

ARE THERE ALLIGATORS
IN MINEOLA?

THERE'S NO KNIFE
LIKE BOWIE'S

A PIONEERING
ARCHITECT INSPIRES

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2024

Perfect Fit

The pieces fall into
place for Texas
puzzle-makers



**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 16

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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*

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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 WORTHEY
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.

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.



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 VIVARD | 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

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor
Austin, TX 78701

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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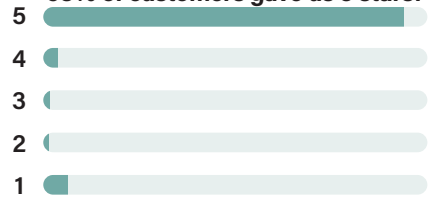
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Woodson Lumber, Caldwell

For Jim and Harrie Woodson, creating a family business was a winding — and muddy — journey. After their mother died in 1912, the brothers left Missouri for Southern California. They found jobs at a lumberyard there, working themselves “black and blue,” Harrie later wrote. But their toil paid off. With the money they saved, the brothers moved to Caldwell in Burleson County and bought their own business, which became Woodson Lumber Co. in 1916. Back then, the town’s streets were unpaved, and mule teams trudged through deep mud to pull the Woodsons’ delivery wagons. Sometimes it took a team of oxen to haul a load of feed across the street, Harrie wrote later. From the original Caldwell location, the business grew to add six other stores around Texas, selling lumber, hardware, building materials, farm and ranch supplies, lawn and garden products, and other goods. The Caldwell branch has been renovated and expanded over the years, but some lumber bins there date to before 1916. Four generations — 12 Woodson descendants and spouses — have worked, or still work, for the family business. Ann Woodson Yager Chapman, Harrie’s granddaughter, succeeded her father, Tom Yager, as CEO in 1998. She credits their longevity to close partnerships with all members of their communities, from local governments to churches, schools and generations of customers. “We played — and continue to play — a role in building the great state of Texas, from the days of horse-drawn wagons to 18-wheelers,” Chapman said. “That’s an honor for us.” — Sarah Beckham



Top: Nathan Jones, left, and Jose Rubio at work at Woodson Lumber in Caldwell in December. Sarah Beal photo. Above: Photo circa early 1900s courtesy Burleson County Historical Commission.

Our communities, past and present

History is alive and essential to Bluebonnet-area towns. That's why examples still stand, from busy Main Streets to quiet back roads.



Stories by Addie Broyles, Sarah Beckham and Sara Abrego

Long before cars or electricity, resilient men and women built lives in Central Texas. Immigrants and settlers were determined to make this rugged land their home. Many towns were settled more than 200 years ago — some through forceful means — in the vast 3,800-square-mile area currently powered by Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. Crops and cattle transformed Caldwell, Brenham, Lockhart, Elgin and other communities into bustling centers of commerce by the early 1900s. Century-old photos reveal many buildings erected then still stand today. Horse-drawn wagons filled dusty Main Streets, new merchants opened their doors, and businesses built from local brick and stone rose in downtowns. Comparing those images with photos from today, you can see what has changed and what remains. Generations of families in our communities understood the importance of their past, and residents today continue to preserve these pieces of their history. Bluebonnet, a relative newcomer to the region, was founded in 1939. As the cooperative marks its 85th anniversary, we honor our communities' pasts and look forward to a shared future.

More Past and Present photos on the following six pages



Old Rock Front Saloon, McDade

The Old Rock Front Saloon is the oldest building in McDade, a small community incorporated in 1870 southeast of Elgin. The saloon was built in 1874 by John Dempsey Nash, a veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto nearly 40 years earlier. At the intersection of Old Highway 20 and Waco Street, the saloon was preceded by two wooden saloons, both of which burned down. The origin of the large stones that gave the original saloon building its name still baffle local historians. The railroad, completed in 1869, brought people and supplies to what was — and still is — a quiet community. But the Old Rock Front Saloon was home to occasional mayhem in the early years, the site of revenge shootings and deaths. The most notorious, in 1883, is known by many as the Christmas Day Shoot-Out and was such a dust-up that the local historical society has been re-enacting it each December in recent years. The saloon closed in 1903, and from 1908 to 1933 the building was the local post office. Other early buildings sprung up along that stretch of road. Between the 1930s and the 1960s, the old saloon housed various grocery stores and cafes, and since the mid-1960s, it has been home to the McDade



Top: Sarah Beal photo, late 2023.

Above: Circa 1875 photo courtesy McDade Historical Museum.

Historical Museum. Now the saloon houses artifacts from the days when the community was a busy trading center in Bastrop County. The museum hosts chili suppers and educational events to keep the area's storied past alive.

