

ARE THERE ALLIGATORS
IN MINEOLA?

THERE'S NO KNIFE
LIKE BOWIE'S

A PIONEERING
ARCHITECT INSPIRES

Texas Coop Power

FOR SAM HOUSTON EC MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2024

Perfect Fit

The pieces fall into
place for Texas
puzzle-makers

VISIT
SAN FELIPE
DE AUSTIN

SEE PAGE 18

PLUS

16 Reliable Power
Today and
Tomorrow

23 Put a Freeze
on Winter Fires



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February 2024



06

Later, Gators?

Finding everything else during a search for the elusive gators of the Mineola Nature Preserve.

Story by Christine Switzer
Illustrations by David Moore

10 Puzzling Times

The Texas puzzle-makers helping folks while away the hours and fill their kitchen tables with beauty.

Story by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers
Photos by Dave Shafer

ON THE COVER
Art and puzzles fit together perfectly for Ericka Chambers and William Jones.
Photo by Dave Shafer
ABOVE
The wild wonders of the Mineola Nature Preserve.
Illustration by David Moore

04

Currents
The latest buzz

05

TCP Talk
Readers respond

16

Co-op News
Information plus energy and safety tips from your cooperative

25

Footnotes in Texas History
A Cut Above
By W.F. Strong

26

TCP Kitchen
Chocolate
By Vianney Rodriguez

30

Hit the Road
Texas' Heartbeat
By Chet Garner

33

Focus on Texas
Photo Contest: Vibrant Color

34

Observations
Progress by Design
By Arianna Cannon



Nasty Norther

THE COLDEST TEMPERATURE ever recorded in Texas happened in mid-February—but it wasn't during our recent icy winters.

On February 12, 1899, it dipped to minus 23 degrees in the Panhandle town of Tulia. This was during a norther that killed 40,000 cattle across the state overnight. In February 1933 thermometers also fell to minus 23 in Seminole in West Texas.

Will You ... ?

Many wedding experts refer to the time from Thanksgiving to Valentine's Day as "engagement season," with as many as 40% of proposals happening during these months.



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RECOMMENDED READING

National Women Physicians Day is February 3. Read *Dr. Sofie Herzog* in our archive and you'll meet a doc who cared for the people of Brazoria a century ago.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

Campfires remind me of ...

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 December prompt: **Can't I have just one more ... ?**

Fishing trip with my dad.

RODNEY WHEELER
BLUEBONNET EC
LYTTON SPRINGS

Chance, officer.

SHELIA WORTHLEY
TRI-COUNTY EC
FORT WORTH

Hour of sleep.

MARY MION-WEBB
VIA FACEBOOK

Moment of peace and quiet.

DAVIE LEE GILES
COSERV
MCKINNEY

Martini.

SANDRA HOLT
VIA FACEBOOK

Visit our website to see more responses.

DECEMBER 2023 How Texas Became a Desert

“Absent is my favorite John Wayne movie with a Texas storyline—*Red River*, loosely based on the creation of the legendary Chisholm Trail.”

BILL “COWBOY” LAMZA
SAN BERNARD EC
HEMPSTEAD



NICOLAS VIARD | DREAMSTIME.COM

More Desert Classics

This reminds me of a Davy Crockett movie starring Fess Parker [*How Texas Became a Desert*, December 2023]. When Crockett came from Tennessee to Texas, he would have passed through the Piney Woods of East Texas, right?

Well, in the movie, they get to the border, and Crockett says, “Well, there she is—Texas!” And they look out upon a mountainous desert land.

My wife and I almost fell on the floor laughing.

David Winkler
Pedernales EC
Dripping Springs

Another Somber Memory

I taught with Kathy Cox in 1963 [*A School Day Like No Other*, November 2023].

While we were glued to the TV, Father Baker came in and told us that they were taking all the kids into the church to pray for the president. The younger kids really didn’t comprehend what was

happening, but my sixth graders were pretty aware, and most of them were in tears.

Father came into the church a few minutes later to tell us that the president had died. After more prayers, the kids were all sent home early.

Diane Shalala Fritel
Wolford, North Dakota

Frankly, Almost a Texan

As someone who has followed Texas music for roughly 72 years, I never thought of Frank Zappa as having much to do with Texas [*Art and Parts*, December 2023]. I always pictured him as the ultimate California dude.

Joe Brannen
Sam Houston EC
Livingston

EDITOR’S NOTE It’s true Zappa wasn’t really a Texan, but in some circles he was considered an honorary Austinite because of his repeated appearances at the Armadillo World Headquarters in the 1970s.



STEPHANIE SHAFER

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

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BY CHRISTINE SWITZER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID MOORE

Later, Gators?

Finding everything else during a search for the elusive gators of the Mineola Nature Preserve

'WHERE are the alligators?" I can hear the frustration in my 8-year-old son's voice as we scan the serene water of Beaver Pond in the southwest portion of Aquatic Loop. This is our second visit to the Mineola Nature Preserve, and we've just learned that some of the ponds are home to alligators.

Fifteen minutes earlier, we had passed a slightly winded hiker on Beaver Pond Trail, an old logging path that harks back to the land's integral role in the East Texas timber belt a century ago.

The hiker smiled, greeted us and said his name was James. He chatted enthusiastically about the nearly 20-year-old preserve that spreads over close to 3,000 acres along the north banks of the Sabine River in Wood County, north of Tyler. James said he has been hiking at the preserve every week for a few years and loves this nature space.

"Most people don't know about this place," James said. He told us he thinks the preserve is one of the best nature areas in East Texas, with bird-watching and stargazing, catch-and-release ponds, plus many trails for horseback riding. Several hiking trails crisscross through the wetland areas around the ponds, and he said we might see wild animals at the preserve too, like beaver, deer and bobcats.

Then he asked, "Have you seen the alligators in the beaver pond?"



SOON we're leaning over the splintered railing of the wooden footbridge that spans Beaver Pond. I hear dragonflies and damselflies darting over the water and the occasional plip-plop of a fish leaping to catch one.

But no alligators in sight.

Once on the verge of extinction, the American alligator can now be found throughout the eastern third of Texas, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The reptile has made a dramatic comeback over the past 50 years and is now a protected game animal in Texas.

"There are a couple of large ones who hang out at the beaver pond," James told us. "They like to sleep a lot at the bottom of the pond, but I've seen them several times."

I wonder to myself if they look like floating logs in the middle of the pond. Or if they lurk in the shady areas around the bridge, with only nostrils visible above the water.

"I'll be right back!" I call to my husband and move toward the opposite side of the pond, past the warning signs admonishing in bright red letters: "Beware of Alligators." I take a few pictures of a lone white egret standing amid a clump of soft rush.

"Don't stand too close to the bank," my husband calls. "Alligators move fast. Faster than you think."

'MAMA, a snapping turtle!" My son points to a partially submerged log, its distinctive beak stretched into the sunshine.

Several months have passed since our previous visit, but we haven't forgotten our conversation with James, so we search once again for the resident alligators in Beaver Pond.

Late spring humidity presses in on us. We hear the buzz of cicadas, grasshoppers and bees among the coral honeysuckle, purple coneflower and blue larkspur. We give wide

berth to the soggy, loamy sands banking the pond, where spring rains have left the ground saturated.

Once on the bridge traversing the pond, we look out over turquoise water shimmering like a dark mirror in the afternoon sun. Giant cutgrass clusters around the bridge. In the center of the pond, we see the remains of abandoned railroad trestles from when trains transported East Texas lumber to far points in the state.

"I don't see any alligators," my son says. Unfortunately, neither do I.

"You should probably go around 3 or 4 in the afternoon," my friend Laura advises. She has heard my story about looking for the preserve's reptile residents, and she has responded in typical Texas Master Naturalist fashion. She has looked things up on the iNaturalist website.

