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Texas Coop Power

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MARCH 2021

Room FOR Blooms

**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18

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March 2021



08

Flower Power

Wildflowers proliferate in an explosion of color along the highways and byways of Texas each spring, inspiring artists to capture the state's wild beauty and luring travelers off the beaten path.

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

ON THE COVER

A red patch of Indian paintbrush highlights a field of wildflowers near New Berlin.

ABOVE

A firewheel.

Photos by Rob Greebon

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Few and Far
By Eli Winter

Month of Tweets

OF THE 654 SPECIES of birds documented in Texas, over half are migratory. Millions of these will fly the Texas skies starting this month on their way to northern breeding grounds after wintering in Mexico and Central and South America.

Some species, such as the prothonotary warbler, below, and red-eyed vireo, will go no farther north than Texas, where they'll make their home until the fall, when they migrate south again.



Scout's Honor

Since the Boy Scouts of America created the Eagle Scout rank in 1911, about 2.6 million Americans have earned one of Scouting's highest honors. Until last year, all Eagle Scouts were boys.

When Abby Winkelman, whose family is a member of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative, became an Eagle Scout in October, when she was 14, she made history, becoming one of the first girls to reach the rank.

"I don't think I've ever set a goal this ambitious for myself, so I'm just really proud of myself that I met my goal," said Winkelman, of Troop 5131 in Austin, "and I planned and I got help from all my friends and all my community."



Hank the Cool Dog

Texas' coolest dog meets Texas' coolest character.

A new podcast series stars Matthew McConaughey as Hank the Cowdog, based on the long-running series of children's books written by Texan John R. Erickson, illustrated by Gerald L. Holmes and set in the Panhandle.

The podcast, which debuted in the fall, is available on all major podcast platforms.

“I will never forsake Texas and her cause. I am her son.”

—JOSÉ ANTONIO NAVARRO

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

THE SONG THAT GOT ME THROUGH A YEAR OF PANDEMIC IS ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town. Here are some of the responses to our January prompt:

Life was better ...

When my skate key was hanging around my neck, my knees were scabbed and the wind was blowing my hair from my face.

JANICE F. CONWAY
TRINITY VALLEY EC
KEMP

Before COVID-19.

GARY GALLOWAY
TRI-COUNTY EC
WEATHERFORD

When we could reach out and touch someone, literally. I miss hugs and handshakes.

CARMEN LOCKSTEDT
VICTORIA EC
VICTORIA

When the only screen we had was in our door, and we could see through it.

PATRICIA RAPACKI
MIDSOUTH EC
MONTGOMERY

After I recovered from ovarian cancer.

SHERRI JEFFERY
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
MCKINNEY

To see more responses, read Currents online.



Drink to That?

USING HOUSTON as a model, researchers at Rice University have developed a plan to recycle wastewater economically and make it drinkable, which could reduce the need for surface water—from rivers, reservoirs and wells—by 28%.

“All the technologies needed to treat wastewater to drinking water quality are available,” Rice researcher Qilin Li said. “The issue is that today they’re still pretty expensive.”

This proposed system makes up for that by bringing down the cost of a city’s water supply. Recycled water doesn’t have to travel as far and is therefore cheaper.

Cheers.



TCP Contests and More

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Night Life

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RUSSELL A. GRAVES

Captured!

“Katmai National Park and Preserve holds a contest every year to name the fattest bear at Brooks Falls.”

JULIA FRANKENFIELD
MIDSOUTH EC
MONTGOMERY

No Fan of the Span

My wife drove across it with our teenage son in 1985 and could not drive back [*The Scariest Bridge in Texas*, January 2021]. It was so traumatizing for her that she has not been able to drive over any multilevel highway overpass, interstate or other even moderately high bridge since.

It should have a warning sign.

William Hamlin
Tri-County EC
Keller



Crossed it pulling a six-horse trailer with a truck full of squealing little girls [*The Scariest Bridge in Texas*, January 2021]. Not something I care to repeat.

KAY MOTLEY
VIA FACEBOOK

A World Opens

The Carnegie library of my hometown of Terrell did indeed fill a real need [*Literary Fortunes*, January 2021]. As a boy I was able to jump on my bike and spend time looking through the stacks and especially enjoying the reference room. The whole world opened for me.

Dan Wood Jr.
Trinity Valley EC
Terrell

Dialect in Danger

The Texas German dialect and culture are slowly dying out as they are not passed on to younger generations [*Burgs in a New Land*, December 2020]. Within the next 20 years, the Texas German dialect will become extinct after being spoken for close to 200 years.

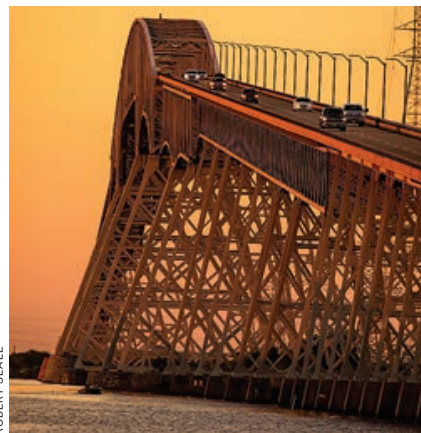
In 2001, I founded the Texas German Dialect Project at the University of Texas to record this unique dialect.

Hans Boas
Pedernales EC
Austin

Thank you for the article about the fear of crossing bridges and high overpasses. I am that person. I will go out of my way to avoid the flyovers in Houston and any other high or narrow bridge.

I no doubt annoy drivers behind me when I have no choice but to use one of these structures, and I crawl across it, white-knuckled, at 40 mph.

Linda Secrist
San Bernard EC
Magnolia



ROBERT SEALE

TCP WRITE TO US
letters@TexasCoopPower.com

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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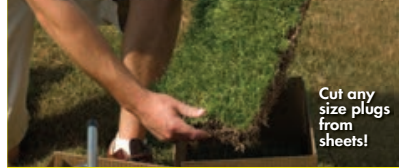


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SEASONAL SWAY OF COLORS
DRIVES TEXANS WILD

Flower POWER

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

NATURE'S PALETTE CAPTIVATES Texans every spring. Sapphire blue, lemony yellow, crimson red, golden orange, lavender purple and ivory white. We love our wildflowers so much that we'll drive great distances to see them. Frame their colors in countless photos. Designate official state titles in their honor. Celebrate their return with festivals, parades and dances. Spread their seeds across our yards, campuses and roadsides. Pen words, compose music and paint landscapes that hail their natural glory.

We also revere the Texans who've promoted our 5,000-plus species of wildflowers and native plants. Foremost was Lady Bird Johnson, who started her national highway cleanup campaign during Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency and co-founded the National Wildflower Research Center in 1982. Now called the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the 284-acre complex in Austin supports the Botanic Garden and Arboretum of Texas as well as cultivated gardens and wild natural areas.

