

YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEWS

MAY 2020

Historic Plains Drawings

Horses' Lineage

Spirits of Seguin

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A white egret is perched on a dark, gnarled branch. The bird is facing right, with its long neck curved slightly. Its feathers are bright white, contrasting with the dark branch and the blurred background of green foliage. A nest made of dry sticks and twigs is visible on the branch below the bird.

## STARK BEAUTY

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Detail of a Kiowa drawing of a military officer and two Native Americans in U.S. military dress.

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By Charles Lohrmann

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#### Texas USA

*Hunting Topaz*

By Brenda Kissko

#### Texas Faces

*An Outsize Legacy*

By Lonn Taylor



### NEXT MONTH

**We Brake for Queso** A belt-busting, cheese-topped tour of the best Tex-Mex dishes in San Antonio—ground zero for the beloved cuisine.



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LEDGER ART: BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART. TEX-MEX: JODY HORTON



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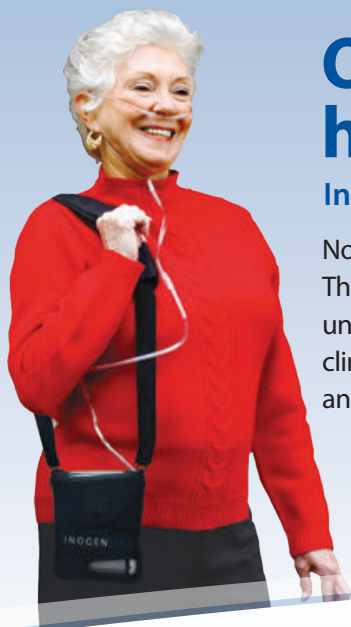


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**ON THE COVER** A great egret at the Stark Foundation's Shangri La Botanical Gardens in Orange. Photo by Julia Robinson

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## iViva Conjunto!

Of all the things I miss about Texas, dancing to a live conjunto band is at the top of the list [*Soul Music of South Texas*, March 2020].

BRUCE LAMB | VIA FACEBOOK

## Get to the Point

I kept looking for a reference to the "correct" pronunciation, according to my Texas-born and -raised husband, of the words barbed wire—"bob wire" [*Sharpening My Knowledge*, March 2020].

ANITA CARSWELL | GEORGETOWN PEDERNALES EC

**Editor's Note:** Check out Chet Garner's video with the story on our website. He notes the "proper" pronunciation, though it's a variation on this one.

## Masterful Illustration

I enjoyed the article but even much more so the clever illustration of crape murder [*Crape Murder*, February 2020]. Michael Koelsch is pure genius with his depiction of the terrorized housewife with the painting of her beloved crape myrtle tree, while outside, her menacing husband viciously commits the heinous act of crape murder. This illustration could easily be the cover of a midcentury Nancy Drew Mystery Stories I collected as a girl.

ELIZABETH WALTERS | BURNET PEDERNALES EC

Cut off crape myrtles as close to the ground as your saw can get. Then prune off subsequent suckers. Replace with native trees that support butterflies, hummingbirds and other native wildlife.

## Squeezebox Cues

The articles about the accordion just took me back to my childhood [*Soul Music of South Texas* and *Texas' Main Squeeze*, March 2020]. I grew up listening to my dad play the accordion and sing Czech songs. Talk about going down memory lane.

BARB SCHROEDER | SCHULENBURG | FAYETTE EC

Like the tallow tree people seem to love for its hardness, the cumulative effect of crape myrtles is that of a destructive invasive species.

JOE FLARITY | OAKHURST  
SAM HOUSTON EC

## Around the Clock

I really enjoyed the picture of the Wise County Courthouse in the March Letters. My wife's grandfather, Daniel Jensen, a jeweler and watchmaker, was hired back in the early years of the 20th century to keep the clock on top of that courthouse running properly. I wonder if anyone sees to the clock's functioning these days.

DAN TEED | MCKINNEY  
COSERV

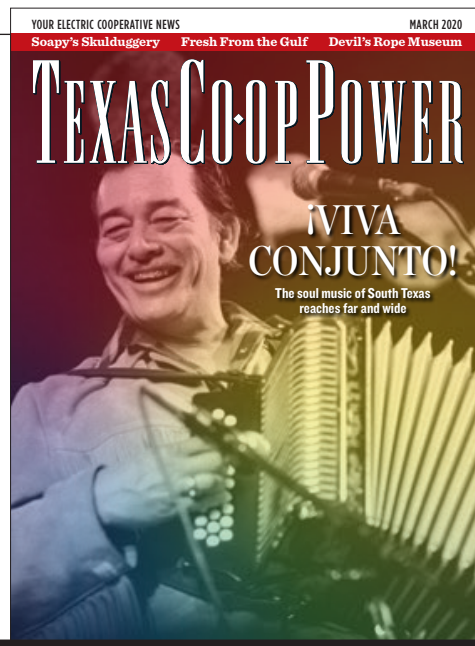
## A Mother's Love

Only a mother's love could have recognized that the picture of the raising of our American flag

over Iwo Jima included her son [A *Texan at Iwo Jima*, February 2020]. Belle Block recognized her son in that splendid image. Also, most amazing, she recognized him from his back in a crouching position. She must have had a million images stored of him in her memory and heart as he grew up.

FRED SMITH JR. | BUNA  
JASPER-NEWTON EC

I wonder how many Americans know that the picture taken by Joe Rosenthal was in fact the second flag raised on Mount Suribachi. The first flag raised was a smaller flag.



I write this to bring a little-known fact to the public's attention and to honor Cpl. Charles W. Lindberg, who passed in 2007 as the last living flag raiser on Mount Suribachi. He was in the squad of Marines responsible for the first flag raised, and I have a picture, autographed by him, of the squad during the first raising.

DONALD GRUBBS | VICTORIA  
VICTORIA EC

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

Texas Co-op Power

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## RURAL LIVING

# The Future Looks Bright

THE NATIONAL FFA ORGANIZATION reached a milestone late last year: 700,000 members. The student organization that supports and promotes agricultural education has chapters in all 50 states. Of course, the Texas chapter is the largest, with more than 137,000 members who “believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words but of deeds.”



## NATURE



THE FIRST  
CULTIVATED  
CARROTS  
WERE PURPLE  
OR YELLOW.

## TECH KNOWLEDGE

### Current Favorite

**One year into** committing his family to an electric vehicle, John Kent, in a column for *The Dallas Morning News*, called his Tesla “the best thing I’ve ever paid money for.”

**Kent said** the vehicle has easily handled trips to Oklahoma City, Austin, Houston and Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, with a range that tops out at about 264 miles.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

### Counting on You

*The 2020 U.S. census is well underway. The 2010 census showed that nearly half of all U.S. Latinos lived in two states: 28% in California, 19% in Texas.*



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

*The best part about being a mom is . . .*



► **Tell us how** you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or post them on our Facebook page. Please include your city and co-op.

Below are some of the responses to our March prompt: **Why do dogs always ...**

Quickly find a way into your heart?

AL AND JUDY WILSON | NORTHLAKE COSERV

Want to go outside as soon as I sit down to do something?

KAY STRICKLIN | SEGUIN  
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

Bark at doorbells on TV even if they've never heard a doorbell in real life?

EMILEE ENSMINGER | FORT WORTH  
TRI-COUNTY EC

Go to sleep so fast?

ELIZABETH AND GEORGE MORGAN  
SAN ANGELO | CONCHO VALLEY EC

Love us when we think there's nobody else who does?

MIKE CATES | BELLS | GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

Hate to have a bath but love to go for a swim in a muddy, algae-covered pond?

DARLA REGNER | BARTLETT | BARTLETT EC

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.