"According to iNat," she continues, "most of the alligator sightings in the preserve have been mid-afternoon. Maybe you'll have more luck then."

Alligators are native to this part of the state, but I haven't seen one in the wild yet in the 10 years I've lived in North Texas. We plan another visit to the preserve, hoping we will finally glimpse the elusive crocodilian.

'OH, NO!' my son exclaims. "Not the alligators again!" With the steady increase of summer heat indices in East Texas, his enthusiasm for alligator hunting has definitely cooled.

We crunch over the gravel of the city-owned and -managed park's Rawhide Trail, under the welcome shade of thorny locust, willow oak and sugar hackberry trees, our faces shiny from the late June heat.

As we approach Beaver Pond, I hear the low, resonant bugle of a bullfrog and the cry of a hawk overhead. Summer blooms of climbing prairie roses and meadow pinks cluster alongside the path. Ahead of us, half a dozen monarchs the size of my palm scatter in a swirl of tangerine.

Leaning over the railing of the now-familiar bridge, we scan the tranquil, algae-laden water for any signs of an enormous reptile. A tiny green anole darts away from us on the splintered wood. We watch a great blue heron lift off in flight above our heads.

"No," I say. "Not the alligators." ■

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest— but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

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PUZZLING TIMES

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS • PHOTOS BY DAVE SHAFER

These Texas puzzle-makers help folks while away the hours and fill their kitchen tables with beauty

GROWING UP, JB Manning remembers putting puzzles together with his grandmother at her home in Minnesota.

“She always had a puzzle spread out on the table,” he says. “She enjoyed working on them, and they became an activity that we all did with her.”

Jigsaw puzzles have been drawing people together for centuries. Most historians credit British mapmaker John Spilsbury for creating the first puzzles in the 1760s. He pasted hand-colored European maps onto thin mahogany



boards and cut them into pieces along political borders. His “dissected” maps were marketed as educational tools to teach children about geography.

In the 19th century, dissected puzzles evolved into jigsaw puzzles, named for the bladed tool used to cut the pieces. Only the wealthy could afford to buy the handcrafted wooden creations. But as manufacturing improved, makers began to utilize plywood and then sturdy cardboard, which reduced costs and enabled mass production. Interlocking pieces were introduced to keep puzzles together.

Fast-forward to the COVID-19 pandemic, when game-makers reported in April 2020 that puzzle sales nationwide skyrocketed more than 300%. Stuck at home, people took to their kitchen tables to pass the time and relieve stress.

In Texas, two small companies have cut out their own niches with special touches that make their puzzles stand out from the ordinary.

Outside San Marcos, in Wimberley, Manning—who owns the Wimberley Puzzle Co.—often worked long hours during

the pandemic to make and ship 100 puzzles a day. Orders have since returned to a daily average of 15 to 20 puzzles. The more relaxed pace suits Manning, who quit a stressful corporate job in Houston in 2011.

He then began traveling through national parks with his digital Nikon camera. While crisscrossing states in 2014, he bought a postcard, wrote on it, cut it up and mailed it in an envelope.

“Puzzle postcards were my original idea,” says Manning, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member. “But I decided they’d be hard to sell. I got the idea about puzzles while I was sitting on an outcrop that overlooked a waterfall at Glacier

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE A signature of JB Manning’s puzzles is including pieces with whimsical shapes—and he signs a piece in every order. A buck-shaped piece stands out in a field of bluebonnets. A computerized laser cutter navigates the myriad shapes of Manning’s creation. It also cuts the pieces for his plywood boxes.

JIGSAW PUZZLES

have been drawing people together for centuries. Most historians credit British mapmaker John Spilsbury for creating the first puzzles in the 1760s.

National Park. I decided I'd use my own photos of places that people know, have been to or want to go."

He moved to Wimberley in 2017 and set up his workshop. The Wimberley Puzzle Co. released its first puzzles, made of sturdy cardboard and packaged in cardboard boxes, early the next year. They featured such iconic Texas scenes as wildflowers along the Willow City Loop near Fredericksburg, Gorman Falls at Colorado Bend State Park, and Fischer Dance Hall between San Antonio and Austin.

That fall, Manning bought a travel trailer and set up a mobile workshop. He continued on the road, taking photos while making and shipping his products.

When the pandemic closed parks, Manning returned to Wimberley. He couldn't find cardboard when supply chains slowed to a crawl in 2021. So he transitioned to Baltic birch plywood to make his puzzles and matching boxes with sliding lids.

Today his computerized equipment includes a large-format printer and a laser cutter. The wooden puzzles, which range from 130 pieces up to 1,000, are usually made to order. His nine-page online catalog has grown to include striking scenes (and animals) from other states, national parks, Route 66 and even Africa, where he traveled in 2014.

From the start, Manning's puzzles have included whimsical pieces that help tell the puzzle image's story. For instance, his best-selling Bluebonnet Sunset, photographed near Navasota, between Houston and College Station, features pieces shaped like a butterfly, dove, bee, live oak and flowers. As a special touch, he always signs a piece, such as one shaped like Texas.

Manning tucks a folded envelope inside each box with information about his company and how customers can order a lost piece. He also includes a small wooden easel for displaying the box lid or glued puzzle as desktop art.

FINE ART of a different kind inspired siblings Ericka Chambers of Little Elm and William Jones of Sachse—towns in the Metroplex—to tap into their roots and launch their own puzzle company.

"We grew up doing puzzles together as a family," says Chambers, a CoServ member. "But we had a hard time finding diversity in puzzle images. Then, when I was pregnant, I wanted to decorate my nursery around a puzzle. But there were very few to choose from."

A painting of a Black woman by artist Kwanzaa Edwards of San Antonio sparked an idea. The vibrant colors and fanciful imagery intrigued Chambers, and she suggested making a puzzle of one of Edwards' paintings. "William thought that was a great business idea," Chambers says.

Thus was born Puzzles of Color, which exclusively licenses and features artwork created by the siblings' favorite Black artists as well as Native American, Latino

and Asian American artists. In fall 2020, they partnered with a company to print the artwork and another to mount the pieces on cardboard.

At night, Chambers, then a product manager for Capital One, and Jones, a freelance graphic designer, would cut the boards on a roller die cutter in Chambers' garage. Then they boxed up the puzzles. Their parents and spouses helped, too. They still do.

A big break came in January 2021, when a local news report on the company aired nationwide. Orders shot up so much that all production had to be outsourced.

Since then, Puzzles of Color has steadily grown, both in sales and merchandise. Puzzles are available online and at special events. "They're in some boutique stores and museums, too," Chambers says. "Last February, Target carried our puzzles during Black History Month. We're working to be there year-round."

So far they've licensed with nearly 30 artists from across the country and also Kenya to create puzzles that range from kid-friendly 20- and 60-piece jigsaws up to 1,000 pieces.



ABOVE William Jones breaks up a puzzle after a die cutter did its work. OPPOSITE Nearly 30 artists illustrate the puzzles that siblings Ericka Chambers, left, and Jones have in stock.



Among their first puzzles was Edwards’ dreamy depiction of a Black woman called *To Be Loved*. Paul Kellam of Jacksonville, Florida, depicts a Black family gathered near a Christmas tree and Kwanzaa table in his *Comfort & Joy*. Steph Littlebird of Las Vegas created *Wapato Woman*, a portrait of a powerful Native American woman.

Puzzles of Color boxes tell the company’s story and those of the featured artists.

“We also interview all our artists in a podcast so we can share their methods and how they got into art,” Chambers

says. “Each puzzle has a musical playlist on Spotify with songs connected to the artist’s inspiration and what music they’re into. So as people are doing a puzzle, they can get into the artist’s mindset.

