THIS OFFICIAL VISITORS GUIDE IS A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF The Gonzales Inquirer

DISCOVER Gonzales County

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COME AND TAKE IT!

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WELCOME

GONZALES

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G onzales – deep in the heart of Texas. It's the place you want to be. Whether it's to learn about our history and the birthplace of Texas freedom, our hospitality, our wonderful fun events, or maybe you want to open your own business here because of our area's legendary work ethic, Gonzales is the place to be.

Located just minutes off I-10, Gonzales has a quaint small-town charm, yet is located close to Texas' biggest cities and all the amenities of big city life. Gonzales is centrally located one hour south of the state capital of Austin, an hour east of San Antonio, and just under two hours west of Houston. We have the perfect location for you to "Come and Visit" or to "Come and Live" deep in the heart of Texas.



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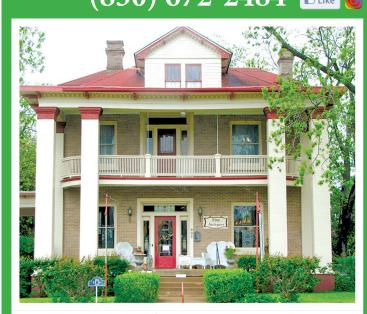
EDITORIAL DESIGN Marissa Ferreira

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Robby J. Ford (1972-2022).

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WELCOME

If it's Texas history you're after — we have it.

onzales is the Come and Take It city, the place where the first shot for Texas Independence was fired way back in October of 1835. It is the home of the Immortal 32, the 32 brave Gonzales men who answered Colonel Travis' call for help during Santa Anna's siege of the Alamo. Those Immortal 32 men marched to certain death at the Alamo because they believed in freedom and liberty. This is our history and our legacy.

In addition to our important place in Texas history, we are proud of our grand and glorious old homes and mansions by the score that add nostalgic charm and grace to our local culture. Come and see it for yourself. See where the notorious outlaw John Wesley Hardin practiced law after serving his prison term for murder.

Gonzales is also a community teeming with fun events and community involvement. Whether it's the Come and Take It celebration the first weekend



of every October, the Main Street Summer Concert Series every Friday night on the square in June through the 4th of July, or Float Fest 2022, coming to Gonzales County on July 23-24. Gonzales is a fun place to be. By Memorial Day weekend, there are seven fun bars and grills within walking distance on the main square in historic downtown Gonzales where you can enjoy great food, beverages and outstanding music. In addition, Gonzales is booming with numerous antique shops and craft vendors. Furthermore, Gonzales is home to numerous rodeos. livestock shows, cook offs, great barbecue, river tubing and more fun than you shake a stick at.

And if it's business you want, well Gonzales is home to a number of major businesses and industries because of our proud, diverse and hard-working local population. Our local economic development corporation, our award-winning Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, our nationally renowned Main Street Program, Victoria College, our four-star Gonzales Health Care Systems—all are ready to welcome and serve you.

So what are you waiting for? Make the simple decision—Come and See Us.

You will be glad you did. ★



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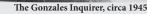
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The Gonzales Inquirer, today

For 169 years, the Gonzales Inquirer has been a vital part of life in our county. Whether it has been our coverage of local politics, news, sports, births or obituaries, we have been the chronicler of life and history in this wonderful community for 169 continuous years, making us the oldest continuously operated weekly newspaper in Texas. We are proud of our history, just like we our proud of the glorious history of Gonzales in helping shape the formation of the great state of Texas. From the first shot fired to start the Texas Revolution to the Immortal 32, we are honored to be a part of this historic town. As we enter into our 170th year of continuous operation, we have rededicated ourselves to providing the best and most comprehensive news, sports and feature coverage ever provided to our community. In the past year, the Inquirer has been awarded four first place awards for editorial writing, column writing, news coverage and headline writing along with 10 other awards for quality newspapering by the Texas Press Association or South Texas Press Association. Whether it's entertainment, community events, high school sports, or local news coverage, the Gonzales Inquirer is your indispensable source of news, information and business advertising for Gonzales County. See for yourself by subscribing, or follow us online at www.gonzalesinquirer.com or like us on Facebook to stay abreast of everything that is happening in our charming community. To subscribe to either our print or online digital version of the Gonzales Inquirer, call us at 830-672-2861 or go online at www.gonzalesinguirer.com to sign up. If you want to advertise or place a classified, call 830-672-2861 and we will bend over backwards to take care of your business needs. We are proud to be the community newspaper of Gonzales County. Come and Grow with us.