## LIFESTYLE

### SPLASH ACROSS TEXAS

**In search of a Texas-sized photo op this summer? Here are some pools that are Texas-shaped, too.**

**HOUSTON** The Marriott Marquis' 550-foot-long rooftop lazy river opened in 2016.

**KERRVILLE** The pool at the Holiday Inn Express has a lone star at the bottom that puts the city on the map.

**PLANO** The Texas Pool, a 168,000-gallon saltwater pool that opened in 1959, boasts a Panhandle diving board and South Texas wading area.



**Know of a Texas-shaped pool near you?**

Let us know: [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com).

## CO-OP PEOPLE

### Badgers Got Your Back



**When Taylor Electric Cooperative** asked students to submit designs for a billboard contest, one entry stood out from all the others to win the grand prize.

**Bailey Casady** at Merkel Elementary School drew fellow fifth grader Logan Malone, who is fighting cancer, alongside the school's mascot and "Badgers got your back."

"**This sweet student** showed us that her love of her community comes in their support of the Malone family and Logan as they go through a tough cancer battle," said Elizabeth McVey, Taylor EC public relations and communications manager. "It surprised the contest committee that a student so young would respond in such a way."

## SPORTS SECTION

### SPORT OF KING

**Two Texas-bred horses have won the Kentucky Derby: Assault in 1946 and Middleground in 1950. Both were from the King Ranch.**





# FIRMLY ROOTED

The Stark family lumber empire  
of Orange forged cultural destinations  
that offer art, history and nature



STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY JULIA ROBINSON



## THE STORY OF

the Stark and Lutchter families in Orange mirrors the rise of the East Texas economy after the Civil War. During the last quarter of the 19th century, grain milling, ranching and cotton were the region's top producers. The timberlands remained relatively untouched, and because forests were considered an impediment to arable farmland, timber acreage could be bought cheap.

Henry J. Lutchter, a lumberman from Pennsylvania, visited East Texas with his business partner in 1876 and moved to Orange, on the Sabine River, the following year. He purchased 500,000 acres of timberland across the Sabine in southwest Louisiana and built a state-of-the-art sawmill.

The expansion of railroads in Texas helped fill demand for lumber products ranging from barrel staves to wood siding, and Texas lumbering experienced a boom that continued until the Great Depression. Through this 50-year industry expansion, the Lutchter and Moore Lumber Company became a leader in the quantity and quality of finished lumber products in the state.

William Henry Stark, a native Texan working in the mill, married Lutchter's daughter, Miriam, and moved into management of the family business. That union of families would transform the Orange community over the next several decades.

In 21st-century Orange, the legacy of W.H. and Miriam Lutchter Stark, along with that of their son, H.J. Lutchter Stark, who went by Lutchter throughout his life, continues through



**Clockwise from opposite page: The W.H. Stark House is a 14,000-square-foot home built of cypress and longleaf pine in 1894. Henry J. Lutchter; Miriam, his daughter; and William Henry Stark, who married Miriam. The library of the Stark House.**

venues managed by the Stark Foundation: the W.H. Stark House, the Stark Museum of Art and the Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center.

"The Lutchter-Stark Family would have been some of the wealthiest in the state before the oil boom and still among the richest even after it," explains Joshua Cole, W.H. Stark House interpretation and programming manager.





The Stark House's dining room is set for a formal evening with one of the many sets of dinnerware the Stark family used.

## STARK MUSEUM OF ART

One block away from the Stark House waits the modern architectural contrast of the two-story Stark Museum of Art. Opened in 1978, the white marble building, with its 60,000 square feet of exhibition, storage and museum facility space, was designed to withstand hurricane winds of 200 mph.

The 9,000-piece museum collection emphasizes art of the American West, much of it collected by Lutch Stark. Iconic sculptures by Frederic Remington and Hermon Atkins MacNeil dominate the entry atrium. Remington's work is of a bucking bronco, and MacNeil's bronze depicts a Native American child learning from an elder. Porcelain sculptures of American birds by Dorothy Doughty line the atrium's walls, and weavings by Navajo women working in the post-reservation period hang from the balcony.

"The theme is exploring America's frontiers through the early 19th-century artists who traveled into the West primarily to

## W.H. STARK HOUSE

The W.H. Stark House, a 14,000-square-foot, 15-room Queen Anne revival mansion, is a Texas Historic Landmark and appears on the National Register of Historic Places. Completed in 1894 and inhabited by the family until 1936, the house was an architectural and cultural anchor for the nascent community of Orange and remains one of the few area mansions fully restored and open to the public.

"When this house was built, [there were] dirt streets and cowboys shooting guns in the air," says Cole. "This house, paving the streets, bringing electricity, the churches—all this is about domesticating what was a frontier border lumber boomtown."

The Stark home was not the largest in Orange or even the largest on Green Avenue when it was built. What set the house apart was its exquisite wood finishes. As the only surviving house of its size, it now dominates the neighborhood, with pitched gables and dormers, detailed woodwork, and wraparound porches.

The exterior walls combine two layers of diagonal cypress, Cole points out. "Whichever way the wind blows, this house gets tighter in a storm," he says. In the foyer, cypress and longleaf pine exude a warm glow, and pine panels, intricate moldings and detailed lathe work line most surfaces of the house.

"This home was not only gorgeous; it was completely modern with all the latest modern conveniences," Cole says. "It was fully electrified, with indoor plumbing, making it one of the very first homes in the world to have those core technologies."

At its peak in the early 20th century, the house was staffed by 15 full-time employees, including a cook, butler, maid, nurse, chauffeur, laundress and gardener, some of whom lived on the grounds in the carriage house and servants' quarters.

Visitors can tour three levels of beautifully preserved rooms lined with yellow silk wallpaper, original family furniture and rugs, original ceiling murals painted on canvas, formal porcelain dining sets and Brilliant Period cut glass.



A John James Audubon painting of mockingbirds from his personal copy of *Birds of America*, a signature piece at the Stark Museum of Art.

AUDUBON: COURTESY STARK MUSEUM OF ART





**Above: The Stark Museum houses 9,000 pieces from the 19th- and 20th-century American West. Right: The museum holds the only complete collection of the United States in crystal by Steuben glass, which includes engraved bowls depicting a scene or theme for each state.**

record and document what was then unknown,” says museum curator Sarah Boehme.

One of the museum’s signature pieces is John James Audubon’s personal copy of *Birds of America* in enormous double elephant folio, one of only 100 remaining in the world. “Audubon set out to record and document every species of American bird, to show them life-size and in their natural habitat,” Boehme explains. “To disseminate this information, he had to make 435 prints and produce them as a book.” The volume, set under glass, is 39.5 inches tall and 28.5 inches wide, and the book is opened to a bird that complements concurrent exhibitions.

Ron Tyler, retired director of Fort Worth’s Amon Carter Museum of American Art, explains that the Stark’s Audubon collection is important not only because it includes Audubon’s own portfolio but also because of the naturalist’s letters, documents, sketches and paintings.

Tyler also cites the Stark’s John Mix Stanley painting of the treaty scene between the Republic of Texas and Native Americans at Tehuacana Creek near Waco in 1843.

In a nearby, specially lit hall, crystal bowls by the Steuben



glass company glitter as if illuminated from within. They comprise the world’s only complete collection of the United States in crystal, which includes a specific motif for each of the 50 states and one more for the United States.

In another gallery, the work of Native American artists shifts the perspective on the

West from outsider to insider. Clothing, baskets, pottery, carvings and weavings by Navajo, Pueblo and Hopi artists interpret daily life and traditions.

Katrina Nelson Thomas, director of the four Stark Art and History Venues in Orange, explains the Stark Museum’s educational mission. “When students come, they see the work in the galleries, and then they make art inspired by something they see, so they always leave with a piece they made,” she says. “We’re trying to make that connection between the collection and the art that’s made.”





