

TEXAS CO-OP POWER



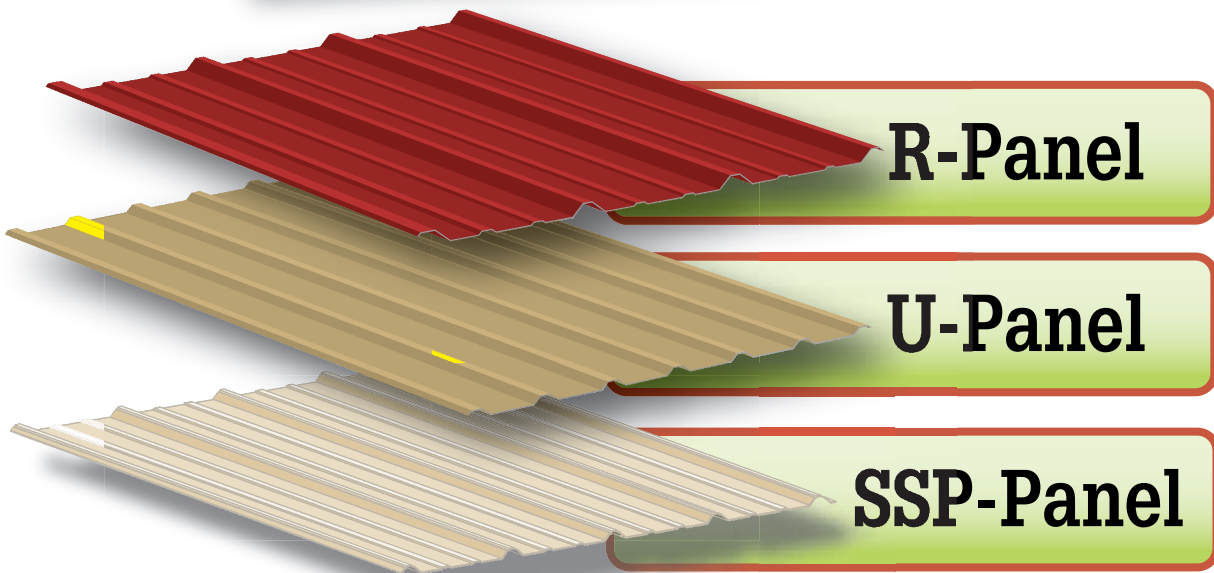
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Cowboys brand cattle at the XIT Ranch.

FEATURES

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The Sneed-Boyce Feud
By Gene Fowler

ON THE COVER Rattlesnakes are among the most commonly encountered snakes in the state. Illustration by David Danz

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A Tree's Trials

I'm a crape murderer—but not because I'm trying to restrict the height of them [*Crape Murder*, February 2020]. My crape myrtles border our driveway. They bloom beautifully and look great during the warm months.

However, once the first freeze occurs, they turn brown and become a bit of an eyesore. Even worse, left untrimmed, they drop dead leaves and seed pods onto my driveway throughout the winter, much of which is then blown into the garage. Foot traffic then brings them inside.

TOM MILLHOLLON | GRANBURY
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

I enjoyed Sheryl Smith-Rodgers' article, but it should have been titled Crape Assault and Battery because it's almost impossible to kill the average crape. Three years ago, I cut off a 6-inch diameter volunteer crape just above the ground (that was too close to the house), and it came roaring back.

I repeatedly cut it back and finally was able to kill it by pouring a thick layer of concrete over the stump. There's nothing delicate about a crape!

DUDLEY DOBIE | AUSTIN
FAYETTE EC

For all of my 50-year career in Texas horticulture, I have yet to hear even one valid reason for this practice. When author Sheryl Smith-Rodgers quoted Greg Grant, she went to one of Texas' finest resources. Indeed, we must "stop the madness."

NEIL SPERRY | MCKINNEY
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

True Confession

I had never seen a crape myrtle before I moved to Texas [*Crape Murder*, February 2020]. There was a row of them along the property line of my lot in a mobile home park. My neighbor told me to cut them back. Soon afterward, I found out that was wrong. I've felt bad ever since. They were fairly tall.

LISA CULBERTSON | VIA FACEBOOK

Not a Flicker of Doubt

In Focus on Texas in February, you identified a bird as a woodpecker. The bird is a flicker.

MARYLIN DOW | SCROGGINS
WOOD COUNTY EC

Editor's Note: We checked with Clifford Shackelford, an ornithologist at the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "It's a male red-bellied woodpecker," he said. "The flicker would never have that much red on the head."

Crawfish Crazy

I am crawfish crazy [*A Tale of Texas Crawfish*, February 2020]. It's a pastime, like baseball or fishing. Conversations over mudbugs and beer—can't beat it.

RYAN WAGNER | VIA FACEBOOK

You left out the best place along the coast in Calhoun County.

Bubba's Cajun Seafood has been serving up its own special seasoning on heaps of steaming crawfish for almost 10 years.

BECKEY BOYD GOODEN | SEADRIFT
VICTORIA EC

I call 'em what they are, crawfish, and the very best come out the Atchafalaya spillway, not farm raised.

DARYL RODRIGUEZ | VIA FACEBOOK



You can call them whatever you want. I call them good.

MICHEAL WOODARD | VIA FACEBOOK

I grew up in West Texas, and we called them crawdads. I never knew people ate them.

MARCIA HERALD | VIA FACEBOOK

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Texas Co-op Power

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BY THE NUMBERS

20 MILLION

That's how many Americans demonstrated on behalf of the environment on the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970. Gaylord Nelson, a Wisconsin governor and U.S. senator, started the movement 50 years ago.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE



I never should have told my parents . . .

► **Tell us how** you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to 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 February prompt: **My most unforgettable first date was ...**

With two different boys. They both showed up at the same time. Awkward.

BARBARA TALIAFERRO | SPRINGTOWN TRI-COUNTY EC

With a girl who had to stop and go to the bathroom in the woods on the way home.

JIM MORROW | HIGHLAND VILLAGE | COSERV

The one that resulted in my lunch date and I being inseparable from that day forward.

CONNIE THOMAS | VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.

HAPPENINGS

School Launch Program

Brett Williams' push for a STEM-based curriculum at Fredericksburg High School in 1996 certainly took off. Williams found a fun way to teach students lessons in science, technology, engineering and math while building a model rocket, which they then launched.

He called his program SystemsGo, and it spread to other schools. Students design rockets to meet specific criteria, such as sending a 1-pound payload 1 mile high or exceeding the sound barrier.

This year, more than 80 high schools in four states will participate in **ROCKETS 2020** launches. The first event in Texas is **APRIL 24-25** in **JACKSBORO**. Launches in Stonewall and Anahuac will follow later in the spring, and Jal, New Mexico, will host an event.

Rockets will launch throughout the events, which are open to the public and free.

INFO ► (830) 997-3567, systemsgo.org

WEB EXTRAS
► Find more happenings online.

POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

Sharing Veterans' Voices

WHEN JAPAN'S ENVOYS signed the documents surrendering to the Allies on September 2, 1945, in Tokyo Bay, they could not know they were being watched by a sailor from Fayette County. Charlie Ripper, a shell man for the 16-inch guns on the USS Colorado, had an eye on the ceremony. "I was on lookout duty," Ripper said, "and from the lookout tower I could see them sign the papers."

Ripper and 62 other World War II veterans—men and women—some who remained stateside to support the war effort and others who slogged through muddy battlefields, told their stories to Fayette County Electric Cooperative member Elaine Thomas, who included each narrative in her book, *Veterans' Voices and Home Front Memories*.