Lew Cohn, Publisher

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onzales, known for its late 19th and early 20th Century commercial and institutional buildings in the downtown area, was awarded Official Main Street status in 1988. Through the revitalization and restoration efforts of the community, Historic Downtown Gonzales has become a great place to Shop, Dine, Play and Stay.

Visit Gonzales and stay at one of our Historic Hotels and Bed and Breakfast in the heart of downtown or in one of our approximately 550 hotel rooms located throughout the community. Stroll through the many antique shops and specialties shops. Enjoy a delicious meal at one of our fine restaurants. Enjoy live entertainment and fine dining at the Running M Bar and Grill. The Come & Take It Bar and Grill is the place to watch your favorite sport on one of the big screen TVs while enjoying a drink or a fine meal. Watch a first run movie at the Lynn Theater. Take the walking or self-driving tour and relive the history of Gonzales.

Gonzales Main Street sponsors the Main Street Concert Series every Friday night in June. From 6 pm to 10 pm enjoy great outdoor entertainment on Texas Heroes Square. This free event has great music, arts and craft show, food and is just good ol' family entertainment. The concert series ends with the Star Spangled Spectacular held at 6 p.m. July 4th on Confederate Square. The show ends with a spectacular fireworks display that can be seen throughout the city.

During the Christmas season, downtown shines with lights outlining the buildings and stars adding a holiday sparkle to this historic area of Gonzales. The Christmas season kicks off with a lighted Christmas parade the first Saturday in December. Other activities for the Winterfest weekend include Breakfast with Santa, arts and crafts show, Historic Homes Tour, Stars in the Village and much more.

Visit Historic Downtown Gonzales and have a great experience. Shop! Dine! Stay! And Play!

For information, contact the city at 830-672-2815 or MainStreet@gonzales.texas. gov. ★

HISTORY

COME AND IT

Inder the leadership of Gen. Santa Anna, the government of Mexico was transformed into a military dictatorship, ignoring the Constitution of 1824, which had cost many lives and had secured liberties not previously enjoyed by the people. The state of Coahuila did not cooperate with Santa Anna's plans, and the state of Zacatecas rebelled, but was brutally crushed by the military. One of Santa Anna's "reforms" was to reduce the number of the militia to one soldier for every 500 inhabitants. This arbitrary decree was a sufficient justification of Texas for her subsequent acts. Every one who knows the Texans, or who has heard of them, would naturally conclude that they never would submit to be disarmed.

Along the coast Mexican garrisons stepped up their campaign to stop smuggling and collect customs duties. At Galveston they seized the Texas schooner Martha, loaded with supplies for the colonists. A message taken from a careless Mexican courier hinted that even more troops were on the way. Angrily the settlers burned some lumber ordered by newcomer Captain Tenorio at Anahuac.

William B. Travis had a better idea. Late in June he raised a company of 25 men and marched on Tenorio's headquarters. He dramatically gave the Mexicans 15 minutes to surrender or be put to the sword. Tenorio quickly capitulated.

Santa Anna decided that this was the time to finish off his enemies. During August he poured more troops into Texas and told his brotherin-law, General Martin Perfecto de Cos, to take personal command. Cos ordered the arrest of Travis and several other Texas troublemakers.

I CANNOT, NOR **DO I DESIRE TO** nfi ivfr Iip thf ΓΑΝΝΟΝ ΑΝΠ **NNIY THRNIIGH** FORCE WILL WE YIELD."

The Mexican leaders completely misinterpreted the situation. The Texans' real goal was to build a secure future without outside interference. They rebuked Travis because he seemed to be inviting a fight. Now they saw an infinitely greater threat: martial law, military occupation, the arrest of good friends. Committees of safety

sprang up in every town. The highly influential Telegraph and Texas Register hammered away for liberty and freedom.

Then on Sept. 1 came an electrifying development -Stephen F. Austin suddenly reappeared from Mexican imprisonment.

Next week 1,000 people jammed the banquet given in his honor in Brazoria. The room fell silent as the trusted leader rose to speak. He had always preached moderation; after a year in Mexican jails, how did he feel?

He left little doubt. Santa Anna was destroying the people's rights.

Word had just come of a serious problem at Gonzales. The colonists there were shining up a small cannon given them years ago to ward off Native American raids. Ugartechea, sent a file of cavalrymen riding to Gonzales with an order for the surrender of the gun. Gonzales Alcalde Andrew Ponton received the order and stalled for time. He buried the cannon in a peach orchard and sent runners to the surrounding area for armed assistance.

