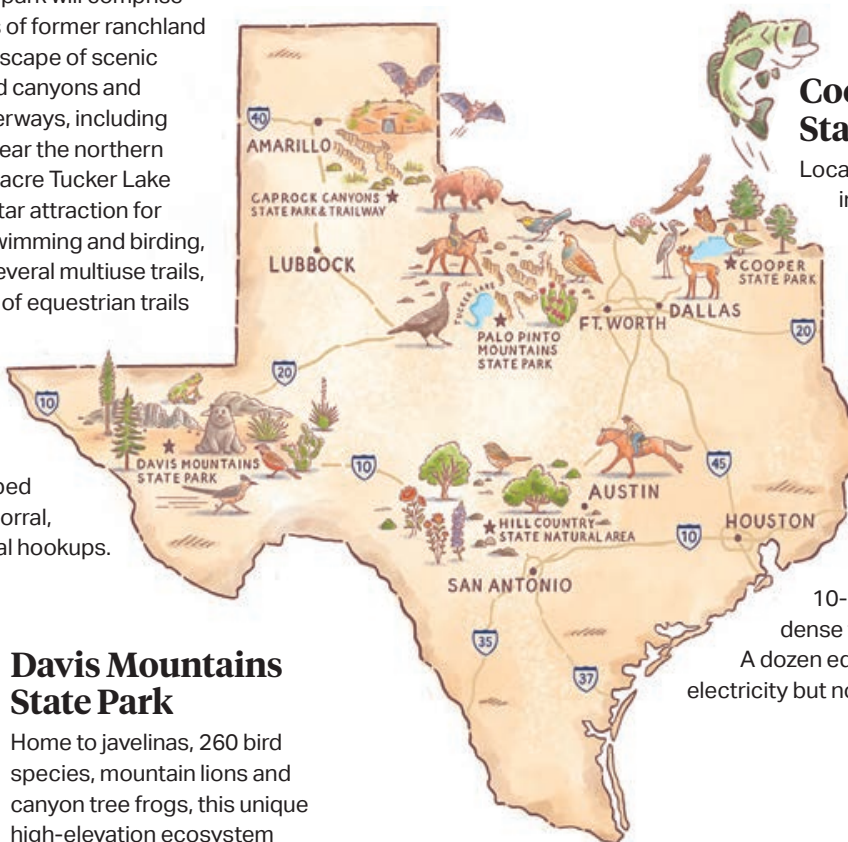
Home to javelinas, 260 bird species, mountain lions and canyon tree frogs, this unique high-elevation ecosystem at the base of the Davis Mountains was formed 25

million–30 million years ago by volcanic eruptions. This volcanic activity is responsible for the West Texas park's most unique formations, Frazier's Canyon, Sleeping Lion and Barrel Springs. Trail riders can explore the stunning landscape on 11 miles of trails that meander from 4,900 to 5,700 feet with scenic overlooks in the Limpia Canyon area. There are six primitive equestrian campsites.



Hill Country State Natural Area

At this former ranch northwest of San Antonio, 40 miles of shared-use equestrian trails cover terrain that includes flat, broad prairies and steep, rocky canyons. The park's extensive equestrian facilities include a day-use area near the headquarters with a water trough, hitching posts and a flush toilet. Overnight equestrian accommodations include six primitive campsites with pens, a group camp that has a barn with stalls for nine horses, and a 1930s ranch house that sleeps 12 humans and has stalls for five horses.





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COUNTING DOWN

Missile silo owners are fighting rust and ruin to preserve and repurpose subterranean Cold War relics

BRUCE TOWNSLEY'S FAVORITE place to visit in Japan is Ryoanji Temple Rock Garden in Kyoto. The enigmatic garden has 15 stones, but only 14 are visible to the viewer, no matter where they stand. One side of the garden is arid and stark, but walk around a corner and there's lush greenery.

It's the unexpected that gets him.

So it's little wonder that Townsley's home in Oplin, south of Abilene, is an illusion all its own. Drive onto his property, and you'll see a few small buildings and a Quonset hut. But that's the tip of the iceberg—one that descends 18 stories into the ground.

For the past 25 years, Townsley has lived underground in the two-story launch control center of a decommissioned missile silo. A relic of the Cold War, the 185-foot silo is one of 12 near Dyess Air Force Base that once housed nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles meant to deter the Soviet Union from using their own.

The Atlas F missile sites roughly encircle Abilene like points on a clock face, a silently ticking time bomb that thankfully never had to be ignited—despite veering dangerously close during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

In 1965, the government salvaged much of the metal, removed the 82-foot missiles and sold the silos to private owners and municipalities. Townsley bought his in 1997, and he's one of several missile silo owners bent on preserving the structures so future generations can learn about and honor this pivotal moment in the Cold War.

Townsley, formerly a real estate broker in Colorado, initially was interested in the site as a renovation project. He still remembers his first visit to West Texas, crawling into the silo by way of an air vent shaft and shining his flashlight deep inside the cavernous concrete and steel structure.

