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FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

JULY 2025

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2. ENERGY STAR rated units qualify for 30% through 2032,  
26% through 2033 and 22% through 2034



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The Renaissance man who pulled strings and gave new life to old grains.

*By Claire Stevens  
Photos by Wyatt McSpadden*

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*Photo by Wyatt McSpadden*

ABOVE  
The Simon Theatre in downtown Brenham.  
*Natalie Lacy Lange | Courtesy the Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre*



# Anchored in History

**THE OLDEST AMERICAN** port west of New Orleans celebrates its bicentennial this year.

The Congress of Mexico established the Port of Galveston on October 17, 1825.

It was home to the Texas Navy during the Republic of Texas' war for independence. Before Ellis Island in New York opened in 1892, it was one of the main gateways into the country for immigrants. At the end of the 19th century, it was the world's foremost cotton port.

But after the hurricane of 1900 destroyed Galveston, Houston emerged as the safer long-term shipping option on the Gulf. Today, Galveston is the fourth-busiest cruise port in the U.S.

Two events in Galveston will celebrate the port's 200th anniversary: a party on the pier October 17 and bicentennial gala October 18.

## Special Delivery

For most of America's history, that meant a delivery via the post office using a process that originated 250 years ago this month.

The postal system was established July 26, 1775. Benjamin Franklin was the first postmaster general.

*Did you know?* The first U.S. stamps, featuring images of Franklin and George Washington, were issued July 1, 1847.



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

**My favorite Fourth of July was ...**

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

Here are some of the responses to our May prompt: **I blush whenever ...**

I think of some of the things I did in school!

STEVE BAILEY  
PENTEX ENERGY  
GAINESVILLE

My wife catches me staring at how beautiful she still is after more than 40 years of marriage.

ROGER ELSEY  
PEDERNALES EC  
WIMBERLEY

My phone goes off in a public place.

COLLEEN PROVASEK  
SAM HOUSTON EC  
LIVINGSTON

I tell the story about accidentally walking into the men's restroom at a restaurant in Houston.

CAROL HILTON  
BANDERA EC  
PIPE CREEK

Visit our website to see more responses.

## **TCP** Contests and More

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Abstract

### RECOMMENDED READING

In December 2016 we told of Galveston's history as the "Ellis Island of Texas." Read the story at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).



MAY 2025 Bavaria, By Way of Texas

"I met Ronny Tippelt in 1984. In '85 and '86 he played my backyard. He was and still is the best yodeler in Texas."

DENNIS PEAK  
PEDERNALES EC  
LAMPASAS



ERICH SCHLEGEL

### Destination: Walburg

We often visit Walburg for German food, drinks and, of course, the oompah music [*Bavaria, By Way of Texas*; May 2025]. From now on I imagine our trips must include reservations made well in advance as many of our fellow Texans will be venturing there to enjoy a bit of Germany come to Texas.

Martha Everman Jones  
Victoria EC  
Victoria

### Hail Chaser

My father, Bob Rinker, was a hail chaser for the Colorado State University meteorology department in "hail alley" in the early 1960s [*Twisted Approach*, May 2025]. Hail alley starts at the eastern front of the Rockies in Colorado and Wyoming and covers all territory east to the Great Lakes.

One time he chased a hailstorm from the Colorado-Nebraska border



JENNY BROWN

all the way to Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Susan Frensley  
Wise EC  
Richardson

### Beeline for Sea Center

I recently retired and didn't even know that Sea Center Texas existed, so my wife and I made a beeline for Lake Jackson [*Fish School*, April 2025]. What a great visit that was at the hatchery with the guide who had done it for many, many years.

Chris Gloger  
Pedernales EC  
Canyon Lake

### Pilot Connection

In 1980 I worked in Yugoslavia for six weeks with Dennis Dalrymple, the son of Millie Dalrymple [*The WASPs Who Flew Out of Sweetwater*, April 2025]. We traveled to the mountain town of Danilovgrad, where America-friendly locals had sheltered his father after bailing out of his damaged bomber.

A couple of great pilot stories in that family.

Russell Honerkamp  
Bluebonnet EC  
Brenham

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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

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# *Living the* GOOD LOAF

BY CLAIRE STEVENS • PHOTOS BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

## **The Renaissance man who pulled strings and gave new life to old grains**

**J**ames Brown has a fascination with history. For 23 years, the Texas native played the viola da gamba, a bowed instrument that resembles a cello but fell out of favor nearly 300 years ago.

“The whole thing was to put the listener in a time and a place,” Brown says. “When you’re hearing this music, if you closed your eyes, it’d be the same as being in Germany in 1735 hearing Bach conducting the chapel choir and orchestra on the same instruments.”

Brown specialized in music of that era, performed and conducted around the country, and was director of worship and arts for a church. But in 2016, he was looking into a second career.

Brown had been baking bread and pizza as a hobby (though he does have a culinary degree picked up among various music degrees). In pursuit of a better loaf, he happened upon a blogger in New Mexico who was touting the wonders of baking with locally grown grains from a co-op in Albuquerque.

To his surprise, he couldn’t find a similar operation in Texas.

So Brown, who was living in Austin at the time, looked into establishing a small-scale mill that could process grains from local farmers. And, just as in his music career, he turned to the wisdom of the past, bringing those around him on a journey through time—this time by way of wheat.

Armed with historical documents detailing the grain varieties grown in Texas in the early 20th century and some hazy information about mills powered by Austin’s Barton Springs in the 19th century, Brown set out “to take people to a time and place” that no longer exists.

“What was growing in Texas? What were people eating? What was being milled in your hometown?” he wondered.

Brown got to work in 2017, and eight years in, Barton Springs Mill in Dripping Springs, about 20 miles west of Austin, provides freshly milled grains to a growing audience of restaurants, distilleries, bakeries and home bakers. It’s showing folks why they should care whether their flour is local and organic or an ancient, heritage or landrace variety.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE  
Wheat sheaves from  
several heirloom varieties.  
James Brown in front of  
one of his three mills,  
each fitted with a pair of  
2,500-pound stones.  
Freshly milled grains are  
available for purchase  
on-site and online.









The grains are selected with a focus on ancient varieties—those largely unchanged over time and still closely resembling how they looked and tasted before human intervention—and landrace and heritage grains—those developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, before more intensive hybridizing. Landrace grains are specifically adapted over time to the local climate where they are developed.

In addition to churning out flour, BSM offers tours of its 17,000-square-foot facility, which houses all the equipment to store, clean, mill and ship grains.

In a classroom opposite the mills, staff and guest instructors teach visitors to make breads, pastas and other baked goods. Through large windows in the classroom, visitors can watch the three stone mills.

The 7-foot-tall pine structures are fitted with a pair of 2,500-pound, flat composite stones. A pattern etched into the stones crushes the grain. The miller can control the result by adjusting the stones' closeness, the speed at which grain is added and the speed at which the upper stone rotates. Power would have been provided by the water of a nearby creek a century ago, but today the mills get their energy from Pedernales Electric Cooperative.

The rumbling stone mills look like relics of the past. In some ways, they are. These days, most commercial milling is done with roller mills, which can produce flour much quicker.

Brown's goal is to show that flour can have its own incredible flavor and aroma. He wants the loaves of bread to transport them back in time, much like his music. Stone-milling preserves the germ and the bran, flavorful parts of the wheat kernel that are typically removed when milling white flour (though included in whole wheat).