Another wildflower hero is Carroll Abbott of Kerrville, a native plant expert who lobbied in 1981 to establish the fourth Saturday in April as Texas Wildflower Day. That same year he was instrumental in founding the Native Plant Society of Texas, which now boasts 34 chapters with 2,800 members.

Other wildflower advocates made a difference, too. San Antonio civic leader Sallie Ward Beretta launched a state-wide campaign in the 1920s to stop the bluebonnet from being overpicked. As president of the City Federation of Women's Clubs and the San Antonio Council of Girl Scouts, she recruited volunteers to gather seedpods in fields around the city. Then they shared the seeds with other cities across the state and nation.

Large or small, every effort to protect our wildflowers makes a difference. You can do your part: Please don't pick, trample or uproot bluebonnets or any other wildflowers. No law prohibits Texans from picking bluebonnets unless they're on private property or state park land, but any flower picked or damaged can't reseed for the next spring's bloom.

So welcome back, wildflowers. We look forward to yet another glorious show!



ROB GREENON | IMAGESFROMTEXAS.COM



A field of bluebonnets in the southern Chisos Mountains welcomes the sun as it rises on Big Bend National Park.

WELL, I DO DECLARE!
OFFICIAL STATE DESIGNATIONS

Officially WILD

STATE FLOWER

Most U.S. states claim one official state flower. Not Texas. We have at least 16. In 1901 the bluebonnet (*Lupinus subcarnosus*) went up against the prickly pear and cotton boll for the right to be named state flower. Rep. John “Cactus Jack” Nance Garner of Uvalde lobbied for the cactus bloom. Other legislators argued that cotton had made Texas rich. In the end, the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America carried the day, and the bluebonnet won.

But floral dissent wasn’t over. Many didn’t like the bluebonnet choice. Of the state’s six bluebonnet species, *Lupinus subcarnosus* was the “least attractive,” opined botanist Howard S. Irwin in *Roadside Flowers of Texas*. So in 1971 state lawmakers amended legislation to include the more popular Texas bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*) in addition to *Lupinus subcarnosus* and all other varieties of bluebonnet as the official state flower.

Since then, horticulturalists have developed different colors of bluebonnets, such as white and maroon. To date, they’ve introduced at least 10 bluebonnet varieties. Thus, Texas has at least 16 official state flowers ... for now.



WILDFLOWER CAPITAL OF TEXAS

DeWitt County

Wildflower trails crisscross DeWitt County, northwest of Victoria, where more than 1,000 wildflower species have been documented. A 1999 resolution adopted by the Texas House recognized the county as the Wildflower Capital of Texas.

TEXAS WILDFLOWER DAY

Fourth Saturday in April

In April 1981 the Legislature declared the fourth Saturday of April as Texas Wildflower Day. The resolution asks the governor “to issue an appropriate proclamation annually” to encourage the proper observance of the special day.

BLUEBONNET CO-CAPITALS OF TEXAS

Burnet and Llano counties

Every spring visitors admire wildflowers along the Highland Lakes Bluebonnet Trail, which winds through Burnet and Llano counties in Central Texas. In 1981 the Legislature designated the pair as Bluebonnet Co-capitals of Texas.



EDDIE WHITE

STATE FLOWER SONG

Bluebonnets

Our state flower song, *Bluebonnets*, has roots in Washington County. Julia D. Booth of Chappell Hill wrote lyrics for the song, which was composed by piano teacher Lora C. Crockett. On February 8, 1933, Alice Clay Rountt of Chappell Hill, accompanied by Crockett on the piano, sang the tune for the Texas House. It was then adopted as the state flower song by the Legislature.

OFFICIAL BLUEBONNET FESTIVAL OF TEXAS

Chappell Hill Bluebonnet Festival

The Chappell Hill Historical Society hosted its first bluebonnet festival in 1964, calling it the Bluebonnet Antique Show. In 1983 the name changed to Chappell Hill Bluebonnet Festival. In 1997 the Legislature named the event, in the town east of Brenham, as the Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas.

**WILDFLOWER SEEDING
BRIGHTENS ROAD TRIPS**

Take It ON THE ROAD

SINCE THE 1930s the Texas Department of Transportation has planted native flowers and grasses along state highways. In 1934 the agency directed staff not to mow until wildflowers had set seed, a policy that still guides mowing schedules.

TxDOT's wildflower program has expanded in both scope and vision, and the department now maintains 800,000 acres of roadside along with 80 safety rest stops and 12 travel information centers. Every year TxDOT must reseed approximately 4,800 construction projects.

Enter native plants, which require less care, provide wildlife habitat and increase biodiversity. "Every fall we sow approximately 30,000 pounds of native flower and grass seed mixes," says Travis Jez, a TxDOT vegetation specialist. "Because monarch butterflies have become a species of major concern, we're also planting pollinator gardens and milkweeds, such as zizotes. What's cool is that all pollinators benefit."

No single seed source can supply the 15 tons that TxDOT sows annually. So Jez works with six Texas companies that specialize in producing seeds for native species. TxDOT also collaborates with Texas Native Seeds of the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, a nonprofit program that develops commercial seed supplies of native plants for use in restoring habitats on private and public lands. The program supports six regional projects that select and grow plants endemic to their areas.

While you're searching for wildflowers, look out for bright green carpets along Texas roadsides. Those indicate that the areas have been hydro-seeded with a slurry of seeds, mulch and water. "The process is used for spreading seeds and to control erosion," Jez explains. "The mulch also holds in water and helps the seedlings get started."

As for the green color, "It allows applicants to see where they've sprayed the slurry," Jez says.



ROB GREEBON | IMAGESFROMTEXAS.COM



Bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush accompany travelers along a stretch of Texas 16 in Gillespie County.

MARY MOTZ WILLS'
WILDFLOWER WATERCOLORS

Picture THIS

IN APRIL 1961 nature enthusiasts hurraed the publication of *Roadside Flowers of Texas*. The classic guide written by botanist Howard S. Irwin showcases 257 wildflower paintings by Mary Motz Wills, a prolific artist and amateur botanist whose work was exhibited nationally. Her attention to the smallest details led to floral watercolors that were, as one columnist noted, “botanically accurate as well as artistically superb.”

Wills attended formal art schools and began painting flowers in 1913 while recovering from an illness in Panama, where her husband, a U.S. Army colonel, was stationed. After his death in 1925, Wills moved to Georgia and then to Abilene, where she aspired to record as many Texas flowers and plants as she could.

At her home studio, Wills painted plants that she collected or were sent to her by friends. She sometimes woke at 4 a.m. or worked through the night to capture blooms in their most natural form. “Some flowers only bloom at night, so I stay up until I get them painted,” she told a newspaper reporter in 1958.

A stickler for accuracy, Wills often noted on her paintings the common and botanical name of plants and where they grew in the wild.

In all, Wills produced more than 2,000 Texas botanical paintings. Many of the plants that she painted “were endangered species in her day, and some have disappeared entirely since then,” writes Cecilia Steinfeldt in *Art for History’s Sake: The Texas Collection of the Witte Museum*.