Soon, the Texans shed all pretense of ever surrendering the cannon. Joseph D. Clements delivered a message to the Mexican army: "I cannot, nor do I desire to deliver up the cannon...and only through force will we yield."

Meanwhile, word was spreading that the Texans at Gonzales needed help. Volunteers responding to the call to arms rushed to the scene, and the little Texan force of 18 mushroomed to 150 by Sept. 30.

Also at this time, Sara Seely DeWitt and her daughter Evaline made a flag – back then referred to as the Old Cannon Flag – now called the Come and Take It flag. Depicted on a white cloth was a cannon with a lone star above it, and the words "come and take it" beneath the cannon.

On Oct. 1, 1835, Capt. Francisco Castaneda arrived from San Antonio with something less than 200 men. Ugartechea intended a show of force. Castaneda, blocked by the Guadalupe, demanded the ferry be restored, and the cannon handed over. There was some parleying, a demonstration by the Mexican cavalry near the town, and considerable yelling and

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Guests Love Us!! 9.9 Rating on Booking.com #1 Rated B&B on TripAdvisor taunting by the Texans, who dared the Mexicans to "come and take it!" echoing the words emblazoned on their newly created flag.

That night the Texans silently slipped across the Guadalupe and formed a defensive square. The Texans resumed their advance toward the Mexican camp in the fog shrouded dawn of Oct. 2. They were sure Castaneda planned to attack this day; they might as well hit him first. Quietly, they edged through the fog. With them was the cannon, dug up from the peach orchard, loaded with chains and scraps of iron.

The Texan militia blundered into the Mexican pickets, but in the dark and fog there could be no war. Everyone drew back and waited until daybreak.

The fog lifted suddenly, showing both forces drawn up on an open prairie. With the Come and Take It flag flying, the Gonzales cannon fired, and Capt. Castaneda immediately requested a parley, asking why he was being attacked.

Colonel Moore, commander of the Texans, explained that the Captain had demanded a cannon given to the Texans for 'the defense of themselves



and the constitution and the laws of the country,' while he, Castaneda, 'was acting under orders of the tyrant Santa Anna, who had broken and trampled underfoot all the state and federal constitutions of Mexico, except that of Texas,' which last the Texans were prepared to defend.

Castaneda answered that 'he

was himself a republican, as were two-thirds of the Mexican nation, but he was a professional officer of the government,' and while that government had indeed undergone certain surprising changes, it was the government, and the people of Texas were bound to submit to it.

Moore then suggested to the Captain, if he were a republican, he should join the revolution against tyranny by surrendering his command, and join them in the fight. Castaneda replied that he would obey his orders. At this, Moore returned to his own lines and ordered the Texans to open fire. There was a brief skirmish, and the Mexican force abandoned the field and rode back toward San Antonio.

The Runaway Scrape

The Alamo fell to Mexican forces under Gen. Santa Anna in 1836. Texas had declared its independence just five days before the worst defeat the Republic had yet suffered. The Goliad Massacre took place three weeks later and was an even worse defeat than the Alamo, leaving 342 soldiers dead. The odds were stacked against the Texans and their fledgling Republic.



Between the fall of the Alamo and the death of Colonel James Fannin and his men, Texas was defeated at the battles of Refugio and Coleto. Susanna Dickinson informed General Sam Houston of the Alamo's fall on March 11. She gave him the bad news before the defeats at Coleto and Refugio, and still Houston knew he couldn't defeat the Mexican army with the number of troops he had. He was skeptical that his army would be able to stand toe-to-toe with the Mexican regulars.

Houston decided to retreat beyond the Colorado River. This was not just for his army, but civilians as well. Thus began the Runaway Scrape; a rearguard action that lasted for a month-and-a-half as Houston zigzagged across Texas until the army turned and fought at San Jacinto.

Local historian Vicki Frenzel gave her own account of the events, with the most prominent account being that Sam Houston ordered the town to be burned.

"When an invading army is coming through, you don't want to leave them any shelter, supplies or anything they can use to help themselves," Frenzel said. "The men had to burn the town to stop the Mexican army from having any resources as they advanced.

"Margaret Darst, whose husband Jacob died at the Alamo, was on the runaway scrape," she said. "She wrote an account saying the people were already starting to drift out of town even before they heard the Alamo fell. They knew it was going to happen; it was just a matter of time."

Fleeing people eventually gathered at the McClure Cabin, where Houston camped under one of the location's oak trees. During the journey Darst and her son David were riding horseback turned and looked back and saw the town burning.

It was one of the coldest and wettest springs in recorded history, with freezing overnight temperatures. This made the mass exodus even tougher.