## SHANGRI LA BOTANICAL GARDENS AND NATURE CENTER

Less than 2 miles from the museum, visitors can walk through Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, named for the fictional Tibetan paradise described in the 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*. Shangri La is where Lutchter Stark cultivated azaleas and camellias in abundance and created a lake where he launched a houseboat for weekend escapes in the 1950s.

A cold winter devastated Shangri La's plants in 1958, and the gardens closed to the public. The land reverted to a wild state, but in 2008, the Stark Foundation reopened the restored gardens to the public. Shangri La now occupies 252 acres of gardens and wetlands, with an eco-boat tour and an egret rookery that includes a viewing blind where 50,000 visitors a year watch great egrets nest and raise their young.

"What Mr. Stark did was paint a picture with plants," says Jen-

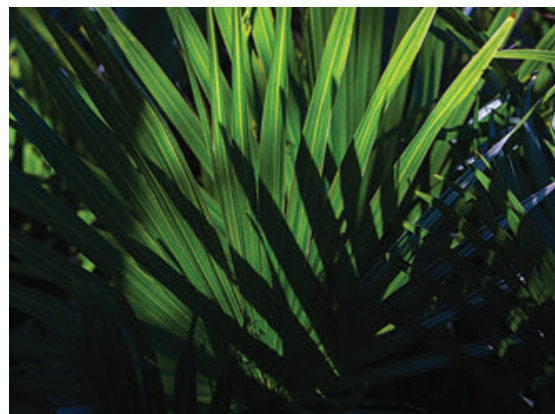
nifer Buckner, Shangri La's director of horticulture. "We honor that and our connection to the museum with garden 'rooms.' " Each section combines plantings that demonstrate an artistic character of line, shape, texture, contrast and color. In the shape garden, rows of dwarf yaupon form perfectly rounded bushes. The contrasts garden showcases flowers and leaves exhibiting colors from opposite sides of the color wheel.

The gardens revived Lutchter Stark's original obsession with camellias and azaleas. Each spring, the flowers bloom along the shore of Pond of the Blue Moon. Miriam Lutchter Stark's original epiphyte house overflows with orchids,

### WEB EXTRAS

► Read online for a link to 600-plus artworks in Stark collections. Call or go online to confirm hours of operation.





**Clockwise from opposite page: The boardwalk above the cypress-tupelo swamp at Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center; bottle tree sculpture; dwarf palmetto; and Bowring's cattleya orchids.**

bromeliads, ferns and lichens. Other areas include an edibles garden, a daylily collection and hanging gardens.

The majority of Shangri La's property lies along Adams Bayou and is most accessible via the boat tour. Elevated wooden walkways take visitors past the Nature Discovery Center toward the dock, which is surrounded by cattails, Texas saw hibiscus, rushes and lily pads as well as bald and pond cypress. "We even have some wild orchids that grow here," says Buckner, who always keeps an eye out for unique flora.

The property along the bayou preserves an untouched section of cypress-tupelo swamp, used as an outdoor classroom for local students. Kathleen Nelligan, an environmental educator, narrates a tour as the boat swings out onto the bayou. As guests motor quietly upriver, they catch sight of turtles sunning on logs or egrets and kingfishers taking flight above the water.

In one classroom, children learn about the swamp ecosystem firsthand. The classroom's A-frame structure rises out of the marsh

like a church, and rows of benches complete the look of a sanctuary.

"I really love teaching outside," says Nelligan. "The kids get out here and think, yay, we're out of school. But we are a school; we're just a school without walls."

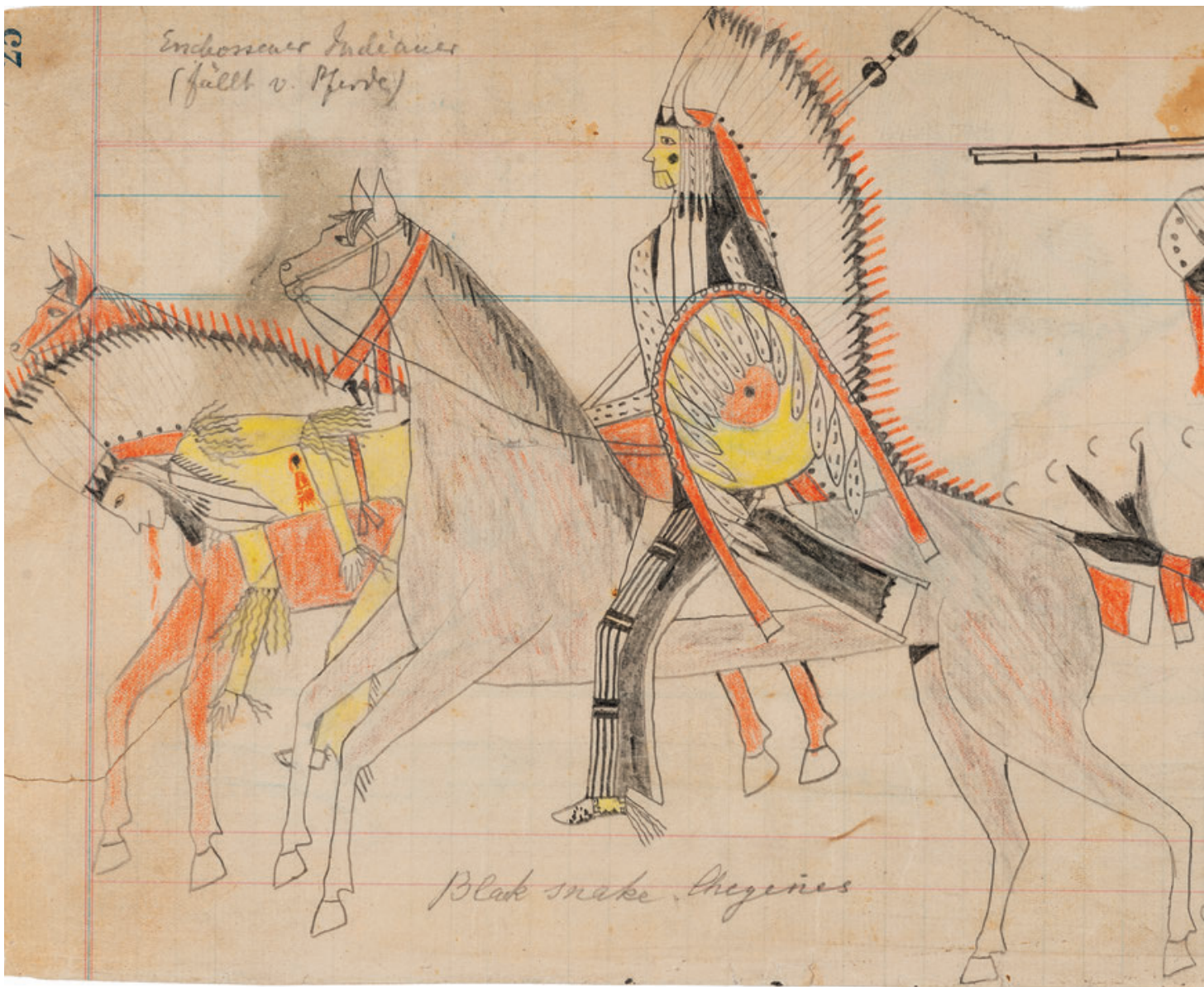
Not far from the dock stands the Survivor Tree, a 1,200-year-old pond cypress that rises from the water near the edge of Shangri La. The species is not typically found in this area, but this tree was here long before Texas was a shape on the map.

"The story of the Lutch-Starks is the story of the creation of the city of Orange," Cole explains. To convince his young wife to remain in Texas, W.H. Stark built an elaborate house to make her as comfortable as possible. "This area was always a borderland between empires, between countries, and was very lawless and underdeveloped."

Stark used the family wealth to pave streets, build churches and schools, and bring refinement to the burgeoning East Texas town.