— Addie Broyles



Old Masonic Lodge, Smithville

Smithville's first buildings popped up in the 1870s, but when the railroad arrived in 1887, the burgeoning downtown moved nearer to the busy rail line and new depot. In 1903, the W.J. Nixon Order of the Masonic fraternal organization built a narrow, three-story building with an extended brick parapet at 301 Main St. The Masonic lodge was the tallest building in Bastrop County for many years. The Masons leased out the first two floors, and met on the top floor until the 1970s, when they moved to a building on Wilkes Street. Many different businesses occupied the bottom floors of the original lodge over the years, including Hainey's Grocery, which sold dry goods to area residents until 1930. It was also the site of an auto supply store and a furniture showroom with a radio repair shop in one corner. Most recently, the Fat Cat Lounge and Cafe, a restaurant and live music venue, has made the building its home. The upper floors have been converted to loft apartments. Located across the street from the Texas Theater, which was built in 1904, the Masonic Temple is one of about 30 historic buildings still standing in downtown Smithville.

— Addie Broyles

Top: Sarah Beal photo, late 2023.
Bottom: Photo, taken several decades after the lodge was built in 1903, courtesy Smithville Heritage Society.



Downtown Square, Lockhart

Lockhart's historic downtown is evolving once more, with music venues, boutiques, new restaurants, a wine and book shop, and an art gallery. But the past remains preserved: More than 20 historic buildings still stand around the town square. Just north of the historic courthouse — which was built in 1894 and renovated in 2000 — is a stretch of seven buildings built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. On one corner, the Brock building, 101 E. San Antonio St., harkens back to a time after the Civil War, when the bustling cattle and cotton town was a launching point for the Chisholm Trail. Andrew Brock, a local business baron who helped develop Lockhart, built the three-story red brick building in 1898 to house a dry goods store. It's one of 12 buildings Brock financed that are still occupied today. Another just a few doors down, at 107 E. San Antonio, was originally a saloon and still bears Brock's initials, A.L.B. Today it is home to a clothing shop, Rollfast Ranchwear. Next door are several still-standing buildings from 1902, including the former site of L. Swartz and Co.'s dry goods store, and a JCPenney store in 1994 that today is home



Facing page: Joe Stafford photo, November 2023.
Above: 1905 photo courtesy Caldwell County Historical Commission.

to Southwest Museum of Clocks and Watches. The discovery of oil ushered in the town's second boom in the 1920s and the founding of several legendary barbecue stops, launching a dining tradition that's still hot in Lockhart.