Santa Anna broke up his Army into columns, believing there were not many Texans remaining. He thought the Texans were crushed and that one swift stroke would chase the rest out of Mexican Texas. ★

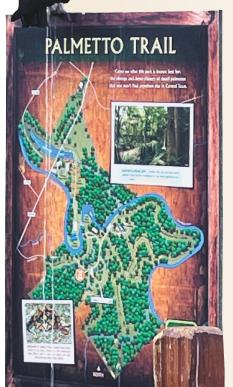
SPOTLIGHT

almetto State Park announces monthly opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts and history buffs alike. In January, visitors got the chance to experience a part of life as a Buffalo Soldier. They served in the first African American regular Army regiments beginning in the 1860s and traveled through the wild west using their animal tracking skills on the trails. Get a closer look at local wildlife and make a Buffalo Soldier Tracking Journal as vou explore.

Palmetto State Park offers a variety of interesting attractions for those who are interested in fun and active ways to learn. Staff at the park began the year with a first day hike on Jan. 1 and plans for many more guided hikes, tours, and plant and bird

identification programs to come. The history of the region can be seen in the amenities available on the trails today.

> A century ago, Franklin D. Roosevelt began a program in New York called the Temporary Emergency Relief



TEXAS HISTORY & WILDLIFE AT PALMETTO STATE PARK

Administration that grew to become the Civilian Conservation Corps on a larger scale the following year. Due to this organization, bridges, roads, trails, dams and ditches were built across the nation and Palmetto State Park still maintains its picnic pavilion and water tower, built by the CCC.

The dwarf palmettos, the wetlands and the chance to see the painted bunting each spring attract travelers from afar.

"The terrain and foliage, the wetlands and the river running right through it are factors that make this area unique," said Texas native and Park Superintendent Chris Sager, adding, "we have amazing trails. You can't take 10 steps without seeing a photo-worthy landscape."

The best trail of all, according to Sager is the Ottine Swamp Trail. Hiking is his favorite adventure in the park and visitors also enjoy camping in wide, comfortable spaces for tents or trailers with fire rings, barbeque pits and picnic tables at each site.

"It's absolutely a great place to camp," Sager said.

Fishing, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, birdwatching and night hikes are available there, too.

Palmetto State Park offers an inexpensive outing for the whole family. Admission is \$3 per adult and children under 12 are free. An annual state park pass grants access to any state park for a year. For more information about this weekend's program or general information about Palmetto State Park, call (830) 672-3266. ★

BUFFALO SOLDIERS AT PALMETTO STATE PARK

exas Parks and Wildlife sponsors the Buffalo Soldier Heritage Program hosted at Palmetto State Park. Native Texan Lt. Ricky Dolifka, who travels the state to share Texas history in parks and schools, gave a presentation about the types of wildlife Buffa Soldiers would have encountered. A table was piled with animal skins and furs as visitors walked into the event.

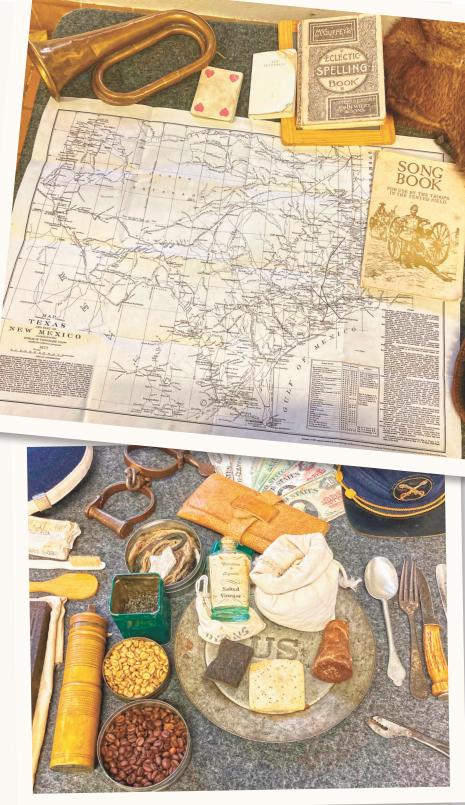
Dolifka discussed the Native American origin for the word opossum and the uniqueness of marsupials among the deer, fox squirrels, rabbits and other animals that could be found in the area in the 1860's. The popularity of the beaver in the fur trade that nearly wiped them out and role of the skunk in the production of perfumes were also topics of the educational program. Some of the wildlife was dangerous and new to the Buffalo Soldier, like the western diamondback rattlesnake.