"I have been a regular columnist for the *Fayette County Record* for more than a decade," Thomas said. "I was talking to Charlie Ripper and asked him if I could interview him for an article."

Ripper agreed on the condition that he not be called a hero. "The only heroes are the ones who didn't come home," Ripper said.

Thomas' stories about Ripper and others in the *Fayette County Record* drew raves from the community. They led to a special section in the paper and then the book.

Four hundred people turned out for the *Veterans' Voices* book signing in November 2018, and 17 veterans and three female civilians whose stories appear in the book were able to accept appreciation from the community for their service. Proceeds from the book, available on Amazon, support a scholarship at Blinn College's Schulenberg campus.



Elaine Thomas with World War II veteran Charlie Ripper of La Grange.

POWER OF OUR PEOPLE recognizes co-op members who improve their community's quality of life. Nominate someone by emailing people@texascooppower.com.

LIFESTYLE

MAKING CENTS



April 1 is National One Cent Day.

That's not an April Fool's Day joke. It's true.

A penny used to be worth something—enough to prompt the centuries-old saying, "A penny saved is a penny earned." In fact, some readers remember penny candy and corner stores, where, for just 1 cent, you could actually get something sweet.

The U.S. first issued a 1-cent coin in 1792. Because of inflation, what used to cost 1 cent then costs 27 cents today.

Though easily disregarded, the penny is the most abundant coin in the country, with about 7.8 billion produced by the U.S. Mint in 2018. But because pennies cost 2.06 cents each to produce, American taxpayers lost more than \$82 million that year minting them.

That's not a joke, either.

WORTH REPEATING

"What is the difference between a taxidermist and a tax collector? The taxidermist takes only your skin."

—MARK TWAIN

(With that, we remind you the tax collector comes calling April 15.)

A close-up photograph of a snake with a brown and tan speckled pattern, coiled in a field of green grass and small red and yellow flowers. The snake's head is visible in the upper left, and its body forms several loops. The background is filled with tall grass and some dried leaves.

**A
SNAKE**

**TO
LOVE**

BY MIKE LEGGETT

FRIEND OR FOE?

What is your experience with rattlesnakes? Tell us at letters@texascooppower.com.

OUTDOORS JOURNALIST COMES TO ADMIRE RATTLESNAKES, WHICH ARE NOT THE EVIL BEINGS OF LEGEND AND MYTH IN TEXAS

I can trace my love affair with rattlesnakes back more than 60 years to a cool, misty October Saturday morning in the mid-1950s when somebody showed up at the little general store in DeBerry with a very large canebrake rattler in the back of a pickup.

I would have been 6 or 7 years old then, and there was no threatened status as there is now for these shy, somewhat gentle reptiles. In those days, when anybody encountered one, the snake invariably lost a war with a load of No. 6 squirrel shot. This one had succumbed to just such a blast, but it wasn't his missing head that fascinated me. It was the full-grown fox squirrel that lay in the slit-open belly of the snake. His last meal.

That rattlesnake was absolutely beautiful to me and kicked off a quest that has kept me fascinated for more than six decades. I loved that snake and hated that it had to die.

I wouldn't see another rattler for at least 30 years. By then I was the outdoors editor at the *Austin American-Statesman*. I

was looking for someone who kept rattlesnakes to allow me to check the efficacy of wading leggings designed to blunt the attacks of stingrays and rattlesnakes. A Texas Parks and

A western diamondback rattlesnake, found in the western two-thirds of the state and one of eight species of rattlesnakes native to Texas.

Wildlife Department employee offered a 3-footer, and I placed my right boot down next to the snake. The strike was surprisingly fast, not even registering as a blow against my calf. There were golden droplets of venom hanging off the ballistic cloth of the leggings.

I went several more years without crossing paths with another rattlesnake, but once I hit my stride, I began to see them and hear them more often. I would catch them when I could and pose them for photos in the wild.

I've seen them during spring turkey season especially, usually crossing a road or *sendero* and trying to go on about their business. I've literally stepped on rattlers, stepped over them and walked within inches of them as they hid in the brush, usually under a guayacan or other shrubby kind of South Texas bush. Only one of those tried to bite me, a big snake—more than 5 feet long—that fired off from under a bush in South Texas one day. I killed it with a deer rifle, something I've always regretted.

Most of the time, rattlesnakes try to stay hidden or move to a hiding place and avoid any contact with humans. In the course of daily life in Central Texas, if you encounter a snake, odds are it will be a western diamondback rattlesnake or a Texas rat snake. But rattlesnakes are not the evil beings of legend and myth in Texas.

RESPECT THEIR LETHAL POWERS

We are too big for rattlers to eat, and they know that. But they will bite if pressured or frightened, and anyone who suffers a bite from a rattler is in for a tough time.

On average, one to two people per year die from snakebites in Texas, according to the Department of State Health Services, and often, those individuals were handling the snake in some way, either by trying to pick it up or fool with it. Most snakebites in Texas are by western diamondbacks, the most common venomous snake in the state.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A RATTLESNAKE

Here are some steps that could help lessen the nasty effects of the snake's venom.

Don't panic. Head straight for a doctor or hospital. Doctors will have access to anti-venom drugs that can help save lives and limbs.

Throw out those old tales about cutting an X above the fang mark or sucking out the venom. You'll probably do more harm than good.

Remain still. Movements help distribute the venom throughout the body.

Remove jewelry or tight clothing around the bite.

Keep the bite area below the level of the heart to keep the venom from spreading.

DO NOT apply a tourniquet or ice to the bite. And no steroids should be used in treatment.

There is a vaccine for dogs and cats that, with an annual injection, can help reduce the effects of rattlesnake bites. Veterinarians typically keep it in stock.

Except for the big timber areas of East Texas, western diamondbacks are the most widespread of venomous snakes, with a range covering the area along either side of Interstate 35 and on into the mountains of West Texas. The South Texas desert and the coastal plains are home to very large diamondbacks, 6–7 feet long. Prairie rattlers show up in the grasslands and scrub brush of the Texas Panhandle.

There are no regional differences in aggressiveness or venomous status of the local snakes, which all have the equipment to bite and injure or kill humans.

University of Texas herpetologist Travis Laduc has spent lots of time studying rattlesnakes and the way they bite. Capturing many hours of footage with ultrahigh-speed cameras, he's learned that the bite itself, from coiled position to contact and back to coiled position, takes but half a second. In that half-second, the rattlesnake can deliver a load of hemotoxic venom that works through the bloodstream.

THEIR ROLE IN THE ECOSYSTEM

Rattlesnakes are abundant in most of their natural range, and they are there for a reason. Rats and mice might be stacked a foot deep without rattlesnakes around to eat a few from time to time.

However, I'm not saying you should ignore a rattler in your yard or close to your house where kids or pets might be in danger. I've lost two Labs to rattlesnakes over the years myself.

My wife and I came home one night. As we walked up onto the front porch in the dark and I was trying to get the key into the lock, we were shaken by the loudest buzzing I've ever heard—so loud up under the porch I thought it had to be cicadas. However, Rana wasn't fooled. She was back in the truck in seconds and yelling for me to get in as well.

I climbed into the cab and turned the lights on to illuminate a large rattlesnake lying on the doormat, just inches from where I had been standing moments before. We had cats then, and as outdoor cats tend to do, they had choused that snake until he couldn't get away and was cornered against the front door.

I had no choice but to do away with the snake. That's one rule I don't break: No snakes around the house.