“We’ve had people tell us they don’t do puzzles,” she adds. “But they’re so enamored with the art that the experience of putting our puzzles together gives them a feeling of being an artist. And that’s cool!” ■

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Substation equipment is key to maintaining reliable power. Roman Reeves, substation technician, checks an electronics display at a substation. Electrical panels within a substation help maintain a reliable power source for Sam Houston EC members.

Reliable Power for Today—and Tomorrow

OUR TEAM AT Sam Houston Electric Cooperative is always looking ahead, exploring ways to innovate and utilize new technologies to improve our services. As our nation increasingly relies on electricity to power the economy, keeping the lights on has never been more important. We're committed to powering—and empowering—our community at a cost local families and businesses can afford.

So how are we working to ensure reliable and affordable power while adapting to a changing energy landscape and our community's evolving needs?

One critical component of reliable power is the mix of energy resources used to generate the electricity that keeps the lights on across our community. You may not realize it, but Sam Houston EC doesn't generate electricity. Instead, we purchase it from our energy provider, and from there, we distribute it to homes and businesses throughout our community.

We're using more electricity generated from renewable energy sources, but we still depend on a diverse energy mix to ensure reliable power that's available to our members whenever they need it.

In addition to managing a reliable energy mix, Sam Houston EC is using technology to enhance our local grid, limit service disruptions and improve outage response times.

Advanced metering infrastructure technology, also known as AMI, enables two-way communication between the co-op

and consumers. In the event of a power outage, AMI helps pinpoint the exact location of the outage and can even analyze damaged or tampered meters. AMI helps us save money with real-time data and ultimately improves power reliability for our entire community.

Proactive tree trimming is another way we limit service disruptions. Scheduled trimming keeps power lines clear from overgrown limbs that are likely to fall. Drone inspections of lines and vegetation have allowed us to reduce labor and equipment costs while bolstering reliability. Through the use of small drones, we can accurately monitor the health and growth of trees and identify potential problems.

As technology advancements become more accessible, we anticipate using advanced mapping software to better maintain the environment while providing more reliable service.

One of the best methods for improving our services to you is monitoring trends and leading practices from other electric co-ops in Texas and across the country. Learning from other co-ops is one of the many benefits of the cooperative business model because for us, it's about cooperation, not competition.

Rest assured Sam Houston EC will continue working to provide the reliable, affordable electricity you expect and deserve—for today and tomorrow. ■



SAFETY

IS THE BACKBONE OF RELIABILITY



SAM HOUSTON
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

Safety is **No.1** at **Sam Houston Electric Cooperative**. This commitment has always been our priority and enables us to deliver reliable energy and peace of mind. That's why safety runs through everything we do.



Time Travel in Texas

A new Southeast Texas museum and replica village transport visitors to the birth of our state

BY RANDY MALLORY | PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

JUST 45 MILES WEST of Houston, thousands of cars and trucks zoom along Interstate 10 every day paying little attention to the exit for FM 1458. If those drivers took that exit and headed north a mere two miles, they could travel back in time two centuries.

With a little imagination, visitors can relive the fascinating, tragic and consequential story of San Felipe de Austin, capital of the first American colony in Texas. While not as well known as other early Texas historic sites—Washington-on-the-Brazos, the Alamo and San Jacinto battlefield—the colony played a pivotal role in how and why Texas began.

This is where empresario—land contractor—Stephen F. Austin became the “Father of Texas.” Austin was able to attract 300 families, still remembered as the Old 300, to colonize the area in the mid-1820s. San Felipe de Austin is where the immigrant Texians built farms and towns under Mexican law, until changing rules riled them to revolt.

“This is where Spanish Texas became the Republic of Texas within 15 years,” said Bryan McAuley, manager of the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site. “I like to tell folks I can connect almost all of the Mexican Texas era’s prominent people and places to the town of San Felipe de Austin. This is a great place to begin or expand your love of Texas history.”

With state-of-the-art facilities recently completed, there’s never been a better time to take that I-10 exit and learn about the birth of Texas.

Remembering San Felipe

Locals have long honored San Felipe’s history. Nearly a century ago, they began setting aside land as a park, later adding an obelisk and a statue of Austin that still rises above the original townsite. Locals also hold an annual Father of Texas celebration honoring Austin.

The first formal archaeological work started in the 1990s. The site became part of the Texas Historical Commission in 2008 and underwent further archaeological study. In 2018, the THC opened a 10,000-square-foot museum—built using state and private funds—located on 100 acres of the townsite.

As you stroll through the modern museum, you pass well-crafted interpretive exhibits, interactive high-tech displays, wall-sized murals and an 1830s cabin with period artifacts. A two-part video documentary follows the growth of San Felipe into Mexican Texas’ second largest town, after San Antonio, and its dramatic demise.

In 2021, the THC added an outdoor exhibit called Villa de



2

1. Period reenactors recreate historical events for visitors.
2. Interactive murals let visitors explore the capital of Texas' first Anglo town.
3. Opened in 2018, the visitor center features in-depth and interactive exhibits and murals as well as a partially preserved log cabin and 1830s-style printing press.
4. Special events often feature reenactors portraying characters from the early Stephen F. Austin colony.



3



4

Austin where replica structures recreate the old town.

Together the museum and villa capture the ebb and flow of frontier life, business and politics.

The Early Days of San Felipe

Central to the story is Austin himself, who first laid eyes on southeast Texas in 1821. "The country is as good in every respect as man could wish for," he reported. "Land, all first rate, plenty of timber, fine water—beautifully rolling."

Austin took over as empresario when his father, Moses Austin, died in June 1821. The original colonial contract with Spain had to be renegotiated because Mexico had just gained independence from Spain.

Officially founded in 1823, the colony covered 4 million acres—bordered east to west by the San Jacinto and Lavaca rivers and south to north by the Gulf of Mexico and El Camino Real, the King's Highway to the national capital of Mexico City. Stephen F. Austin would eventually settle some 1,500 American families—mostly Southern agriculturalists—in his colony and its capital of San Felipe de Austin.

Initially Austin saw himself as a loyal Mexican citizen, as required by his contract. He learned Spanish, went by Estevan (Stephen in Spanish) and became well acquainted with key Mexican officials.

"If you had a problem as an American in Mexican Texas, he was your go-to guy," said Jordan Anderson, site assistant manager.

Austin was a patient, prudent leader who tried to make the system work. Immigrant families abided because they had

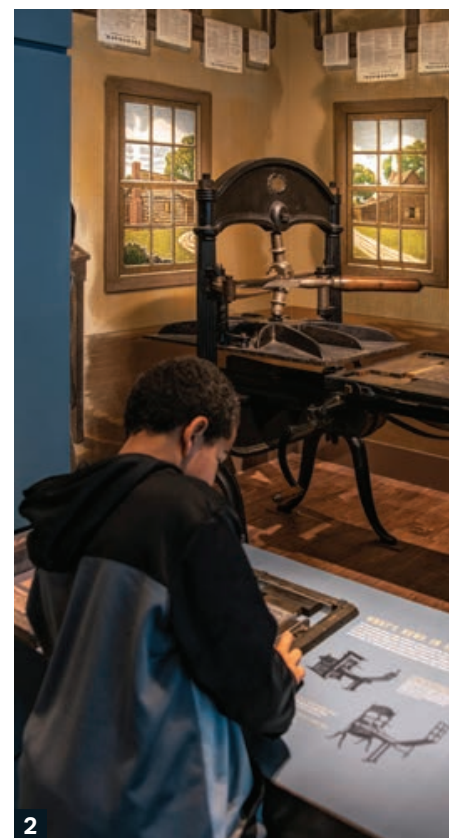
something to lose, explained Anderson. During the 1820s and '30s, they converted wilderness into productive farms and businesses.