See more of **Julia Robinson's** work at [juliarobinsonphoto.com](http://juliarobinsonphoto.com).





# Cultural Accounting

19TH-CENTURY DRAWINGS OFFER INSIGHT INTO PLAINS PERSPECTIVE

BY CHARLES LOHRMANN

**T**he nomadic tribes of North America's southern Plains, including the Kiowa, did not traditionally maintain a written history, so a Native American version of events from the mid-19th century is not easy to find.

One rare example can be seen in a series of 58 pencil drawings in the collection of the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin.

These drawings—many attributed to the Kiowa—were originally bound in an account ledger and dated 1840–1895. It is known as the Schild Ledger because it was purchased in 1895 by Dr. E.H. Tips in Fredericksburg from the estate of Herman Schild, believed to have been a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners.

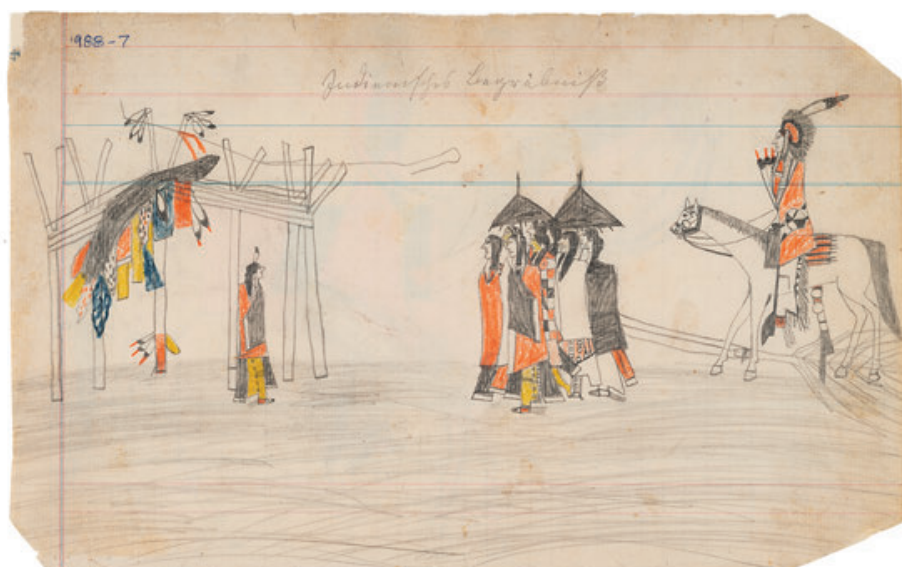
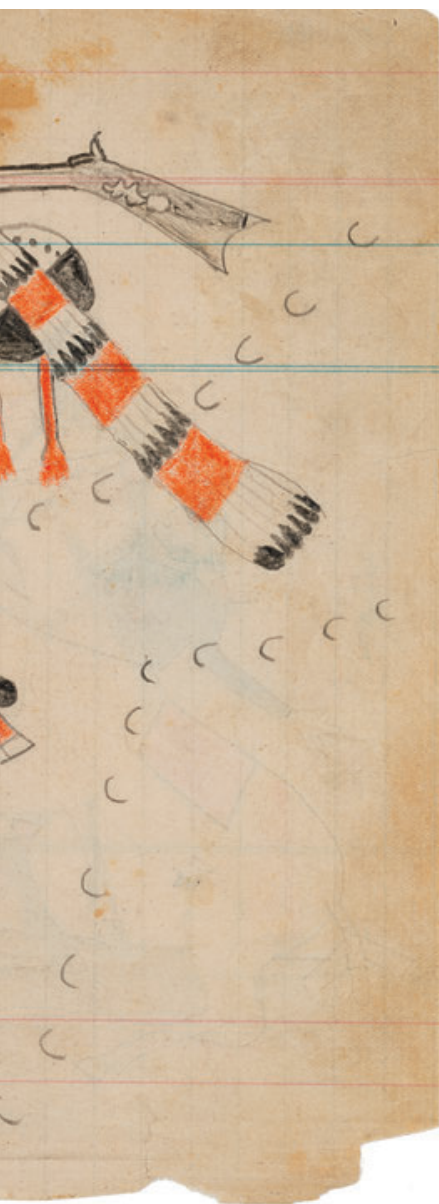
“Because Kiowas had no written form of their language in

the 19th century, the ledgers are among the most important formats in which we can see things from their perspective,” explains Jennifer Graber, associate director of the Native American and indigenous studies program at UT Austin. “The ledgers, with their emphasis on landscapes, community, animals, family life, significant life events and ritual, point us toward what was important to Kiowas.”

Ledger art is widely known among students and collectors of 19th-century Native American art. As the name suggests, the drawings were made on paper in actual ledgers, and they are described as similar to paintings originally made on animal hides.

Graber points out that Kiowas changed artistic and historic media through the centuries the tribe lived on the Plains. Generations earlier, Graber says, the Plains people would have made carvings and paintings on rock. Later, these people painted on tepees and shields made from buffalo hides. “When paper





became available, they used that too," she says.

Even though an artist with a notebook full of paper can create more complex images than on other media, Graber says that "throughout their history of artistic production, Kiowas evidenced many consistencies, including their depiction of important historical events and their encounters with supernatural powers."

Ledger art history suggests that the drawings continued a Plains artistic tradition of two-dimensional figures populating scenes of battles, ceremonies and native life. The artists capture the essence of the scene in a highly stylized way, including little shading to imply depth. Unique details in the drawings, such as shield designs, are useful for identifying the subjects by tribal affiliation or even by name.

The Schild Ledger was a well-traveled volume. After Tips purchased the ledger in 1895, he traveled with it to Germany, and his son, Carlos, ultimately returned with it to the United States. The Texas Memorial Museum acquired the ledger from Carlos Tips'

#### WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story online for more about ledger art.

**Clockwise from opposite page: Drawings from the Schild Ledger show a confrontation between two mounted warriors; two figures in elaborate dress; tribal members bringing boughs to a Sun Dance lodge.**

widow in 1964.

When the museum deaccessioned its cultural artifacts to focus on natural history, the ledger moved to the Texas Archeological Research

Laboratory. In 2016, the ledger was transferred from TARL to the Blanton Museum of Art.

Jonathan Jarvis, associate director of TARL, describes the archaeological information these drawings communicate. In one example, a drawing depicts the 1874 Buffalo Wallow battle of the Red River War. "For us it is great art, and we recognize the history there, but we can relate it to actual, in-the-ground archaeology."

Jarvis helped facilitate the transfer of the Schild Ledger to the Blanton because the museum is better able to get the drawings out to the public. Now, the drawings are exhibited occasionally and preserved for further study by tribal members, artists, archaeologists, historians and anthropologists.

Charles Lohrmann is the editor of *Texas Co-op Power*.



# Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

**DEAR DARRYL:** My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

*Clogged and Smelly – Amarillo, TX*

**DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY:** As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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# Budget-Friendly Efficiency Upgrades



STEVE DEBENPORT | ISTOCK.COM

**THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO MEASURE ENERGY EFFICIENCY** improvements. There's the payback period—the amount of time it will take for the improvement to pay for itself. Then there's comfort. Improvements can often increase the comfort level of a home—not easy to measure but one of the driving forces behind home weatherization efforts. There are several areas of the home that can be improved easily, without breaking your budget.

## Lighting

There has been a steady decline in the price of LED bulbs for residential consumers. Nowadays, 60-watt-replacement LEDs can be purchased for \$5 or less. LEDs should save 60% or more on power costs compared to incandescent bulbs and last for many years. New LED fixtures are also an affordable option. They come with LED bulbs built in so you never need to change the bulbs.

## Heating and Air Conditioning

The Energy Information Administration estimates that heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems account for 22% of a typical home's annual electric bill. While newer systems can be 20%–45% more efficient than older ones, the upfront cost is often a barrier to adoption.