In Central Texas, where I live and where a generous portion of Texas rattlesnakes live, that is kind of a classic encounter. Maybe you find one hiding in your flower bed one morning or crawling through your corral. We should be thankful for them and for what they do to keep vermin under control.

Here's a challenge for anyone who comes across a rattlesnake: Let it stay in its hiding place or just crawl away into the brush. If it's hiding, rattle or not, it's just hoping you'll go on by and leave it to hunt in peace.

Mike Leggett was outdoors editor for the *Austin American-Statesman* from 1985 to 2013. He has a lifelong fascination with rattlesnakes and is currently writing a book about rattlers, due out in 2021. He lives in Burnet and is a member of Pedernales EC.

WEB EXTRAS

► [Read this story on our website to learn more rattlesnake facts.](#)

COMMON SNAKES OF TEXAS

VENOMOUS

Rattlesnakes are not the only venomous snakes in Texas, though they are by far the most common and tend to strike the most fear in Texans' hearts.

Next on the list of most feared snakes is the **cottonmouth**, or **water moccasin**. Ranging in color from a splotchy gray to nearly black, it is commonly found around swampy, slow-water terrain and habitat.

The **copperhead** is a small, beautifully colored and patterned snake found mostly in yards and wooded areas of East Texas but also Central Texas. It is common in cities and towns and is known to deliver bites to children playing outside or adults walking on the lawn.

Coral snakes, which deliver neurotoxic venom, are found throughout the eastern half of the state, including Central Texas. They are small, slender snakes and must literally chew on a person to get their venom into the bite.

NONVENOMOUS

Texas rat snake Maybe the most common snake in Texas, this acrobatic climber feeds on rats and mice, birds and birds' eggs. It can grow to be quite large but is not dangerous to humans. It will bite, though, and protect itself with an obnoxious musk.

Coachwhip A slender, mostly light brown to tan snake that will kill and eat rattlesnakes, it doesn't attack people by whipping their legs, as folklore suggests. It eats birds, small reptiles and almost anything else it can catch and swallow. The Central Texas whipsnake, a member of this family, has a black head and a black-and-white pattern on the rest of its body.

Hog-nosed snake Most common in East Texas, this little snake has an upturned nose and feeds on insects. It will play dead if threatened. It has a brownish to gray body with broken patterns of brown and black on its back.

Diamondback water snake A brownish snake with yellowish belly, it is common in lakes and ponds through much of Texas, especially the damper eastern half of the state. It eats fish, frogs and other aquatic fauna. It is often mistaken for a water moccasin and killed.

Speckled king snake A large snake, it's commonly known as a chicken snake for its habit of sneaking into hen houses and devouring eggs and baby chicks—though the rat snake is more likely the culprit in those raids.

MIKE LEGGETT



COTTONMOUTH



COACHWHIP



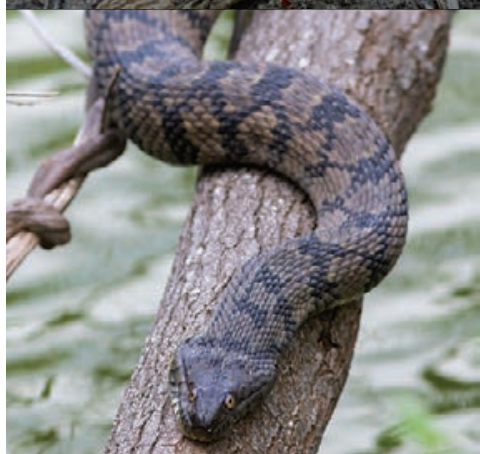
COPPERHEAD



HOG-NOSED SNAKE



CORAL SNAKE



DIAMONDBACK WATER SNAKE



TEXAS RAT SNAKE

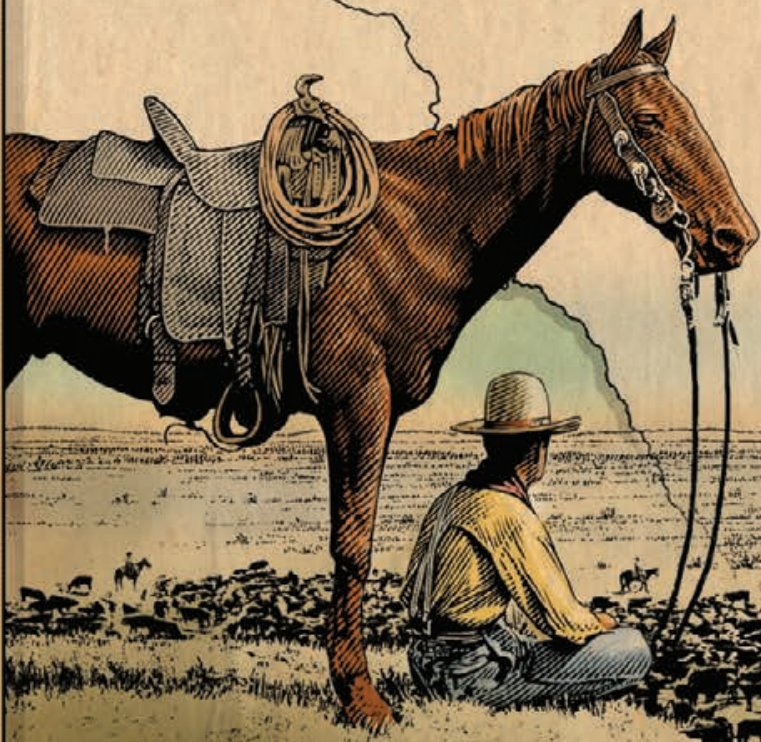


SPECKLED KING SNAKE



XIT

THE RANCH
THAT BUILT THE CAPITOL



JOHN A. WILSON

THE SHORT-LIVED XIT RANCH, THE WORLD'S LARGEST, LEFT BEHIND MYTHS AS LASTING AS THE EDIFICE IT FUNDED

WHEN SAM HOUSTON'S youngest son, Temple, spoke at the state Capitol dedication in 1888, he waxed eloquent about the grand building. "Texas stands peerless amid the mighty, and her brow is crowned with bewildering magnificence!" he said. "This building fires the heart and excites reflection in the minds of all."

Houston also commented on the logistics required to manifest this structure, which started with the creation of the 3 million-acre XIT Ranch and included the construction of the Austin and Northwestern Railroad to deliver red granite for the Capitol from Marble Falls to Austin.

"The XIT looms large in Texas mythology and ranching history because it was the largest fenced ranch in the world during its heyday," says Nick Olson, director of the XIT Museum in Dalhart, which preserves images, stories, saddles and artifacts associated with the XIT. "And it's the ranch that built the largest state Capitol in the country." At the time of its dedication, the Texas Capitol was the seventh-largest building in the world.

Neither the XIT Ranch nor the special, narrow-gauge railroad tracks exist today. The XIT lives on as a carefully tended legend, and the reality of the ranch is difficult to separate from the myths. Capitol and XIT historian Bill Green says the ranch's legacy can be seen as a branding tool because businesses in Dalhart and around the Panhandle adopt the name: XIT Roofing, XIT Real Estate, XIT Feeders, and XIT car dealerships and communications companies. Thousands of area residents own small patches of the fabled ranch. Cattle outfits operate on lands purchased from the original XIT acreage.

Moreover, the XIT legacy looms globally. "I was curator of history at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum for 17 years," Green explains, "and we had visitors from all over the world. They all knew two things about Texas: the Alamo and the XIT."