— Addie Broyles



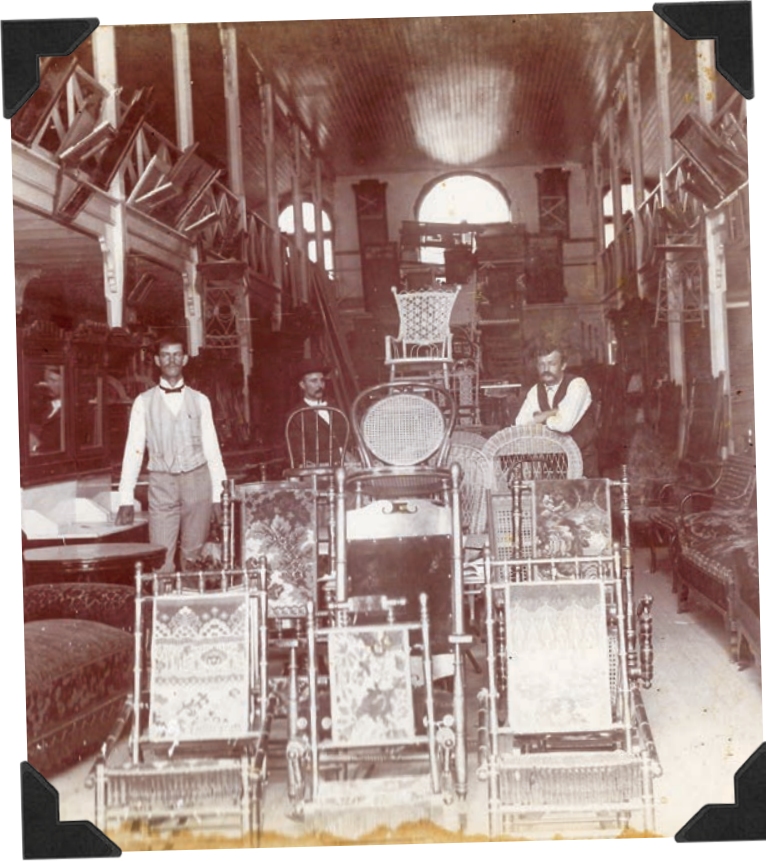
Simon Theatre, Brenham

In the 1920s, the James Simon family of Brenham, owners of the local opera house, hired Alfred C. Finn, the architect behind the San Jacinto Monument, to build a Beaux-Arts Classical Revival-style building. There, they hoped to offer vaudeville performances, silent films, “talkies” and a ballroom for residents of the economic capital of Washington County. The Simon Theatre, at 111 W. Main St., opened in 1925 and it immediately became something bigger: a cultural center that ushered Brenham into a golden era of entertainment. Sadly, James Simon passed away before the theater was completed. Later, the theater was sold to the Stuckert family, and multiple generations of that family ran it for almost 50 years. The theater closed in the 1980s. At one point afterward, it housed a Chinese restaurant. In 2003, the building, in need of repairs, was purchased by Brenham Main Street Historical Preservation Inc., which spent the next 13 years — and more than \$1 million — refurbishing it. In 2016, the theater reopened as the Barnhill Center at Historic Simon Theatre, with a 321-seat auditorium and a renovated lobby. The bright lights of the original theater’s vertical sign, or blade, still surround the Simon name, and the venue continues to draw crowds for movies, comedy shows, tribute bands and bona fide stars such as Ricky Skaggs. Inside the lobby, you’ll find the Washington County Visitor Center and, on the second floor, a 220-person ballroom and smaller conference hall are available for rent. Get more information at thebarnhillcenter.com or call 979-337-7240.

— Addie Broyles



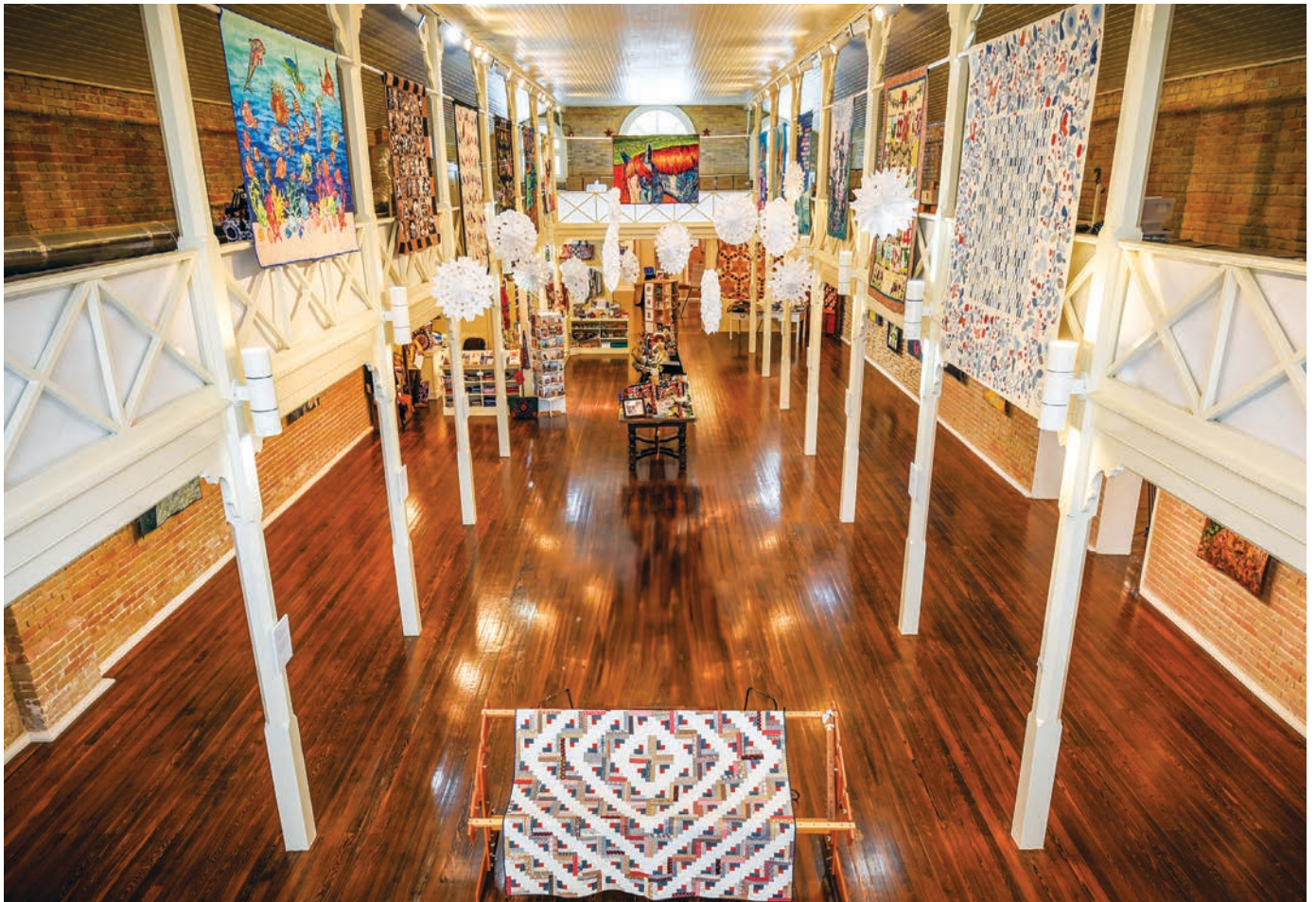
Top: Sarah Beal photo, late 2023. Above: 1925 photo courtesy Brenham Heritage Museum.