"You pick up the aroma and the flavor and the characters of these wheats, and they become an equal player in anything that you make," he says. "It becomes an ingredient that contributes those things, rather than just being neutral."

TAM 105, a variety of hard, red wheat developed by Texas A&M University in 1976 and one of the mill's more modern grains, smells to Brown like a wet dog while it's being milled. Fortunately, that doesn't translate when the finished flour is used for baking, and Brown recommends it for breads, pastas and pizza dough.

On the other hand, rouge de Bordeaux, a 19th-century wheat, naturally smells and tastes of cinnamon, baking spices and molasses. "People will swear that's in the bread," Brown says. "No, that's just the wheat—wheat, yeast, water and salt."

Brown has gone to great lengths to track down seeds for wheat varieties he desires. He found farmers still growing marquis, which was popular in the U.S. in the beginning of the 20th century, in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan. Other seeds he could get only from the Department of Agriculture's National Plant Germplasm System, a bank of plant material that conserves plant genetics.

When BSM was just an idea, Brown convinced 10 organic farmers across the state to meet with him. Over coffee or a meal, he presented his pitch: He'd provide the seeds and buy the wheat they produced. To his surprise, all 10 were



RIGHT Brown shows unmilled Sonora soft white wheat kernels.

OPPOSITE Barton Springs Mill's warehouse. To keep the grain fresh in the Texas heat, oxygen is removed from each bag of wheat. Last year, the mill processed 650 tons of grain.



interested, which meant he had to turn some down due to a lack of capacity.

Henry Martens has been growing wheat for Brown, in rotation with peanuts and cotton, at his farm in Tokio, about 40 miles southwest of Lubbock, since 2017.

A fifth-generation farmer, Martens always knew he wanted to farm. In 2015, when a piece of land became available that hadn't yet been treated with chemicals, he couldn't pass it up. He began organic peanut farming, which he rotated with cotton.

Today, Martens farms roughly 2,000 acres but likens his experience farming organic to tending a garden. The work is especially labor intensive—keeping up with weeds and caring for crops without the use of chemicals—but he says organic farming is worth it for him.

"It takes dedication and love," he says.

When he met Brown, Martens had been looking to add another crop to his rotation. Crop rotation is particularly important for organic farmers, who rely on it to manage pests and diseases and keep soil healthy. Peanuts reintroduce nitrogen, a key nutrient, into the soil. Plant only cotton too many years in a row, and pests become a problem.

## Starring Rolls

A Michelin star is considered by many to be the highest award a restaurant can receive. The Michelin Guide has been bestowing stars since 1926, but it took until 2024 for the guide's secret reviewers to finally make it to Texas.

In November, 15 Texas restaurants were awarded Michelin stars, including awards for barbecue, sushi, and Mexican and Southern fares. Among the stars, five of the awarded restaurants use grain from Barton Springs Mill.

Wheat is a good rotation crop for Martens because it can be planted in winter, when weeds are less of a concern, and the tall grass provides cover to the ground, protecting it from high winds. As another plus, Brown pays his farmers significantly more for their crops than the market rate.

An additional benefit for Martens is getting to try the flour from his wheat.

"When you see it, it's not what you're used to seeing—the flour, where it's so fine and perfect and white," Martens says. "But I guess that's never mattered to me and my wife. We care about it being organic and it being directly from the farm that we know, and it tastes amazing."

The best way to test a grain's flavor, Brown says, is to make a pancake with it. They're simple, quick and allow the flavor of the grain to come through.


And since "nobody wants to eat a spoonful of flour," Brown sends visitors next door to Abby Jane Bakeshop, which sells a variety of baked goods that use only BSM grains.

Brown is proud to help farmers, supporting what he calls the local grain economy. He works with four to five farmers each year (groups rotate in and out with their crops). Most are in Texas, but he has also worked with farmers in Oklahoma, Colorado and Arizona.

Brown says he gets a call from a farmer wanting to grow for him about once a week, but he's at capacity. Last year, the mill processed 650 tons of grain. This year, it may take in a record 800 tons.

"I got into all this because I wanted a better loaf of bread," Brown says. "That's really the long and short of it."

"But along the way, I became more intimately acquainted with what's going on with American farms and with American farmers and became quite passionate about how we treat farmers, regard farmers and our farmland." ■

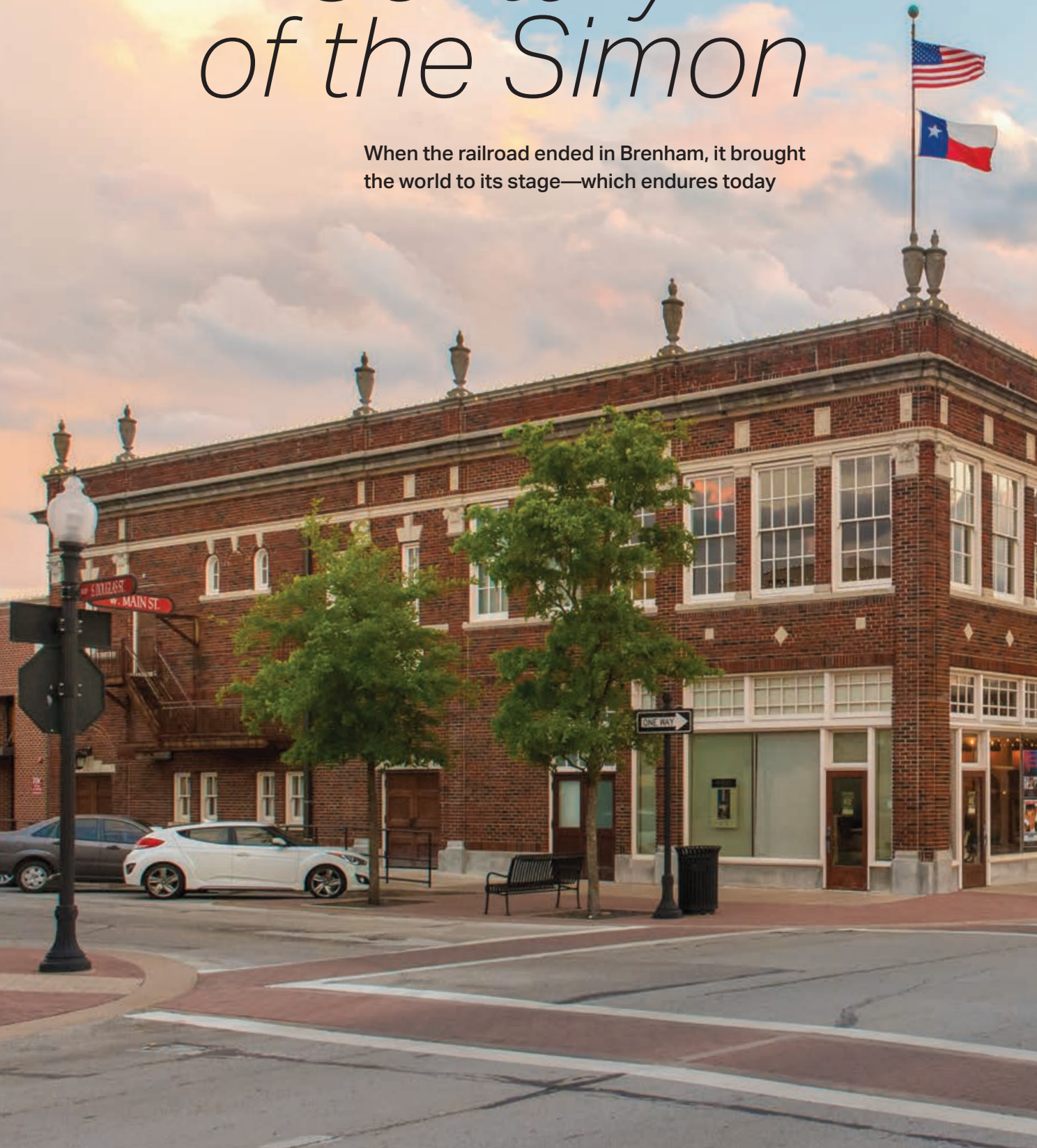
 Watch the video on our website to tour Barton Springs Mill.