Wills died at 86 in 1961. Today, many of her delicate watercolors are housed for safe-keeping in Austin’s Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, San Antonio’s Witte Museum and Abilene’s Grace Museum. ■

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Collectors are Already Going Wild for This "Final" Release!

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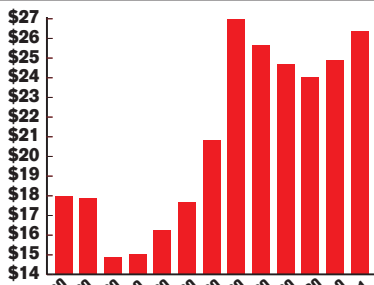
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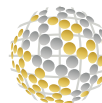
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These reinvisioned metal-frame homes are trending among Bluebonnet area landowners

Booming Barndominium Life

By Kristin Finan

WHEN MARK AND SUNNY Woelfel settled onto 3 acres of family land in Giddings in 2014, it was clear they were right where they were meant to be.

“It was always a lifelong dream to move to Grandpa’s place,” said Mark Woelfel, a Bluebonnet member.

But as they researched ideas for building a home on the Lee County property, they were drawn to a particular concept: the “barndominium.” The word, popularized in the 1980s, is the name given to the transformation of a barn-like space into a home. In recent years, barndominiums are often built from a variety of metal-frame buildings.

After removing an existing mobile home from the property, the Woelfels spent a year living on-site in an RV with three of their five children — the other two are adults who visit frequently — while the home was built. Last summer, they moved into their new Pinterest-worthy, two-story 3,200-square-foot barndominium, which centers around a sprawling great room and is adorned with lovingly restored furniture that has been in the family for generations.

It was custom built by Exner & Snyder Custom Homes. The company, based in Giddings, works on both barndominiums

and traditional houses across the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative service area. Both styles of homes average about \$135 per square foot, said owner and founder Jonathan Snyder of the company. The Woelfel house, however, cost roughly \$100 per square foot to build.

The concept of barndominiums (“barn” plus “condominium”) is not new. Rural homeowners have transformed wood or metal barn structures into living spaces for generations. In recent years, however, thanks to websites like Pinterest and home design shows such as Chip and Joanna Gaines’ HGTV series “Fixer Upper,” (which first featured a barndominium in 2016), the trend has gotten bigger and grander.

Stacey Lynn Bell, aka “The Barndominium Lady,” has designed nearly 150 barndominiums across the country, including some being constructed in the Bluebonnet area.

Continued on page 20



Mark and Sunny Woelfel built this 3,200-square-foot barndominium on family land in Giddings.

Sarah Beal photos



Amanda and John Hart did all the work themselves in building their barndominium in Winchester, 13 miles east of Smithville. See more photos on pages 22-23.

minium





Stacey Lynn Bell designs barndominiums, some of which are in Bluebonnet's service area. Her own home in East Texas is The Creek House plan, which has 5,200 square feet of interior living space. Below, her home also features a 2,000-square-foot covered porch.

Continued from page 18

Bell, who is based in the small East Texas town of Cleveland 45 miles northeast of Houston, said that in the South, especially in Texas, “barndos” are typically steel-frame structures that often include a workshop or garage. They can be built within an existing



Stacey Lynn Bell

metal structure or completely from scratch. They generally feature a metal, rectangular frame that has been finished out on the inside, meaning the inside has the feel of a traditional house but is centered around an open-concept great room. In other parts of the country, she said, wooden “pole barns” or engineered wood frame structures are more common. The exteriors of barndominiums can vary greatly, ranging from a traditional, barn-like feel to a more modern metal façade.

Although the barndominium trend is nationwide, it is especially popular in Texas, Oklahoma and Georgia, the website barndominiumlife.com states. Although the cost of building a new metal-frame home tends to be comparable to that of a basic wood-frame home, people are drawn to the aesthetics of barndominiums and the fact that their design – which typically

Photos from ourbarndominiumlife.com



features energy-efficient windows, lots of natural light and spray-foam insulated walls and attics – can be as energy efficient as their wood counterparts. They are also more durable and resistant to heat, weather and pests than wood-frame structures, said Elliott Lukasik, owner of Pristine Designs, which creates floor plans for about a dozen home builders in Central Texas.

Lukasik, who has been drawing floor plans for 28 years, has been asked to design metal-frame homes since the early 2000s. He didn't regularly start hearing the word barndominium until seven or eight

years ago. These days, he said, nearly half of the 100 plans he draws each year are for barndominiums, and most are in the Bluebonnet area.

“Originally it was something really simple, something cheap to get into, something to live in. Now, some of the barndominiums are Taj Mahals, big and elaborate and really nice,” he said. “If you think you're living in a barn, it's really not a barn. These can be more expensive than doing a conventional wood-frame build. It's really what you want to put into it.”

Most Texans opt for metal frames rather

than wood frames, in part because they like the look, Lukasik said. For do-it-yourself projects, metal-frame home kits are easier to assemble than wood-frame kits.

The average barndominium buyer is looking for a home in the 1,500- to 2,200-square-foot range, although some go as big as 4,000 square feet. The most requested plan is a one-story rectangular home, Lukasik said, but upstairs lofts are also popular.

Snyder of Exner & Snyder Custom Homes has seen demand for barndominiums increase in the past 15 years.

The company works on six or seven barndominiums a year, concentrating on the area between Brenham and Bastrop. “The lending was really hard to get on them before, because the banks didn’t know what to do with them as far as taxing and values on the building, but they’ve become a lot more mainstream on the market,” Snyder said.

They are popular in part because metal exteriors allow for less upkeep (you don’t have to paint them, for example) but the interiors allow for greater creativity.

“You start out with a big main structure and then really you can build anything you want on the inside,” he said. “They can be simple buildings, but they can be super extravagant on the inside. It’s really about your imagination.”

Most of the houses take 6 to 8 months to build, Snyder added. “We are a complete custom builder, so we are customer-first driven,” Snyder said. “We sit down with the customer to help them envision what they want and make sure they get the product

Sarah Beal photos



The Woelfels’ barndominium is more energy efficient thanks to 8 inches of foam insulation in the attic, left, and 6 inches in the exterior walls, energy-efficient windows, an upgraded HVAC unit and black metal roof.

on paper and ask a lot of questions. I had my notepad with me all the time. Think of questions and shoot them over right away.”

Bluebonnet member Christa Wilson, who lives in Cypress near Houston, dreamed of building a place where she and her twin sister, Corrin Wilcox, could retreat with their families on weekends. After falling in love with Brenham, the sisters purchased 7 acres there to build a traditional house they could share. Then they watched the “Fixer Upper” barndominium episode in 2016 and changed directions.

“We wanted the big grand room that had everything,” said Wilson, who has five children. Her sister has three children. “We wanted a space for our family to hang out. It’s like a party barn pretty much.”