Texas Quilt Museum, La Grange

In May 1892, Frank Reichert moved his business into the furniture store he had built at 140 W. Colorado St. in La Grange. The retail hub thrived, and in 1907 Reichert expanded into the building at 136 W. Colorado. Even though the store suffered a major blow from a devastating 1913 flood, causing \$4,000 in damage — about \$125,000 in today's dollars — the buildings survived, and the store bounced back. In 1922, it became known as Reichert and Kneip and then Kneip Furniture Company from 1941-1974. Other incarnations followed, including Sweitzer Hardware and Furnishings, Sports-n-Stuff, the Dusty Rose antiques store and a J.C. Penney catalog store. In 2011, the old Reichert store and neighboring building took on new life as the Texas Quilt Museum. Today, the museum attracts visitors from around the world and is home to the largest quilt research library in the southwestern United States. Guided by the Gensler architecture firm, the careful restoration of the buildings that house the museum has been recognized by Preservation Texas and other groups. Visitors can stroll the 10,000-plus square feet of display space, appreciating both the artistry of the quilts and the restoration of original building features like the hardwood floors. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays. For more information, visit texasquiltmuseum.org or call 979-968-3104.

— Sarah Beckham



Top: 1892 photo courtesy Fayette Heritage Museum and Archives. Above: Sarah Beal photo, late 2023.

The General Store, Lexington

Long ago, Lexington residents in need of goods headed to a general store that became a family-owned legacy for generations. The Hester Store was founded in 1868 by German immigrant Nicholas Hester. After his death, his widow kept it going, overseeing construction of a new location downtown in 1893. Across decades, the store in Lee County was run by families connected through marriage: the Hesters, the Dowdys and the Engelharts. Hester son-in-law W. S. Dowdy took over in 1896 and the Dowdys operated it until 1917. Then Henry Engelhart, a Hester son-in-law, took over, and his family operated it for another 28 years. The building was torn down in 1967 and its site is now a vacant lot across from the Lexington Log Cabins. A few blocks away, though, Jean Dowdy, 91 — the granddaughter-in-law of W.S. Dowdy and Germana “Monnie” Hester Dowdy — carries on the family’s retail tradition. Jean retired from her job at a medical office more than 30 years ago but quickly got bored. She bought an old Ford dealership at 608 N. Rockdale St. and christened it “The Dowdy House.” Today she sells antiques, greeting cards and gift items there. While the original Dowdy family merchants rang up purchases on a big, blocky cash register, Jean scans customers’ credit cards with an iPhone or iPad.



— Sarah Beckham

Top: Sarah Beal photo of Jean Dowdy in The Dowdy House store, which is open 10 a.m. -5 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday. Right: Photo courtesy Lee County Historical Society.



Above: Joe Stafford photo, late 2023. Right: 1916 photo courtesy Elgin Depot Museum

Railroad Depot, Burton

More than 140 years ago, the town of Burton in Washington County was a stop for trains carrying livestock, lumber, cotton and people traveling between Brenham and Austin on the Houston and Texas Central Railroad. During the depot's heyday, steam engines pulled trains into Burton four times a day. The original depot burned down in 1898, but was rebuilt and stood witness to passenger train travel until 1951. The last freight train rolled through Burton in 1980. The old depot building had been moved, but the Burton Heritage Society bought it, moved it back near its original location and restored it in 1990. Today, the society keeps Burton's history alive for visitors inside the old depot. Items on display include railroad workers' tools, an old ticket counter, toys and other pieces of the town's past. Even signatures scribbled with pieces of coal by long-ago train workers remain on the walls of the old baggage and freight rooms. The platform where passengers stood more than a century ago, listening for a distant train whistle, can still stoke the imagination. The depot, which holds state and national historic designations, is 15 miles west of Brenham, at 507 N. Railroad St. It is open to visitors from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. the first and third Saturdays of the month. Call 979-803-0393 for information.