"It felt like it was—this is going to sound strange—alive," he says. "It was just like something was sleeping. It wasn't a frightening feeling; it was just an unusual feeling."

OPPOSITE Bruce Townsley in his missile silo in Oplin. The crib, the silo's steel framework, held an Atlas F intercontinental missile in the early 1960s.

RIGHT, FROM TOP A close-up of Townsley's Cold War-era missile launch control panel. He converted the control center into a living space.



"IF WE DON'T
KNOW OUR PAST,
WE CAN'T LIVE
OUR FUTURE
THE WAY LIFE
IS INTENDED
TO BE LIVED."

As with many of the 72 Atlas F silos built across six states, water had seeped into the vast void over the years, and the walls were graffitied with the names of local students who had sneaked onto the property decades ago.

Townsley, a Taylor Electric Cooperative member, purchased the property for \$99,000 and set about making the control center into a personal residence. Connected to the silo by a 40-foot tunnel, it once housed a five-man missile crew on its upper floor and equipment and offices on another floor.

After about 18 months of renovations, Townsley began his subterranean existence that has lasted more than a quarter century. He says he enjoys the quiet. The living spaces are white and open, with plenty of lighting and high ceilings.

"You don't have that sense of claustrophobia," Townsley says. "Now, some people really react to there being no windows, but cameras and monitors provide a pretty good substitute."

After renovating the control center, Townsley, with the help of others, turned his efforts to the silo itself, draining the water and removing debris (the only bones he found belonged to a coyote and an armadillo). He was also able to get one of the 75-ton, 3-foot-thick silo doors operable so that it once again opens to the sky with the press of a button.

As Townsley renovated the property, he became friends with people who had helped construct the facilities and missileers who served when the sites were active, 1962–65.

"You can't help but get involved in the history of it," Townsley says. "It's just part of it."

One of the people he met was Roger Jensen, who enlisted in the Air Force in 1961 at age 19 and worked on the Abilene silo sites as an electrical technician with the 578th Strategic Missile Squadron.



Now in his 80s, Jensen still remembers some of the passwords he spoke at the door to gain access to the control center, words like "bicycle" and "wheelbarrow."

"We spent 24 hours in and out of the silo," Jensen says. "We had to go out into the silo at least once every hour to take specific readings on various pieces of equipment."

Tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union were high during those years, especially during the 13-day Cuban Missile Crisis, when the Soviets deployed nuclear missiles to Cuba. The Air Force's Strategic Air Command was at DEFCON 2, one step away from the highest level of readiness for nuclear war.

With a wife and baby in Abilene, Jensen says the possibility of nuclear war became undeniable for the crew. "It was a big dose of reality and what was reality at that time," he says.

The crisis was averted through diplomatic agreements, and Jensen says the crew was “elated when it was over.”

In homage to that history, Townsley had long thought his silo should be turned into a museum, an idea planted by the broker who showed it to him. And in January 2024, he started the Atlas Missile Museum of Texas, a nonprofit organization with a five-member board.

Visitors must make an appointment through his website, www.atlasmissilemuseumoftexas.org, to tour the silo and control center and learn about the site’s role in the Cold War. They can walk into the silo and see the steel crib once equipped with an elevator capable of raising the Atlas F missile to the surface and launching it in about 10 minutes. Townsley has a model elevator to show how it works and a refurbished control console that simulates a missile launch.

A short drive down the road in Lawn, Larry Sanders is also preserving the history at his missile silo, which he acquired in 1999. Sanders spearheaded a movement in 2001 to get the roadway it sits along renamed to the Atlas ICBM Highway.

He spent years saving the complex from its more recent No. 1 enemy: rust.

“My immediate concern was stabilization,” Sanders says. “You have to keep in mind that water was everywhere. Wood rot, decomposing Sheetrock, metals being compromised totally to rust. So we did nothing for the first five years but demolition.”

Now that the site is stable and clean, Sanders plans to add back infrastructure. Through the Atlas Missile Base Cold War Center, a nonprofit he founded, he holds on-site events and

gives presentations to groups about the Cold War, a time that can sometimes get forgotten.

“No one received the recognition and the honor that they deserved in winning the Cold War, unlike World War II,” Sanders says.

In addition to veterans, Sanders says the heroes of the time include civilian contractors and city administrators. “Texas had a significant role in America’s Cold War victory, and Texans need to celebrate Texas’ role in that victory,” he says.

Like a lot of American schoolchildren in the early Cold War era, Sanders grew up doing “duck and cover” air raid drills in elementary school and watching the political tension unfold on TV.

Mark Hannifin, who owns a missile silo in Shep, also remembers this tense time and tells younger generations that for them, “the Cold War might as well have been in black and white. It’s kind of like us looking at the second World War or our predecessors looking at the first World War and Civil War. No, it was in color. It was a real thing.”

Hannifin and his wife, Linda, bought their silo in 1982 and were “armchair survivalists” at the time, he says. To avoid detection, they used a code word whenever they referred to the facility in public.