Wilson and Wilcox, both former teachers turned stay-at-home moms, decided to be their own general contractors, purchasing one large red metal building frame from Mueller, Inc., a West Texas-based steel manufacturer with 33 locations across the Southwest. Construction of the building — which includes 4,000 square feet downstairs, half of which is the great room, and 1,000 square feet upstairs — took about four months.

The barndo, which also includes a

they envisioned.”

Bluebonnet member Kathy Anderson and her husband, Jay Anderson, are building a barndominium outside Giddings with the help of Exner & Snyder. They expect their 2,200-square-foot home to cost around \$300,000. The couple will live next door to Kathy Anderson’s sister.

“It took me a long time to find a floor plan for what we wanted,” said Anderson, who hopes to eventually add a large garden, chickens and a small orchard on the property. “You want to maximize your best views. Don’t be afraid to draw it out

The Woelfel family savors movie night, below. Sunny and Mark flank their children, Jay, 11, second from left, Layna, 14, and Rayli, 10. Dogs are, from left, Molly, Flower, Gracie and Lucy.

Continued on next page





The Harts added on to their barndominium in Winchester in 2019, turning what was their living room into a dining room. The add-on became their new living room. The wood behind the TV comes from an old farm house on their family's property.

Continued from previous page

1,500-square-foot covered patio, was ready in January 2017. Since the house can sleep 28 people, Wilson and Wilcox decided to rent it out when they weren't using it. You can get a taste of their barndo life by booking a stay on their website, 12armadillos.com, or by searching "barndominiums" in Central Texas on home rental websites Airbnb or VRBO.

Amanda Hart embraced the barndominium life well before it became a trend. She and her husband, Jon, a Bluebonnet member and welder, started hand-building their first barndominium on their 10-acre property in Winchester in 2005. The initial structure was 26 feet by 50 feet, half of which the couple enclosed to be their home, which they moved into in 2007. The couple used the other half of the building as a welding shop.

"It was literally going to be a barn and a shop, but then we decided, 'Why have this big space and wait to build a house later when we could just make this our house?'" she said.

After their family expanded to include three kids, they enclosed the rest of the 26-by-50-foot structure for living space and started an 18-by-36-foot add-on completed in 2019. They also added a back porch, carport and another bathroom.

"We had a kitchen and a living room, but we didn't have anywhere to sit down and eat as a family," she said. "We wanted to be together and we needed the additional space to be able to do that. I love it. To be able to do it yourself really gives you another level

Area builders in and near the Bluebonnet service area

- **Texas Barndominiums** (texasbarndominiums.com)
- **Exner & Snyder Custom Homes** (512-304-8928)
- **Tello Welding and Construction** (979-716-0343 or facebook.com/TelloWeldingAndConstructionLLC)

READ UP: There are multiple books about barndo designs and layouts online, or read "Barndominium Lifestyle," a bimonthly magazine (barndominiumlifestyle.com).

ON THE WEB: There are Facebook groups dedicated to barndominiums, including "Texas Barndominiums," "Barndominium Homes" and "Barndominium Life" (by barndominiumlife.com). Texas Barndominiums has a YouTube channel where you can learn more: <https://bit.ly/39qkD3a>.

of appreciation for what you have."

Hart estimates that hiring a contractor for the work would have cost twice as much.

Bluebonnet member Dawn Hedgpeth and her husband, Jesse, also plan to embrace the do-it-yourself barndominium approach, downsizing from a 3,500-square-foot house in Dickinson, 30 miles southeast of Houston, to live temporarily in a 320-square-foot shed-house on 8 acres in Bastrop. They purchased the property because it has an empty 2,000-square-foot metal building they plan to convert to a barndominium over several years.

"We're hoping to do most of the work ourselves," she said, but they are working

with Tello Welding and Construction of Giddings on the project.

The estimated cost for their property and construction is about \$300,000. The Hedgpeths have been interested in barndominiums for more than 20 years and are excited to work on the project. After living through hurricanes on the Gulf coast, Dawn Hedgpeth can tile and build cabinets.

"We're in our mid-50s. We could just as easily buy a little condo somewhere and have money set aside and travel, but this is an adventure, and we like doing this sort of stuff together," she said. "We get to do something together and say, 'Look what we did. This is ours. We built it.'" ■



Sarah Beal photos

Amanda Hart holds a sheet of metal steady as husband John, a welder, cuts the piece with metal shears to cover the kick space under the bar in their kitchen.

Home Kits, a do-it-yourself option

Folks who want to build a barndominium but are on a budget may opt for a home kit.

What does a home kit include? Typically a floor plan and prefabricated components to build a one-, two- or three-bedroom home including a bathroom, great room, kitchen, dining room and laundry room.

How much does it cost to build a barndominium using a kit? Barndo home kits can be significantly cheaper than building a traditional home or hiring a contractor if you do it yourself.

Pros: If you plan to hire help, expect to pay a general contractor less if you use a home kit. Kits cut construction time as well as labor and building costs.

Cons: Home kits and what they include vary from company to company, so do a lot of research. Even if you plan a DIY, you'll likely need to hire subcontractors for items such as a septic system, plumbing, electrical, fireplace and HVAC. On average, expect to pay \$60 to \$135 per square foot with a home kit.

Where to buy: A few Texas-based companies that offer home kits are General Steel Corp. (gensteel.com), Absolute Steel Texas (absolutesteeltx.com), Capital Steel Industries (csisteelbuildings.com), Mueller Inc. (muellerinc.com/kits) and Texas Barndominiums (texasbarndominiums.com).

Sources: barndominiumlife.com and gensteel.com



Cooperative's Annual Meeting set for May 11

BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC Cooperative's Annual Meeting will be Tuesday, May 11, at The Silos on 77 near Giddings. Two of nine seats on the Board of Directors are up for election that day.

Board members serve staggered three-year terms. The two seats up for election are District 2, Travis County, and District 3, Bastrop County. The deadline to declare candidacy and file the required documentation and fees to seek a seat on the Board was Feb. 10.

Look for information about all candidates and more details about this year's Annual Meeting in the April edition of Texas Co-op

Power magazine and on our website, bluebonnet.coop.

If you are unable to attend the Annual Meeting, you can vote by proxy. Proxy forms will be mailed to all Bluebonnet members this month. Proxy voting allows a member who cannot attend the Annual Meeting to designate another person to vote in his or her place.

On the proxy, members can assign their vote to either Bluebonnet's Proxy Committee or to an individual. The Proxy Committee is composed of all Bluebonnet Board members whose terms are not currently up for election.

Proxies are counted together with the votes of members at the Annual Meeting. Completed proxy forms must be post-marked or dropped off at any of Bluebonnet's member service centers in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart or Manor by 5:30 p.m. May 4.