But there are still ways to save. Simple solutions such as changing air filters at least every three months will increase airflow to rooms, increase the life of the HVAC unit's motor and improve air quality in the home. Sealing and insulating ductwork can be done in a weekend and results in energy savings of up to 20%.

To lessen the amount of work that heating and cooling systems need to do, it is important to find and seal air leaks. Look for leaks around exterior doors and windows, electric outlets, and entrance points for TV and phone cables. Also check dryer vents and any place with an opening in the wall. To seal leaks, apply caulk, spray foam or weatherstripping to these areas.

Simple acts such as cooking outdoors on a hot summer day or keeping curtains closed to keep out the summer sun will keep the interior of your home cooler and reduce the amount of time AC units need to operate.

## Appliances and Electronics

The appliances and gadgets that make life easier are also among the largest users of electricity in our homes. When buying a new appliance, narrow your choices to those with an Energy Star label. That simple act can result in 10%–15% savings in energy consumption.

### Other simple household tips:

- ▶ Clean dryer lint traps after every cycle, and don't overdry—you'll save energy and extend the life of your clothes.
- ▶ Replace worn refrigerator door gaskets to stop cool air from leaking from the refrigerator.
- ▶ Clean refrigerator coils and keep fridges away from heat-generating appliances such as an oven.

Home electronics, like computers, TVs and game systems, consume power even when turned off—what are known as “energy vampires.” According to a study conducted by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the average home loses 8% of its monthly energy consumption to these vampires. A full 75% of the power used to run home electronics is consumed when those appliances are turned off, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Cutting off power by using a power or smart strip is an easy way to stop this needless waste of energy.

The best energy efficiency improvements are often the easiest. Turning lights off when leaving a room, sealing windows and doors, and cleaning refrigerator coils aren't as much fun as buying a shiny new appliance. But these simple tasks are proven ways to save energy and increase comfort on a budget.





# Reminders for National Electrical Safety Month

EVERY DAY, WE RELY ON ELECTRICITY TO POWER OUR HOMES AND OFFICES. HOWEVER, it can be easy to take for granted the safety of electric appliances and equipment and power lines. May is National Electrical Safety Month—a great time to raise awareness of how to avoid potential electrical hazards.

## Indoors

- ▶ Check electric cords for fraying or cracking. Replace cords that may be damaged, and don't overload electric outlets.
- ▶ Extension cords are intended to be temporary. If you find yourself using extension cords regularly, have an electrician add outlets where you need them.
- ▶ Don't run cords under carpets or rugs and don't tack or nail cords to walls or floors.
- ▶ Keep electric appliances and tools away from water. Never reach for or unplug an appliance that has fallen into water; instead, turn the power off at the breaker before you unplug the appliance or remove it from the water.
- ▶ Never put anything other than an electrical plug in an outlet. Use outlet covers or caps to protect children.
- ▶ Keep your home's electrical system in good repair. Contact a licensed electrical contractor if you have flickering lights, sparks or nonfunctioning outlets, or need wiring repairs or upgrades.

## Outdoors

- ▶ Never touch downed power lines.
- ▶ Always call 911 or your electric cooperative if you see lines down.
- ▶ Watch for overhead lines every time you use a ladder, work on roofs or in trees, or carry long tools or tall loads. Keep kites, drones and metallic balloons away from power lines.
- ▶ Know what's below before you dig. Call 811 three days in advance of your project to have underground utility lines, pipes and cables marked for free.
- ▶ Avoid planting trees underneath power lines or near utility equipment.

## Double Savings With Energy Star Sales Tax Holiday

EVERY YEAR AROUND MEMORIAL DAY, you can buy certain Energy Star-certified products tax-free—letting you save on taxes and energy expenses.

This year's Energy Star sales tax holiday runs Saturday, May 23, through midnight Monday, May 25.

**Qualifying products:** You can buy or lease the following Energy Star-labeled items tax-free:

- ▶ Air conditioners (with a sales price of \$6,000 or less)
- ▶ Refrigerators (with a sales price of \$2,000 or less)
- ▶ Ceiling fans
- ▶ Incandescent and fluorescent lightbulbs
- ▶ Clothes washers
- ▶ Dishwashers

**Nonqualifying products:** These items do not qualify even if they are Energy Star-labeled:

- ▶ Water heaters
- ▶ Clothes dryers
- ▶ Freezers
- ▶ Stoves
- ▶ Attic fans
- ▶ Heat pumps
- ▶ Wine refrigerators and kegerators

**Note:** Delivery, shipping and installation charges are part of the item's sales price. The item's total sales price determines if it is tax-exempt.





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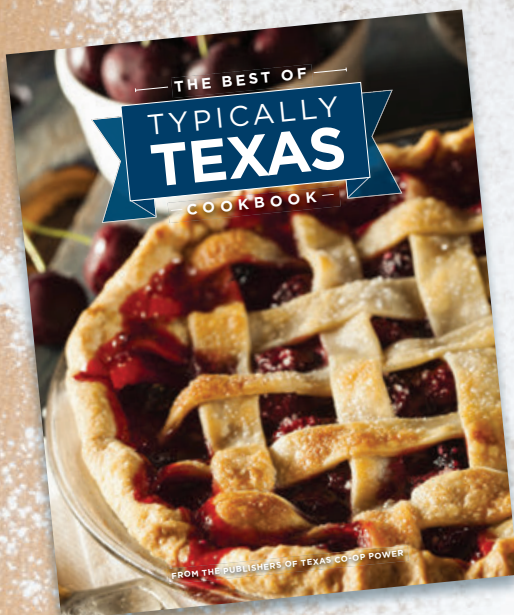
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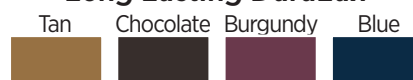
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# Hunting Topaz

The official state gem occurs naturally in Texas in just one county

BY BRENDA KISSKO

FRANK ROBERTS HAS HELPED PEOPLE from as far away as Belgium and France look for Texas' official state gem.

"There's something about finding a sparkly rock that's been in the ground for a billion years," says Roberts, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, who guides guests to Central Texas on quests for Texas topaz. "Once they find it, they're hooked."

Texas blue topaz certainly stands out as a rare and prized stone. Mason County is the only county in Texas where the official state gem can be found, making it a frequent destination for visitors eager to pluck their very own from the ground.

The go-to guy in Mason for all things topaz is Warren Grote, proprietor of Mason Country Collectibles downtown and a member of Central Texas Electric Cooperative. He tells a story about one couple who walked into his store a few years back. They were on their first vacation in 21 years. They had stayed close to home because their son was born with Down syndrome and required extensive care. Grote explained how best to search for topaz and sent them on their way with all the tools they needed for a chance to find themselves a Texas gem.

Three ranches in Mason County offer public topaz hunting—Bar M Ranch, Lindsay Ranch and Seaquist Ranch. All require advance reservations. The Lindsay and Seaquist ranches are open mid-January through fall, and Bar M Ranch is open from February through September. Topaz hunting on the Lindsay Ranch is available only to overnight guests at its ranch

houses and campsites.

If you strike out after such a quest, there are several places in Mason that sell Texas blue topaz, which became the official state gem March 26, 1969, when Gov. Preston Smith signed House Concurrent Resolution No. 12 into law.

Topaz requires a lot of aluminum and growth from hot, fluorine-rich fluid near the end stages of granite crystallization, says Mark Helper, a senior lecturer in the University of Texas' geosciences school. The granite plutons in the Llano Uplift in Mason County are the only masses known to bear topaz in Texas.

Topaz naturally occurs in many colors, including yellow, pink and brown. Pure topaz is colorless; chemical impurities give it its color. A natural blue topaz—one of the rarer colors—is caused by imperfections in the arrangement of its atoms. Some of the brighter blue topaz is obtained by irradiating colorless topaz, making it an accessible and popular variety. Most of the topaz found in Mason County is colorless or light blue. Topaz is found in other states and on every continent. Brazil is the largest producer.