An avid scuba diver, Hannifin eventually decided to open the silo for diving and began cleaning out the debris. Their business, Dive Valhalla, hosts scuba dive clubs in the 120 feet of water.

“It’s nice, crystal-clear well water,” Hannifin says. “We have been letting people dive in there for about 30 years now.”

Hannifin’s control center is equipped with beds for over-night stays, and he shows a short Cold War documentary and slideshow so visitors are aware of the silo’s original mission.

The Hannifins no longer feel the need to keep it under wraps, and Mark says he’s seen other missile silo owners move from concealing their purchase to being more open about it.

The silos were part of a top-secret mission (although folks in Abilene couldn’t have missed the construction crews that arrived in 1960 to build them). When that secret mission faded, the silos “had fallen out of use,” Hannifin says. “Fallen out of memory.”

But these dutiful owners are ensuring this important history isn’t buried by time.

Jensen, who spent many hours in the silo as a young man during the beginning of his military service, certainly won’t forget.

“If we don’t know our past,” Jensen says, “we can’t live our future the way life is intended to be lived.” ■

OPPOSITE Mark Hannifin turned his silo in Shep into Dive Valhalla for scuba divers. A staircase and gangplank connect to a floating platform.

BELOW The entry to Larry Sanders’ silo in Lawn.



TCP Watch the video on our website to get a window into this underground world.



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As a not-for-profit cooperative owned by those we serve, Tri-County Electric Cooperative (TCEC) is committed to delivering on our mission: providing safe and reliable power at the lowest possible cost. We work very hard to ensure TCEC decisions are rooted in that mission and guided by your shared ownership in the cooperative.

Earlier this year, members were given the opportunity to opt out of receiving a mailed copy of Texas Co-op Power magazine. While this may have seemed like a small change, the impact has been significant. So far, approximately 60,000 members have chosen paperless billing—which includes opting out of the printed magazine—resulting in an estimated monthly savings of \$25,000. This cost-conscious choice is one example of how we are working together to meet our mission and uphold our cooperative values.

In addition to improving financial stewardship, this leadership team has also prioritized transparency and accessibility. Over the past year, we've taken measurable steps to make key information more readily available to members:

- Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes are now available online
- Video recordings of each Board Meeting's open session can be viewed online
- The Member Information Center now contains essential documents, such as audited financials and rates
- A dedicated Power Cost Recovery Factor (PCRF) page now shows monthly details for the rest of the calendar year
- A clear breakdown of rebate funds for the 2025 Energy Efficiency Pilot Program is now available

These updates are not just examples of better management—they are reflections of our cooperative mission and this team in action. Efforts ranging from conserving resources to improving communication directly support our two primary goals: strengthening the cooperative's financial health and enhancing transparency for members. Both are essential to fulfilling our mission of delivering safe and reliable electric service at the lowest possible cost.

As a member-owned organization, your voice and your choices matter. We appreciate your continued partnership and support as we work to deliver power with purpose—guided by our mission, grounded in transparency, and driven by shared responsibility.

Scott Spence
President & CEO

2025 ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATE PILOT PROGRAM

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ENERGY STAR Appliance Rebate
\$50 Bill Credit
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With rebate funds still available and the program nearing its goal, now is the perfect time to improve your home's energy efficiency.

You can apply for one HVAC Tune-Up Rebate and one Energy Star Appliance Rebate per account.
<https://tcectexas.com/energy-efficiency-rebates>



Rebate Payment Tracker

As of 8/4/25



BRAZOS ELECTRIC RATEPAYER HARDSHIP FUND



The Brazos Electric Ratepayer Hardship Fund provides financial assistance to help qualifying members offset a portion of the Brazos Financing Rider charge on their electric bills.

Six hundred seventy-four (674) members are already receiving assistance through the hardship fund. If someone you know may benefit from this support, more information and application details are available on the website.
<https://tcectexas.com/brazos-hardship-fund>

This program is fully funded by unclaimed funds, meaning it's already paid for—no extra costs passed on to members.

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Seymour, TX 76380 |

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| • By Phone | • Local Office |



2025 OFFICIAL NOTICE

Consistent with the Cooperatives's Bylaws the 2025 Tri-County Electric Annual Meeting will be conducted virtually on Tuesday, September 23 at 6 p.m. During the meeting, cooperative updates will be presented and the results of the 2025 director elections announced. The meeting will be broadcast virtually and will be streamed on the Cooperative's website.

Max Waddell

Board Secretary/Treasurer

STREAM ONLINE

tcectexas.com/annual-meeting

LISTEN BY PHONE

855-710-6229

2025 DIRECTOR ELECTION UPDATE

Districts 5, 7, and 9 each have one candidate running unopposed. These candidates are anticipated to be elected by acclamation at the annual meeting, provided they continue to meet all eligibility requirements and qualifications. As a result, no voting or ballots will be required this year.

*Please note that Max Waddell has withdrawn from the District 9 election. He will continue to serve the remainder of his current term. His candidate information appeared in the August issue of Texas Co-op Power magazine prior to his withdrawal.