The Silos on 77 is at 1031 County Road 223, south of Giddings. Learn more about Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting at bluebonnet.coop/annualmeeting, call 800-842-7708 from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, or email memberservices@bluebonnet.coop.

Bluebonnet CFO Elizabeth Kana retires after 18 years

ELIZABETH KANA, Bluebonnet's chief financial officer, retired in February after nearly two decades of leading the cooperative's financial team.

"Working for Bluebonnet the past 18 years has been the most rewarding experience of my career," Kana said. "When I came to Bluebonnet, our goal was to be one of the best co-ops by providing safe, reliable, affordable electricity as well as excellent member service, and supporting the communities we serve. Thanks to the outstanding leadership by our Board of Directors and the dedication of our employees, we have accomplished that goal."

Before joining Bluebonnet, Kana worked in the private sector, managing the Bastrop office of an Austin-based accounting firm and operating her own firm, and in the public sector with the Lower Colorado River Authority.

"My first impression of Elizabeth when we met 18 years ago was that she was kind



Elizabeth Kana

and every day. She has been a pleasure to work with, and we will miss her."

Kana plans to spend more time with her husband, Roy, and their four children and six grandchildren. She looks forward to enjoying warm water, sandy beaches and snowy mountains.

"I'm going to miss my work family and the satisfaction I feel when we succeed together, but I sure am looking forward to spending more time with my family and

and patient, but that she also had an absolute toughness and resolve to her," said Matt Bentke, Bluebonnet's general manager. "She cares about doing things the right way, all the time, which is something we ask of all our employees

friends — especially my grandkids!"

Grant Gutierrez is Bluebonnet's new chief financial officer. Gutierrez is a certified public accountant and has worked for Bluebonnet since 2005, most recently as controller and chief information officer. Prior to joining Bluebonnet, he worked for Ernst & Young, a global accounting and professional services firm. Gutierrez was raised in Bastrop and graduated from Texas A&M University. He and his wife live in Smithville with their three daughters.

"Congratulations to both Elizabeth and Grant," said Ben Flencher, Bluebonnet's board chairman. "Elizabeth has been instrumental in Bluebonnet's success during the past 18 years. It's a testament to her leadership that we didn't have to look outside our organization to fill her shoes. I hope she enjoys her much-deserved retirement as much as I have enjoyed working with her and her friendship."

Bluebonnet adds solar panels to new Caldwell County facility



Bluebonnet's Maxwell service center has 292 solar panels that can offset about 70 percent of the facility's total annual energy consumption.

BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC Cooperative's service center in Caldwell County is now the cooperative's third facility with solar panels. The service center, which opened in July 2020, is located between Lockhart and San Marcos in Maxwell. It allows field operations personnel to better serve the area.

In December 2020, New Braunfels-based Speir Innovations installed 292 solar panels totaling 100 kilowatts of AC power with four power inverters on two roofs of the facility. The array will produce enough power to offset about 70 percent of the facility's total annual energy consumption.

The campus also features two rainwater collection tanks that each hold 30,000 gallons.

Looking to install solar? You're in luck – the 26 percent federal tax credit was recently extended through 2022. Learn more about connecting your power source to the grid at bluebonnet.coop. Click on the Energy Solutions tab, then Home Renewables & Green Energy.

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Safety

Safety is the top priority at Bluebonnet. This is the first in a series focusing on ways our employees protect one another and deliver safe, reliable electricity to our members and the communities we serve.



Journeyman linemen Donald Hudgen, left, and John Matejcek discuss safety hazards and precautions as part of a job site tailboard meeting.

5,236

total hours of safety training for all employees in 2020

4

years of training required for an apprentice line worker to earn journeyman status

15,600

estimated tailboard meetings by field operations crews annually

Before every job, crew members gather to review job details and identify safety hazards, preventive measures and required safety equipment and procedures.

331

employees with CPR certification

Every Bluebonnet employee goes through CPR training.

161

Bluebonnet vehicles equipped with an automated external defibrillator (or AED)

That's every Bluebonnet vehicle. All employees are trained in using an AED as part of safety training.

16

months Bluebonnet has gone without a single lost-time accident (as of January 2021)

WANT A SAFE SPRING BREAK? We've got lots of ideas

Get out of the house with the kids and have COVID-19 safe excursions during spring break with our March social media guide to fun activities across the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative area. We want your suggestions, too! Email them to giveaway@bluebonnet.coop or add them as comments to our posts. A few lucky Bluebonnet members will win kid-friendly goodie bags.



Check out the amazing murals in downtown Giddings for a socially distanced spring break outing. Get details and plenty more ideas in March in Bluebonnet's social media.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE MARCH 5

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative is accepting applications for its academic and trade & technical Scholarships of Excellence. The \$2,500 scholarships will be awarded to 60 qualified Bluebonnet service-area students graduating from high school or an accredited home study program. Applications are due March 5, 2021, and can be found at bluebonnet.coop. Click on the Community tab, then Scholarships.

DRIVE-THROUGH LANES OPEN

Bluebonnet member service center lobbies remain closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, but drive-through lanes are open 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. Report power outages by texting OUT to 85700 (to register, text BBOUTAGE to that number) or via 800-949-4414, bluebonnet.coop or our mobile app. Pay your bill any time online, on our mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708.

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Wounded— Then Rejected

The first casualty of the Texas Revolution, a free Black man, had to fight for his residency in the new republic

BY MICHAEL HURD

SAMUEL MCCULLOCH JR. was biracial but considered a free Black man when, as a soldier with the Texian army, he was wounded during the Battle of Goliad on October 9, 1835, and considered the first casualty of the Texas Revolution. A musket ball shattered his right shoulder, and despite his injury and service, the postwar Texas government ordered him and all other free Blacks to leave.

Then, in a series of conflicting legislative moves, things got confusing. Could he stay, or did he have to go?

McCulloch was born in 1810 in South Carolina. His father was white, and his mother was Black, but no other records

of her status exist. McCulloch Sr. moved his son and three daughters, all considered free, to Texas, where they settled near the Gulf Coast in what is now Jackson County in May 1835.

The Battle of Goliad was the second skirmish of the revolution, coming one week after the brief skirmish known as the Battle of Gonzales and just four days after McCulloch joined the Texian army as a private with the 50-man Matagorda Volunteer Company. When the force attacked a Mexican army camp, McCulloch was first to enter the fort and the lone soldier wounded. The injury left his shoulder permanently disabled.

After the war McCulloch's residence status quickly began to twist and turn. Initially, the republic's constitution, adopted in September 1836, prohibited citizenship for "Africans and the descendants of Africans and Indians" and required all free Blacks to apply to the Congress for permanent residence. McCulloch made the required application for himself and his sisters in 1837, recounting his military service and stating that he had been "deprived of the privileges of citizenship by reason of an unfortunate admixture of African blood."

On June 5, 1837, the republic passed a law that permitted free Blacks to keep their residency if they had been living in Texas before the Republic's Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836.