# *A Century of the Simon*

When the railroad ended in Brenham, it brought  
the world to its stage—which endures today





NATALIE LACY LANGE | COURTESY THE BARNHILL CENTER AT HISTORIC SIMON THEATRE

BY ADDIE BROYLES



The man whose name is on Brenham’s famed Simon Theatre never saw it completed, but the renovated theater still reflects his vision a century later.

The historic venue on Main Street in Brenham, midway between Austin and Houston, turns 100 this year. It’s thriving today because of a multimillion-dollar restoration that saved it from the brink of crumbling, and its story tells the story of Brenham, a town that has found a way to mine its past to preserve its future.



In the 1920s, the theater, originally with more than 700 seats and a balcony and separate entry for Black theatergoers, emerged from the imagination of James H. Simon, son of a Polish immigrant, who grew up in Brenham in the entertainment industry and died three months before the first performers took the stage.

Simon was a boy when his family moved to Brenham, arriving with some of the first Jewish settlers in the region and staying because that’s where the railroad ended, according to Sharon Brass, a local researcher who created the *A Century of Simon* exhibit, on display at the historic theater earlier this year.

The Simon family arrived in the mid-1860s, and James’ father, Alex Simon, opened a mercantile store. He eventually bought the Grand Opera House in town and turned it into a family-friendly venue for musical performances, receptions, recitals, political meetings and vaudeville, which was quickly becoming the most popular form of entertainment at the time.

The Simon Theatre stands as an anchor in downtown Brenham, though in the late 20th century, it came close to being demolished to make way for a parking lot.





As the terminus of the Washington County Rail Road, constructed in 1860, the county seat's population doubled every decade until 1900—and with it grew Brenham's reputation as an entertainment hub, along with the opera house.

When Alex Simon died in 1906, his sons took over. They opened the stage for an even wider variety of local performers, including Black singers from the nearby Brenham Normal and Industrial College, a postsecondary school for African Americans, according to Tina Henderson, who grew up in Brenham. She's president of the Texas Ten Historical Explorers, a research organization focused on the freedmen's communities around Washington County.

James H. Simon sold the opera house in 1918 and started making plans to build his own theater. He teamed up with Houston architect Alfred C. Finn to make plans for a majestic performance space with an upstairs section for Black theatergoers so they could watch the shows too.

"They built the theater with [integration] in mind," Henderson says. Although Simon didn't live to see the completion of his theater, he was ahead of his time in terms of wanting to make art available to more people, Henderson says.

"Segregation was very harsh, but there were some people

who understood it was unkind," she says. "They had to abide by the laws, but I think they were trying to accommodate and do what they could" to make the performances accessible to all.

Variety acts had been around for a long time, but it wasn't until the late 1800s that "vaudeville," a word borrowed from French, became a household term to describe a kind of show performed by artists, comedians, magicians—anyone who had something amazing, interesting or entertaining to show off.

At the height of vaudeville, as many as 50,000 performers traveled in troupes to perform in thousands of American cities, including Brenham. This lasted from the end of the Civil War into the 1930s, when in-person variety shows gave way to those broadcast on radios and, later, television.

The earliest vaudeville shows took place in saloons and beer halls, but their popularity soared, thanks in part to the growing popularity of circuses during this time. Venues like the Grand Opera House in Brenham opened in places served by the railroad to make it easy for the performers to get there and for visitors to come to the shows, according to Brass.

Many of the vaudeville performers who came through



COURTESY THE BARNHILL CENTER AT HISTORIC SIMON THEATRE



CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE The 1954 Western film *Arrow in the Dust* drew a crowd to the Simon. The theater's stage and auditorium during its extensive reconstruction. The Malpass Brothers brought their traditional country and bluegrass music to the Simon in September 2024.

Brenham would have been well-known to people who lived there, thanks to telegraphs and the newspapers that came in on the railroads daily from the East Coast.

Vaudeville shows were on the decline in the 1920s due to the rising popularity of silent films, but they were a crucial part of the early days of the Simon Theatre because the shows brought in big names, like Adelaide Prince, who was born in London but grew up near Brenham.

After Simon's death in 1925, the theater was sold to the Stuckert family, who ran it for almost 50 years before selling it. The venue continued to host movies and events into the 1980s, when competition from drive-in theaters, shopping malls and home video ultimately caused the theater to shutter. After a showing of *Night of the Living Dead* on October 31, 1985, the theater went dark.

Jennifer H. Eckermann, former tourism and marketing director for the city, is a Brenham native who remembers when all those historic buildings were an afterthought.

"The Simon wasn't in great shape," she recalls. "There was a lot of talk about it being demolished to build a parking lot. For so many downtowns, that was the answer."

In 1999, after a career at Blue Bell Creameries, Eckermann started working with the nonprofit Main Street Brenham.

## From Downtown to Camptown

The Texas Ten Historical Explorers tells the stories of the freedmen's communities that formed after the Civil War, when as much as half of Washington County was Black. Many of those families lived in freedmen's communities spread throughout the region, and one of the oldest, called Camptown, has a seven-part immersive audio tour, available online. It starts at Brenham's Jerry Wilson Park and explores the story of a consequential fire in 1866 and the evolution of the neighborhood as a center for Black life.

By that time, the Simon Theatre had become a Chinese restaurant and then sat vacant, waiting for demolition or the kind of restoration that takes a miracle to pull off.

She joined a handful of people who had a vision for what the brick building could be. Thanks to that community spirit that led James H. Simon to build the theater so many years ago, local boosters raised more than \$1 million for the restoration project. The Simon Theatre reopened in 2004 with 321 seats.

The group eventually raised another \$1 million to renovate the ballroom and retail space that was part of the original design. The facility now operates as the Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre, with shows throughout the year from performers such as Grammy Award-winners Ricky Skaggs and Marty Stuart to tribute bands celebrating the Carpenters, the Eagles and the Andrews Sisters.

Eckermann says the project sparked a downtown revival that continues to this day and that the success story of the renovation reflects changing attitudes toward preservation.

"People are always coming and going," she says. "You might own this building now, but one day, you won't." The current keepers of the keys—and the stories—are trying to tell new stories while also keeping the old ones alive.

The Simon Theatre could last another century, but Eckermann says that depends on always finding new ways to bring in people. They've had success in recent years with themed movie nights and school performances.

"You have to be thinking about the next generation and what would be appealing about this theater to them," she says. "What can it continue to offer to the community?"