Dolifka said that in his opinion, the most interesting regional animal to track is the mountain lion because it is so elusive.

"They're powerful and sleek. There are waterways and plenty of hogs and deer for them to eat, so there's a good healthy population of mountain lions in Texas," Dolifka said, adding that although, "mountain lions tend to avoid people, it's always good to be mindful of what's around you when you're camping."

He also warned that strawberry-scented shampoo is better left at home in order to avoid wildlife in search of food. Seeing or hearing a nearby animal may be possible, but Dolifka pointed out that wildlife will also leave behind evidence that they're around such as footprints and droppings. He demonstrated a camper's rule of thumb to avoid getting too close.

Unlike the withdrawn mountain lion, Dolifka explained that bison were curious animals who would approach humans to investigate. He discussed the bison's ability to run up to 35 mph and described them as, "the biggest, baddest animal out there on the Great Plains."



Despite being herbivores, he said that bison were the toughest and that was why Native Americans gave the Buffalo Soldiers their name.

"History is something that's being made every day. We all play a part in that and if we don't remember our history, we don't have a good guide to follow in going forward and making new history," said Dolifka.

For more information about the events at Palmetto State Park, call (830) 672-3266. ★

Currency, cooking utensils and canisters containing food help visitors imagine the types of things a Buffalo Soldier would have carried.



TOUR BRINGS HISTORY MOME



mong the many historic homes of Gonzales open for frequent tours, one popular stop is a twostory white house on Mitchell Street that belonged to J.B. Wells. Neatly kept original furnishings and décor provide a taste of life in early Gonzales.

Although the house was remodeled by the Wells family thirty years after they purchased it in 1890, much of the structure and many of the family's authentic belongings can be seen there. Josephine Wells and her son, J.B. Wells, Jr. played essential roles in keeping the history alive for future generations to experience.

Visitors crowd around a docent to share peach pie from a Dutch oven in front of the outdoor kitchen that J.B Wells, Sr. and his family once used. They learn about the process of raising corn and cooking it with lye to soften it and make hominy as the Wells family did in the 1890's. Members of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas volunteer their time to demonstrate the ways life in Texas changed over the last century.

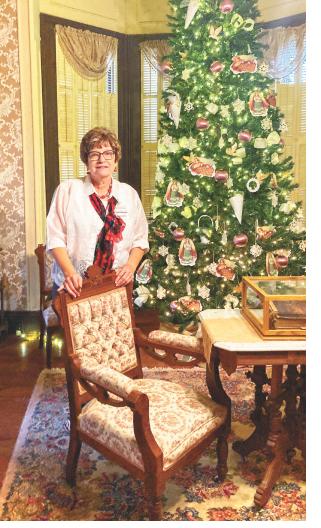
"It's just amazing that somebody would keep so much, and it was because of her

THIS PAGE

The house at 833 Mitchell St. was home to J.B. Wells Sr. and his family. Lynette Slinker explains how the outdoor kitchen was used by the Wells family more than a century ago.

NEXT PAGE

Sandra Mauldin welcomes visitors to experience Christmas in the 1890's.



story-telling that her son felt like this was what he wanted to do to share the house with the public. He gave this to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. The J.B. Wells Park and Santa Anna Mound, he gave to the city of Gonzales. Across the road, on the other side of the river, he gave that to the Presbyterian church. Just a tremendous gift of history and stories about our heritage," said DTR member and Gonzales native, Sandra Mauldin.

According to Mauldin, the wallpaper in the parlor is original though some of the wallpaper was done around 1920 and in 1958, when the youngest son married. Portraits of the three children hang in the upstairs hall.

"Charlie and Effie were about seven and 12 when they came. J.B. Junior was born the year after they moved in," Mauldin said.

A portrait of J.B. Wells, Sr. can be seen near the doors to the upstairs sleeping porch. Mauldin explained that the family often used the outdoor kitchen in the summers due to the heat a cast-iron stove could generate.

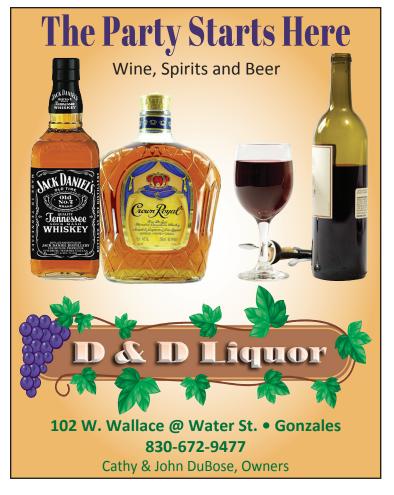
"It's such a time capsule," said Maudlin, pointing to Effie's hats, which have remained in the bedroom that belonged to her. In another bedroom, pants, shirt, tie, belt, hat and cane that belonged to J.B. Wells, Jr. hang on a rack near the door. His pipe sits on a table. A model of the Alamo can be seen by the bedside, an example of his handiwork.