BUILDING THE CAPITOL

STATE LEGISLATORS realized they needed to plan for a new Capitol in the 1870s, and the Texas Constitution of 1876 set aside 3 million acres of land along the western border of the Panhandle to fund its construction. Even though they allocated the land, they did not articulate a procedure for how to survey the land and execute the legal agreements required to construct the building itself. In 1879, the Legislature approved a process for surveying the land and moving forward with a working plan. Not long after the existing Capitol burned in 1881, the newly appointed Capitol Board, including the governor, treasurer, attorney general and land commissioner, solicited bids.

In 1882, the contract to construct the edifice went to four Illinoisans: brothers John and Charles Farwell, Amos C. Babcock and Abner Taylor, who formed the Capitol Syndicate. Taylor

then hired a 27-year-old German immigrant named Gustav Wilke to serve as contractor. In 1885, the syndicate made an agreement by which it could occupy and ranch on the XIT land even though it did not yet have the title to it. Once the Capitol was complete, the legal title would be conveyed from the state to the syndicate.

To finance the cattle ranching, John Farwell formed the Capitol Freehold Land and Investment Company of London. He and his partners raised about \$5 million to keep the ranch running until it could be broken up and sold to individual ranchers and homesteaders. Back in Austin, construction started on the Capitol, with the Farwells paying for the initial stages from their own funds.

As Green points out, Europeans of the time had a rather romantic view of Texas ranching, and British investors had bankrolled several large Texas ranches, including Charles Goodnight's JA Ranch. The British Empire enjoyed global reach, and there was little opportunity to pursue the promise of such lucrative investments at home.

OPERATING THE RANCH

THE FIRST LONGHORNS arrived on the XIT range in 1885, delivered by a team of drovers led by Ab Blocker. J. Frank Dobie wrote that Blocker was “the most original-natured trail boss I have known.” At the third XIT Reunion in 1938, where aging cowpokes gathered to swap tall tales and reminisce, Blocker told Lewis Nordyke, author of the 1949 XIT volume, *Cattle Empire*, that he sketched the XIT brand in the sod with his boot heel for the ranch’s manager at the time, B. H. “Barbecue” Campbell. Blocker demonstrated for Campbell that the brand could be accomplished with five applications of a straight-line branding iron and would be nearly impossible for rustlers to alter. XIT it was.

In his 1929 book, *The XIT Ranch of Texas*, J. Evetts Haley explained that managing the sprawling ranch posed huge challenges for Campbell. “Barbecue exercised slight control over his men and allowed the ranch to become a rendezvous for rustlers, outlaws, and hard cases of all kinds,” Haley wrote.

Ranch operations improved when Albert G. Boyce, described by Haley as “a frontier cowman of commanding presence and vast experience,” became manager of the XIT in 1888. When Boyce took over, he fired and replaced most of the ranch’s 150 cowboys. At the same time, John Farwell improved profitability by replacing the ranch’s longhorn herds with Hereford, Angus and other purebred stock.

To further streamline the XIT’s business, Boyce divided the massive ranch into eight sections, each with a separate function, and established ranch headquarters in the town of Channing, where he built a house. The northernmost section was named Buffalo Springs. The others included Middle Water, Ojo Bravo, Alamasitas, Rita Blanca, Escarbada and Spring Lake. The southernmost division was Yellow Houses, named for nearby limestone formations called *las casas amarillas*.

Cowpunchers, well drillers, windmill toilers



Above: Bronco busting at the Yellow Houses division of the XIT Ranch in 1904. Below: The Capitol in Austin in the late 19th century.



and freighters—who kept the ranch’s remote outposts equipped with necessities—came from all walks of life. One cowpoke was even said to have a special love for the poetry of John Keats. When Boyce’s daughter Bessie opened a letter from a farm boy in Maryland who professed to love horses, she hired him by return mail. A hand named Blue Stevens later recalled that he gathered cow chips—used as fuel—for 21 days straight, picking up enough chips “to heat branding irons for every cow in the U.S.A.”

Noted ranching photographer Ray Rector cowboied on the XIT as a youth. According to the 1995 volume *The Papers of Will Rogers*, the cowboy philosopher worked on the XIT around 1901. A photograph of Yellow Houses’ chuck wagon dining includes an hombre identified as Rogers, who later recalled the Plains as “the prettiest country I ever saw in my life.”

Operating under threat of receivership by British investors for most of its existence, the XIT began selling off its acreage in 1901. The last cattle left the ranch in 1912. In 1936, the first XIT Reunion drew a crowd to Dalhart, and the annual event is now known internationally as “the world’s largest free barbecue.”

The Escarbada division headquarters building—deconstructed, moved, reconstructed and restored—can be seen today at the National Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock. The XIT general office and manager’s residence still stand in Channing, where an annual Christmas in July event began in 2018. (The 2020 event will be July 25.) The Capitol Visitors Center in Austin features a display on the XIT story.

Was the XIT too sprawling and massive to be a successful ranching operation? Manager Boyce thought so. But Andy Wilkinson, playwright of *Charlie Goodnight’s Last Night*, takes a longer view. “When you let all the big windies about the fabled ranch drift off into the sunset,” muses Wilkinson, “what still remains is a spread of 3 million acres, 1,500 miles of barbed wire, tens of thousands of cattle, and enough outlaws and heroes and honest-to-goodness cowhands to populate all the rangeland myths of the American West.”

Writer and author **Gene Fowler** specializes in art and history.

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We were able to secure these authentic desert gems for a remarkable price. You could easily spend as much as \$900 for a White Buffalo pendant in sterling silver. But, our philosophy is to pass our good fortune on to our customers, which is why you can own a piece of Native American history for under \$100.

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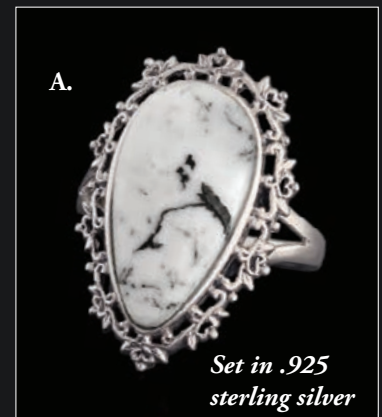
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Line Crews Keep the Lights On



MESSAGE FROM GENERAL MANAGER KATHI CALVERT

ELECTRICITY TRAVELS ALONG AN INTRICATE network of wires and poles to power our homes and businesses. Most of the time, it's a seamless journey, but occasionally, the path of electricity is disrupted by obstacles like fallen tree branches, animals or car accidents. When that happens, Houston County Electric Cooperative's linemen are ready to restore that connection no matter the weather or time of day.

We couldn't carry out our mission without the daily dedication of our line crews. It's a demanding job on the front line of our co-op that often requires working around the clock in

challenging conditions to serve our members and communities. They are first responders who get us through some of our darkest hours. We count on them to power our lives, day in and day out.

When I think of our linemen, I smile with pride. I fully recognize their skill, dedication, courage and selfless sacrifice to serve our members.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association officially acknowledged the tireless efforts of this talented group with this 2014 resolution:

Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on;

Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure;

Whereas linemen are the first responders of the electric cooperative family, getting power back on and making things safe for all after storms and accidents; and

Whereas there would be no electric cooperatives without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of linemen;

Therefore be it resolved that NRECA recognize the second Monday of April of each year as National Lineman Appreciation Day and make available to electric cooperatives materials and support to recognize the contributions of these valuable men and women to America's electric cooperatives.

We proudly join with NRECA and cooperatives across the country to honor linemen and show our appreciation and respect for the service they provide for our members.