— Sara Abrego



Top right: Sarah Beal photo of depot, late 2023.

Below right: 1939 photo courtesy Burton Heritage Society.



Main Street, Elgin

In Elgin's historic downtown district, you'll find more than 30 buildings dating back to the late 1800s and early 1900s, nearly all built with the town's famous bricks. This stretch of Main Street showcases several of them, including the still-standing Simon and Miller buildings. Simon's Department Store, at the far left, was built in 1906 at 30 N. Main St. It sold clothing for many years, and then became a furniture store that was divided into two buildings. Today it houses a bustling coffee shop and dance studio, plus two residences. The two-story red brick Miller building next door, 34 Main St., was built in 1890 and was one of the town's first banks. By World War II, it housed a domino hall that became a watering hole for soldiers training at nearby Camp Swift. In the decades after, the building housed the Merchants & Farmers State Bank, a hair salon and a financial advisor's office. Today it is home to McCrary Insurance, an independent agent representing Germania and other providers. In the back, inside a 1910 addition, The Healthy Spot smoothie cafe serves visitors. In the next block, the first building's second story burned in the 1950s, but the first floor was restored and became home to Upchurch's Drug Store until the 1990s. The rest of the block has several buildings circa 1900-1910: Singleton's Grocery and Frost Barber Shop, Joe Toggery's Building, and the O'Conner and Bengston buildings. Elgin remains a brick mecca: Three manufacturers still operate there, maintaining the town's title as "The Brick Capital of the Southwest." — Addie Broyles

15 apprentice lineworkers advance

Two graduates began their co-op careers as interns; four additional staff members receive advanced technical training certifications

By Sidni Carruthers

FIFTEEN APPRENTICE lineworker graduates at Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative are ready to join dozens of other journeyman lineworkers who keep electricity flowing to co-op members across its 3,800-square-mile service area.

Of the 15, two began as lineworker interns at Bluebonnet in 2019, completing a six-month training program before beginning years of apprentice training.

Another four Bluebonnet employees recently completed specialized training programs: one in advanced electric meter work, one in substation operations and two in control center operations.

Each program has different study, testing, training and work requirements. The lineworker apprentice program at Bluebonnet requires 8,000 hours of on-the-job learning, which includes 672 hours of technical instruction — typically a four-year commitment.

The recent apprentice graduates have obtained U.S. Department of Labor certification as lineworkers.

“I grew up in the Brenham area with Bluebonnet folks all around. When the apprenticeship opened up and I had an opportunity to work here, I took the chance,” said Brenham-based journeyman Ryan Quinton, one of the 15 graduates. “There is always something to learn out here, but I have a good crew that makes sure we are safe and can serve Bluebonnet’s members.” He added that the best parts of his job are being able to work outside and do something meaningful.

Many of the apprentice graduates brought knowledge and skills from previous training and other jobs.

“Before coming to work at Bluebonnet, I worked as a heavy-machine operator,” said Matt Mole, now a Bluebonnet journeyman working in Maxwell. “That time taught me the importance of safety, paying attention to what is happening around you and the importance of teamwork. The best part about working at Bluebonnet is the camaraderie that I feel with everyone.”



Including this year’s group, 139 Bluebonnet lineworker apprentices have graduated from the program since it began in 2004.

During their hundreds of hours of classroom instruction and thousands of hours of on-the-job training, apprentices focus on learning how to build overhead and underground power lines, restore power, repair and replace equipment and connect meters.

Garrett Gutierrez, field superintendent in Bastrop, is proud of the program and the quality of service it allows Bluebonnet to provide. “Most of the guys who go through our program are from around the Bluebonnet service area and are Bluebonnet members, too,” Gutierrez said. “They take pride in their work, and that shows when they are working. It is great to see them be able to work in their communities.”

The most recent Bluebonnet apprentice graduates, in addition to Quinton and

Mole, are Nick Baker, Joseph Carrillo, Caleb Clay, James Holder, Casey Jacobs, Matt Jones, Stephen LeFrance, Parker Redwine, Bubba Townsend, Garrett Urban, Rhett Vellier, Bryan Woods and John Zamora.

Clay and Baker, both from Bastrop, began their Bluebonnet careers as lineworker interns in 2019. The intern program, which started in 2018, provides six months of technical instruction in line work. To advance into the apprentice program, participants must also obtain a power-pole climbing certification and a commercial driver’s license.