In the spacious downstairs bedroom, visitors view the couple's Italian marble fireplace. A wardrobe, dresser, trundle bed, two quilts, and even a modest sugar bowl displayed behind the glass door of a cabinet all come with stories of the past.

"When Mrs. Wells, Sr. married J.B. Wells, Sr., her grandfather, James Hodges asked her what she wanted as a wedding gift. She said she wanted that sugar bowl," Mauldin explained, adding that it had been buried in the Runaway Scrape.

Wooden letter blocks, flutes, spinning tops and marbles that had been the youngest son's toys are displayed in the downstairs bookcase. His cradle is kept in an upstairs bedroom.

The house is open every Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and appointments can also be made for tours. ★



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Connie Dolezal Owner

805 St. Joseph Gonzales, Texas 78629 or over three decades, the Elks Lodge has owned and managed a children's summer camp just down FM 1586 on the outskirts of Gonzales. Texas Elks Children's Services has provided the camp free of charge to over 250 kids each summer since 1987. Registration for this year's camp began on Jan. 1 for children with special needs ages seven and up.

The Elks Camp has offered fishing, swimming, nature hikes, archery, cookouts and campfires for children with special needs every year since it began. Campers can play sports on the basketball court or the new wheelchair accessible playing field and games like pool and foosball in the recreation room. Crafts and music activities are popular with the kids and everyone gets to make a tie-dyed t-shirt and picture frame with a special photo in it. A talent show, a costumed dance, a chicken fried steak dinner and a trip to Sea World each week have also become favorite camp traditions. The camp even has a pet tortoise and a large fish tank.

Loretta Shirley has served as the executive director of

"HAVING A difference doesn't make a difference."

TEXAS ELKS

CAMP

ELKS CAMP OFFERS SUMMER FUN THAT'S ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

A large elk used for the lodge's parade floats awaits the arrival of this summer's campers.



Tinker the tortoise greets visitors to the Elks Camp offices.

Texas Elks Children's Services since Aug. 2018. This summer, she and Assistant Director Janet Person (known by her camp nickname, Whoopsie) have made plans to spend seven weeks with campers and one additional week of intensive training with 20 camp counselors who will be there to support the campers each week. Preparations have been set for 40 new campers to arrive each Sunday according to their age group and stay until Friday. More than 250 campers have attended in years past.

"They do all the things that kids at other summer camps do, no matter what their special needs are. We improvise and adapt so they can participate in everything," said Shirley.

Children in foster care and kids with autism can meet the requirements to attend the camp, along with children who have cerebral palsy or Downs Syndrome. The camp's motto is "Having a difference doesn't make a difference."

The 20,000 square foot building that now houses the dorm style rooms, nurse's station, full commercial kitchen, dining room, laundry facilities and offices used for the camp was originally constructed in 1946 as a children's hospital for polio patients. It was built next door to the Warm Springs rehabilitation center for adults with polio. Photos of the young patients line the shelves of glass cabinets stored in the former children's hospital. After the threat of polio was virtually eliminated due to the development of a successful vaccine in the 1950s, the hospital adapted and continued to offer medical care to children. The hospital closed in the '80s and the facility was repurposed as a summer camp for children with special needs.

The Elks camp is funded by Elks Lodges throughout the state and donations made to the Texas Elks Endowment. A kitchen staff prepares meals for the campers and the rest of the staff throughout the summer. A nurse is onsite 24 hours a day during the camp and counselors are paid staff who also sleep onsite. Counselor recruitment begins at this time each year. Crisis prevention and intervention training, CPR and first aid training are provided. American Camp Association Accreditation was renewed in Oct. 2021.





The playground is one of the many amenities for special needs children at the Elks Camp facility. Below, Loretta Shirley shows off a craft cabinet where ceramics are stored for the campers.

Altogether, the camp encompasses ten acres. There is space for a paintball target shooting range and a wide pavilion next to a playground. A weekly trek is made to Palmetto State Park for nature adventures. No electronic devices are allowed. Even the staff members ditch cell phones in favor of walkie talkies for the week.