The best time to hunt for topaz is after a good rain, when the ground is soft and the creek beds are stirred up. Look for it around granite outcroppings and near creeks. Your ranch hosts will direct you to the best spots on their property. You'll need a small shovel and a fine screen for sifting. Gloves, sunscreen, closed-toe shoes and a hat are recommended. These are working ranches, so be mindful to leave the land how you find it, including filling in any





holes that you dig. Do not enter private property without the owner's permission.

To learn more about topaz, head to the Mason Square Museum, where you'll see the largest known light blue topaz discovered in North America, found in Mason County in 1904 by Albert McGehee. It's said that McGehee used the 6,480-carat crystal as a doorstep before the Smithsonian Institution bought it from him for \$75 in 1913. It's now at the museum on loan from the Smithsonian, along with several other pieces of topaz.

When you're ready to buy, Country Collectibles sells raw and cut gems in a variety of sizes and shades. Many are faceted in

the Lone Star cut, the official state gemstone cut. Check out Grote's 587.15-carat light blue topaz, named the Grand Azure.

Grote finishes his story about the couple that stepped into his store many moons ago. They sent him a postcard when they returned home. On their quest, they discovered a large piece of topaz as well as a translucent arrowhead thought to be made out of quartz circa 9000 B.C.

"That's my all-time favorite story," Grote says. He told them, "God's rewarding you for your faithfulness to your son."

**Brenda Kisko** writes about nature, travel and our relationship with land. Read more of her work at [brendakisko.com](http://brendakisko.com).

# An Outsize Legacy

Remembering Daddy-O Wade and his eye-catching art

BY LONN TAYLOR

**Editor's Note:** The late historian and author Lonnn Taylor profiled Texas characters for his weekly Rambling Boy column in *The Big Bend Sentinel*. This look at artist Bob Wade from 2018 is one of them. We offer it as a remembrance of Wade, who died December 24, 2019.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, MY WIFE AND I WERE enjoying dinner at Marfa's Blue Javelina when a cacophony of sirens and gunshots erupted outside on U.S. Highway 90. A battered sedan came by at 90 miles an hour, followed by four Border Patrol vehicles and a sheriff's car with lawmen leaning out of the windows shooting at the sedan. We were witnessing a narcotics chase, which ended on the east side of town when a bullet went through the sedan's rear window and the 17-year-old *narcotraficante* pulled over and gave up. His bullet-riddled sedan sat on the shoulder of the highway for several days.

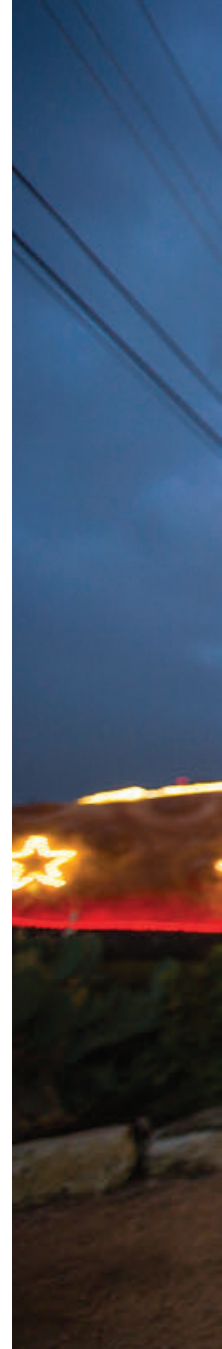
That is why I did not give a second thought to the bullet-riddled yellow Chevrolet step van that appeared in the parking lot of Marfa's Lost Horse Saloon not long after. I assumed it was the relic of another narcotics chase. So I was taken by surprise when artist Bob Wade called and asked if I would write about his shot-up Bonnie and Clyde Mobile that was on display in Marfa. I went back for another look and, sure enough, in red paint under the windshield it said, "Bonnie and Clyde Mobile © BobWade.com 1982." It needs a larger label.

Wade told me that he bought the vehicle in Dallas in 1982 to drive in a Mardi Gras art car parade. He had it painted

school-bus yellow so the bullet holes would show up, and then took it to a shooting range in Garland and paid the owner to pepper it with machine gun fire. In the parade, he tossed plastic toy soldiers to the crowd and was soundly booed; the crowd evidently felt that the van was not in the Mardi Gras spirit.

Wade, who was known by the nickname "Daddy-O," is a native Texan, born in 1943. For 40 years, he has adorned the Texas landscape with giant sculptures incorporating iconic Texas symbols. His best-known work is probably the 35-foot-high cowboy boots he created in 1979 for the Washington Project for the Arts, which were initially displayed in a public art space three blocks from the White House. They are now at North Star Mall in San Antonio, where at Christmas they are lit by 8,000 red and white LED lights. In 2015 they were recognized by the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the world's largest cowboy boots.

Wade has also built a 40-foot-long wire-and-polyurethane iguana named Iggy, which is now at the Fort Worth Zoo, and a set of six 10-foot-high dancing musical frogs. The frogs were originally made for a Dallas night club called Tango and were christened *Six Frogs Over*







#### WEB EXTRAS

► Read *The Curious Creations of Daddy-O Wade* on our website.

ly atop Carl's Corner, on Interstate 35 [in the HILCO Electric Cooperative service area].

Wade also developed a process for digitizing Western photos from old postcards and enlarging them onto canvas, which he then airbrushed with transparent layers of acrylic paint, producing the effect of giant hand-tinted photographs. His cowgirls, Mexican revolutionaries and rodeo performers are in permanent collections all over the country, and his enlarged and colored photograph of Buffalo Bill Cody and Prince Albert I of Monaco hangs in

*Tango* because the club was owned by Shannon Wynne, whose father owned Six Flags Over Texas.

The frogs lived brief-

the royal palace in Monte Carlo.

Wade first came to my attention in the mid-1970s, when some friends in Denton told me about him supervising a master's thesis that involved a student named Andy Sheehan tattooing Harley-Davidson wings on a pig.

The tattooed pig did not exactly establish Wade's (or Sheehan's) reputation as an artist, but in 1979 Wade was invited to enter a piece in the prestigious Paris Biennale. He submitted *Texas Mobile Home Museum*, a 1947 Spartan trailer coach filled with Texas oddities, including a taxidermied bucking bronco, a two-headed calf, a stuffed armadillo and sets of longhorns. This was the second year of the *Dallas TV* series, and the French were crazy about anything from Texas; the trailer was a huge

hit, and Wade's artistic future was secured.

It is appropriate that the Bonnie and Clyde Mobile ended up in Marfa because Wade lived there when he was in the fourth grade and his father was the manager of the Paisano Hotel. This was long before Donald Judd came to Marfa, so Wade said he was the first contemporary artist to live in Marfa.

When I was talking to Wade about the Bonnie and Clyde Mobile, I asked him how he was able to resist squeezing off a few rounds himself when he was having the step van shot up. He lowered his voice on the phone and said, "You know, I'm a real Texas guy and all that, but I've never felt comfortable around loaded guns."

I've always known Daddy-O is a softie at heart.

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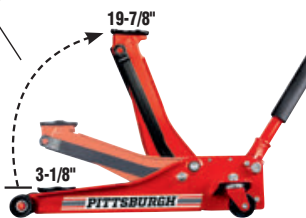
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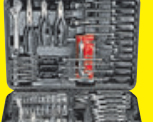
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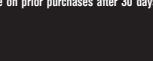
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# Horses' Roundabout Trail

How today's noble steeds follow in the footsteps of their prehistoric ancestors

BY MARTHA DEERING

MUCH OF THE MODERN HISTORY OF TEXAS was built on the backs of horses, but where did these equine partners in the settlement of the state originate? The fossil record of the genus *Equus*, according to Live Science, can be traced back some 4 million years in North America.