For its 100th year, the Simon Theatre team kicked off the celebration with performances that included juggling, dancing and comedy. "It was fun to have something for everybody," Eckermann says. "It's still vaudeville." ■








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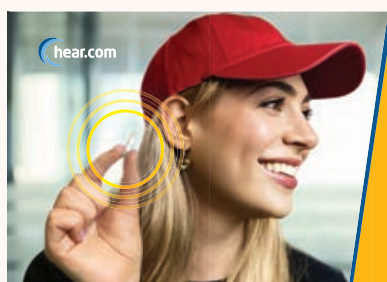
*“It's the first time I've seen patients genuinely speechless. They go from struggling to hear to 'wow' in seconds.”*

*-Dr. Emily Russell, Lead Audiologist*

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SPENCE**

PRESIDENT/  
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OFFICER

## THE BRAZOS ELECTRIC RATEPAYER HARDSHIP FUND

### Help Is Available:

Tri-County Electric Cooperative (TCEC), we remain focused on supporting our members, especially when unexpected challenges arise.

One of the most lasting impacts in recent memory is Winter Storm Uri, which devastated the Texas power grid in February 2021. To help ease the financial burden that followed, TCEC encourages eligible members to apply for the Brazos Electric Ratepayer Hardship Fund. This program provides bill credits to offset a portion of the Brazos Rider—a charge added to member bills to help repay the Cooperative's share of the storm-related debt.

### About the Hardship Fund

The Brazos Electric Ratepayer Hardship Fund provides partial bill credits for qualifying lower-income residential members of TCEC and other electric cooperatives. Credits are applied specifically to Brazos Rider charges, resulting from Winter Storm Uri, and vary based on each member's usage.

### Who's Eligible?

You may qualify if:

- You or someone in your household participates in: SNAP (Food Stamps), Medicaid, SSI (Supplemental Security Income), or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families)

OR

- Your household income is below 200% of the 2025 Federal Poverty Level

### What You'll Need to Apply

- A recent electric bill showing: Service address, Account number, and Account holder's name

AND

- One of the following:
  - A case action letter or award notice from SNAP, Medicaid, SSI, or TANF
  - Income documentation such as: Recent pay stubs, Most recent signed tax return, Social Security or unemployment documentation

### How to Apply

Complete the application online or download a printable version at <https://tcectexas.com/brazos-hardship-fund>.

For questions or assistance:

Email: [contact@brazoshardshipfund.com](mailto:contact@brazoshardshipfund.com)

Phone: 844.770.8549 (Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM–5:00 PM)

### Moving Forward Together

TCEC is committed to providing support for those most in need. If you think you may qualify, we encourage you to apply. If you know someone who might benefit, please share this information. Together, we're weathering challenges and building a stronger, more resilient cooperative for years to come.

**Scott Spence**  
President & CEO

# COOPERATIVE GIVING A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION

A heartfelt thank you to the more than 200 members who are already making a meaningful impact by supporting the Cooperative Giving Program.

Three Easy Ways to Give:

Round Up - Round your electric bill to the next dollar each month  
Recurring Donation - Choose a monthly dollar amount to contribute  
One-Time Donation - Send a one-time donation by check

Every contribution supports local members facing financial hardship. This support is only possible through the voluntary donations of generous Tri-County Electric Cooperative members and employees.

Visit <https://tcectexas.com/cooperative-giving> for more information.

## COOPERATIVE GIVING APPLICATIONS

Eligible members across TCEC's service area can apply for assistance with past due electric balances through the Cooperative Giving Program, in partnership with Texas Neighborhood Services.

This support is made possible through the voluntary donations of generous Tri-County Electric Cooperative members and employees. Please note: Funds are limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

To apply visit <https://tcectexas.com/cooperative-giving>

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2. Energy Star Appliance Rebate \$50 – Upgrade to energy-saving appliances and get rewarded.

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

Tell your neighbors, friends, and any members who may qualify - let's help our entire member community save energy and lower utility bills together.

## CURRENT CONVERSATIONS

Current Conversations is a cost-effective, timely electronic newsletter delivered monthly by email to members.

To receive it straight to your inbox, be sure your email address is up to date in your MyTriCountyTX account.

View current issue at  
[tcectexas.com/current-conversations](https://tcectexas.com/current-conversations)





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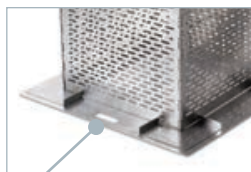
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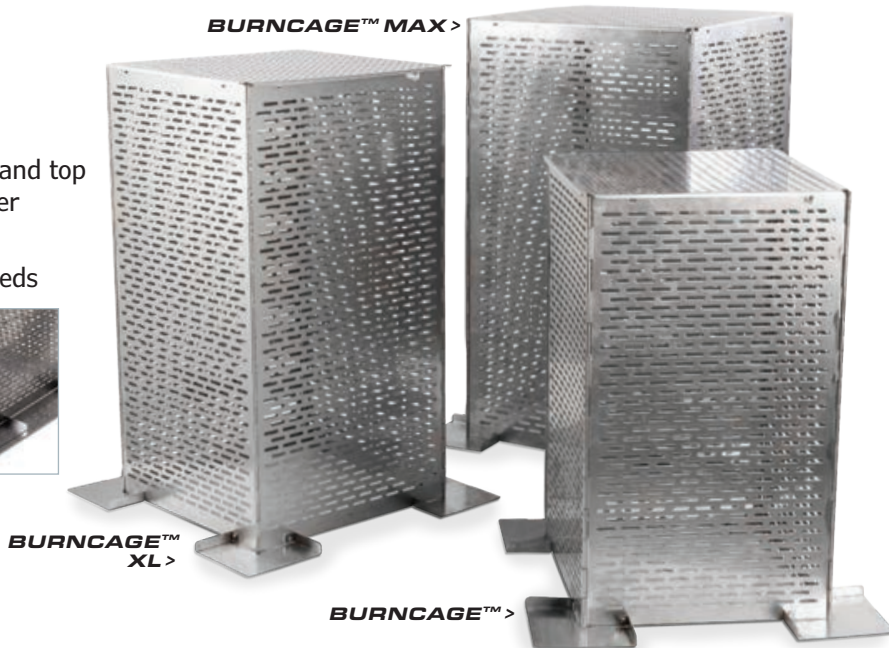
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# Dillo Dirt

One of nature's—and Texas'—strangest creatures holds a special state honor

BY MARTHA DEERING • ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN WILSON

**NO SELF-RESPECTING** Texan would expect the state small mammal to be fuzzy, friendly and cute. No way.

Instead, like us, it lives among rocks, mesquite trees, prickly pear and rattlesnakes. And it survives on earthworms, scorpions, wasps, beetles, cockroaches, fire ants, spiders and grubs. That explains why the nine-banded armadillo is a perfect symbol for the state.

During the 1995 Legislature, according to a *Dallas Morning News* story from the time, amid discussions in the Texas House over whether the longhorn or armadillo should be the state mammal, a compromise was reached: The longhorn would be designated the state large mammal and the armadillo the state small mammal.

"The armadillo possesses many remarkable and unique traits, some of which parallel the attributes that distinguish a true Texan," the resulting House concurrent resolution reads, "such as a deep respect and need for the land, the ability to change and adapt, and a fierce undying love for freedom."