“I was interested in the internship program because I knew Bluebonnet was a great place to work, and there is always a need for lineworkers,” said Baker, who began the program after graduating from Bastrop High School. “Plus I already knew a few guys that were in the apprenticeship program. Having started as an intern and seeing what all it took to be a lineman at **APPRENTICES, continued on page 22**

to Bluebonnet's journeyman ranks



Graduating lineworker apprentice class of 2023

Above, from left: Stephen LeFrance, Ryan Quinton, Garrett Urban, Casey Jacobs, Rhett Vellier, Bryan Woods, John Zamora, Joseph Carrillo, Matt Mole, Bubba Townsend, James Holder, Matt Jones and Parker Redwine. At left are Caleb Clay and Nick Baker, two graduates who began their careers at Bluebonnet as lineworker interns.



4 employees earn advanced technical certifications



Hunter Adamek, control center operator



Anthony Garcia, power quality and metering technician



Bryn Janca, control center operator



John Russell, substation technician

Sarah Beal photos

Grants support 2 area volunteer fire departments

BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC Cooperative and the Lower Colorado River Authority recently provided grants to two volunteer fire departments and a community center as a part of LCRA's Community Development Partnership Program. Bluebonnet, one of LCRA's wholesale electric customers, is a partner in the grant

program that supports the co-op's members and the communities it serves. Applications for the upcoming round of grants will be accepted through July. Get more information about the program and a link to an application, when it is available, at lcra.org/cdpp.

A \$50,000 grant from Bluebonnet and LCRA will help the Southeast Caldwell County Volunteer Fire Department construct a building extension to house two fire trucks and firefighters' gear. The grant, along with \$25,000 in matching funds, will pay for the added space. Pictured, from left, are Rick Arnic, LCRA regional affairs representative; Patty Mundine, VFD president, secretary and firefighter; Margaret D. "Meg" Voelter, LCRA board member; Milton Shaw, Bluebonnet Board member; Tom Hamilton, VFD lieutenant and treasurer; and Jo Anna Gilland, Bluebonnet's Lockhart-area community representative.



A \$25,000 grant from Bluebonnet and LCRA will help the Maxwell Community Volunteer Fire Department buy rescue gear. The grant, along with \$8,230 in matching funds, will pay for essential materials for first responders. Pictured, from left, are Ambrose Garcia, firefighter; Rick Arnic, LCRA regional affairs representative; Alfredo Hernandez, firefighter; David Childress, fire chief; Margaret D. "Meg" Voelter, LCRA board member; Milton Shaw, Bluebonnet Board member; Mark Kirk, VFD operations manager and firefighter; Jo Anna Gilland, Bluebonnet's Lockhart-area community representative; and Hank Alex, Caldwell County deputy chief of emergency management.



LCRA photos

APPRENTICES Continued from page 20

Bluebonnet really solidified that this is what I wanted to do."

The internship program aims to hire candidates who live in the Bluebonnet region.

"We concentrate a lot on safety with these young guys," said Nick Barta, Bluebonnet safety and training supervisor. "Throughout the cooperative we focus on safety, but it is essential that when the interns start, they understand the importance of safety and how to think about it in all of their work."

Four Bluebonnet employees also received certifications for specialized work. Anthony Garcia, a power quality and metering technician, received training in troubleshooting meter problems and formulas for reading meters. John Russell, a substation technician, completed an apprenticeship to learn skills required to maintain and repair substation equipment. Two control center operators, Bryn Janca and Hunter Adamek, completed a 10-month program and proficiency exam to receive control center operator certifications.

Learn more about Bluebonnet's intern and apprenticeship programs at the cooperative, at bluebonnet.coop/careers.