With his petition still pending, McCulloch saw his residency status further imperiled on February 5, 1840. That's when an act was passed to prohibit the immigration of free Blacks and demand that all free Black residents vacate the republic within two years or be sold into slavery.

McCulloch filed a successful second petition, likely because of the Ashworth Act, passed December 12, 1840. This legislation provided that the Ashworth families, Black relatives in Jefferson County, could remain in Texas after influential whites intervened.

As a disabled veteran, McCulloch was eligible for a land grant and was awarded one league (4,428 acres) of land, two-thirds of which he chose to ranch and farm near Von Ormy.

Despite his land and his disability, McCulloch soldiered again, fighting in the battle of Plum Creek in 1840 against Comanches and serving as a spy during the Mexican invasion of San Antonio in 1842. He died in Von Ormy on November 2, 1893. ■

Tacos

Some of the most creative and complex flavors ever to meet a tortilla

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

This month, readers treat us to a variety of taco recipes, so naturally we crave salsa. We turn to Austin food advocate and community coordinator Héctor González, who has been sharing his recipes since moving from Mexico. "There are taquerías there that established their fame based on their salsas," González says. But, he says, you don't have to limit the versatile ingredient's use to a condiment—it is also the perfect base for cocktails. This salsa can easily be adapted to your tastes. Increase or decrease the jalapeño pepper or try a habanero if you want an extra kick.

Roasted Red Salsa

6 plum tomatoes
1 medium white onion, halved
3–5 cloves garlic
1–2 hot peppers, such as jalapeños, serranos or habaneros
Fresh cilantro (optional)
Salt, to taste

COOK'S TIP You can turn this salsa into a michelada. Press $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salsa through a fine mesh strainer into a pint glass. Add 1 tablespoon lime juice and 1 teaspoon salt, or more to taste, then slowly pour in 12 ounces of Mexican lager. Cheers!

1. Roast the tomatoes, onion, garlic and peppers on the stovetop or under a broiler. Turn vegetables as needed, blackening all over. Keep an eye on the garlic and peppers, as they will roast faster than the tomatoes.
2. Add roasted vegetables, and cilantro if you like, to a blender or food processor and blend until smooth. A couple of pinches of salt will bring the salsa's brightness to the fore. Taste and adjust seasoning to your liking. You can serve this salsa warm, or chill until ready to serve.

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Butternut Squash Tacos With Black Beans.





Fajita Tacos With Chimichurri Sauce

KITTIELE POTTS
BOWIE-CASS EC

For her fajita tacos, Potts uses a zippy chimichurri sauce that pairs beautifully with sweet caramelized onions.

FILLING

- 32-ounce sirloin steak**
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar**
- ¼ cup olive oil**
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce**
- 1 tablespoon salt**
- 1 tablespoon pepper**
- 1 teaspoon cumin**
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ½ teaspoon onion powder**
- ½ teaspoon paprika**

CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

- 1 cup parsley**
- 1 cup cilantro**
- ½ cup olive oil**
- ½ red onion**
- 20 green pitted olives**
- 4 cloves garlic**
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon capers**
- 1 teaspoon oregano**
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- ¼ teaspoon cumin**

CARAMELIZED ONIONS

- 4 onions**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, melted**
- ⅓ cup olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon sugar**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper**

TO SERVE

Tortillas

COOK'S TIP The sauce is best made in advance to allow flavors to meld.

CONTINUED >

\$500 WINNER

Grilled Garden Harvest Tacos

CHERYL SCHULMAN
FAYETTE EC



These vegetarian tacos pack a surprising amount of flavor into each bite, thanks to the crisp slaw and cool avocado crème. If you can't find ancho chile powder, substitute regular chili powder and a pinch of ground cayenne.

MAKES 6 TACOS

FILLING

- 3 large carrots**
- 2 medium zucchini**
- 1 large sweet potato**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon ground ancho chile powder, or to taste**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 2 ears corn, shucked**

"BRING THE HEAT" SLAW

- 3 cups shredded green cabbage**
- ⅓ cup chopped cilantro**
- 1 small jalapeño pepper, chopped**
- ⅓ cup diced jicama**
- ½ cup chopped red bell pepper**
- ½ cup apple cider vinegar**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- ½ teaspoon sugar**



AVOCADO CRÈME

- 1 large avocado**
- ½ cup Mexican crema**
- 2 teaspoons lime juice**

TO SERVE

- 12 corn tortillas**
- Crumbled cotija cheese**
- Pico de gallo**
- Lime wedges**

- 1. FILLING** Prepare grill to cook over medium-high heat.
- 2.** Peel carrots and cut in half lengthwise. Slice zucchini into strips ¼ inch thick. Peel sweet potato and dice into ¼-inch cubes. Toss all in olive oil, cumin, ancho chile powder and salt. Set aside.
- 3. SLAW** Mix cabbage, cilantro, jalapeño, jicama, bell pepper, vinegar, salt, pepper and sugar. Set aside.
- 4. CRÈME** Combine avocado, crema and lime juice in a blender and blend on low until smooth. Set aside.
- 5.** Place a sheet of foil on half of grill grates. Place carrots flat side down on foil along with sweet potato cubes. Place zucchini strips and corn directly on grill. Turn vegetables to char on all sides. Remove vegetables once they're well charred and tender all the way through, about 6 minutes total for the zucchini and 10 minutes for the carrots, corn and sweet potato. Let cool slightly, then slice zucchini and carrots into quarters and cut corn kernels off the cob.
- 6.** To assemble tacos, grill or warm the tortillas. Layer two tortillas, then top with grilled vegetables followed by slaw and avocado crème. Garnish with pico de gallo, cotija or lime juice.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

KIDS COOKING DUE MAR 10

Have your kids turned into sous-chefs? Share their kitchen creations with our readers. Enter at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests by March 10.



Focus on Texas

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Deadline: March 10

Portraits

Deadline: April 10

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RECIPES CONTINUED

1. FILLING Place steak in a shallow baking dish. Combine vinegar, olive oil and Worcestershire sauce and pour over steak. Cover and refrigerate; let marinate at least 4 hours.

2. SAUCE Combine ingredients in a blender or food processor and pulse until ingredients are completely chopped but not liquefied. The sauce should be somewhat thick and chunky.

3. ONIONS Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Peel off the outer paper layer of the onions, leaving the ends on. Halve onions lengthwise from stem to root. Place the onions in a casserole dish cut-sides up. Combine melted butter, olive oil, sugar, salt and pepper. Drizzle onions generously with the mixture. Cover loosely with foil and bake 30 minutes. Flip onions over and bake an additional 25 minutes, or until onions are tender and caramelized.

4. When ready to cook steak, prepare grill for direct heat cooking. Combine salt, pepper, cumin, garlic powder, onion powder and paprika, and season steak on all sides. Grill to desired doneness, about 10 minutes per side for a medium sirloin. Let steak rest 5 minutes.