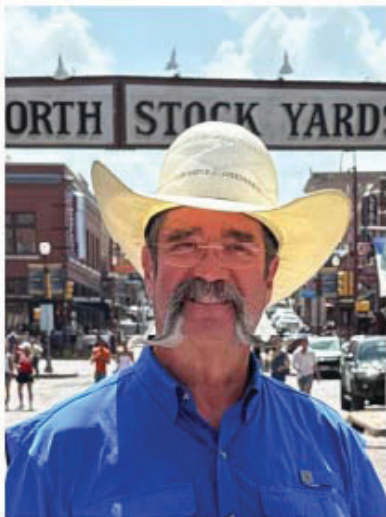
2025 DIRECTOR ELECTION: CANDIDATES



Robin Corder - District 5
Nomination Candidate



Sommer Portwood - District 7
Incumbent



Don Lambert - District 9
Nomination Candidate

READ CANDIDATE BIOS





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Fall Safety Tips

WHILE FALL CAN FEEL pretty short in Texas, the temperatures will soon start dropping. When it's cooler, you depend more on your electrical devices to keep you warm and comfortable. Here are some safety tips to keep you and your family safe.

Test your smoke alarms. You should test your alarms every month. If they're not working, change the batteries or replace them. Your smoke alarms warn of dangerous situations—especially important when you're asleep. Make sure your family is protected.

Check devices before using them outside. Moisture and rain don't mix with electricity, so make sure you're taking the proper precautions when using your devices outside. Investing in ground-fault circuit interrupter outlets is one way to stay safe.

Inspect your cords. Extension cords can become frayed or damaged. If they are, then they're no longer safe to use. Whether it's Halloween decorations or Christmas lights, make sure there's no damage before putting out your festive decorations.

Clear away debris. Dry leaves can be a hazard. If they're met with a spark, a fire can start. Sweep them away from outlets, fixtures, cords or any other electrical components.

Inspect electrical devices. Check for any wear and tear, and ensure power cords aren't damaged. Replace or repair before a disaster happens.

Use weatherproof outlet covers to prevent rain and dust infiltration, and inspect them for cracks, chips or overheating.

Don't overload your power strips, extension cords or outlets. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations, and keep the load on any given circuit within its designed limit. ■



BACKGROUND: MARCIN JUCHA | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM.
DIP: IRINA ROSTOKINA | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Vidalia Onion Dip

2 large Vidalia or 1015 sweet onions, finely chopped
1½ cups grated Parmesan cheese, divided use
1 cup mayonnaise
1 cup sour cream
¼ cup fresh dill, lightly chopped (or 2½ teaspoons dried dill), divided use
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
Pinch red pepper flakes
Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
2. Place onions, 1 cup Parmesan, mayonnaise, sour cream, 3 tablespoons dill (or 2 teaspoons dried), parsley, horseradish and red pepper in a mixing bowl and use a spatula to combine. Season to taste with salt and black pepper, then transfer the mixture to a deep-dish 10-inch pie dish. Sprinkle the top evenly with the remaining ½ cup of Parmesan and remaining dill.
3. Bake 40–45 minutes, until lightly browned. Serve with chips or crackers.

SERVES 4–6

TCOP Find this and more delicious recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](https://www.texascoopower.com).

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Restless Quilt

Craftwork that traveled from Texas to Brazil and back again stitches a family's history

BY ANNE R. KEENE • ILLUSTRATION BY ERIC KITTELBERGER

WIND GUSTS ROCKED ships anchored in Galveston's harbor January 26, 1867, as the Linn family from Navarro County boarded a dilapidated brig bound for Brazil. Though the Derby was overloaded with more than 150 passengers carrying rationed goods like water, farm tools and seed, the Linns brought a Lone Star quilt that reminded them of home.

Nearly 160 years later, the quilt's journey represents one of the most significant yet little-remembered mass exiles in U.S. history—one that scattered families, heirlooms and exotic tales of lost treasure between two continents.

After the Civil War, many Confederate families contemplated exile. Southerners fled to Mexico, British Honduras, Canada and Europe. But the most popular destination was Brazil, where Emperor Dom Pedro II expatriated thousands (estimates vary widely) of Americans who settled on cheap land to grow crops like cotton, coffee and sugarcane.

Exiles (nicknamed Confederados) were promised political freedom and, unfortunately, the ability to own slaves—before the practice was abolished in 1888.

One colony was led by Frank McMullan, a former Confederate officer from Hill County who planned to settle on a 500-square-mile property (about half the size of Rhode Island).

Getting out of America wasn't easy. During Reconstruction, the country needed every hand to rebuild the devastated South, and the Rio Grande was patrolled by Union soldiers to stave off American militiamen heading into Mexico. With seaports bottled up, McMullan's colonists shivered in tents on the beach in Galveston for weeks, waiting on a ship to Brazil.

Skilled émigrés lined the Derby's manifest, including planters, engineers, judges, ministers, teachers, a physician and a dentist. Farmer George Alwin Linn; his wife, Amanda Pairalee Hammonds Linn; and their boys, William Hamlin, 6, and baby George, were also among those headed for Texas' largest organized colony.