"There's just something magical about Elks Camp and I don't know who gets more out of it, the campers or the staff. We look forward to it. It's a lot of work, but it's so rewarding," said Person.

This year will be Person's 12th summer with the camp.

Each Friday, a graduation ceremony is held in the assembly hall when parents return to pick up their children. Each camper receives an award from his or her counselor.

"We want them to be more independent when they leave here. We want them to learn that they can be like all the other kids. Parents say they see more confidence in their kids after they come home from camp," Shirley said.

For many of the younger children, summer camp is their first time sleeping away from home. Although it takes courage at first, Person said the children are often sad to leave at the end of the week. Shirley explained that the campers often make good friends and memories at the Elks Camp.

"We are honored to have them here," said Shirley. \star



HEREFOR 550 BIRD JEEFAN

BAKER BOYS DO IT AGAIN!

Gonzales barbecue joint makes 2021 Texas Monthly list

NOUS

he slogan for Baker Boys BBQ in Gonzales is "Come and taste it." The critics at Texas Monthly have done so and the accolades continue to pile up like freshsliced brisket for this family-owned business.

The magazine released its "The Top 50 Texas BBQ Joints: 2021 Edition" list in the November 2021 issue, and Baker Boys BBQ smoked a lot of top-notch competition, including some very venerated Lockhart institutions, to again make the cut.

This is the second time the restaurant — owned by father Phil Baker, 69, and son Wayne Baker, 40 — has made honorable mention in what many consider the "barbecue bible" for the Lone Star state. The first kudos came in 2017, just two years after the restaurant opened; now they are one of just 21 restaurants from the 2017 list to make a repeat appearance in the 2021 version.

Creating the list — of which this was the sixth generated since 1997 — is no small undertaking for Texas Monthly, as it required 32 editorial staffers and three freelancers to make unannounced visits to more than 400 barbecue joints throughout the state in a period of just eight weeks throughout the spring and summer.

And just in case you are wondering, Texas Monthly paid for all the food it ate to keep it completely fair and unbiased. So what did they have to say about the Gonzales restaurant?

"When a joint executes the holy trinity as well as Baker Boys does, you'd be forgiven for overlooking its other meat options," Texas Monthly wrote. "But don't make that mistake here. The smoked turkey, generous half chicken, roasted raspberry-chipotle-glazed pork loin, and chicken legs stuffed with jalapeño and onion should not be missed."

One of the ways Baker Boys stands out is through the use of charcoal and indirect heat for most of their meats as opposed to the pecan, post oak or other wood used as a fuel source by other area pitmasters, especially those in Lockhart, Luling and other restaurants in the state's "Barbecue Belt."

"Charcoal burns clean and doesn't give the meat too heavy of a smoke flavor," said Wayne Baker. "You get the flavor in the meat, but it isn't overpowering. It burns consistently and our pits can run all night on the charcoal without having to have someone there watching them all night. We can cook a brisket for 14 to 17, 18 hours and leave them alone."

Wayne Baker said he also believes the

strengths of the restaurant are menu variety and consistency of product — a brisket or sausage or chicken at Baker Boys BBQ tastes the same each and every time you visit.

There are also plenty of sides, including two types of beans and two types of potatoes, all made in-house and desserts that include some of the best banana pudding and chocolate meringue pie in the state.

"We have a pretty wide menu for the barbecue joints around here and we put out a consistent product, a good product," the younger Baker said.

"There are very few people that can make the stuffed chicken and not come up with shorter fingers," Phil Baker added with a laugh. "But that's one of our secrets we have, along with good desserts, like my mother's banana pudding."

The elder Baker said he learned a lot about meat while working at Boysen's Market when he was young and he also learned he had a talent for cooking not just a lot of food, but a lot of good food.

"It's all just stuff that I learned how to make. I was a cook in the Army National Guard and it's not all that I just learned there, because my daddy was also a cook. We've learned a lot about cooking that has made it easier than what it used to be.

"My daddy was a firm believer if that chicken leg didn't twist, it wasn't ready. That joint had to give. And what we've learned is that by the time you get there now, you have lost a lot of your juices in the meat. So now we use a thermometer and we go by the temperature of the meat."

Innovation also continues at Baker Boys when it comes to looking at new menu options.

"If someone shoots something at us and we think it might work, we'll try it, but we'll try it in-house before we put it on our menu." Phil Baker said.

"We did the Texas Monthly barbecue road trip promotion the week before last," Wayne Baker said. "We cooked a barbecue meatloaf (an all-beef version smoked on the pit and glazed with a sauce reduction) and pork steaks. Now, because a lot of people are asking us to cook those, we're gonna start doing the pork steaks every Tuesday, and the meatloaf we'll do periodically."