"Later arrivals began bucking Mexican rule and even criticized Austin as too Mexican," Anderson said. "But he was able to find workarounds to soften the impact of changing Mexican laws, especially ones that limited immigration and made slavery illegal." (Many immigrant American families arrived with enslaved workers who eventually accounted for a quarter of the colony's population.)

Austin was paid in land, so he sought industrious, steadfast immigrants who would build successful farms and buy town lots. That meant his most pressing priority at first was to survey the colony and lay out the capital. He kept up with important colonial documents in a sturdy traveling desk that is now on display as a centerpiece artifact of the museum.

Geographically, the capital encompassed some 22,000 acres, boasting hundreds of town lots and adjacent farmland. The town rested on a bluff above a ferry landing where the Atascocita Road crossed the Brazos River. As a transportation hub, San Felipe de Austin enabled frontier families to ship products such as cotton and hides in wagons and boats to distant ports such as New Orleans and Vera Cruz, Mexico.

Traders returned with manufactured goods that brought sophistication to the frontier. Shops also stocked items made by local artisans—including blacksmiths and tinsmiths, tailors, hatters, and even a clock maker, silversmith and jeweler. At the town's peak, it supported a population of approximately 800. Most residents were Anglo-Americans and African-Americans,



but there was a small Mexican enclave that provided horses and livery services.

A paved walking trail leads from the museum around the original central business district with interpretive panels explaining what took place on the lots.

Several taverns, most notably Peyton's Tavern, offered meals, lodging, drinks and space to socialize. Peyton's patrons included local lawyer William Barret Travis and San Antonio trader James Bowie, both of whom died while defending the Alamo. Robert M. Williamson, an influential local lawyer and early supporter of independence from Mexico, also frequented the tavern. He was known around Peyton's as "three-legged Willie" because of his wooden leg.

Tavern proprietress Angelina Peyton later famously fired a cannon in another Austin—today's state capital—to prevent the secret removal of the fledgling Texas Republic's archives to another town. A statue on Congress Avenue in Austin honors Angelina Eberly (her name following a second marriage) and that daring cannon shot.

Villa de Austin

Several hotels also catered to the steady stream of arriving settlers as well as officials and lawyers in town on business. Visitors today get a real-life look at a frontier hotel in the site's living history village called Villa de Austin.

A colorful sign welcomes you to the Farmer's Hotel, a two-story log structure that offered boarding by the day or month. Lodging was important because newcomers often had to stay in town for extended periods while land documents were finalized. The villa's replica hotel features a brick-lined cellar, similar to

the original, which stored kegs, other drinks and barrels of food.

Nearby is a reproduction of an outdoor kitchen and bake oven once used by an enslaved cook named Celia who prepared meals for hotel patrons. Unlike most enslaved residents, Celia gained her freedom in 1832 with help from local lawyer William Barret Travis.

Because San Felipe was the capital, one of the most important businesses was the printing office. The villa's print shop features a working replica printing press like the real one that printed the *Texas Gazette*, the first consistently published newspaper in Texas. The shop also printed the first book published in Texas—an English translation of the Spanish decrees that established the colony.

San Felipe garnered a second newspaper when surveyor and Austin confidante Gail Borden Jr. co-founded the *Telegraph and Texas Register*. The shop opened in October 1835 as Texian frustrations with Mexico's new leader, Santa Anna, boiled over. Borden and associates began printing broadsides supporting settlers' demands for independence.

The newspaper's first issue announced the Texian victory over Mexican troops at the Battle of Gonzales. Subsequent issues were printed almost weekly to inform citizens about the Texas Revolution. It also printed Travis' *Victory or Death* letter from the Alamo and the 1836 *Unanimous Declaration of Independence* signed at Washington-on-the-Brazos.

Before that declaration, Texian leaders had gathered three times in San Felipe to discuss political options and to chart a way forward. The Villa's replica courthouse and convention hall recreate the original places where those critical councils and conventions took place.



3. A recreated 1830s print shop features an operating replica press that visitors can help operate.
2. The historic town held the first newspaper printed in Texas, as the printing press exhibit details.
3. Periodic special events feature pioneer craft skill demonstrations.
4. Hands-on learning helps bring history alive, especially for school-age visitors.
5. A statue of a colonial family on the move welcomes visitors.
6. Commemorative obelisk installed in 1928.
7. A replica of the 1830 Farmer's Hotel, also used as the town hall, a tavern and store.



Rising From The Ashes

Meandering through the new “old town” of Villa de Austin, visitors learn how San Felipe rose to prominence—and how it reached its demise.

Texian troops experienced a devastating defeat in San Antonio at the Alamo, and triumphant Santa Anna marched eastward to capture the colonial capital of San Felipe de Austin. Settlers quickly fled eastward to stay ahead of advancing Mexican troops. The scramble became known as the Runaway Scrape.

San Felipe’s residents readied their own escape, but first they had to obey an order from local militia leaders. To keep Mexican troops from making use of the capital’s buildings, residents had to do the unthinkable—burn their town to the ground. Santa Anna remained at the burned townsite for several days in early April as he and his troops tried crossing the Brazos River. Weeks later, Santa Anna and his forces were captured at San Jacinto, allowing the Texas Republic to commence.

The new republic carried on without the smoldering ruins of San Felipe de Austin, which never recovered.

“The dramatic destruction of the town kept it from regaining its early prominence, but it also created a unique archaeological record that continues to reveal the town’s history,” said historian Michael Rugeley Moore, who has studied Austin’s colony for more than two decades.

Archaeology may allow for San Felipe’s rich history to rise like a phoenix from the ashes. “Only 10% of the historic site has been fully excavated,” said staff archaeologist Sarah Chesney. “But because the town didn’t rebuild and has seen little development in 200 years, we have much to find. When we excavate down to a black layer, we know that’s the 1836 burn layer. It’s a

San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site is at 220 Second St. in San Felipe, just east of Sealy. The site is open 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Wednesdays–Sundays for self-guided visits to the museum and a recreated town center called Villa de Austin.

Most Saturdays the villa features living history interpreters in period clothing. Prearranged group or school tours of the museum and villa can last 90 minutes to three hours.

The site’s annual Father of Texas Day celebration is the second Saturday of November. A bicentennial temporary exhibit continues through Labor Day 2024.

Contact the historic site for more details and entry fees by calling (979) 885-2181 or visiting visitsanfelipedeAustin.com or facebook.com/sanfelipedeAustin.

timestamp that lets us put what we find in historical context.”

Plans are underway for an on-site archaeology lab, she added, so the story of San Felipe de Austin may come into clearer focus as work continues.

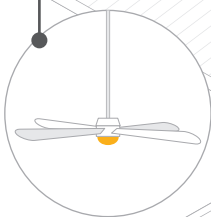
“We now have a strong sense of place to tell our story,” said site manager McAuley. “Texans have spent 100 years falling in love with the Alamo, Goliad, San Jacinto and Washington-on-the-Brazos. We’re a part of that story, directly connected to those famous sites, and visitors who come to San Felipe de Austin now will be surprised by what’s here.” ■

Heating and Cooling Tips for Manufactured Homes

If you own a manufactured home, take measures to ensure you have an efficient heating and cooling system. You can also make simple improvements that save energy and make your home more comfortable.

\$ Install ceiling fans

Install ceiling fans throughout your manufactured home. Ceiling fans are energy efficient and can be used to keep warm or cool air moving throughout your home. Be sure to turn them off when you're away. Remember, ceiling fans cool people, not rooms.