Amanda Linn carried with her a hand-appliquéd quilt she made in 1858. The roughly 90-inch-square spread is bordered with Turkey-red and Prussian-blue berries with upturned vines that reminded Linn of Texas. Linn, who was born three years after the Republic of Texas gained its independence from

Mexico, centered the quilt with a five-pointed red Texas star medallion scalloped with blue edging.

Linn's great-great-granddaughter Kerry Graham Rustin, who lives in Dallas, says she knows little about the quilt but remembers family lore about Linn as a strong pioneer woman who endured the incredible trials of exile.

For starters, a storm derailed McMullan's expedition when the Derby crashed on rocks off the coast of Havana. Though everyone survived the wreck, valuables were swept out to sea. The quilt was salvaged after being submerged in salt water for several days.

Weeks later a rescue ship transported McMullan's refugees to New York, where they lived in a drafty, run-down hotel awaiting transport to Brazil on an ocean liner named North America. In May 1867, the colonists pulled into Rio de Janeiro's port.

It didn't get easier from there. In his account of this short-lived diaspora, *The Elusive Eden: Frank McMullan's Confederate Colony in Brazil*, the late writer and historian William Clark Griggs writes of colonists battling tuberculosis, floods, snakes, homesickness and isolation.

Within a year, most of the émigrés returned to the U.S. The Linns boarded a steamer to New Orleans on November 7, 1867, carrying the Lone Star quilt back to Navarro County, where they settled on a farm and had seven more children. Before Linn died in 1909, she willed the quilt to daughter Daisy Linn Chase of Los Angeles.

In 1947, Chase, then in her 70s, donated the quilt to Texas Gov. Coke Stevenson, who sent it to the University of Texas. Today the quilt is housed with 900 others at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History with a personal note explaining its shipwrecked, globe-trotting history.

"The Lone Star represents one young woman's love letter to the state of Texas," says Jill Morena, a registrar at the Briscoe Center. "[It's] a visually striking, hand-sewn and early treadle machine-repaired quilt, its story made extraordinary by its dramatic loss and rescue and embodiment of the chaotic traversal from post-Civil War Texas to Brazil and back again." ■



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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



It's in the Bag

How did Frito Pie make its way to Hank Hill and football fans across Texas?

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY GISELA GOPPEL

FRITOS PIE OR Fritos chili pie or simply Frito pie—whatever *you* call it—is a much-loved delight often spooned up under Friday night lights.

I've heard many baby boomers claim their mother invented the dish out of necessity to feed incessantly hungry kids back in the 1950s. I've heard claims that their grandmothers had been making something like Frito pie since the '20s, which would have been a neat trick since Fritos weren't invented until 1932.

A version of Frito pie was served at a gathering of the Dallas Dietetic Association in 1949. The recipe came from the Frito Co. itself and originally called for putting a layer of Fritos in a casserole dish, covering it with chili and then cov-

ering everything with liberal amounts of cheese and onions. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes.

You can see how this got MacGyvered into just pouring chili into bags of Fritos for efficiency and transportability. Today, you'll also find it with the added ingredient of a mound of jalapeños on top.

Whatever the case, Fritos and the pies are Texas originals.

Charles Doolin of San Antonio created the chips, putting his own spin on a recipe he bought for \$100 from a Mexican restaurant in 1932. He fried strips of corn dough, and Fritos were born. It's interesting that most Texans now associate the chip with piles of meat, as Doolin was a vegetarian.

He called them *fritos*, Spanish for “fried.” Doolin also invented Cheetos, around 1948, by the way.

In the 1960s, my mother made something she called “creamed tacos,” which was a cheesy chili con carne poured over a plate of Fritos. Exceptionally filling, the recipe no doubt came from Frito-Lay itself. Though the company, now based in Plano, had its own brand of chili by then, my mother, like Hank Hill, preferred Wolf Brand Chili (“Neighbor, how long has it been?”), another Texas original.

This type of mixing and matching was encouraged in the early days of Fritos—as they were not marketed as a stand-alone snack. They were sold as an ingredient for casseroles. The inventor's wife, Mary Kathryn “Kitty” Doolin, even experimented with pouring chocolate over Fritos and baking them on a cookie sheet.

Kitty also is credited with coming up with the original chili pie recipe. We know this because her daughter, Kaleta Doolin, wrote the most thorough history on the subject you can find, her 2011 book *Fritos Pie: Stories, Recipes, and More*. It's an incredibly detailed history that provides all manner of Fritos recipes you have never imagined. Maybe there's another classic in there, waiting to be popularized in today's world of spicy snack foods.

Along with her mother, Kaleta gives credit to another woman for popularizing the dish. She writes with admiration that Teresa Hernandez sold thousands of Fritos chili pies at the Woolworth's counter in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the 1960s, reportedly selling 56,000 bags in one year.