Your voice, your co-op benefit

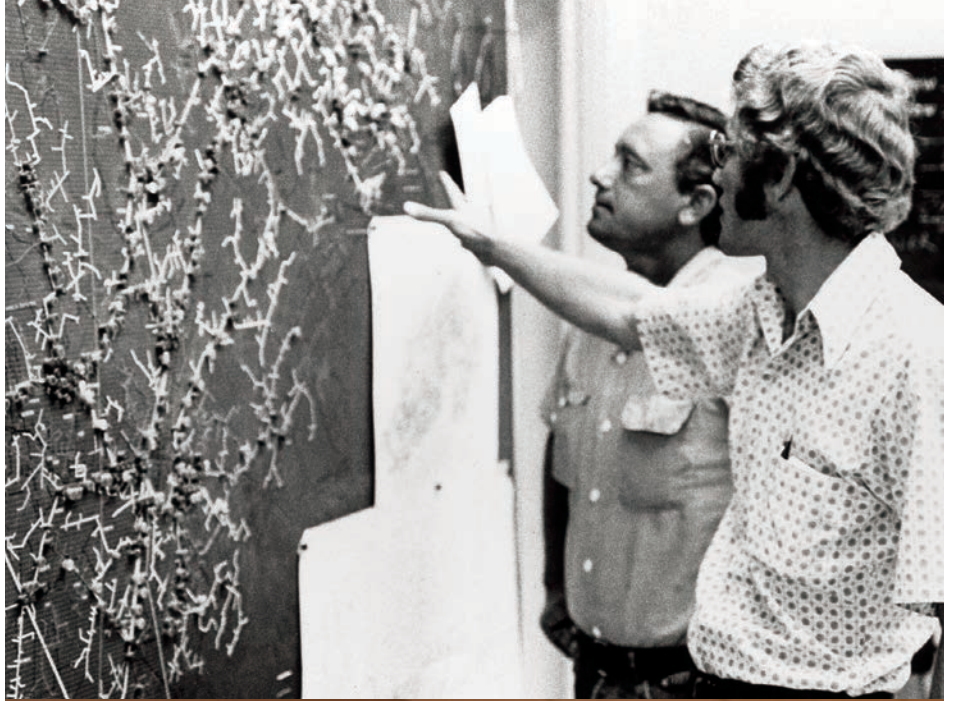
One benefit of being a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member is the opportunity to participate in cooperative business. Ensure your voice is heard by submitting your proxy voting form by May 7, 2024, or by attending the cooperative's Annual Meeting in person on May 14, 2024. Keep an eye on your mailbox: Your proxy voting form will arrive in March. Learn more about the process at bluebonnet.coop/annualmeeting.

OFFICE CLOSINGS

Bluebonnet offices will be closed Feb. 19 for Presidents Day. If you have a power outage, you can report it online at bluebonnet.coop, via our MyBluebonnet mobile app or by calling 800-949-4414. You can pay bills any time online, on our mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708 (select option 2 when prompted).

that was **THEN**

For decades, Bluebonnet employees relied on paper maps. Crews tracked down outages and restored power using large books of maps carried in their service trucks. Engineers and technicians planning the growth of the co-op's system worked from maps on walls. Representatives who took members' calls referred to the maps to help resolve problems.



this is **NOW**

Today, specially trained control-center operators use complex computer systems to identify power outages, manage restoration and constantly monitor our electric system. Line workers get information on laptop and tablet computers in order to repair and maintain more than 12,500 miles of line. Members can also use digital tools to track outages online and get text notifications on their phones.

Bluebonnet's control center operators are on the job 24/7 to ensure the cooperative provides safe and reliable power to its members.



Top: Donald Bell and Bennie Bieberstein, at Bluebonnet's Giddings headquarters in the mid-1970s, consult a map showing locations of poles and lines.

Above: Today, operator Bryn Janca monitors the cooperative's electric system in the control center.

In 2024, Bluebonnet celebrates 85 years of providing safe, reliable and affordable electric service to its fast-growing membership. Throughout the year, join us in celebrating this milestone as we honor our past and plan for the future.