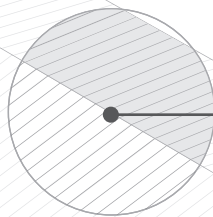


\$ Option for smaller budgets

\$\$ Option for flexible budgets

\$\$ Choose an efficient roof color

Choose a light-colored roof if you live in the southern U.S. and a dark-colored roof if you live in the northern U.S.



\$\$ Install a mini-split system

Eliminate unnecessary heating and cooling by following a single zone strategy throughout your manufactured home. A zone system allows you to save energy by only heating or cooling rooms that are occupied.

ZONE 2

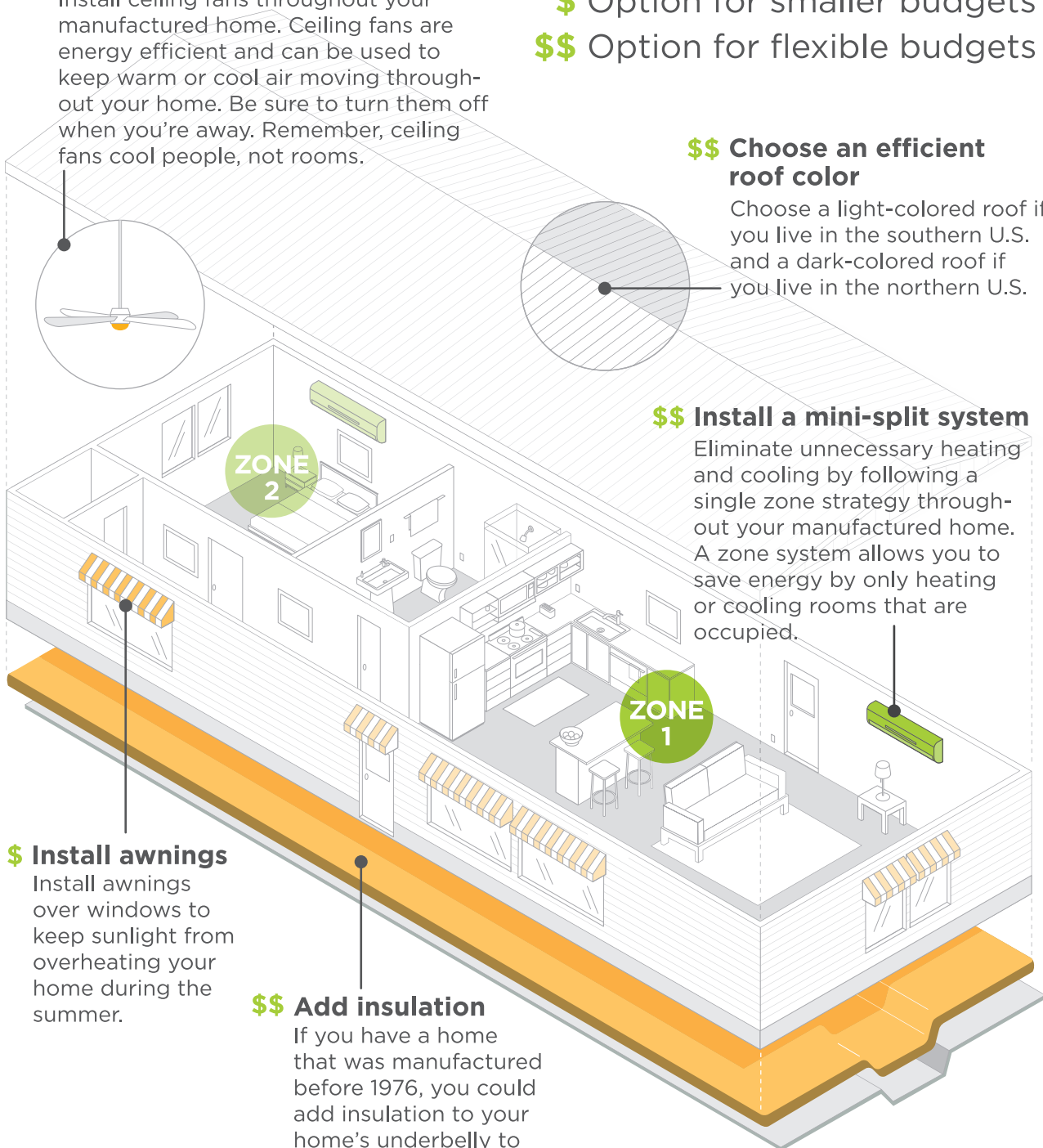
ZONE 1

\$ Install awnings

Install awnings over windows to keep sunlight from overheating your home during the summer.

\$\$ Add insulation

If you have a home that was manufactured before 1976, you could add insulation to your home's underbelly to reduce heat loss.



Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy

Put a Freeze on Winter Fires

HOME FIRES ARE most common in the winter, when folks are using heat sources to stay warm. As you stay cozy and warm this winter, be smart about fire safety.

If you're using a portable heater:

- ▶ Make sure it has an automatic shutoff so if it tips over, it turns off.
- ▶ Keep anything that can burn, such as bedding, clothing and curtains, at least 3 feet from the heater.
- ▶ Plug portable heaters directly into wall outlets. Never use an extension cord or power strip.
- ▶ Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.

If you're using a fireplace:

- ▶ Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out and starting a fire.
- ▶ Do not burn paper in your fireplace.
- ▶ Before you go to sleep or leave your home, put the fire out completely.
- ▶ Put ashes in a metal container with a lid. Store the container outside at least 10 feet from your home.

If you're using a wood stove:

- ▶ Have your chimney inspected and cleaned each year by a professional.
- ▶ Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from the stove.
- ▶ Don't burn paper in your wood stove.
- ▶ Before you go to sleep or leave your home, put the fire out completely.

When heating your home, be aware of carbon monoxide. It's called the invisible killer because it's a colorless, odorless and poisonous gas. More than 400 people in the U.S. die every year from accidental CO poisoning from generators or fuel-burning appliances such as furnaces, stoves, water heaters and fireplaces.

Put CO alarms inside your home to provide an early warning of increasing CO levels. These alarms should be placed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of your home.

As always, make sure you have a smoke alarm on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and outside sleeping areas. ■




VESNAANDJIC | ISTOCK.COM

Chocolate Caramel Bars

11½ ounces milk chocolate chips
2 tablespoons vegetable shortening
30 vanilla caramel candies
3 tablespoons salted butter
2 tablespoons water
1 cup coarsely chopped peanuts

1. Line an 8-inch-square pan with nonstick foil.
2. Melt the chocolate chips and vegetable shortening in a double boiler or a heatproof bowl set above (not touching) simmering water. Stir until chips melt and mixture is smooth. Remove from heat and pour half the chocolate into the lined pan, spreading evenly. Set aside remaining chocolate and refrigerate lined pan of chocolate until firm, about 15 minutes.
3. In a second double boiler, combine caramels, butter and water. Melt over simmering water, stirring constantly. Add peanuts and stir until well blended. Pour into chocolate-lined pan and spread evenly. Refrigerate until tacky, about 15 minutes.
4. Place the reserved melted chocolate back over the simmering water and heat, stirring once or twice until soft enough to spread. Spread evenly over caramel filling. Return to refrigerator and chill until firm, about 1 hour.
5. Lift from pan and cut into 2-inch squares. Keep refrigerated.

MAKES 16 PIECES

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

See the Forest Through the Trees

Mighty Conifer Knife at an Impossible Price!



What Stauer Clients Are
Saying About Our Knives



"Outstanding knife of high quality
and a great price. I now have a
number of your great cutlery in
my growing collection!"