The predecessors of modern horses spread from North America, probably over the Bering land bridge that once connected Alaska and Siberia, and colonized Asia, Europe and Africa. The last of those prehistoric horses in North America died out 11,000–13,000 years ago, the result of a cooling event that also wiped out woolly mammoths, American camels and other animals.

The Americas remained horseless until Christopher Columbus arrived on his second voyage, in 1493, and introduced domesticated horses to Hispaniola and Cuba. The return of horses to the Western Hemisphere was no small feat. Records from early voyages tell of numerous deaths among valuable horses, which crossed the stormy Atlantic suspended in slings in damp, dark holds to prevent the rolling of the ship from tossing them about.

If the storms didn't get them, the calm winds of the "horse latitudes" might. In this region, about 30 degrees north and 30 degrees south of the equator, ships sailing to the Western Hemisphere from Europe and Asia often became stalled,



sometimes for weeks. If a ship carried horses and the supply of fresh water crept below a critical point, sailors would sometimes be forced to throw horses overboard—earning this region its name.

In 1519, Hernando Cortés landed in what is now Veracruz, where horses left hoofprints on the North American mainland for the first time in more than 10,000 years. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who accompanied Cortés, explained, "The natives had never seen horses up to this time and thought the horse and rider were all one animal."

That same year, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado sailed to North America with 150 horses, followed in 1539 by Hernando de Soto with 237. Eventually, some of the wily beasts emancipated themselves and set up housekeeping on the Great Plains, helped in their expansion by the development of Spanish missions, which kept herds of horses. Some were traded with Native Americans, who learned to ride like the centaurs that had so astonished

them when the Spanish arrived.

The first horses brought to Texas arrived in 1542 with the Moscoso expedition, named for Luis de Moscoso Alvarado, who took charge of the 600-man expedition when de Soto died of fever near the Mississippi River. These original Spanish mustangs were the foundation for later American breeds, including the fabled quarter horse, whose endurance and talent for handling cattle made it the horse of choice for frontiersmen and ranchers in early Texas.

Today, there are an estimated 880,000 horses in Texas, according to Texas A&M University. Artist Frederic Remington paid tribute to the noble animal when he remarked, "Of all the monuments which the Spaniard has left to glorify his reign in America, there will be none more worthy than his horse."

**Martha Deering**, a Heart of Texas EC member, lives in McGregor. Read more of her work at [marthadeering.com](http://marthadeering.com).

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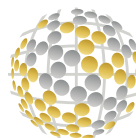
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# Spring Celebrations

SPRING IS USUALLY A TIME FOR CELEBRATIONS, including graduations and bridal showers. Of course, gatherings have been on hold and social distancing is in place because of COVID-19. So save these recipes for when we're able to join together and celebrate joyous occasions.

Whenever I go to a party, or host one of my own, I try to bring something that everyone will enjoy. Often I share dishes that are on the healthier side to balance out a buffet spread. I know guests are grateful when only crumbs remain.

This take on a popular dip is portable. You can make the dip in advance and bake the cups just before party time, ensuring they're warm and crisp for serving.

**MEGAN MYERS**, FOOD EDITOR

## Spinach Artichoke Wonton Cups

- 24 wonton wrappers
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen spinach, thawed and drained
- 1 jar (7.5 ounces) marinated artichoke hearts, drained and finely chopped
- 1 cup sour cream
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

**1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Arrange the wonton wrappers in two 12-cup muffin pans, then coat lightly with nonstick spray. Bake the wonton cups for 5 minutes, then remove from oven and set aside.

**2.** In a medium bowl, stir together spinach, artichoke hearts, sour cream, cream cheese, Parmesan, garlic and pepper until thoroughly combined.

**3.** Divide mixture evenly among the wonton cups. Bake 10–12 minutes until warmed and wonton cups are golden. ▶ Makes 24.

**COOK'S TIP** This recipe uses a standard muffin tin, but you can also use a minimuffin tin to make the cups bite-size.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com).



# Recipes

## Spring Celebrations



### THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

MILLIE KIRCHOFF | NUECES EC

Banana bars are a hit with kids of all ages. Topped with cream cheese icing, this recipe is baked in a sheet pan, ensuring plenty for eager hands.

Kirchoff suggests topping the bars with pecan halves or decorative sprinkles for an extra-festive touch.

### Banana Bars

#### BARS

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs, room temperature
- 2 cups mashed ripe banana (about 4 large bananas)
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- Pinch of salt

#### FROSTING

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

- 1. BARS:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease an 18-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheet with butter or nonstick spray and set aside.
- 2.** In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs one at a time until just incorporated, then stir in banana and vanilla.
- 3.** In another bowl, combine flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves and salt, then add to banana mixture and mix well.
- 4.** Pour onto prepared baking sheet and bake 20 minutes or until it springs back slightly when touched in the center. Cool completely.
- 5. FROSTING:** While bars cool, mix together butter, cream cheese, powdered sugar and vanilla until smooth. Spread over cooled banana bars. Cover and chill at least 1 hour.

► Makes 3 dozen bars.

### Soy Brown Sugar-Glazed Salmon

CASSANDRA HUNTER | PEDERNALES EC

This easy yet flavorful salmon dish is excellent for a spring dinner party. "Every time I make this salmon for a special occasion, I have had numerous guests asking me for the recipe," Hunter says. For ease of serving, cut the salmon into individual portions before baking, keeping in mind that cook time may be reduced.

- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 pounds center-cut salmon

- 1.** Preheat oven to 450 degrees. In a mixing bowl, whisk together brown sugar, soy sauce, rice vinegar, ginger and garlic. Set aside.
- 2.** Place salmon skin-side down on a rimmed baking sheet lined with foil. With a small knife, cut ½-inch slits about 1 inch apart across the top of the salmon. Brush the salmon generously with the glaze, reserving the rest. Allow the mixture to seep into the slits.
- 3.** Bake salmon 10 minutes, then baste again with remaining glaze. Return to oven for 5 minutes more, until a baking thermometer inserted in the salmon's center reads 145 degrees. Let salmon rest 5 minutes and serve. ► Serves 8.

### Grandma Jewel's Italian Cream Cake

KAITLYN WILLINGHAM | CENTRAL TEXAS EC

This popular cake is often served at birthday parties and other celebrations. This version features nuts in the frosting, but Willingham also loves to incorporate pecans within the cake. For those who enjoy more coconut, press extra coconut flakes to the frosting while it is still tacky.

#### CAKE

- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup shortening
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- 5 eggs, separated
- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup sweetened flaked coconut



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### \$500 Recipe Contest

We know there's an abundance of **Cobblers, Crisps, Buckles and Betties** made around the state. What makes yours special? Enter our October contest by **May 10**. Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://TexasCoopPower.com/contests); MAIL to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; FAX to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.



## FROSTING

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- ¾ cups powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup chopped pecans

1. **CAKE:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease 2 round 9-inch cake pans.
2. In a large bowl, cream sugar, shortening and butter. Add egg yolks one at a time.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together flour and baking soda. Add the flour mixture to the large bowl alternately with the butter-milk and vanilla.
4. In a separate bowl, beat egg whites until stiff. Fold into batter until no streaks remain, then stir in coconut.
5. Divide batter between cake pans and bake 25–30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool in pans 5 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.
6. **FROSTING:** Combine cream cheese and butter. Using an electric mixer, beat in powdered sugar until smooth, taking care to increase speed slowly. Add vanilla and pecans. Place one cake layer on serving plate and top with ¼ of the frosting, spreading evenly to edges. Top with second layer of cake and spread remaining frosting on top and sides. ▶ Serves 12.