Houston County EC's linemen are the best of the best and truly deserve this special day of recognition. We invite our members to take a moment to thank a lineman for the work they do. Leave a message for them on our Facebook page and use the hashtag #ThankALineworker to show your support for the men and women who light our lives.



Remember to #ThankALineworker



Houston County Electric Cooperative

P.O. Box 52, Crockett, TX 75835

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Work Zone Awareness Week

April 20 - 24

**WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING
AND SEE A UTILITY CREW,
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SIDE OF THE ROAD, MOVE
OVER WHEN POSSIBLE.**

**IF MOVING OVER IS NOT
AN OPTION, REMEMBER
TO *SLOW DOWN*.**

**LET'S WORK TOGETHER
TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE
ON OUR ROADWAYS!**



**DO YOUR PART TO KEEP OUR UTILITY WORKERS SAFE!
IT'S THE LAW**

POWERFUL PEOPLE

Whether they're restoring power after a major storm or maintaining the critical infrastructure of Houston County Electric Cooperative's electric system, linemen are the heart of our co-op. The service-oriented mentality of our linemen is one of their most admirable qualities. Their focus is on maintaining electric service so that our member-owners can be safe and comfortable in their homes.

Mother Nature has no consideration for holidays, vacations or birthdays—so when a storm hits, our linemen set aside their personal lives and concentrate on one thing: restoring power to our local communities. Line crews work around the clock, sometimes in difficult and dangerous conditions, to achieve their goal.

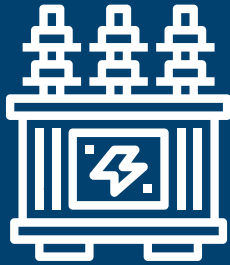
We want our linemen to know that this sacrifice does not go unnoticed. Houston County EC is proud to honor the past, present and future linemen that maintain our service territory.

THE DANGERS OF BEING A LINEMAN



HEIGHTS

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WEATHER

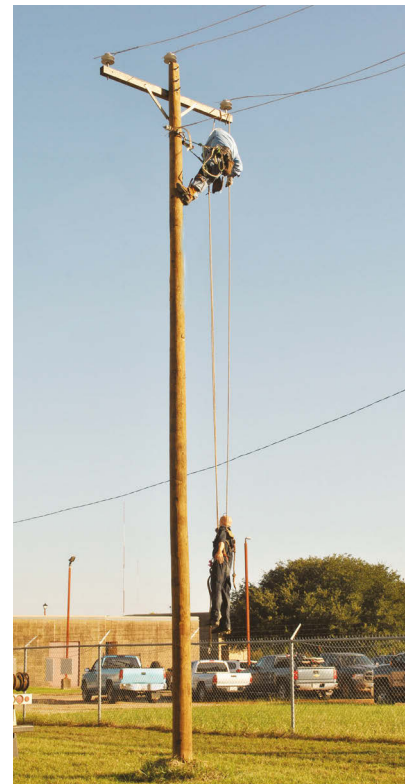
WORK IN THE WORST WEATHER & AT NIGHT



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April 13, 2019, was a day that changed the lives of many Houston County EC members. Three tornadoes swept through the HCEC service territory, causing extensive damage to property, destroying homes and even claiming the life of one of our beloved members. Thousands of homes were without power. The task of restoration seemed daunting. But without hesitation, our line crews pulled together and headed out to our local communities to restore electricity. Back-to-back storms had the line crews working 16-hour days for an entire week, finally restoring the last of the outages on Easter Sunday, April 21.

We can only call it fate that this year, in 2020, Lineman Appreciation Day is scheduled for April 13, exactly one year after our heroic line, right-of-way and contract crews worked to restore power to our members.

It is our good fortune that these brave men are part of the Houston County EC family. And we are thankful that we can sleep a little better at night knowing that they are out there working hard, in good weather and bad, to provide all of our members with safe and reliable electric service.



YOUR DEDICATED TEAM:



Riley Barrett	2nd Class Lineman
Jeremy Bobbitt	Foreman
Trevor Brooks	2nd Class Lineman
Jeff Brown	1st Class Lineman
Duane Burleson	Foreman
Casey Corry	1st Class Lineman
Justin Currie	1st Class Lineman
Donny Davis	3rd Class Lineman
Cody Duke	3rd Class Lineman
Dan Fedak	1st Class Lineman
Curtis Franklin	3rd Class Lineman
Kraig Goolsby	Foreman
David Hildebrand	Service man
Huntter Hollis	2nd Class Lineman

Bobby Hutcherson	Service man
Tim Johnson	Service man
Allen Lawrence	Foreman
Perry Little	Line Inspector
Randy Lively	Foreman
David McKinney	1st Class Lineman
Cliff Moore	Service man
Brandon Quillin	2nd Class Lineman
Russell Rivers	Service man
Clint Rosser	Helper
Joseph Smoldas	3rd Class Lineman
Lowell Stagner	1st Class Lineman
Doug Whitehead	1st Class Lineman



TOP: Back row, from left, Randy Lively, Houston County EC construction crew foreman; Loretta Eddins, ASISD counselor; Shelby Vance, HCEC network administrator; Kevin Plotts, ASISD principal; and Cody Moree, ASISD superintendent. Front row, from left, Cheryl Hildebrand, ASISD public education information management system secretary; Tara Campbell, ASISD first grade teacher; and Lawanda Williamson, ASISD technology coordinator.

BOTTOM: Apple Springs Elementary students learn on their new tablets, which were donated by Houston County EC.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH



MARY PAT WALDRON

Windy Hill North Spring Salad

SALAD

- Mixed spicy greens (mustard, mesclun, arugula or red leaf lettuce)
- Radishes, thinly sliced
- Green onions, thinly sliced
- Young asparagus, trimmed
- Crumbled goat cheese
- Fresh chopped dill
- Hard-boiled eggs, sliced
- Sea salt and fresh cracked pepper, to taste

DRESSING

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons white wine or apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon spicy mustard (such as Dijon or Creole)
- 1 teaspoon honey
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric

1. Combine the salad ingredients in a bowl.
 2. In a separate bowl, whisk together dressing ingredients (or combine them in a jar and shake).
 3. Drizzle the dressing over the salad and toss to combine. Taste for seasonings, adding salt or pepper as desired, and serve immediately.
- Serves 4.

COOK'S TIP Plan on a handful of greens per person and add other ingredients as desired. A sprinkling of flaky sea salt on top makes the vegetables' flavors pop.

Find this and more delicious recipes online at **TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM**

Powering Our Youth

IN FEBRUARY, HOUSTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE DONATED 31 TABLETS TO Apple Springs Independent School District. The tablets, all iPads, are four to seven years old but have been well maintained and are still in excellent working condition. The tablets' operating system could no longer accept the software updates that are required by the programs Houston County EC employees use, but they still hold value as learning tools for the students.

The tablets will be used primarily by elementary school students because of how easy they are to navigate, said Lawanda Williamson, Apple Springs ISD's technology coordinator.

HCEC used most of the tablets in the field, for line crews handling outages and other day-to-day functions. Work orders were sent to the tablets in real time, rather than using paper tickets and waiting until the next business day to receive them. Some apps that are necessary to access these items could not be updated to the latest version due to the age of the iPads, so their use was limited by HCEC.

Though we were no longer able to use the tablets, we are glad that we could share these tools with teachers and students who will put them to good use.