— Robert F., Richardson, TX

We know you. You're not interested in everyday, run-of-the-mill, common cutlery. You want something with a story, a unique feature that you can brag about. We've got just the thing for you. Our *Mighty Conifer Knife* is a unique tool with a Damascus steel blade and a handle crafted from an enhanced and stabilized natural pinecone. While our competitors are charging hundreds for similar knives, we're offering the Mighty Conifer for JUST \$99! That's what we call our Stauer Impossible Price.

JOIN MORE THAN 389,000 SHARP
PEOPLE WHO COLLECT STAUER KNIVES

Each pinecone — and therefore, each knife — has its own unique characteristics. And the back of the handle features hand tooling, a further demonstration of each piece's individual nature.

The blade is nothing to scoff at either. Constructed of Damascus steel, a modern reworking of the legendary steel forged by ancient swordsmiths, this nearly 5-inch blade features 256 layers of steel that have been folded on top of each other to increase its durability. Our competitors are charging hundreds for boring, run-of-the-mill knives with no features worth bragging about. We're asking JUST \$99 for a knife unlike any you've seen before!

With its full-tang construction and high-quality genuine leather sheath, the Mighty Conifer Knife is the perfect blade for the

person who wants to stand out. **CALL NOW!** If you're one of the first 700 587 callers for this ad, we'll throw in a pair of *Stauer 8x21 Compact Binoculars* — a \$99 value — **ABSOLUTELY FREE!** Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back!

Knife Specifications:

- 9 1/2" overall length. Full-tang construction
- Damascus steel blade and natural pinecone handle
- Genuine leather sheath

Mighty Conifer Knife

~~\$299~~ \$99* + S&P **Save \$200**

**You must use Insider Offer Code: MCK160-01 to get this price.*

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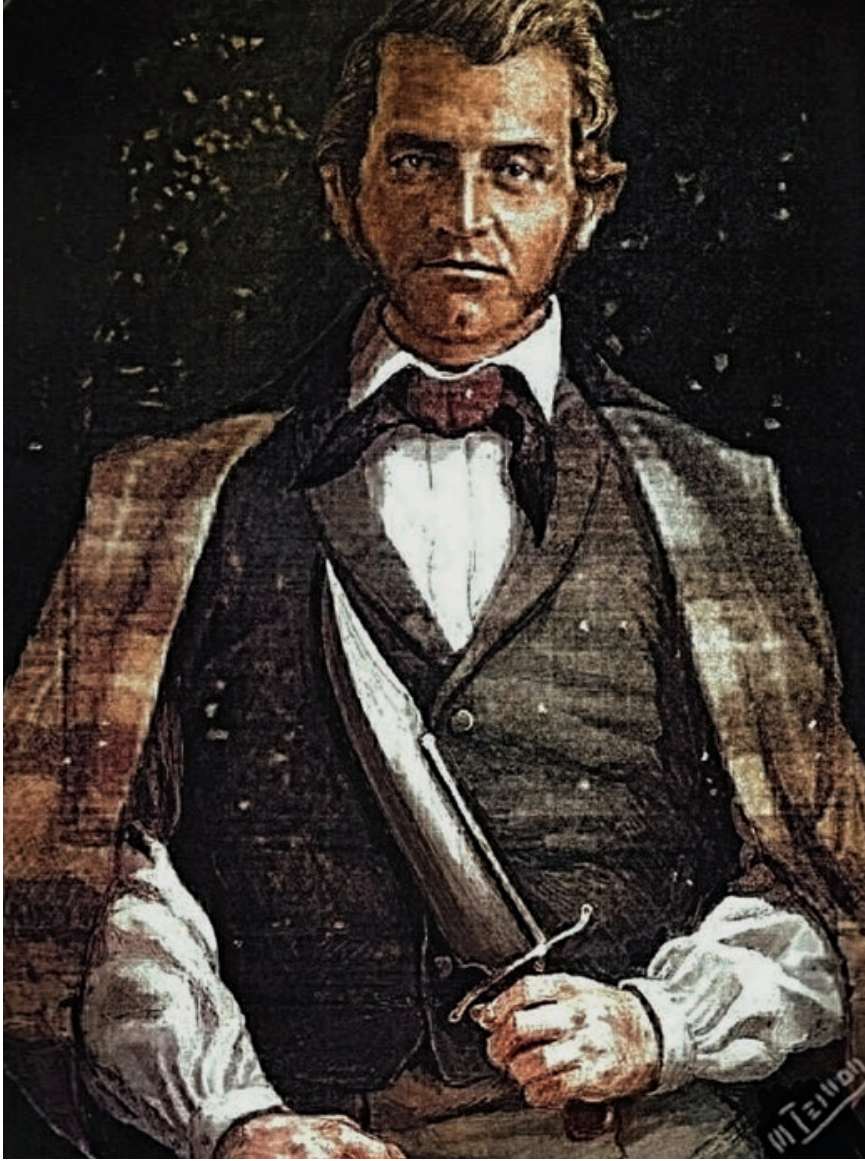
**EXCLUSIVE
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Stauer | AFFORD THE EXTRAORDINARY®



A Cut Above

No knife influenced the world like Jim Bowie's behemoth

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY MARK LEMON

A RELATIVELY NEW phenomenon in modern society is the rise of social media influencers, personalities skilled at persuading followers to pay attention or even buy things. But how many of today's influencers will still be known in 200 years?

How many can compare to the lasting magic of Jim Bowie?

Many assume Bowie became famous defending the Alamo in 1836. In truth, he was already quite famous 10 years before—as a knife fighter and designer, frontiersman, and all-round world-class badass. He was truly a “man’s man” by any standard.

His world-renowned Bowie knife was probably first made at the direction of his brother, Rezin Bowie. But later versions with Jim’s modifications became the enduring design.

Jim Bowie used the earlier knife in a bloody skirmish called the Sandbar Fight, when Jim was nearly killed by two assailants who shot him on a Mississippi River sandbar in 1827. One man stabbed Bowie with a cane sword, but the sword bent when it hit Bowie’s sternum, giving him a moment to spring upon his attacker with his huge knife, killing him. Bowie then badly wounded the second assailant.

You see, in those days, you wanted to

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



take a knife to a gun fight because guns were notoriously unreliable. Bowie miraculously survived, and the account of the Sandbar Fight went global, thanks to a journalist who witnessed it. Bowie and his blade were thus immortalized.

What made the knife stand out was its size. The original was almost a foot long, but the subsequent model was even longer—and razor sharp. About one-third of the top of the knife, the clip point, was honed to a fine edge—so it cut both ways.

Its lethality became legendary. The *Red River Herald* of Natchitoches, Louisiana, wrote that after the Sandbar Fight, “all the steel in the country, it seemed, was being converted into Bowie knives.” That’s influence!

When Bowie arrived at the Alamo nine years later, with his notoriety on the rise and his famous knife at his side, even Davy Crockett was impressed. He said the sight of a Bowie knife “makes you queasy ... especially before breakfast.”

Bowie’s last stand at the Alamo elevated his fame. It was widely claimed, at least what I heard as a kid, that he took out 10 Mexican soldiers with his knife in close-quarters combat. This is improbable given that Bowie was critically ill from typhoid fever, but a good legend will kill probability any day of the week.

I do like what Bowie’s mama said when she learned of his death: “I’ll wager no wounds were found in his back.”

Soon after, various versions of the Bowie knife began to be made by blacksmiths. Texas Rangers carried them. The Marines had their own version. In popular films, Rambo never left home without his and neither did Crocodile Dundee.

It’s as famous as the Swiss Army knife or Buck knife. Given the ubiquity of Bowie’s blade in the world today—nearly 188 years after his death—I’d say Bowie is a greater influencer than any social media star you can name. ■

Chocolate

Think outside the box with these delectable delights

BY VIANNEY RODRIGUEZ, FOOD EDITOR

This twist on a traditional tres leches cake begins with a boxed cake mix. And when one of the tres leches—three milks—poured over the warm cake is chocolate, you know you're in for sinfully sweet goodness.