5. Slice steak thinly and layer on tortillas with caramelized onions and chimichurri sauce.

SERVES 8



Instant Pot Carnitas Tacos

MELALEE WINKLER
COSERV

These carnitas tacos are made in an Instant Pot for all of the flavor in half the time. Instead of frying, Winkler finishes the carnitas under the broiler to get the crispy edges carnitas are known for. If you have leftovers, save some of the cooking liquid for reheating.

6-7 pounds boneless pork butt shoulder

1 tablespoon salt

1 tablespoon dried Mexican oregano, crumbled

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

1 tablespoon cumin

1 teaspoon chipotle powder

½ teaspoon garlic powder

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 cup orange juice

¼ cup chicken stock

1 yellow onion, quartered

TO SERVE

Flour tortillas

Diced red onion

Sliced radishes

Chopped cilantro

Crumbled queso fresco

Lime wedges

COOK'S TIP If you don't have an Instant Pot, you can also cook this in a heavy, covered pot in the oven at 325 degrees for 3½ hours.

1. Cut the pork butt into six or seven chunks. Mix together the salt, oregano, paprika, cumin, and chipotle and garlic powders. Rub the pork with the spice mixture on all sides.

2. Set the Instant Pot to sauté setting high. Heat the oil in the pot and, working in batches, brown the pork on all sides. Remove the pork and deglaze the Instant Pot with the orange juice and chicken stock, scraping up the browned bits.

3. Place the quartered onion in the pot and turn off the Instant Pot. Place all of the pork on top of the onion. Put the lid on, making sure the valve is set to seal, and set the Instant Pot to pressure cook, high, 1 hour.

4. When the time is up, allow natural release for 15 minutes, then manual release. Remove pork, reserving some of the cooking liquid. Discard the onion.

5. Pull pork with two forks and spread on a baking sheet. Drizzle with a small amount of the cooking liquid and place under the broiler until the pork is slightly browned and crispy on the edges, 3-5 minutes. Serve with grilled flour tortillas, red onion, radish, cilantro, queso fresco and lime wedges.

SERVES 12

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Where Artistry Congregates

Czech and German painted churches in Central Texas are sparkling shrines

BY CHET GARNER

A **TOUR OF TEXAS** back roads takes you past prosaic scenes such as pastures full of grazing cows, profiles of spinning windmills and rural churches quietly awaiting their Sunday congregations. For most of these outlying houses of worship, a simple exterior foreshadows a modest sanctuary. That expectation changes in Fayette and Lee counties, where, concealed within unassuming facades, you'll find Old World decorative glory inside the region's painted churches.

I started my own churchgoing road trip with an apricot kolach because that's what you do when visiting Texas Czech country. I was on a mission to visit the area's five painted churches that are hidden in plain sight within the Czech and German communities that dot the map. My first stop was Dubina.

I pulled into a dirt parking lot and shrugged at what appeared to be an ordinary white building known as Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church. As soon as I stepped inside, I was transported to a world of sacred traditions and intricate religious art. From floor to ceiling, the room dazzled in bright colors and inlaid metals adorning the altars and statues of saints. It was clear that the Czech immigrants who built this church in the late 1800s took great pride in their work and sought to recreate the traditions and artistry of their European homeland here in Texas.

I spent the entire day driving, relying on my GPS so I didn't miss a turn down an obscure road in Fayette or Lee counties. From St. Paul Lutheran in Serbin to St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Ammannsville, each sanctuary had its own feel and history. In the ornately painted St. Mary Catholic Church in High Hill, known as the "Queen of the Painted Churches," the wooden columns looked just like marble. I felt transported to Europe without leaving Texas. ■

ABOVE Chet inside St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Ammannsville.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Chet's video from the painted churches in Fayette County and check out his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

Some events may have been affected by COVID-19. Call or check an event's website for scheduling details.

MARCH

01 **College Station [1-11] Territory: The Exhibition in a Box**, (979) 458-0539, arch.tamu.edu/inside/services/wright-gallery

06 **Bulverde [6, 13, 20, 27] Saturday Night Rodeo**, (830) 980-2226, tejasrodeo.com

09 **Houston Viano String Quartet**, (713) 348-5400, chambermusichouston.org

11 **Tyler [11-14] Texas Rose Spring Kickoff II Hunter/Jumper Horse Show**, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

12 **Shiner [12-13] Pink Chandelier Market Barn Sale**, (361) 798-0573, facebook.com/pinkchandeliermarket

McKinney [12-14] Third Monday Trade Days, (972) 562-5466, tmttd.com

13 **Huntsville [13-14] Rusty Chippy Vintage Hippy & Garden Show**, (936) 661-2545, huntsvilleantiqueshow.com

14 **Dallas [14-June 20] Building on the Boulevard: Celebrating 20 Years of the Meadows's New Home**, (214) 768-2516, meadowsmuseumdallas.org

Dallas [14-June 20] Fossils to Film: The Best of SMU's Collections, (214) 768-2516, meadowsmuseumdallas.org

15

Fredericksburg [15-20]
Spring Break at the Pioneer Museum, (830) 990-8441, pioneermuseum.net

16

Austin [16-20] South by Southwest Online, (512) 467-7979, sxsw.com

18

Brenham [18-21, 25-28]
The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey, (979) 830-8358, unitybrenham.org

19

Abilene [19-20] Outlaws and Legends Music Fest, (325) 660-8458, outlawsandlegends.com

Wichita Falls [19-20]
Cowboy True, (940) 767-2787, artscouncilwf.org/cowboy-true

Tyler [19-21] United States Dog Agility Association Agility Trials, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

Palestine [19-April 4]
Texas Dogwood Trails Celebration, (903) 723-3014, www.texasdogwoodtrails.com

20

Corpus Christi Lecture: Kitchen Herbs, (361) 852-2100, stxbot.org

Irving Las Colinas Symphony Orchestra: Jonathan Jones, (972) 252-4800, lascolinassymphony.org

Luckenbach Mud Dauber Fest, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Mesquite Eggcitement With the Bunny, (972) 216-6273, cityofmesquite.com/pard

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

We pick events for the magazine directly from TexasCoopPower.com. Submit your event online for May by March 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar.

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Hit the Road

Event Calendar

Fairs, festivals, food and family fun! Pick your region. Pick your month. Pick your event.

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Pick of the Month

Classic Car Stampede

Bellville, March 13
 (979) 865-3187
austincountycruisers.com

Austin County Cruisers is a small group of die-hard car enthusiasts who share a passion for the mixture of mechanics and art that creates a vehicle. Cars, trucks and motorcycles from 1976 and earlier will be on display.