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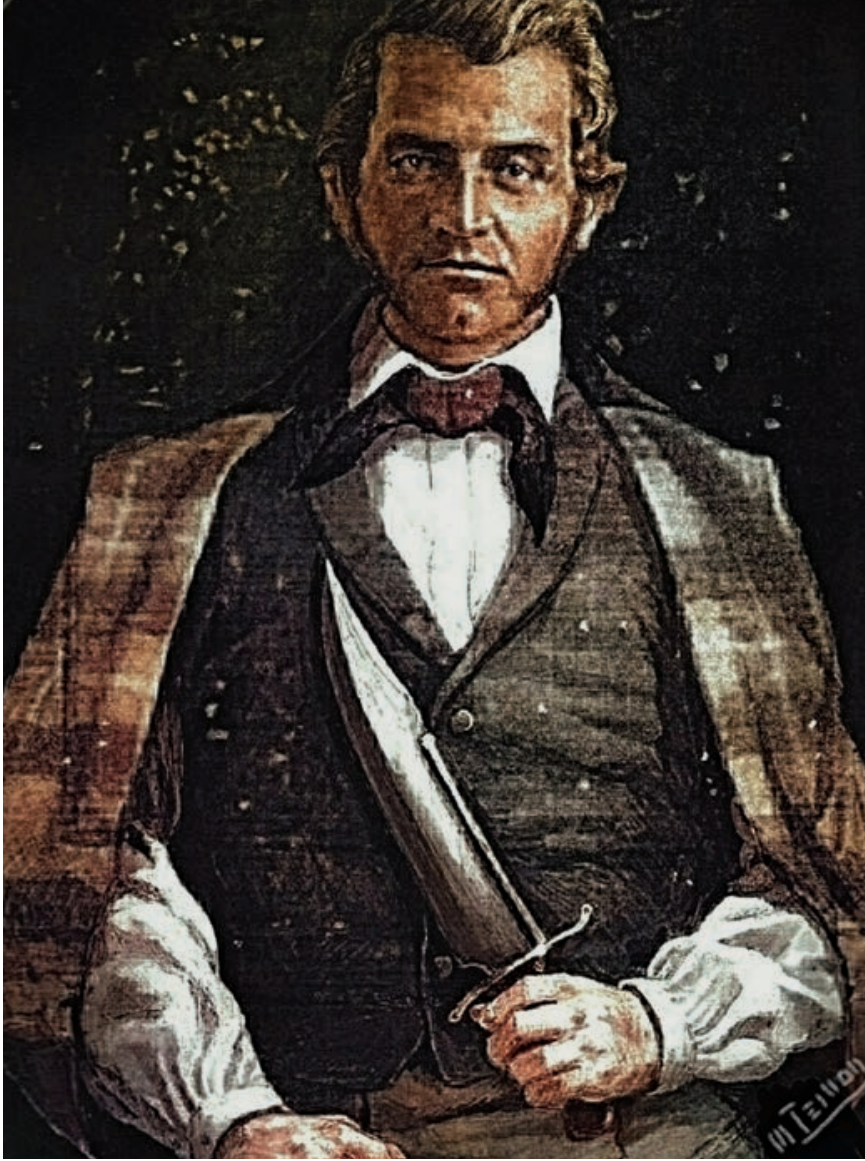
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TCP Listen as W.F. Strong narrates this story on our website.



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

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**

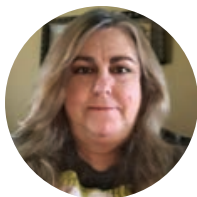
1. In a bowl, combine vinegar and milk and stir in baking soda to dissolve.
2. In another bowl, sift together flour, 1 cup sugar, salt, baking powder and 1 teaspoon cinnamon.
3. Stir in milk mixture, eggs, butter, chocolate and vanilla.
4. Roll out dough to ½-inch thickness on a floured surface, adding 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

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

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Texas' Heartbeat

San Felipe de Austin was home for the first Texians 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 Texians. 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 townsite. 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 Texians. 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

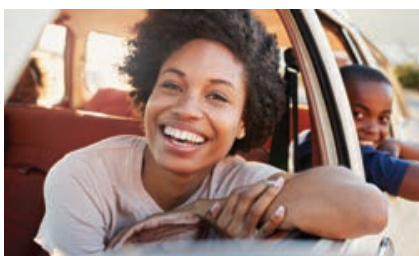
We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your May event by March 1, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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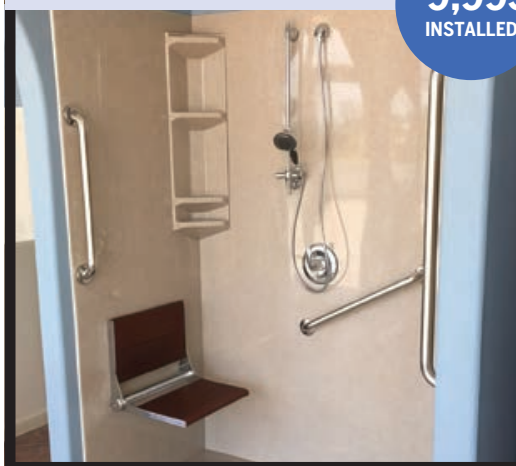


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Vibrant Color

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

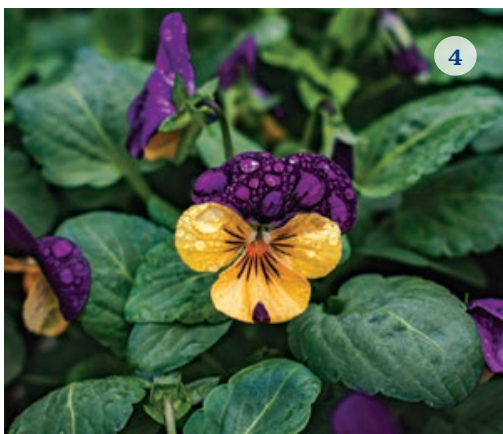
An iconic San Antonio holiday scene on the Riverwalk.

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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