Quick and Easy Chocolate Tres Leches Cake

CAKE

- 1 package white cake mix (14.25 ounces)**
- 3 eggs, room temperature**
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup milk**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) butter, room temperature**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 ounces)**
- 1 can evaporated milk (12 ounces)**
- 1 cup chocolate milk**

TOPPING

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream**
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips**

- 1. CAKE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9-by-13-inch pan with cooking spray.
- 2.** In a bowl, beat together cake mix, eggs, milk, butter, vanilla and cinnamon until smooth.
- 3.** Pour into prepared baking pan. Bake 25–30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean.
- 4.** Cool in pan 10 minutes.
- 5.** Use a fork to pierce holes in cake. Slowly pour the sweetened condensed milk, evaporated milk and chocolate milk over the cake.
- 6.** Allow cake to cool completely. Cover and chill overnight in the refrigerator.
- 7. TOPPING** In another bowl, beat whipping cream, powdered sugar and vanilla until light and fluffy.
- 8.** Spread over cake and top with chocolate chips.

SERVES 12

TCP Follow Vianney Rodriguez while she cooks in Cocina Gris at sweetlifebake.com, where she features a recipe for Mole Braised Brisket.





Marlene's Chocolate Doughnuts

TINA WEBB
BLUEBONNET EC

Making homemade chocolate doughnuts is easier than you think. Webb's recipe, passed down through generations, begins with a batter that comes together in a snap.

- 1½ teaspoons distilled white vinegar**
- 1 cup milk**
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- 3 cups flour**
- 1 cup sugar, plus 4 tablespoons for dusting**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 3 teaspoons baking powder**
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon, divided use**
- 2 eggs**
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter, melted**
- 1½ ounces unsweetened chocolate (1½ squares), melted**
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract**
- 1 cup vegetable oil**

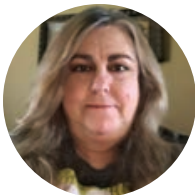
1. In a bowl, combine vinegar and milk and stir in baking soda to dissolve.
2. In another bowl, sift together flour, 1 cup sugar, salt, baking powder and 1 teaspoon cinnamon.
3. Stir in milk mixture, eggs, butter, chocolate and vanilla.
4. Roll out dough to ½-inch thickness on a floured surface, adding additional flour if dough seems too moist.
5. Cut dough into doughnuts using a doughnut cutter.

CONTINUED >

\$500 WINNER

Hershey Bar Chocolate Cake

KAREN HOLMES
JASPER-NEWTON EC



This customer favorite at the tearoom for which Holmes baked became her husband's requested birthday cake each year. Rich, gooey cake layers sandwiched between thick, fluffy icing is a chocolate lover's dream.

SERVES 12



CAKE

- 2 cups flour**
- ½ cup sugar**
- 1 teaspoon baking soda**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder**
- 3 eggs**
- ½ cup buttermilk**
- 1 cup water**
- 1 cup vegetable oil**
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract**

FROSTING

- 1 package cream cheese (8 ounces), room temperature**
- 2 cups sugar**
- 1 cup powdered sugar**
- 1 container whipped topping (12 ounces)**
- 4-ounce chocolate bar, chopped**
- ½ cup chopped pecans**

1. **CAKE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat two 9-inch round cake pans with nonstick spray.
2. In a bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and cocoa powder.
3. In another bowl, whisk together eggs, buttermilk, water, oil and vanilla.
4. Pour wet ingredients over dry ingredients. Mix well for about 2 minutes.
5. Divide batter evenly between cake pans. Bake 30 minutes.
6. Let cakes cool and remove from pans.
7. **FROSTING** In another bowl, cream together cream cheese, sugar and powdered sugar.
8. Fold in whipped topping.
9. Spread half the frosting over one cake. Top with second cake and spread remaining frosting over top.
10. Decorate with chopped chocolate and pecans.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

FROZEN TREATS DUE FEBRUARY 10

We all know it won't be too long before we're trying to beat the heat. Share your favorite recipes for cold desserts—ice creams, popsicles and beyond—for a chance to win \$500. Go online and submit your favorite by February 10.



RECIPES CONTINUED

6. Heat oil to medium-high in a medium skillet and fry doughnuts until golden-brown on both sides.
7. In a small bowl, combine 4 tablespoons sugar and remaining 1 teaspoon cinnamon and dust over hot doughnuts.

MAKES ABOUT 24-30 DOUGHNUTS

Chocolate Cobbler

LINDA J. MOORE
SOUTH PLAINS EC

Moore says she prefers dark chocolate cocoa powder in the batter of this family favorite, which comes out of the oven fudgy and brownielike.

BATTER

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 4 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder



- 2 cups flour
 - 2 teaspoons baking powder
 - 1/4 teaspoon salt
 - 1 cup milk
 - 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- TOPPING
- 2 cups sugar
 - 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
 - 3 cups boiling water
 - Whipped topping (optional)
 - Unsweetened cocoa powder (optional)

1. BATTER Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Melt butter in oven in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish, removing from oven once butter has melted.
3. In a bowl, stir together sugar, cocoa powder, flour, baking powder, salt, milk and vanilla. Spoon mixture over melted butter, but do not stir.
4. TOPPING In another bowl, stir together sugar and cocoa powder and sprinkle over batter in pan.
5. Pour boiling water over all, but do not stir. Bake until top has set, 35-40 minutes.
6. Allow cobbler to cool 15 minutes. Serve with whipped topping and dust with cocoa powder, if desired.

SERVES 8

Not enough chocolate? You'll find many more recipes in our online archive. Just search "chocolate."

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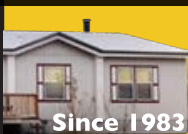


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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Texas' Heartbeat

San Felipe de Austin was home for the first Texans 200 years ago

BY CHET GARNER

IT WAS EARLY MORNING, and I was flying down Interstate 10 with my radio on full blast, a fresh cup of coffee in my hand and the air conditioning cranked. Needless to say, it was a far cry from the way the first pioneers traveled through this same stretch of Texas in the 1820s to settle one of our most important towns.

I needed to connect with my past and so I set my GPS for the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site in Sealy.

Nestled on the banks of the Brazos River, this charming site was once the headquarters for Stephen F. Austin's colony and is now a fascinating glimpse into the lives of early Texans. I stepped into the museum and was amazed at the interactive exhibits, artifacts and displays that told the story of how Austin led 297 families—the Old Three Hundred—here and established the unofficial capital of Texas. This act of courage earned Austin the title of the Father of Texas.

For more than a decade, San Felipe was a major hub, and everyone important to the Texas Revolution passed through here.

I walked the timeline of how the town grew exponentially but was then abandoned and burned to the ground in a moment of fear known as the Runaway Scrape in 1836. Until recently, visitors had to use their imagination to envision the bustling townscape. But today, visitors can step inside meticulously recreated buildings, including a cabin and Austin's empresario office. Fully costumed reenactors transported me back 200 years.

Visiting San Felipe gave me a new appreciation for the lifestyle and struggle of Texans. Whether you're a history enthusiast, a nature lover or simply need to be reminded of how thankful you are for modern conveniences, this is a must-see destination. ■

ABOVE Chet, right, with Bryan McAuley, manager at the San Felipe de Austin State Historic Site.

TCP Join Chet as he sees life as the Old Three Hundred did. And see all his 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.