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Lost, Texas

Book offers a photographic tour of buildings forgotten and abandoned

EXCERPTS AND PHOTOS
BY BRONSON DORSEY

AS CITIES GROW, NEW DEVELOPMENT CAN leave in its wake spaces that are no longer needed or necessary; these spaces are remnants of human advancement. Retrofit developments, reclamation projects, and restoration/adaptive reuse techniques are all attempts to reintegrate these areas back into productive societal space. They are, at once, both a liability and an opportunity. *Lost, Texas* couples a literal narrative and discourse with a sightseeing tour of various architectural elements, either currently repurposed or in the process of abandonment, that are scattered across Texas. The book tells the important, yet disappearing, stories of fading components within the built environment, dotting both the rural and urban Texan landscape. —From foreword by **Galen Newman**, Texas A&M University College of Architecture

CROCKETT | HOUSTON COUNTY

In the 1870s, the Pennsylvania-based Presbyterian Board of Missions for Freedmen established a school for African American girls in the prosperous East Texas town of Crockett. Initially named Crockett Presbyterian Church Colored Sabbath School, the name was changed to the Mary Allen Seminary in 1886 in honor of one of its benefactors. A four-story, Second Empire-style brick building—named Mary Allen Hall—opened in October 1887 on a ten-acre site donated by the citizens of Crockett. An additional three hundred acres of land, added to the campus in 1889, allowed other buildings to be constructed, including Grace McMillan Hall. Although successful in educating African Americans

through the 1930s, the school experienced several changes in administration and ownership, finally closing in September 1972. Mary Allen Hall, perched on the top of a hill, is all that remains of the school.

EAGLE LAKE | COLORADO COUNTY

The history of Eagle Lake dates back to the late 1830s, when members of Stephen F. Austin's first colony received land grants in the area. Early settlers found a lake teeming with fish, alligators, and waterbirds, along with low-lying land ideal for subsistence farming and raising sugar cane and rice. Following the Civil War, three railroads served Eagle Lake, facilitating the shipment of farmers' crops to market. The town grew rapidly during the late 1800s, as sugar and rice mills were built and other businesses opened. In the early 1900s, excursion trains brought





CROCKETT

for their children. Rosenwald, the one-time president and chairman of Sears, Roebuck, and Company, was a philanthropist who established a fund to build schools for African Americans in the southern United States. Local supporters in Eagle Lake raised an additional \$1,365 for a three-and-a-half acre site for the school. The E. H. Henry High School served the African American community in Eagle Lake until the public schools were integrated in the 1960s. After subsequently serving as a middle school, the building was abandoned when the Eagle Lake school district became part of the Rice Consolidated School System.

Bronson Dorsey is an architect and architectural photographer. *Lost, Texas* was published by Texas A&M University Press in 2018.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see a slideshow.

hunters and recreation seekers from Houston and Galveston. Eagle Lake’s population of 406 in 1880 ballooned to more than 1,100 by

1900. The ten-square-block Eagle Lake Commercial Historic District (listed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation) has thirty-nine significant structures—most dating from the early 1900s.

Education for African American children throughout the South in the late 1800s and early 1900s was largely insufficient, where it existed at all. Eugene H. Henry was a teacher and principal at Eagle Lake’s school for African Americans in 1929, when he and leaders of the black community were awarded a \$7,000 grant from the Julius Rosenwald Foundation to build a new school



EAGLE LAKE

The Sneed-Boyce Violent Feud

Love triangle involving wealthy ranching families erupts in bloodshed

BY GENE FOWLER

FAMILY STORIES, FILTERED THROUGH A forest of genealogy and oral tradition, often have a way of teaching us more history than scholars and their books. My late grandmother often told stories about a West Texas ranch on which she and my grandfather worked in the early 1910s.

The ranch, near Paducah, was owned by Beal Sneed. One of my great-uncles, Beech Epting, worked for Sneed as a tenant farmer. One day, Sneed's wife, Lena, ran off with Albert Boyce Jr., the son of a former XIT Ranch manager. The resulting feud connected two wealthy Texas families in an affair that bloomed into a torrid, front-page scandal that would result in several deaths. My grandmother's stories explained how Epting got caught up in the drama.

Sneed and Boyce had each sought Lena's affection when all three were students at Southwestern University in Georgetown. Sneed married her, but she declared her love for Boyce in 1911, so Sneed placed her in Fort Worth's Arlington Heights Sanitarium for moral insanity, a dubious diagnosis even a century ago. Upon release, Lena fled to Canada with Boyce but later returned to Texas and rejoined her husband.

So aggrieved was Sneed that he shot and killed Albert Boyce Sr. in Fort Worth's Metropolitan Hotel in early 1912. Sneed believed that the elder Boyce had assisted his son in breaking up the Sneed home. That March, Sneed's own father was murdered by a tenant farmer whom Sneed believed was connected to the Boyces. In September, Sneed asked Epting to accompany him to Amarillo to close out some

business affairs. Because he believed the Boyces were intent on revenge, Sneed told Epting the two needed to travel incognito.

It turned out that Sneed's business in the Panhandle was the removal of Al Boyce Jr. from this world with blasts from a 12-gauge shotgun. Sneed was charged with murder, and Epting was charged as an accomplice.

After each killing, Sneed promptly turned himself in to authorities. The trials resulting from the murders generated reams of newspaper copy and inflamed emotions to a fever pitch. According to an account in the *Handbook of Texas*, at least four men died in disputes related to the first trial, held in Fort Worth, and women dueled with hatpins in the courtroom and the courthouse halls.

A hung jury in Sneed's first Fort Worth trial for the murder of Boyce Sr. resulted





in a mistrial, and Sneed was acquitted in both of his subsequent murder trials, held in Vernon and Fort Worth. The Vernon jury only needed three minutes of deliberation to find Sneed not guilty of killing Boyce Jr. A jury in the Panhandle town of Memphis took a half-hour to liberate Epting from an accomplice-to-murder charge.

Followers of the sensational cases in other states expressed dismay that a man could be excused for two coldblooded murders. The foreman of one jury, when asked how his peers reached the verdict, replied, "Because this is Texas." An unwritten law, he and others argued, allowed a man to protect the sanctity of his home and marriage by any means necessary.

I first learned of these events in Epting's life in the early 1980s. By then, most of the family members who knew anything about the Sneed matters had passed on.

Intrigued, I dug up what I could find and published an article in a Western magazine. I didn't learn much about the senior Boyce then, but in researching a story about the XIT, I came to see him as an important and admired figure in Panhandle history.

Then I connected with Clara Sneed, a writer and researcher from Berkeley, California. A descendant of Beal Sneed, she had much more information about the events, though her family members—like many Texans who had some connection to the saga—had been reluctant to discuss the tragic story. In her account, published in the *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, Clara described the lingering discomfort in the decades after the killings. "I am told," she wrote, "that one could not be friends with both families: One had to choose sides."

Writer and author **Gene Fowler** specializes in art and history.

Several of author Gene Fowler's ancestors worked on Beal Sneed's farms and ranches in the 1910s. Beech Epting, Fowler's great-uncle, sits in the horse-drawn wagon at left.

Bad to the Bone

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Death on Tiny Wings

Mosquito-borne yellow fever terrorized Texas multiple times in the 1800s

BY MARTHA DEERINGER

IT BEGAN WITH A HEADACHE, FOLLOWED by chills, fever, muscle and bone pain, and dizziness. “After a few hours, the eyes are bloodshot, and have a peculiar shining, drunken appearance,” wrote Dr. Ashbel Smith, who treated patients on Galveston Island during the yellow fever epidemic of 1839. “A diminution of the pains and febrile excitement very generally takes place, from eight or 10 to 20 hours.”

At this point, the patient either began to recover or progressed to the critical stage. The yellow tinge of jaundice that gave the disease its name appeared, followed by the dreaded “black vomit,” which signaled the approach of death.