Although there are about 20 species of armadillos across the Americas, the nine-banded is the only one found in the U.S. Armadillo means "little armored one" in Spanish, appropriate for the bony, armorlike plates that cover its back, head, legs and tail.

A nine-banded armadillo may actually have as few as seven or up to 11 bands in its armor, but it's a bit tricky to get one to hold still long enough to count them. Most are about the size and weight of a large cat—2½ feet from nose to tail and weighing around 12 pounds.

In his book *'Dillos: Roadkill on Extinction Highway?*, author W. R. Klemm writes, "Armadillos are evolutionary relics, an animal version of the Bradley tank. As life goes on over eons of time, the armadillo endures, its walnut-sized brain oblivious to the law and perils of survival of the fittest."

No newcomers to the Americas, the armadillo's earliest relatives were the glyptodonts of around 35 million years ago, heavily armored creatures that evolved in South America and reached the size of a rhinoceros, weighing a few thousand pounds. Aren't you glad you don't have those digging up your yard?

Traveling up from South America, nine-banded armadillos arrived in Texas about 175 years ago. The weather then may have been wetter than it is today,

making for good digging. They thrived and spread throughout the South and Southwest. They've even been seen as far north as Illinois and Nebraska.

Recent research has discovered that Texas armadillos are actually four different species that are nearly impossible to tell apart in the field, according to scientists in Chicago and France who studied their DNA.

Among 'dillos' many unique traits are the ability to hold their breath for up to six minutes and walk across the bottoms of rivers and streams. When faced with wider bodies of water, they can swallow air to inflate their stomachs, giving them enough buoyancy to swim. It may take a poor bloated armadillo hours to release this excess air.

Rarely observed in daytime, these nocturnal animals are practically blind in daylight since their eyes lack light-detecting cells called cones.

Armadillos have long, sharp claws for digging burrows and unearthing insects and other edibles. Genetically related to anteaters and sloths, they have pointy snouts and long, sticky tongues for extracting ants and termites from their nests.

On the downside, armadillos are one of the only animals other than humans that can contract leprosy, although cases of humans getting the disease from handling armadillos are extremely rare.

What's worse, they have an unfortunate tendency to leap straight into the air when startled, an ill-fated reaction if they are straddled on the highway by a car—one of their few predators. During the Great Depression, people ate them, referring to the dish as "poor man's pork" or "Hoover hog."

Armadillos have little body fat and a reptilian-like metabolism, so prolonged cold spells can be fatal. However, they don't seem to be going anywhere anytime soon.

"Armadillos were busy digging holes in the ground long before the first humans arrived on earth," Klemm writes. "Armadillos were sniffing out grubs long before alligators crawled out of the swamps. Armadillo ancestors were darting out of the way to keep from being trampled on by dinosaurs."

Texans hope these ancient creatures are here to stay. ■







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caused by weary eyes? No, rather the effect came from tiny flecks of silver glinting in the sun.

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# The Fast Track

The Father of Country Music yodeled his way into hearts, proclaiming a special love for Texas

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

**IT'S HARD FOR** people today to understand just how popular singer and songwriter Jimmie Rodgers was during the 1920s and '30s. Think Elvis in the '50s, the Beatles in the '60s or Taylor Swift today. Southerners joked that the typical Depression-era shopping list was a pound of butter, slab of bacon, sack of flour and the new Rodgers record.

Rodgers was born in Mississippi in 1897, but he declared in song that Texas was "a state I dearly love." He proved it by moving here in 1929.

He grew up the son of a railroad gang foreman but showed a fondness and knack for show business from an early age. Convinced he was well on his way to fame and fortune after winning a talent

contest when he was 14, he ran away from home with a traveling medicine show before his father put him to work on the railroad.

In 1924, when he was 27 years old, doctors diagnosed Rodgers with tuberculosis. Sensing that his time was short, he quit the railroad and devoted himself to playing music. Over the years, he had compiled a repertoire that included traditional folk songs, jazz, blues, vaudeville tunes and yodels—the sounds of America.

Rodgers played on street corners and at tent shows—anywhere he could. He performed at an Asheville, North Carolina, radio station in 1927 with the Tenneva Ramblers. And when the band

learned that the Victor Talking Machine Co. (later RCA Records) was holding recording sessions in Bristol, Tennessee, they decided to go. Until the Bristol sessions, radio stations didn't play country records because they had precious few to play.

The two songs Rodgers recorded in Bristol didn't do much, but a second session, in Camden, New Jersey, included *Blue Yodel No. 1*, which sold a half-million copies and is better known as *T for Texas*.

Rodgers recorded more than 100 songs over the next few years, including classics like *In the Jailhouse Now*, *Frankie and Johnny*, and *Waiting for a Train*. He reportedly sold more than 10 million records in his lifetime—more than any other RCA Victor artist pre-Elvis.

As his health worsened, Rodgers limited his touring to the Southwest. Nearly every Texas town, regardless of size, has a Rodgers sighting in its history. Once, after a performance in Temple in 1929, he returned to his motel and started singing from the window of his room, drawing such a crowd that cops had to be called to break up the ensuing traffic jam.

Rodgers moved to Kerrville in 1929 in hopes that the Hill Country air might give him some relief from the tuberculosis that was slowly killing him. He built a house at the intersection of West Main Street and Jackson Road and called it Blue Yodeler's Paradise.

In 1933, a gaunt and ailing Rodgers traveled to New York to make 12 new records. He recorded his last song May 24 and died two days later. He was 35.

Though his time was brief, his legacy looms large. Country performers including Merle Haggard, Ernest Tubb and Johnny Cash cited Rodgers as a major influence, but so did blues singers Mance Lipscomb, Howlin' Wolf and Mississippi John Hurt and rockers like Lynyrd Skynyrd.

Rodgers is the only artist to be inducted into the country music, rock 'n' roll and blues halls of fame, and that says it all. ■



# Make It Spicy

Peppers put on quite a show as the lead act

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

I am a salsa girl—hit me with all the spicy goodness! But why are tomatoes always the star? Frankly, I'm a little tired of it. It's high time we gave fruit the kick it deserves. Bring on the pineapple and mango, and say hello to this exciting salsa!

## Pineapple Salsa

**4 cups diced pineapple (about 1 medium pineapple)**  
**2 cups diced mango (about 2 large mangoes)**  
**½ cup minced red onion**  
**1 small jalapeño pepper, finely diced**  
**½ cup diced red bell pepper**  
**¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro**  
**Juice of 1 large lime**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**Tortilla chips, for serving**

**COOK'S TIP** To serve your salsa in the pineapple, slice the pineapple in half lengthwise. Cut around the edges of the pineapple, being careful not to pierce through the rind, to remove the inside of the fruit before dicing. After Step 1 below, spoon salsa into pineapple shell, place on serving platter and continue to Step 2.

1. In a large bowl, combine pineapple, mango, onion, jalapeño, bell pepper, cilantro, lime juice and salt. Gently stir together to incorporate.
2. Refrigerate at least 30 minutes.
3. Serve chilled with tortilla chips.

**SERVES 8**

**TCP** Follow Vianney Rodriguez as she cooks in Cocina Gris at [sweetlifebake.com](http://sweetlifebake.com), where she features a recipe for Watermelon Salsa.







## Sautéed Spicy Corn

RICK GUTIERREZ  
GVEC

If you love the flavor of grilled corn but not eating it off the cob, sautéed spicy corn is the summer side for you. Sautéing fresh corn kernels with a bit of butter and jalapeños enhances the corn flavor while producing tender kernels with a bite.

- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter**
- 6 ears corn, kernels removed from cob, or 3 cans golden sweet whole kernel corn (15 ounces each), drained**
- 1 fresh jalapeño pepper, minced**
- ½ cup chicken broth**
- 2 teaspoons salt**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**

- 1.** In a large skillet over medium heat, melt butter.
- 2.** Add corn, jalapeño, chicken broth, salt and pepper.
- 3.** Cook, stirring frequently, until corn is tender, about 12–15 minutes.

**SERVES 6**

\$500 WINNER

## Zesty Spaghetti Salad

NANCY HORTON  
DEEP EAST TEXAS EC



Get ready to sharpen those dicing skills because this salad is a total game changer! We're talking about a colorful medley of diced veggies that comes together in the most delightful way and makes every moment spent chopping absolutely worth it. This zesty salad dazzled my taste buds.



- 16 ounces uncooked spaghetti, broken in half**
- 2½ cups halved grape tomatoes**
- 2 small zucchinis, diced**
- 1 English cucumber, diced**
- 1 yellow bell pepper, seeds removed, diced**
- 1 red bell pepper, seeds removed, diced**
- ½ cup sliced banana peppers, drained**
- 1 cup thinly sliced hard salami**
- ½ cup diced pepperoni**
- 1½ cups zesty Italian dressing**
- 2½ tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese**
- 2 tablespoons black sesame seeds**
- 1 teaspoon poppy seeds (optional)**
- ½ teaspoon paprika**
- ½ teaspoon celery seed**
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- Dried chives or fresh garlic chives, for garnish**

- 1.** Cook spaghetti according to package directions, rinse with cold water, drain and place in a large bowl.
- 2.** Add tomatoes, zucchini, cucumber, yellow and red bell peppers, banana peppers, salami, and pepperoni to spaghetti and gently mix to combine.
- 3.** In another bowl, whisk together Italian dressing, Parmesan, sesame seeds, poppy seeds (if using), paprika, celery seed, garlic powder, black pepper, red pepper flakes and salt. Pour over pasta salad and mix until well coated.
- 4.** Refrigerate at least 2 hours to blend flavors. Garnish with chives and serve chilled.

**SERVES 8**

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

**HOLIDAY BREAKFAST** DUE JULY 10

Christmas dinner gets all the attention, but what about that morning? Share your best holiday breakfast recipe that can feed a crowd, and you could win \$500. Enter by July 10.

**UPCOMING: OODLES OF NOODLES** DUE AUGUST 10



CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 >



## Pecan-Stuffed Jalapeños

GARY CRANE  
VICTORIA EC

Holy jalapeños, these are good. I'm not lying—I devoured four during recipe testing. (That's right, four.) No need to worry about too much spice when baking these up. The seeds are removed, and the peppers are stuffed with a cheesy pecan mixture that softens the heat.

### 10 large jalapeño peppers

### 1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), softened

### ½ cup chopped pecans

### 2 green onions, minced

### ¼ cup medium-heat red salsa

### ½ teaspoon salt

### ½ teaspoon ground cumin

### ½ teaspoon garlic powder

### or 2 cloves garlic, diced

### ¼ teaspoon orange or lemon zest

### ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese



1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or foil.
2. Slice the top off each jalapeño and slice in half lengthwise. Remove seeds and place jalapeños on prepared baking sheet.
3. Bake jalapeños 30 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool 10 minutes.
4. In a bowl, stir together cream cheese, pecans, green onions, salsa, salt, cumin, garlic and zest until combined.
5. Fill each jalapeño half with cream cheese filling and return to baking sheet.

## Beat the Heat

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ

**Wear kitchen gloves** when handling chiles to protect skin from capsaicin, the element that makes chiles hot. In a pinch, use sandwich bags.

**Protect skin** if not wearing gloves by running a knife under the ribs of seeds to remove.

**Avoid touching eyes and face** when working with chiles—wash hands with dish soap first.

**To minimize burning on skin**, apply a little oil—olive, canola or vegetable—as capsaicin dissolves in oil.

6. Sprinkle jalapeños with cheddar, return to oven and bake 10 minutes. Serve warm.

MAKES 20 HALVES

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- J.P. Morgan*





COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Lodged in Time

Visit 1840s Castroville at the Landmark Inn State Historic Site

BY CHET GARNER

I WAS LYING in bed but felt like I was in a creepy movie. I imagined all the travelers who had slept in my room since the 1800s and wondered if any of them had met a sudden and unexpected ending. I eventually fell asleep and when I woke up (alive), I found myself in one of the most peaceful and historic places in Texas.

Castroville, 25 miles west of San Antonio, was settled in the 1840s by immigrants from the Alsace region of France. The inn, which emerged from a house built in 1849, is among a cluster of buildings that today is part of the Landmark Inn State Historic Site. The inn originally served as a hub for this immigrant community.

But this site is more than the stark-white, two-story building where I stayed overnight. It's an entire block of buildings that tell the story of grit and industry in the Hill Country.

Over the years, the property passed from one owner to another. While some of the buildings have fallen into disrepair, many are still standing.

There's a wash house, where bygone travelers could take a much-needed bath, and the home of Rowena Vance, a schoolteacher from Vermont and one of the original matriarchs of the property. There's a gristmill, where two giant stones worked 12 hours a day providing grains to the townsfolk and which decades later was converted to a hydroelectric power plant to electrify Castroville. The property was gifted to the state in 1974 and transferred to the Texas Historical Commission in 2008.

Every story I heard added a ripple to the complex tale of life in Texas over the past 175 years. I counted myself fortunate to have stayed in one of the eight historic rooms the inn offers modern guests. ■

ABOVE Chet spent the night in one of the eight historic rooms in the Landmark Inn.

**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.

## JULY

### 10

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**Mason [10–12] Mason County Roundup Weekend**, (325) 347-5758, [masontx.org](http://masontx.org)

### 11

**Corsicana Food Truck Friday**, (903) 654-4850, [visitcorsicana.com](http://visitcorsicana.com)

**McDade [11–12] Watermelon Festival**, (512) 980-4456, [mcdadetexas.com](http://mcdadetexas.com)

**Laredo [11–13] International Sister Cities Festival**, (956) 795-2200, [visitalaredo.com](http://visitalaredo.com)

**Hico [11–12, 15–19] Old Settler's Reunion**, (254) 434-1249, [hicoTXchamber.org](http://hicoTXchamber.org)

### 12

**Corsicana Mimosas at the Market**, (903) 654-4850, [visitcorsicana.com](http://visitcorsicana.com)

**Galveston Old Smokey Throwdown**, (409) 765-5778, [albatrossgalveston.net](http://albatrossgalveston.net)

**Grapevine Ice Cream Social**, (817) 410-3185, [grapevinetexasusa.com](http://grapevinetexasusa.com)

**Weatherford Parker County Peach Festival**, (817) 596-3801, [peachfestivaltx.com](http://peachfestivaltx.com)

**Winnsboro Adam and Chris Carroll**, (903) 342-0686, [winnsborocenterforthearts.com](http://winnsborocenterforthearts.com)

**Lewisville [12–Aug. 9] All Natural**, [visualartleague.org](http://visualartleague.org)

### 15

**Fort Worth [15–20] The Wiz**, (817) 212-4280, [basshall.com](http://basshall.com)



## Pick of the Month

### Fuzzy Peach Festival

Fairfield, July 18-19

(903) 389-5792

fairfieldtexaschamber.com

Cool off during this two-day festival east of Waco. Enjoy music, vendors, cornhole, food and lots of water activities.