And at the same time, it was all the rage in San Antonio and across Texas at football games as fundraisers for civic and student groups. Who knows how many kids were sent to college on profits from Frito pies. ■

One-Skillet Dinners

Where convenience and flavors unite for a delicious cause

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

Growing up in Aransas Pass, home of the Shrimptree Festival, we enjoyed the freshest harvest delivered by the shrimp boats daily from the Gulf Coast. We grilled, fried and sautéed shrimp in countless marinades and spices, and we always served them with plenty of fresh lime juice. This one-pan dinner is a family favorite.

Spicy Shrimp and Rice

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 small onion, diced
1 yellow bell pepper, seeds removed, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup uncooked white rice
2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
½ cup salsa verde
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon ground oregano
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined
Juice of 1 lime
Cilantro leaves, for serving
Lime slices, for serving

1. In a skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion, bell pepper and garlic. Cook until onion is light and translucent, stirring often, about 5 minutes.
2. Add rice, stir and continue to cook 2 minutes. Stir in broth, salsa verde, cumin, oregano, salt and black pepper.
3. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer, cover and cook 15 minutes.
4. Remove lid, place shrimp over rice, cover and cook until shrimp are opaque, about 5–7 minutes.
5. Add lime juice and fluff the rice mixture. Serve with cilantro and lime slices.

SERVES 6

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Skillet Chicken Fajita Rice.



Cider Stew

THERESA SHELDON
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC

Stews are good for the soul and the belly. This one-skillet wonder starts with chunks of beef that are seared then simmered with vegetables and herbs in a rich and savory broth that tastes complex in flavor but is actually simple to make. The whole family will love it.

- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter
- 2 pounds beef chuck stew meat, cut into 1-inch pieces
- ¼ cup flour
- 2 cups water
- 1 cup apple cider
- ½ cup steak sauce
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3 medium carrots, sliced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 package frozen cut green beans (10 ounces)

1. Heat butter over medium-high heat in a large skillet. Add beef and brown on all sides, 2–3 minutes per side.
2. Stir in flour. Gradually stir in water, apple cider and steak sauce. Bring to a boil.
3. Stir in thyme, pepper and bay leaf. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 2 hours.
4. Add potatoes, carrots, onion and green beans. Cover and cook an additional 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Discard bay leaf before serving.

SERVES 8

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



\$500 WINNER

Egg Roll Stuffing Stir Fry

JENNIFER CURTIS
PEDERNALES EC



This might just be my new favorite dinner. It takes everything delicious in classic egg rolls and turns it into one ridiculously easy, healthy and flavor-packed meal with no rolling required. Spoon the stuffing into lettuce cups or over rice. The leftovers are a great lunch the next day.

- 2 tablespoons avocado oil or other neutral cooking oil
- 1 large yellow onion, diced
- 2 pounds ground pork or ground chicken
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons white sesame seeds
- 2 teaspoons black sesame seeds
- 1 cup shredded carrot
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 4 tablespoons honey
- ½ cup coconut aminos or soy sauce
- 2 cups shredded purple cabbage
- 2 cups shredded green cabbage
- Lettuce leaves or rice, for serving

1. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook until light and translucent.
2. Add pork or chicken and cook, breaking meat up into small pieces with a spoon, until cooked through, about 6 minutes. Season with salt, pepper, red pepper flakes and ginger.
3. Reduce heat to medium and stir in garlic, sesame seeds and shredded carrot and cook 3 minutes.
4. Make a well in the center of the skillet and add the rice vinegar, honey, and coconut aminos or soy sauce. Stir to combine.
5. Stir in cabbage and cook 3 minutes to slightly soften cabbage.
6. Serve warm, spooned into lettuce cups or over rice.

SERVES 6

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

CHEESECAKE DUE SEPTEMBER 10

Did you know they served cheesecake at the first Olympics 2,800 years ago? We want to serve yours while we watch the 2026 Games. The best recipe will score \$500. Enter by September 10.

UPCOMING: BARBECUE SIDES DUE OCTOBER 10





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Southwest Chicken With Toasted Orzo

GAIL PATTERSON
PENTEX ENERGY

One of the main reasons I enjoy cooking with orzo is its quick and easy preparation. I usually add a splash of lemon juice and a touch of grated Parm, but once I spotted Patterson's Southwestern spin, I knew I had to give it a try. Brothy orzo and blistered tomatoes combine with perfectly seasoned chicken.



½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon granulated garlic
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon kosher salt
4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch pieces
5 teaspoons olive oil, plus more as needed, divided use
1 cup cherry tomatoes
1 tablespoon (⅞ stick) butter
1 cup uncooked orzo
1 tablespoon chicken base
3 cups water, plus more as needed
1 cup corn kernels
1 can black beans (15 ounces), drained and rinsed
½ cup chopped cilantro, for serving
Tortilla chips, crushed, for serving

1. In a small bowl, mix together cayenne, cumin, granulated garlic, black pepper and salt.
2. Season chicken with half the spice mixture, reserving remaining half.
3. In a skillet, heat 3 teaspoons oil over medium-high heat. Sear chicken in 2 batches until lightly browned on both

sides, adding more oil if needed. Set cooked chicken aside in a bowl.