FEBRUARY

07

Laredo [7–10] Birding Festival, (956) 718-1063, laredobirdingfestival.org

08

Brenham [8–11, 15–18, 22–25] The Crucible, (979) 830-8358, unitybrenham.org

09

Boerne [9–10] Chocolate Walk, (830) 248-1635, ci.boerne.tx.us

Fredericksburg [9–11, 16–18, 23–25] How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

10

Amarillo Triosarachops Devours, (806) 376-8782, amarillosymphony.org

Round Top Valentine's Concert and Bybee Library Fundraiser and Reception, (979) 249-3129, festivalhill.org

Surfside Beach Marathon and Half Marathon, surfsidebeachmarathon.com

Bay City [10, 16–18, 23–29, March 1–2] Matagorda County Fair, (979) 245-2454, matagordacountyfair.com

15

Alpine [15–17] Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering, (432) 216-2167, lonestarcowboypoetry.com

16

Brenham [16–17] Texas Trails Quilt Show, friendshipquiltguild.weebly.com

Waller [16–17] Chili When It's Chilly Cook-Off, chiliwhenitschilly.org

17

Lake Jackson A Celebration of American Black Composers, (979) 265-7661, bcfas.org

San Felipe Nature Talks: Invasives and Exotics, (512) 461-4780, tpwd.texas.gov

19

Brenham [19-24] Fortnightly Club Annual Used Book Sale, (979) 830-5665, visitbrenhamtexas.com

23

Luling [23-24] American Legion Post 177 Chili and BBQ Cook-Off, (512) 554-5389, facebook.com/legion177

24

Victoria Tchaikovsky Spectacular, (361) 576-4500, victoriasymphony.com

26

Decatur [26-March 3] Wise County Youth Fair, wcyouthfair.org

29

Brownsville [29-March 2] Charro Days, (956) 542-4245, charrodaysfiesta.com

MARCH

01

San Angelo [1-2] Brews, Ewes & BBQ; (325) 655-2345; facebook.com/brewsewesbbq

02

Huntsville Texas Independence Day and Gen. Sam Houston's Birthday Celebration, (936) 291-9726, huntsvilletexas.com

TCP Submit Your Event

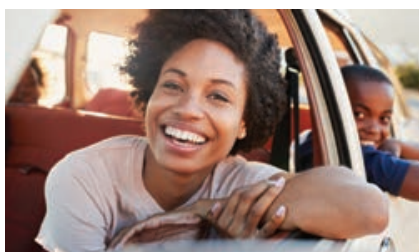
We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your May event by March 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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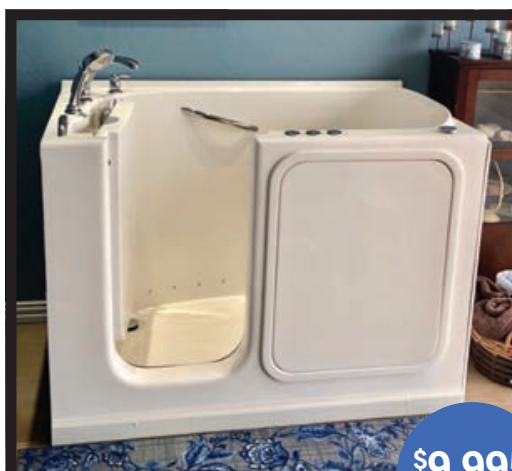
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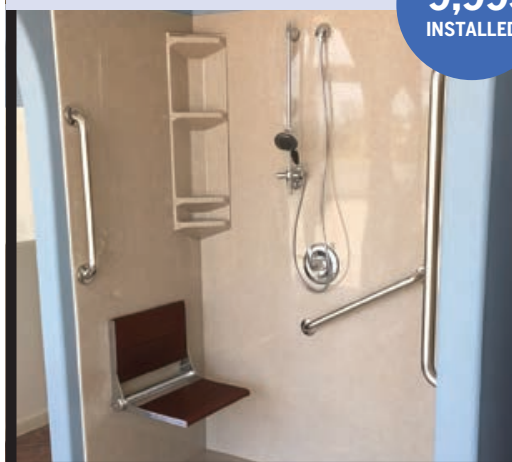


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Vibrant Color

The sun rises, and the world becomes alive with color. As we marvel at hues both artificial and natural, some photographers are fortunate enough to capture the moment with vivid clarity. Come along as we wind down the back trails to see what catches the eye.

CURATED BY GRACE FULTZ

1 KRISTEN BROWN
PEDERNALES EC

A grackle finds something to eat on the trail at Brushy Creek Park in Cedar Park.

2 MARK HOLLY
BANDERA EC

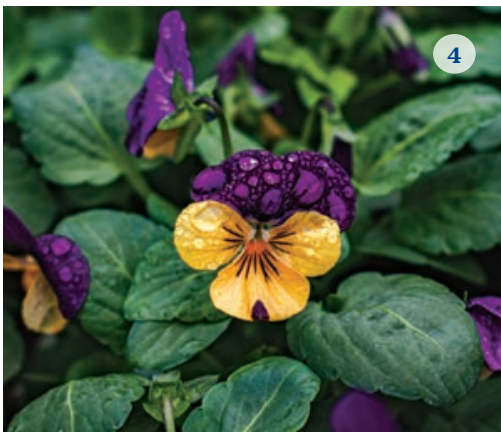
An iconic San Antonio holiday scene on the Riverwalk.

3 DANNY VIVIAN
NUECES EC

"A fiery sunrise on a summer morning on Mustang Beach, the most beautiful sunrise spot in Texas."

4 ALLISON MORROW
WOOD COUNTY EC

A horned violet.



Upcoming Contests

DUE FEB 10 Food and Cooking
DUE MAR 10 Shells and Scales
DUE APR 10 Textures



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

TCP See Focus on Texas on our website for many more Vibrant Color photos from readers.



Progress by Design

Beverly L. Greene framed a future for architects like her

BY ARIANNA CANNON
ILLUSTRATION BY
JOHN JAY CABUAY

I KNEW AT A YOUNG AGE that I wanted to change the world.

What I didn't know was how to go about doing it or even who I was to think that I could change the world. I did know that I was drawn to architecture. Maybe that would be my purpose, the mode by which I would change the world.

But less than 100 years ago, I couldn't have pursued that purpose.

Beverly L. Greene needed to come along first. In 1942, she became the first known female African American licensed architect in the U.S. In a field dominated by white men, she stayed true to herself and pursued a path into the unknown.

She earned a degree in architectural engineering, overcame preconceived notions—even being forced to move to New York due to a lack of opportunities

for a Black female architect in Chicago—and persisted.

"I wish that young [Black] women would think about this field," she said in an interview. "I wish some others would try it."

I answered that rallying call by enrolling as an architecture student at Texas Tech University in 2021, knowing full well that despite the many years that have passed since Greene's historic achievements, the playing field is still not level.

While history was made in 2020 as the number of licensed female Black architects reached 500, the national registrar reported that just 0.5% of licensed architects were Black women. Not even 1% of architects look like me.

But if Greene could achieve all that she did—including working on the UNESCO headquarters in Paris—during segregation and a world war, then the only limitations on the legacy I create are me.

It's possible that pursuing architecture will have no effect on a global scale, and it's possible that I'll face criticism and setbacks. It's even highly likely that I will fail in this field, which has a higher dropout rate than engineering and medicine.

If learning about Greene taught me anything, it's that success in life is often-times transient and short-lived, but your effect on others—your creations, all those beautiful gifts—those outlive you.

So if someone asked me today what I want my life or my career to look like, I won't tell them that I want to help people in an unconventional but impactful way. I won't tell them that I want to create bonds through and with the built environment. I won't even tell them that I want to design a world in which everyone has access to safe, sustainable and affordable shelter.

Instead I'll tell them this: I want to be remembered like Beverly L. Greene because I helped shape the future for those who came after me. ■

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