**WEB EXTRAS ▶** Find more than 800 recipes in our online archive, including this winning punch from November 2015.

## Almond Punch

DEBBIE SUGAREK | BLUEBONNET EC

- 2½ cups sugar
- 3 quarts water
- 1 can (46 ounces) pineapple juice
- Juice of 3 lemons (approximately ¾ cup)
- 3 teaspoons almond extract
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

1. Combine sugar and water in a large pitcher and stir until sugar is completely dissolved.
  2. Add pineapple juice, lemon juice, and almond and vanilla extracts. Stir to blend.
  3. Refrigerate 24 hours. Serve cold.
- ▶ Serves 24.



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# Fairs and Carnivals

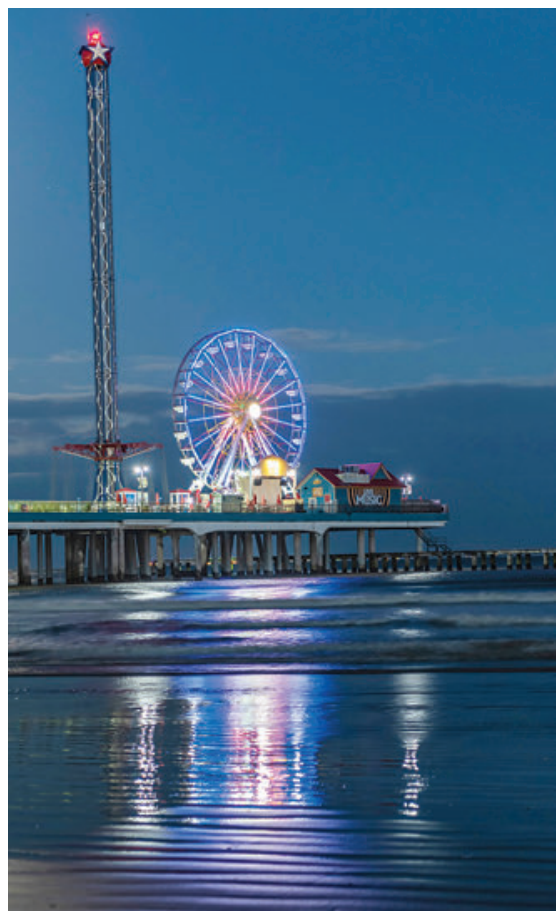
TAKE A STROLL DOWN THE MIDWAY WITH US. Enjoy the rides and breathe in the intoxicating aroma of deep-fried everything. **GRACE FULTZ**

**WEB EXTRAS** ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



▲ **RACHELLE GLENN**, Guadalupe Valley EC: "Aurora and Will at the Come and Take It Carnival 2019 on one of their favorite rides."

▼ **TSO DAVIS**, United Cooperative Services: "Close call."



▲ **ANGIE BIRMINGHAM**, Nueces EC: "The Galveston Pleasure Pier is a year-round carnival."

▼ **CHAD PRAHL**, CoServ: "It's not a fair without some cotton candy."







**AROUND TEXAS** ▶ TCP's monthly list of local events has been suspended due to COVID-19 cancellations. Always call or check an event's website for details.

◀ **THERESA MCKEE**, Fannin County EC: "The icon of the Texas State Fair, Big Tex, after the fatal fire. Now he has a slightly new look."



▲ **REBECCA WARREN**, Heart of Texas EC: "Riot of color offered blessed shade for one patio in the September heat of the State Fair of Texas."



▲ **PAUL LAUDER**, Farmers EC: "The pig and her handler catch up on badly needed sleep after the competition."

◀ **PATRICIA STEHLING**, Central Texas EC: Rainbow Ferris wheel.

#### UPCOMING CONTESTS

SEPTEMBER SHAPES	DUE MAY 10
OCTOBER SELFIES	DUE JUNE 10
NOVEMBER EXTREMES	DUE JULY 10

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— Don W., Sherman, TX

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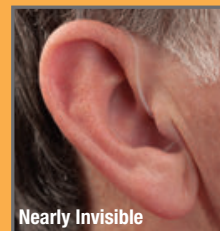
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# Spirits of Seguin

Historic Magnolia Hotel features encounters with the supernatural

I'D HEARD THAT SEGUIN'S MAGNOLIA Hotel is one ghostly getaway where eerie encounters are a nightly occurrence, so I decided to see for myself. A block east of the Guadalupe County Courthouse, I found the boxy, two-story frame building and learned that its history dates to the mid-1800s.

Texas Ranger James Campbell built a log cabin on the site in 1840, and Ranger Jack Coffee Hays married the owner's daughter there in 1847. The hotel itself was built in 1853, and current owners Erin and Jim Ghedi saved it from abandonment after it was named to advocacy group Preservation Texas' 2012 Most Endangered Places list.

Erin Ghedi had taken my tour reservation and met me at the door. Knowing she voluntarily lives in a haunted hotel, I was surprised when she greeted me with a calming smile. My first brush with the unexpected occurred on the first floor, which felt anything but haunted: I encountered a warm and welcoming home with bright lighting and antiques in every corner.

The tour started in the front living room, which was decorated with frontier memorabilia and a large portrait of Campbell, the supposed lingering occupant. Ghedi described how guests catch the scent of Campbell's burning cigars or hear his boots walking across the wooden floor. Almost on cue, the rocking chair in the corner moved back and forth. "Oh, and he likes to do that too," Ghedi said.

As we moved from room to room, Ghedi told stories of the 13 ghosts that inhabit the building. In the kitchen, guests encounter the 1850s owner and her chil-



**Jim and Erin Ghedi with Chet.**

dren. Near the back fireplace, a person who had been enslaved blows out candles. To convince skeptics, Ghedi supports each story with photographs from guests and a binder full of historical research.

Upstairs, the Ghedis have transformed a portion of the second floor into an Airbnb rental, while the rest remains the same as when they bought it. Before we entered the dark rooms, Ghedi paused and said, "Remember, the ghosts cannot hurt you. While you may feel them touch you and you may feel scared, they cannot hurt you." I had never been touched by a ghost and was not sure I wanted to start now.

Ghedi handed me a flashlight and a device with blinking lights to signify when spirits were present. Then she led me into the darkness. My flashlight beam illuminated walls with crumbling wallboard and bathrooms full of broken tiles and fixtures. Even in daylight, this place would be super creepy. Suddenly, the overwhelming scent of rose perfume filled the air. Ghedi spoke:

"Oh, Rosebud is excited that a gentleman is visiting. She was a madam here for many years." I didn't believe my nose and even accused Ghedi of spraying the room with rose scent. She swore she had not.

Ghedi believes all the ghosts are voluntarily present and can leave at any time—all except one, known as the Murderer, who is trapped in an upstairs bedroom. I walked into the room and experienced an overwhelmingly heavy feeling. I decided to walk out before I learned more about this spirit.

I'm certainly a skeptic when it comes to haunted places, but I've got no explanation for the things that happened on my tour. I do know that if you're looking for a rendezvous with the strange, the spooky and the unexpected, you need to check into this historic hotel that's so fascinating some guests never check out.

**Chet Garner** shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

**WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video of Seguin's Magnolia Hotel. Call or go online to plan a visit.

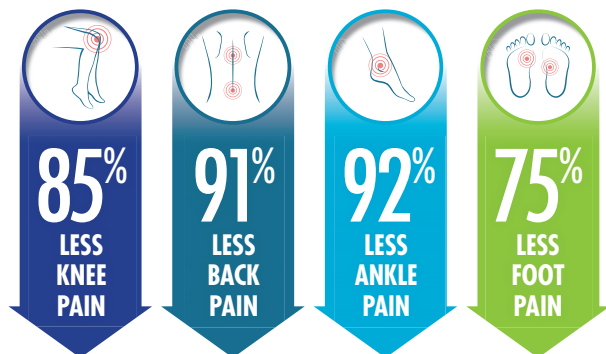


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