4. Add 1 teaspoon oil to skillet and add cherry tomatoes, stirring to coat in oil. Cover and cook, shaking pan occasionally, 5 minutes or until tomatoes slightly blister. Add tomatoes to bowl with chicken.

5. Add butter and remaining 1 teaspoon oil to skillet. Reduce heat to medium and stir in orzo. Cook, stirring occasionally, until orzo is golden and glistening, about 5–7 minutes.

6. Stir in chicken base and 3 cups water, bring to a simmer. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, 6 minutes or until almost all liquid is absorbed.

7. Stir in corn, black beans, prepared chicken and tomatoes, and remaining spice mixture. Add water if orzo becomes dry. Cover and cook an additional 3 minutes. Serve warm, with cilantro and tortilla chips.

SERVES 4

Why I Love One-Skillet Meals

I tell myself I cook for a living, but in reality I wash dishes for a living. Not when it comes to one-skillet meals.

Less cleanup: Forget about the mess of juggling several pans on the stovetop.

More flavor: Mixing all the ingredients together in one skillet brings out richer flavors.

Budget friendly: Beans, rice, pasta and vegetables help make these recipes easy on the pocketbook.

—Vianney Rodriguez



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Saga on the San Saba

The remains of Menard's Spanish fortification predate the U.S.

BY CHET GARNER

THE SMALL TOWN of Menard (population 1,300) sits along the blurry line where the Hill Country turns into West Texas. It's more than an hour from any major city, but if the Spanish had had their way, it might have become our largest metropolis.

As I stood in the middle of a dusty field, staring at the crumbling walls of the Presidio de San Sabá, I couldn't help but feel the dramatic story of conquest, bloodshed and what-could-have-been. Today, what remains of the abandoned Spanish fort covers a few acres on the north bank of the San Saba River.

The fort was constructed in 1757 to protect the Mission Santa Cruz de San Sabá, 4 miles to the east. Spain brought in a caravan of 300 soldiers and civilians to push their presence and control deeper into the heart of Texas.

Native Americans (and the French) didn't want the missionaries there. And in March 1758, 2,000 Comanche and other natives (likely armed with French weapons) attacked the mission and massacred its residents. A decade of fighting between the Spanish citizens inside the fort and the surrounding tribes followed, until the Spanish gave up and left in 1772.

Over the centuries, the ruins became a sort of roadside attraction. Famous Texan Jim Bowie even carved his name in the stone gate after supposedly hiding his silver cache, but that's another story. Sadly, the presidio's history began to fade as its stones were scavenged to construct Menard's growing downtown, and the grounds became an attraction on the city golf course. Seriously!

Luckily, it's now a protected site that's been extensively studied and cataloged.

If you're a lover of Texas history and want a glimpse into the past—but without the constant threat of death—it doesn't get much better than walking the grounds of the old presidio and pondering life on the Texas frontier. ■

ABOVE Chet in front of the ruins of Presidio de San Sabá in Menard.

TCP Watch the video on our website and see all Chet's Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details, and check our website for many more upcoming events.

SEPTEMBER

7

Gainesville [7–14] Fall Art Exhibition, (940) 613-6939, gainesvilleareavisualarts.org

11

Grapevine [11–14] GrapeFest, (817) 410-3185, grapevinetexasusa.com

12

Bryan [12–13] Brazos Bluebonnet Quilt Guild Quilt Show, (979) 776-8338, bbquiltguild.org

13

Chappell Hill Airing of the Quilts, (979) 337-9910, chappellhilltx.com

Luling Luling Foundation Youth Grill-Off, (830) 875-2438, lulingfoundation.org

Stephenville Local Art & Wine Walk, (254) 965-6190, downtownstephenvilletx.com

14

Yorktown Holy Cross Festival, (361) 564-2893, holycrossyorktown.net

19

Giddings [19–20] Happy Stitchers Quilt Show, (979) 540-8043

25

Grand Saline [25–27] Salt Festival, gssaltfestival@gmail.com, facebook.com/gssaltfest

26

Commerce [26–27] Bois D'Arc Bash, (903) 886-3950, commerce-chamber.com

27

Winnsboro [26-27] Cowboy Music and Poetry Gathering, (903) 342-0686, winnsboro.centerforthearts.com

Hallettsville Kolache Fest, (361) 798-2662, hallettsville.com

Lake Dallas 50th Anniversary Celebration of the Lake Dallas Library, (940) 497-3566, friendsoflakedallaslibrary.com

Lakehills Medina Lake Cajun Festival, (830) 460-0600, cajunfestival-medinalake.com

Woodville Ghosts and Legends of Texas Past, (409) 403-2025, heritage-village.org



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Meyersville Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church Fall Festival, (361) 275-3868, stspeterpaulalloysius.org

OCTOBER

3

Granbury [3-5] Oktoberfest, (682) 936-4550, granburysquare.com

4

Burnet Texas State Button Society Fall Workshop and Sale, texasstatebutton.society.com

Huntington Catfish Festival, shophuntingtontx.com

Johnson City Blanco County Wild Game Dinner, (830) 833-4138, facebook.com/wildgamedinner

Taylor Bluebonnet Horse Expo & Training Challenge, 1-888-542-5163, bluebonnethorseexpo.com

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your December event by October 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.