From 1668 to 1893, port cities along the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Ocean and Mississippi River basin were stricken by 135 major yellow fever epidemics, according to a 1986 article in *Texas Medicine*. At least nine times between 1839 and 1867, Galveston suffered outbreaks that killed a total of 6,000–8,000.

Yellow fever, also called yellow death or yellow jack (after the yellow flags ships were required to fly when passengers showed signs of illness), terrified early Texans. Once stricken, a healthy person could be dead within three days, and doctors were at a loss to explain the fever’s rapid spread. Smith was correct to believe that it was not contagious. But he and other physicians wrongly believed garbage heaps and unsanitary conditions produced particles called miasmata that infected



those who breathed the contaminants. That theory was questioned during the epidemic of 1853, as increased sanitation and quarantines did not stop the disease and 60% of Galvestonians got sick.

The virus that causes yellow fever likely originated in Africa and was transmitted to the Americas by slave ships as early as the 1600s. Major outbreaks occur in populated areas where breeding mosquitoes transmit the virus from person to person. Frightened residents of Galveston and other cities hit by large outbreaks burned barrels of tar in the streets and sprayed sulfur and lime in the homes of infected patients—believing the substances served as disinfectants. Even so, the agony subsided only after a hard freeze, often resurfacing when spring arrived.

During the 1839 epidemic, a cabin just east of 18th Street in Galveston, built on raised blocks with two windows and a door in the middle, served as the general hospital. It was erected away from town to isolate the sick. Shallow burials nearby revealed bones exposed by the sea washing over them.

A Cherokee woman named Sarah Ridge Paschal successfully treated yellow fever patients in her home with traditional Cherokee herbal medicine, including tea from orange tree leaves. All of her patients survived, and neither she nor any of her three children caught the fever.

Texas doctors were unable to recognize the mosquito vector. Pathologist Walter Reed, experimenting on humans in Cuba in 1900, confirmed Carlos Finlay’s hypothesis of 1881 that mosquitoes transmitted the disease. The experiments proved that mosquitoes flourished in fresh water and transmitted the disease after a viral incubation period of at least 12 days. This essential information spread, and mosquito control improved.

Smith went on to become the driving force behind the establishment of the University of Texas at Austin and the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Today, yellow fever can be prevented by a single dose of vaccine.

Martha Deeringer, a Heart of Texas EC member, lives in McGregor. Read more of her work at marthadeeringer.com.

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Farmers Market

IN MY VIEW, FARMERS MARKETS ARE ONE of the best ways to see Texas on display. From rows of stacked peppers to bowls of the sweetest berries to the friendly faces behind the tables, a farmers market is a conduit to all that grows around us—and inspires me to get into the kitchen.

We're coming into the best time to experience these local markets. As the growing seasons converge, you might see collards alongside early tomatoes or strawberries along with the last of the winter citrus. Now is the time to experiment!

This dish is a favorite in my house, and it's a great way to get kids to eat vegetables. Instead of chicken, you can use ground beef—or cooked lentils for a meatless option.

MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Zucchini Taco Boats With Chicken

- 4 medium zucchini
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ½ cup diced onion
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup tomato sauce or salsa
- ½ cup shredded cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees and lightly coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with nonstick spray.
2. Slice zucchini in half lengthwise and scoop out centers, reserving the flesh in a bowl. Place zucchini hollow-side up into baking dish.
3. Cut chicken into small pieces, about half-inch cubes. Warm olive oil in a sauté pan over medium-high heat, then add chicken and cook until cooked through and starting to brown, about 8 minutes. Add onion and reserved zucchini flesh and continue to cook 1 minute.
4. Mix together chili powder, cumin, oregano, paprika and salt and sprinkle over chicken. Stir to coat and cook 2 min-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32

Recipes

Farmers Market



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

BLAIR SHELTON-TONGSON | LAMAR ELECTRIC

Fresh sweet corn is the star of this dip that is ideal for entertaining. Reminiscent of esquites—Mexican street corn salad—it also features cumin, chili powder and jalapeño. “For an extra kick,” says Shelton-Tongson, “add a dash or two of ground cayenne pepper.” If fresh corn isn't available, use thawed frozen corn.

Baked Street Corn Dip

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon chili powder, plus more for garnish
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons (¼ stick) butter or vegetable oil
- 3 cups sweet corn kernels (about 4 ears)
- 1 cup diced tomatoes
- 1 jalapeño pepper, seeded and diced
- 1 clove garlic, pressed or minced
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, plus more for garnish
- ¼ cup shredded cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, mix together cream cheese, sour cream, mayonnaise, cumin, chili powder, and salt and pepper. Stir until creamy, then set aside.
3. Melt butter or heat oil in a large skillet over low heat. Add corn, tomatoes, jalapeño and garlic. Sauté gently 8–10 minutes.
4. Remove corn mixture from heat and stir into cream cheese mixture. Add cilantro and shredded cheese, stirring until well blended.
5. Pour into a medium baking dish and bake 12–15 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool 5 minutes. Garnish with chili powder and cilantro and serve warm with tortillas or corn chips. ▶ Serves 12.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

- utes. Stir in tomato sauce or salsa and simmer 5–10 minutes, until thickened.
5. Divide chicken mixture into zucchini and top with cheese.
 6. Cover with foil and bake 35 minutes. ▶ Serves 4.

COOK'S TIP A melon baller works wonderfully to scoop out the insides of the zucchini, but if you don't have one, a spoon will do.

Follow along with **Megan Myers** and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Carrot Fritters.

Chopped Spring Veggie Pasta Salad

MARIAN EVONIUK | PEDERNALES EC

Pasta salad is an easy, versatile way to enjoy everything the farmers market has to offer. If you like, you can skip the step of roasting the peppers and asparagus—just make sure you select thin, tender asparagus stalks at the market.

- ¼ pound asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 6 cups plus ¼ cup water, divided use
- 2 cups uncooked tricolor rotini
- ½ pound green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cups peas
- ½ cup chopped red onion
- ½ cup chopped cucumber
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup loosely packed cilantro, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- ½ cup Italian salad dressing

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Spread asparagus and pepper evenly over a large, parchment-lined rimmed baking sheet. Roast uncovered 20 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside to cool.
3. Bring 6 cups water to a boil in a 2½-quart heavy saucepan, then add pasta. Cook until pasta is al dente, about 8 minutes.
4. Drain pasta in a colander, rinsing with cold water, and pour into a large mixing bowl.
5. Using same saucepan, add the



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\$500 Recipe Contest

You'll want the best **Game Day Snacks**, our September recipe contest, when football season kicks off. Send us your favorites. The deadline is **April 10**. Readers whose recipes are featured will receive a special *Texas Co-op Power* apron.

ENTER ONLINE at 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.

remaining 1/4 cup water and the green beans. Cover and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook 3–4 minutes. Add the peas and continue cooking an additional 3–4 minutes, until veggies are tender but still have some bite. Drain and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking process.

6. Into the large bowl containing the pasta, add the asparagus, peppers, green beans, peas, red onion, cucumber, tomatoes, cilantro, garlic, salt, pepper and Italian dressing. Mix well, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving. ▶ Serves 6–8 as a side dish.

Zucchini Nut Bread

SILVIA ARNOLD | RUSK COUNTY EC

Zucchini bread is a classic way to use summer squash—and with good reason. “This has been a favorite of the family for years,” says Arnold. Make sure to use quick-cooking oats, which are chopped rolled oats, for this recipe. The oats will help absorb some of the moisture from the zucchini while also keeping the bread tender and delicious.