MARCH EVENTS CONTINUED

Palestine Dogwood Festival, (903) 729-6066,
palestinechamber.org/dogwoodfestival

Belton [20-21] A Sami Show, (512) 441-7133,
samishow.com

New Braunfels [20-21] Old Gruene Market Days, (830) 629-5077,
gruenemarketdays.com

21 **Kerrville Celtic Angels Ireland**, (830) 896-9393,
caillouxtheater.com

Belton [21, 28, April 11, 18, 25] Healthy Kids Running Series, (254) 340-4577,
healthykidsrunningseries.org

26 **West [26-27] West, Central Texas Ceramic Expo & Handcrafted Items**, (254) 716-5227,
westceramicshow.com

Burton [26-April 3] La Bahia Antique Show and Sale, (979) 289-2684,
labahiaantiques.com

27

Abilene Triple Concerto: Beethoven at 250, (325) 677-6170,
abilenephilharmonic.org

Burnet Hill Country Lawn & Garden Show, (512) 756-9396,
burnetcountyhighlandlakesmastergardener.org

Burton Texas Ranger Day, (979) 803-0393,
burtontexas.org

Sabinal [27-28] Wild Hog Festival and Craft Fair, (830) 486-8549,
sabinalwildhogfestival.com

San Antonio [27-May 9] Night of Artists, (210) 299-4499,
briscoemuseum.org/noa

APRIL

01

Levelland [1-3] American Business Club Pro Rodeo, (806) 777-1510,
abcrodeo.com

Karnack [1-24] Earth Day Flotilla, (903) 736-3063,
tinyurl.com/flotilla2021

Ennis [1-30] Bluebonnet Trails, (972) 878-4748,
bluebonnettrail.org

02

Jefferson [2-4] City-Wide Rummage Sale, (903) 665-2672,
jefferson-texas.com

03

Llano Fiddle Fest, (325) 247-5354,
facebook.com/llanofiddlefest

New Braunfels Jamestown Revival, (830) 964-3800,
whitewaterrocks.com

Palestine Easter Egg Express on the Texas State Railroad, (855) 632-7729,
texasstaterailroad.net

Diners

Diners sprinkled across the state offer cooking that tastes like home no matter where you travel. Here's what our members served up, and we're coming back for seconds!

GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

CHRIS MILLER
BLUEBONNET EC

A diner Miller stumbled upon during a road trip on Route 66.

REAGAN MAZY
SAM HOUSTON EC

Sunset at Ranch Hand Cafe in Cleveland.

SHELLY BORGFELD
FITZPATRICK
PEDERNALES EC

"We spent our anniversary in the charming town of Blanco and had a delightful experience at the Chess Club."

SANDRA DRAKE
BLUEBONNET EC

Drake's grandson at Mama's Daughters' Diner.



Upcoming Contests

- DUE MAR 10 **Night Life**
- DUE APR 10 **Portraits**
- DUE MAY 10 **Rust & Decay**

Enter online and review submission rules at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



Few and Far

Young musicians find out just how much luck and money Far West Texas requires

BY ELI WINTER
PHOTO BY WYATT MCSPADDEN

CAMERON KNOWLER AND I rang in Christmas next to a trailer in the Christmas Mountains. It was 2018, and we had just done a show at Terlingua's Starlight Theatre. For breakfast we'd eaten cowboy omelets with Catfish, a legendary river guide who punctuated slow bites with a groan—"Oh, merciful days!"

Later that night, toward the end of an 11-hour drive to Austin, we sat in an empty Kerrville IHOP for 45 minutes without being served and wolfed down fast food in a parking lot late at night.

That's how touring goes sometimes: No matter the crowd size, guarantee or delusions of grandeur, whether you play bars, basements or arenas, you spend a lot of time driving. Especially in far West Texas.

We were just 21 and 22 but already seasoned touring musicians. My music re-

volves around instrumentals for six-string, 12-string and Weissenborn acoustic guitars. Cameron's guitar and banjo playing draws influence from old-time and bluegrass musicians of the rural South.

This tour marked the first time we had performed together regularly, reinterpreting traditional folk songs and devising our own, and our Christmas Eve concert marked a halfway point, for which we'd traveled from Houston to the desert and back—a route we had looked forward to.

Growing up in Houston, I thought of Far West Texas as a region of stark beauty and mystery. I listened to *StarDate* on the radio and gave a presentation on Fort Davis in fourth grade. It seemed impossibly far.

We were surprised to have made it. On the way out of Lubbock, we stopped by Buddy Holly's grave. Holly toured similarly, and his plane use began from a desire to avoid freezing on a tour bus between shows in the rural Midwest. Our concerts, perhaps like his, were small—a nonprofit record store in Dallas, a backyard barn in Austin and a hotel bar in Marfa—but they didn't need to be big. Cameron thought of it like Hollywood, less charmed by the \$10 cacao nibs we attempted to snack on during long drives or the person who asked him before a gig if we were together, then asked, "Are you any good?"

Each day we made enough money for the next, aware of the luck that permeated our travels: playing to a packed house in a repopulated ghost town the night before Christmas, the night after playing for an attentive handful on the outskirts of Austin.

At the homecoming show in Houston, we cracked jokes about our travels, and I thought back to Catfish, as I often do. These days had been merciful indeed. ■

TEXAS MINT

We are excited to announce the release of the 2021 Texas Silver Round – Revolution Series. This is the second release of a four-year series commemorating the battles of the Texas Revolution. Each Texas Silver Round is one troy ounce .9999 fine silver.

The obverse of the high-quality mint strike features Texas' iconic lone star in the foreground. The smooth engraving of the star is framed by a textured topographical outline of the state of Texas. "TEXAS" arches proudly over the top of the round's obverse in large capital letters, with "Precious Metals" presented inversely along the opposite side. The round's mintage year is engraved in the bottom left of the round, just southwest of what would be the Rio Grande bordering Texas and Mexico.

The reverse of the 2021 release displays a scene from the famous Battle of the Alamo. It depicts two Texian soldiers including the American icon, Davy Crockett, attempting to fend off Mexican soldiers attempting to breach the walls of the Alamo.



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BATTLE OF GONZALES

first in the series ● ● ● ●

The stunning 2020 Texas Silver Round depicts a scene from the Battle of Gonzales, with three Texian revolutionaries defending the famous Gonzales cannon, while brandishing the Come And Take It Flag.

The Texas Silver Round can be purchased in a monster box produced exclusively for the Texas Mint. Packaged in 20 protective tubes of 25 rounds each, the monster box holds 500 1-ounce Texas Silver Rounds. Built from durable cold-rolled steel and finished with a matte black powder coat, the monster box lid features an orange cutout of the state of Texas. Each sealed monster box is secured with a unique serial number and a holographic seal to ensure maximum product protection.

The Texas Silver Round is also available to purchase in a similarly designed and secured mini-monster box, which contains 10 protective tubes of 25 rounds each for a total of 250 silver rounds.



BATTLE OF THE ALAMO

second in the series ● ● ● ●

The events of this famous battle took place on the days of February 23rd - March 6th, 1836. At the end of a 13-day siege, President General Antonio López de Santa Anna and his Mexican troops reclaimed the Alamo Mission, killing the Texian and immigrant occupiers.





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