Western Swing Festival

September 6-7, 2025
Stephenville City Park
Free Entry | Food Trucks

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September 6
7AM-10AM



Cars & Coffee @ the Courthouse

📍 Downtown Stephenville



Stephenville Farmer & Artisan Market
9AM-12PM



Celebrate Rodeo Heritage in the Cowboy Capital

Ranch Rodeo
September 20-21, 2025



PRCA Rodeo
September 26-28, 2025

📍 Priefert Cowboy Capital Fairgrounds Arena

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1 SABINE BREDOW
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2 REAGAN FERGUSON
CENTRAL TEXAS EC

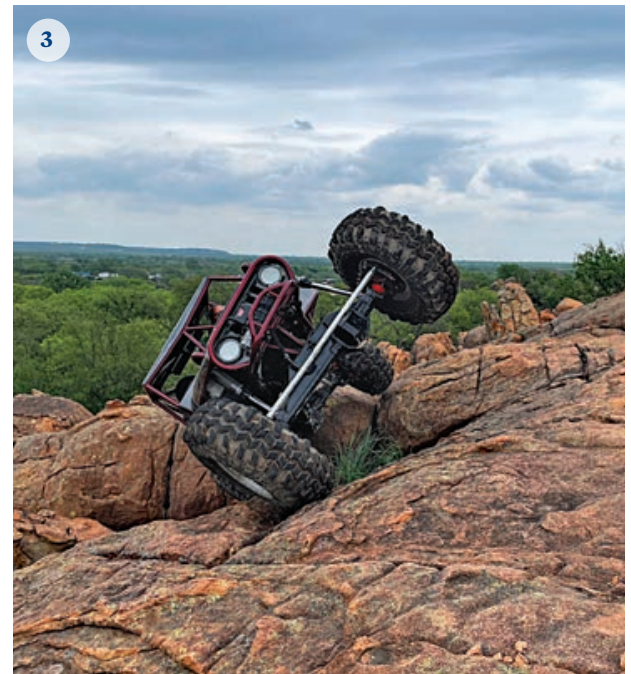
Navigating Engineer Pass in Colorado, with a 1,000-foot drop on the right.

3 STEVEN MOORE
BLUEBONNET EC

"Rock crawling Texas style at Wolf Caves off-road park in Mason."

4 LESLI SAN JOSE
PEDERNALES EC

At the end of a trail called Top of the World in Moab, Utah.



Upcoming Contests

DUE SEP 10 Snakes Alive!
DUE OCT 10 From the Oil Fields
DUE NOV 10 Still Life



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Off-Road Adventures photos from readers.



Ebb and Flow

People come and people go,
and when they do, nature reclaims

BY MARTHA DEERING
ILLUSTRATION BY
JONATHAN RICE

A SPRING BURBLES in a peaceful Central Texas valley. Hidden beneath the tall weeds and grasses around the spring are the foundation stones of old buildings.

They are all that is left of a small Texas town—a town that was once as alive as the mockingbirds that bicker in the live oak trees.

Two hundred years ago, someone dug a well near the spring where the unmistakable aroma of wild onions filled the air. A windmill built above the well pumped water into a trough for horses and cattle.

The well never went dry, and during the hottest, driest weather, settlers drove their wagons for miles to get its water. The families who came to live there built a small Baptist church out of logs.

Eagles made their nests in the oak trees

near the spring. And so the people who built their homes in the area called it Eagle Springs.

Before long, a post office and a general store were added. Since farmers near the spring grew lots of cotton, a cotton gin was built. Blacksmiths set up shop and fixed wheels, sharpened plows and put shoes on horses. A woodworking and harness shop opened, and a doctor set up his practice in town. Court was held, and a jail was needed when horse thieves arrived.

Eagle Springs had become a noisy, bustling town of more than 200 by 1884.

The well always had plenty of water, so ranchers drove great herds of cattle through the town on their way north along a branch of the Chisholm Trail. Parents worked together to build a school for the children, and one little boy named Pat Neff grew up to become the governor of Texas.

One day the railroad announced that they were building a track in the area, but it would not go through Eagle Springs. The railroad brought business to other towns, and Eagle Springs began to decline.

The stores and blacksmith shops moved closer to the railroad. The farmers took their cotton there, and the gin closed.

The children were sent to a bigger school. The cattle went north in railroad cars. Little by little, the old, abandoned buildings at Eagle Springs fell into ruin.

After nearly two centuries, little is left but the spring and the church, rebuilt in 1876 after the log church burned.

Bit by bit, nature has erased Eagle Springs, relegated to Texas' long list of more than 500 ghost towns.

The water still burbles cheerfully over stones, and wild onions grow all about. The evening breeze shivers the leaves of the live oak trees, making a sound like the soft whispering of voices from long ago. ■

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