# STAY & PLAY IN GRAPEVINE!

GrapevineTexasUSA.com



18

### Brenham The Great DuBois:

Masters of Variety,

(979) 337-7240,

thebarnhillcenter.com

### Huntsville [18-19] Texas

Thimble Trail, (936) 329-1376,

texashtimbletrail.com

### Fredericksburg [18-20]

Trade Days, (210) 846-4094,

fbgtradedays.com

### Palestine [18-20, 25-27]

Alice in Wonderland,

(903) 394-2173,

thetexas theater.com



19

### Friona Cheeseburger

Festival & Cook-Off,

(806) 250-3491,

friona-chamber.com

### Lewisville [19-Aug. 16]

Nouveau West,

visualartleague.org

MORE EVENTS >

## TCP Submit Your Event

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



## Hit the Road

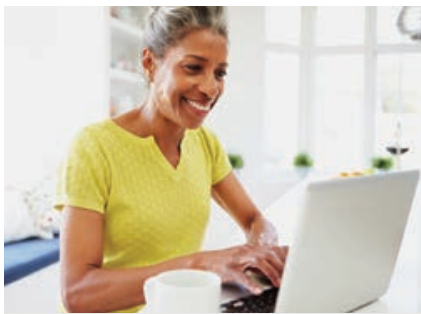
### Event Calendar

With hundreds of events across Texas listed every month, TexasCoopPower.com has something for you.

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### JULY EVENTS CONTINUED

23

**Winnsboro [23–Sept. 20]**  
**Women in the Arts,**  
 (903) 342-0686, winnsboro  
[centerforthearts.com](https://centerforthearts.com)

26

**Buffalo Gap Tour De Gap,**  
 (325) 829-0617,  
[tourdegap.com](https://tourdegap.com)

24

**Clute [24–26] Great Texas Mosquito Festival,**  
 (979) 265-8392,  
[mosquitofestival.com](https://mosquitofestival.com)

**Sargent [24–26] Hooked on Sargent Fishing Rodeo,**  
 (985) 258-8233,  
[hookedonsargent.org](https://hookedonsargent.org)

25

**Fredericksburg [25–27] Hill Country Swap Meet,**  
 (254) 751-7958,  
[earhartproductions.com](https://earhartproductions.com)

**Grapevine Disco Wine Train,** (817) 410-3185,  
[grapevinetexasusa.com](https://grapevinetexasusa.com)

## AUGUST

1

**Anna Kenny Chesney Covered by Barefoot Nation,** (972) 560-4101,  
[barnhillvineyards.com](https://barnhillvineyards.com)

**El Campo [1–3] Lagoon Fest,** (979) 275-1600,  
[eclostlagoon.com](https://eclostlagoon.com)

2

**Granbury Blazin' Saddle 75,**  
[blazinsaddle75.com](https://blazinsaddle75.com)

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[museumofthebigbend.com](https://museumofthebigbend.com)



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 MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

# Catch of the Day

This nautical haul leaves us reeling with excitement! Fishing out the best ones was easy as shooting fish in a barrel. There may be bigger fish to fry, but these folks seem pretty pleased with what's on the line.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ



**1 JENNIFER MATULA**  
VICTORIA EC

"Her first big redfish that she brought in on her own."

**2 RAYMOND TESTA**  
FARMERS EC

"I caught the moment that a bass struck at this lure in Royse City."

**3 TOM HERRIN**  
PEDERNALES EC

"A mature bald eagle catches lunch in the Mississippi River during the dead of winter."

**4 RAY BEDNAR**  
BLUEBONNET EC

"A kingfisher about to have a large lunch."



## Upcoming Contests

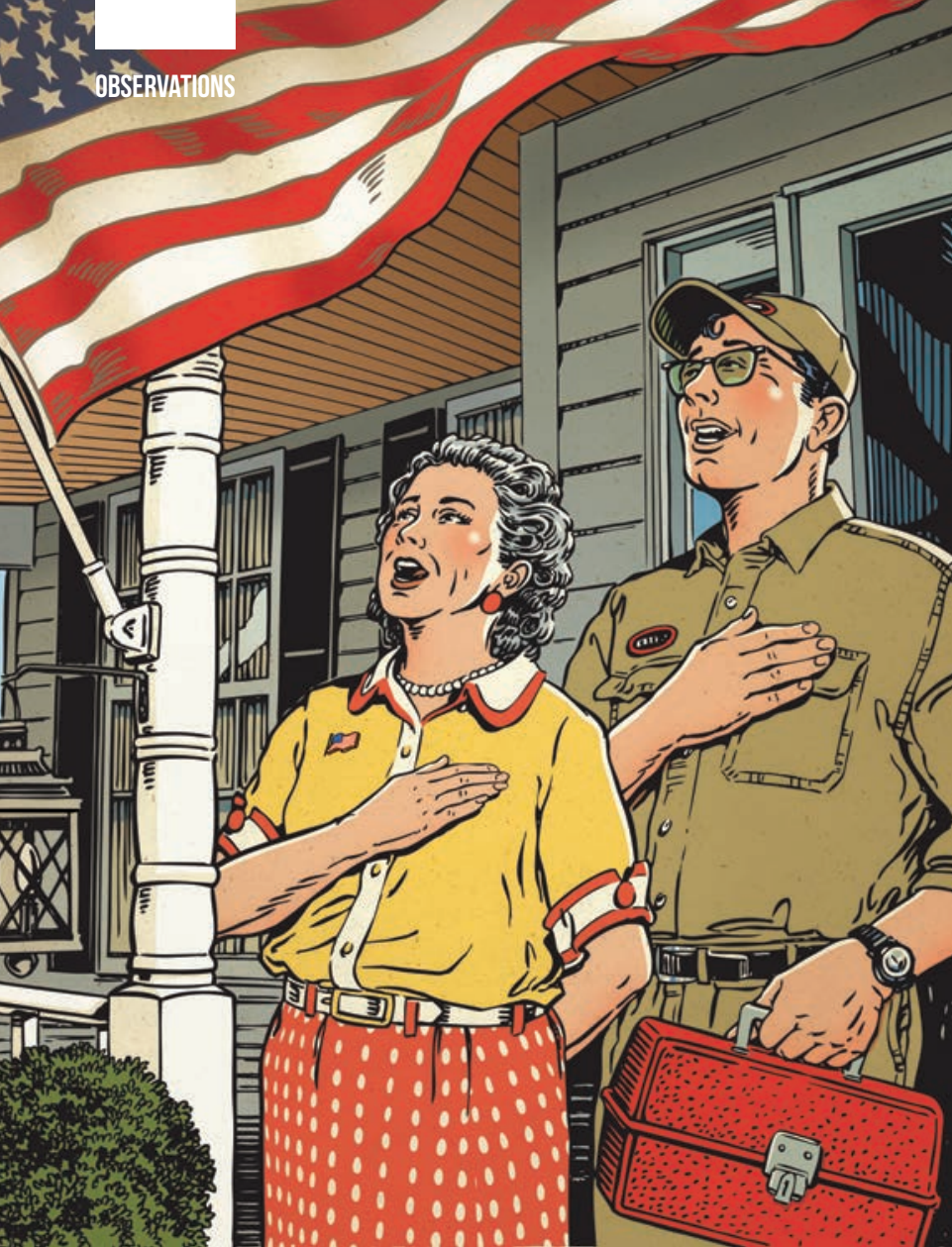
**DUE JUL 10** Abstract  
**DUE AUG 10** Country Life  
**DUE SEP 10** Snakes Alive!



Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Catch of the Day photos from readers.





## Liberty Belle

One grandmother's unmatched poetic love for the red, white and blue

BY CAROL GENE GRAVES  
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

MY GRANDMOTHER LOVED America and felt every citizen should share her patriotism. She instilled her fervent patriotism in me—and everyone around her.

Her love of country was not reserved just for holidays like the Fourth of July but was a belief she carried out daily.

When I visited her in the summer, we would put out the American flag on her front porch on Main Street in the small Central Texas town of Gatesville. When the flag was in place, she would stand erect and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

If any unsuspecting soul was walking down the street, Grandmother would throw out a strong invitation to join us: "Come on up and say the pledge with us!" I don't think anyone dared to turn down Mrs. McCoy's strong invitation.

In Grandmother's bedroom was a

patriotic shrine: a framed copy of the preamble to the Constitution draped with a small American flag. Stuck to the side of the frame was a picture postcard my family had sent her from Philadelphia when we vacationed there. She was so thrilled that I had personally seen the Liberty Bell.

The bell had great significance for Grandmother because her favorite poem was *Independence Bell*. It's a dramatic poem, possibly written by American author Charles Brockden Brown, that recounts the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. Would the 56 delegates to the second Continental Congress declare the colonies free in July 1776?

The poem's setting is a hot, jittery Philadelphia as citizens stand before the Pennsylvania State House waiting for news. I can still see Grandmother the last time she recited this poem by memory for our family.

*"Will they do it?" "Dare they do it?"*

*"Who is speaking?" "What's the news?"*

*"What of Adams?" "What of Sherman?"*

*"Oh, God grant they won't refuse!"*

We could only be expectant as Grandmother described the old bellman, who was waiting "with one hand ready on the clapper of the bell." Then the old man's grandson brings him the news. He shouts, "Ring, Grandpapa, ring!"

Grandmother swelled with pride as she proclaimed this and concluded the poem:

*We will ne'er forget the bellman  
Who, betwixt the earth and sky,  
Rung out loudly, "Independence";  
Which, please God, shall never die!*

Grandmother died January 19, 1981, and the next day was one of high national drama. Not only did we say goodbye to her, but we also watched Ronald Reagan be sworn in as America's 40th president and were thrilled at the return of 52 American hostages from captivity in Iran.

We flew Grandmother's flag that day to celebrate the hostages' return, but it was more our family's way of remembering Grandmother and how much she loved America. ■

# ATTO SPORT

## THE MOST ADVANCED PORTABLE MOBILITY SCOOTER IN THE WORLD

Where engineering excellence meets sleek design - a lightweight, safe, customizable, and stylish scooter for **UNLIMITED FREEDOM**.

Numerous scooters with various features and capabilities are on the market, making it crucial to select the one that best suits your requirements.

### How did Anna start to enjoy life to the fullest?

At the age of 56, a back operation left me dependent on a cane, significantly impacting my daily life. Simple tasks like going to the store or meeting friends became challenging, and I even had to cancel a long-awaited anniversary trip to Italy.

My husband purchased a scooter for me, but it was cumbersome and uncomfortable for everyday use, leaving me feeling more constrained than liberated. However, everything changed when I came across the ATTO SPORT. This remarkable scooter proved to be a game changer. Not only is it robust and reliable, but it also conveniently splits into two pieces, allowing me to effortlessly lift it into my car trunk on my own. I was even able to stow it in the overhead compartment on the plane, enabling us to finally take that trip to Italy! I am now independent once more, able to go wherever I please and do so with a striking sense of style. In fact, I now find that my husband struggles to keep up with me!



### What makes ATTO so unique?

- **Independence & Convenience:** Easy to use and conveniently folds into a compact suitcase size for simple storage. It easily separates into two parts in seconds, with the heaviest piece weighing just 37 pounds, making it easier to lift into your car trunk.
- **Go Anywhere:** Conquer any terrain with puncture-proof, shock-absorbing tires and a 4-inch ground clearance. Equipped with electronic stability control for added safety on descents and turns, it is also flight-approved, ideal for air travel and cruise ships. With a driving range of up to 12.5 miles (25 miles with the XL battery), a top speed of 6.2 MPH, and a maximum weight capacity of 300 pounds, this durable scooter is designed for longevity.
- **Top-Notch Engineering:** Guaranteeing both comfort and durability, this scooter offers ample legroom and a big comfortable seat. The ATTO is super portable and lightweight, and still rides like a heavy-duty scooter.
- **Unmatched Stylish Design:** You deserve a mobility solution that doesn't just get you from A to B but makes you feel great while doing so. ATTO stands out from the crowd with its stunning design.



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comfortable seat**



**Splits into 2  
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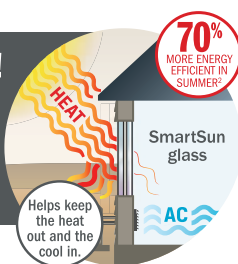
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<sup>1</sup>**DETAILS OF OFFER:** Offer expires 8/31/2025. Not valid with other offers or prior purchases. Get \$379 off per window, get \$779 off per entry/patio door and 12 months no money down, no monthly payments, no interest when you purchase four (4) or more windows or entry/patio doors between 7/1/2025 and 8/31/2025. Subject to credit approval. 12-month Promo Period: while no payments are due, interest accrues but is waived if the loan is paid in full before the Promo Period expires. Any unpaid balance owed after the Promo Period, plus accrued interest, will be paid in installments based on the terms disclosed in the customer's loan agreement. Financing is provided by various financial institutions without regard to age, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or familial status. Savings comparison based on purchase of a single unit at list price. Available at participating locations and offer applies throughout the service area. See your local Renewal by Andersen location for details. License numbers available at [renewalbyandersen.com/license](https://renewalbyandersen.com/license). Some Renewal by Andersen locations are independently owned and operated. <sup>†</sup>Review aggregator survey of 5-star reviews among leading national full-service window replacement companies. January 2024 Reputation.com. <sup>2</sup>It is the only warranty among top selling window companies that meets all of the following requirements: easy to understand terms, unrestricted transferability, installation coverage, labor coverage, geographically unrestricted, coverage for exterior color, insect screens and hardware, and no maintenance requirement. Visit [renewalbyandersen.com/nationsbest](https://renewalbyandersen.com/nationsbest) for details. <sup>3</sup>Values are based on comparison of Renewal by Andersen® double-hung window U-Factor to the U-Factor for clear dual-pane glass nonmetal frame default values from the 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018 International Energy Conservation Code "Glazed Fenestration" Default Tables. <sup>4</sup>Based on testing of 10 double-hung units per ASTM E2068 20 years after installation. "Renewal by Andersen" and all other marks where denoted are trademarks of Andersen Corporation. © 2025 Andersen Corporation. All rights reserved. RBA14201

<sup>\*</sup>Using U.S. and imported parts.