- 3 eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup quick oats
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 cups grated zucchini
- 1 cup chopped walnuts

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour two 8-by-4-inch loaf pans and set aside.
- 2.** In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, sugar, oil and vanilla until well combined.
- 3.** In a separate bowl, stir together flour, oats, cinnamon, baking soda, salt and baking powder. Stir into wet ingredients until no dry bits remain.
- 4.** Stir in zucchini and walnuts, then divide batter between prepared pans.
- 5.** Bake 1 hour, until a toothpick inserted into the center of each pan comes out clean. ▶ Makes 2 loaves.



Know Before You Go

New to farmers markets or need a refresher? Here are some tips for making the most of your trip.

SHOP EARLY for the biggest selection. During peak seasons, items like strawberries, asparagus and even eggs can sell out quickly.

BRING CASH and pay in exact amounts, if possible. Farmers appreciate not having to make change.

PUT A COOLER in your car. Along with a reusable tote, it will help keep items cool and organized for the trip home.

MEGAN MYERS

TEXAS COOP POWER

NEXT MONTH

FIRMLY ROOTED The Stark family lumber empire in Orange forged cultural destinations that offer nature, art and history.

LEDGER ART Native American drawings from the 19th century offer unique historic perspective.

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Sunsets

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



▲ **ALTA COCKRELL**, Deaf Smith EC: “My son William the night I took his senior pictures outside of Hereford.”

▶ **CHARLES CARLSON**, Bandera EC: This sunset photo of mammatus clouds was taken on the Frio River near Garner State Park.



▲ **JIMMIE HEIMAN**, Guadalupe Valley EC: “Spring flowers and sunset in rural Lavaca County.”



▲ **TIFFANY ROGERS**, MidSouth EC: A musician stands at the end of a pier on Lake Livingston to play out a tune on his guitar late one August evening.

◀ **LAURA BREWER**, CoServ: “The perfect setting for reflection on the pond.”

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April 11

Onalaska Lew Vail Memorial Easter Parade and Egg Hunt, (936) 646-5000, cityofonalaska.us

Elgin [11-12] Hip Hop Shop, (512) 229-3227, elgintx.com

16

San Saba [16-17] Creative Quilting Event, (325) 372-5141, sansabachamber.com

17

Beaumont Rend Collective Revival Anthem Tour, (409) 838-3435, beaumontcvb.com

Paducah [17-18] Cottle-King Old Settlers Reunion & Rodeo, (806) 492-2143, facebook.com/cottlekingoldsettlers

Terrell [17-18] Kaufman Quilt Guild Show, (972) 979-9152, kaufmanquiltguild.org

18

Burton Cotton Gin Festival, (979) 289-3378, texascottonginmuseum.org

Mason Mason County Republican Women's Home Tour, (325) 347-5516, masontxcoc.com

McQueeney McQueeney Baptist Church Open Car Show, (210) 265-9200

Southlake Bobbyfest, (817) 999-8332, bobbyfest.com



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Chappell Hill [18-19] Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas, (979) 836-6033, facebook.com/bluebonnetfestival

Cypress Mill [18-19, 25-26] Bunkhouse Gallery Art Show and Sale, (512) 517-3453, bunkhousegallery.com

23

Avinger, Hughes Springs, Linden [23-25] 50th Annual Wildflower Trails of Texas, (903) 756-7502, wildflowertrailsoftexas.org

Waxahachie [23-25] Crossroads of Texas Film & Music Festival, (469) 309-4045, facebook.com/crossroadsoftx

Hallettsville [23-26] Fiddlers' Frolics, (361) 798-2311, fiddlersfrolics.com

24

Granbury [24-25] Wine Walk, (817) 964-7993, granburywinewalk.com

Gun Barrel City [24-25] Quilt Guild Annual Quilt Show, (903) 340-6547, gunbarrelquiltersguild.org

Clute [24-26, May 1-3] *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, (979) 265-7661, bcfas.org

25

Cisco Folklife Festival, (254) 631-6501



April 25
Tatum
Pecan Pie Festival

Conroe Relay For Life of Conroe & Walker County, (713) 706-5686, relayforlife.org/conroeeandwalkercotx

Jacksonville North Cherokee VFD Fish Fry, (903) 571-5854

Karnack Earth Day Flotilla, (903) 736-3063

Rising Star Rising Star VFD Crawfish Boil, (254) 433-3285, risingstarfd.org

Tatum Pecan Pie Festival, (903) 947-6403, facebook.com/tatumpecanpiefestival

Brazoria [25-26] Migration Celebration, (844) 842-4737, migrationcelebration.org

May

2

Georgetown Preservation Georgetown Home Tour, (512) 869-8597, preservationgeorgetown.org

Hilltop Lakes Hilltop Lakes Equestrian Association Kentucky Derby Gala, (713) 503-0470

3

Wylie Wylie 500 Pedal Car Race, (972) 516-6016, wylietexas.gov

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Dark Landmark

Dead Man's Hole near Marble Falls remains as a grim reminder of Civil War brutality

MY FASCINATION WITH TEXAS HISTORY inspired me to visit Marble Falls and Dead Man's Hole, the dark landmark south of town.

I started my visit at the Falls on the Colorado Museum, housed in a 129-year-old school building. My education began by peering at the bones of Rockie, a 700-year-old bison whose remains were found on a nearby ranch.

Remnants of the town's pioneer days include artifacts ranging from saddles to railroad ties. I visited the town's namesake falls beneath nearby Lake Marble Falls, and I was fascinated by tales of the town's grim Civil War experience as it relates to Dead Man's Hole.

Of course, I couldn't go exploring on an empty stomach, so I stopped by the legendary Blue Bonnet Cafe, which has been feeding hungry travelers since 1929. My chicken-fried steak was made even better by the towering wedge of coconut meringue pie that followed.

After lunch, I drove 4 miles and found the historical marker for Dead Man's Hole. A few hundred feet away, I saw the hole in the limestone. The 7-foot-wide Dead Man's Hole earned its grisly name during the Civil War, when locals disposed of the bodies of at least 17 Union sympathizers in the cave.

In those days, after Texas seceded, many Hill Country German communities remained loyal to the Union. Burnet County voted overwhelmingly against



Chet Garner at Dead Man's Hole outside Marble Falls.

secession, but local Confederate zealots, called fire eaters, killed some of those who favored the North. Dead Man's Hole became both courtroom and cemetery as hasty trials resulted in slaughter.

After Burnet County Judge John R. Scott was deemed a Union loyalist, he attempted to flee to Mexico but was gunned down, his body tossed into Dead Man's Hole. Even though the historical marker puts the number at 17, legend suggests as many as 36 bodies were thrown into the pit.

Whatever the actual number, it troubled me just to stand nearby, even in the middle of the afternoon more than a century later. The cavity is now covered by a steel panel to keep anyone from slipping in. I hopped down onto the metal and felt an unnerving thump as my weight hit the steel and sent reverberations into the

depths below. I bent down and attempted to peek through. I dropped a pebble down and listened to it bounce off rocks until it faded away. From the sound of it, the hole went on forever.

The cave was not fully explored until 1951, when a group of Austin spelunkers pulled out multiple sets of bones. Local lore suggests that the last skeleton was brought to the courthouse, and while it was awaiting a proper burial, it disappeared.

I stepped away from the hole and made certain I was the only person present that afternoon. As the hair on my neck began to stand up, I decided I didn't want to find out if anyone was nearby. I began to briskly walk (OK, run) back to my truck.

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 his visit to Dead Man's Hole.

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