Baker Boys BBQ is located at 1404 N. Sarah DeWitt Drive in Gonzales. ★





THINGS TO DO IN GONZALES COUNTY

There's plenty to do in Gonzales County and the surrounding area. We trimmed it down to 32 to represent the "Immortal 32." The Immortal 32 are the Gonzales men and boys who, on March 1, 1836, fought their way into the beleaguered Alamo to die with Colonel William B. Travis for the liberty of Texas. They were the last and only reinforcements to arrive in answer to the final call of Colonel Travis.



THINGS TO DO

Gonzales History: the birthplace of Texas Independence: Experience the history of the Come and Take It city, home to the First Shot fired for Texas Independence and home of the Immortal 32. The city-owned museum is home to the First Shot Come and Take It cannon plus historical artifacts. Enjoy the reflecting pool out front and check out the 1930s amphitheater out back. 414 Smith St., Gonzales 78629. 830-672-6350. And see the First Shot monument located in Cost, Texas just a few miles outside of Gonzales.





Come and Take It Celebration: Celebrate the first shot of Texas Independence in downtown Gonzales on the first weekend in October. Live music, food, arts and crafts, carnival, parade and various contests, there is so much to do during Come and Take It weekend.

Fiesta Guacamole: If you like guacamole, then you're sure to love Waelder's annual festival at Waelder City Park every Labor Day weekend. Music, food and, of course, guacamole, are the highlights to the weekend celebration.

4

The Guadalupe River:

Kayak, canoe, float, fish, or admire the natural wonder that courses through the middle of the county. Part of the Texas Paddling Trail designated by the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. Put in at Lake Wood Recreation Area, take out at the Gonzales hydroelectric dam. **Pilgrim Opry:** Hosted monthly at the Pilgrim Community Center featuring a rotating list of musicians plus dinner each month. Call the hall at 830-857-1666 or 830-437-2316.

Smiley Bantamfest:

Bantamfest 2022 takes places in early May at the Smiley Community Center from 11 a.m. – midnight. From free kid's games, pony rides, to horseshoe tournaments and a car show, there's something for everyone at the Bantamfest put together by the Smiley Bantam Activity Group. Main Street Concert Series: Every Friday in June leading up to July 4, Gonzales Main Street sponsors the Concert Series with great outdoor entertainment on Confederate Square.



Leesville Country Fair: Second weekend in October. This annual get-together is a host of fun for the whole family.

Yorktown Western Days: Drive about 50 miles south the third weekend of October for this annual free music festival. Festivalgoers can look forward to the live music, kid's tractor pull, hay dive and much more.





Shiner Half Moon Holidays: Held July 1-3 in Shiner. A smalltown festival with all the fixins. www. shinerhalfmoon.com



Cuero Turkeyfest: Always the second weekend of October, the Cuero Turkeyfest features the Great Gobbler Gallop, fun foods, kid events, live entertainment and more.



Moulton Jamboree: Held up the road in Moulton the last weekend in July. Dance, cookoff, parade, vendors, parade, cold beer. www.moultontexas.com/ jamboree





THINGS TO DO



Gonzales Chamber of Commerce Banquet: The annual chamber banquet early in the year not only allows local business and civic leaders to mingle, dine and donate to a good cause — it allows the community to honor special guests in attendance by awarding them community service and lifetime achievement awards.



Float Fest: After three years off, Floatfest returns July 23-24, 2022, to Gonzales to a private 765-acre ranch south of town off U.S. 183. The festival is expected to feature more than 25 bands on two stages in a pecan grove with more than 450 acres of trees which will create "natural shade canopies" over larger camping sites. Festival goers have immediate on-site access to nearly two miles of the Guadalupe River for private floating on the river daily between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.



Come and Fly It: Each year during the Come and Take It Celebration, the Gonzales Rotary Club holds its spectacular poultry push, where contestants use a plunger to try and coax their feathered companions to victory.

Local bars: Have a drink at the local watering holes here in Gonzales. By Memorial Day Gonzales will feature six bars in walking distance of the square in downtown Gonzales. Live music, pool tables, and good eats: Gonzales has it all. Visit the Running M Bar & Grill, Come and Take It Bar & Grill, La Bella Tavola, Templin Bar and Grill, Willie's Place, Memo's Bar and Grill, the TA Sports Bar, GG Steaks & Spirts, Spanky's Sports Bar, the American Legion, Mr. Taco and the Elks Lodge.



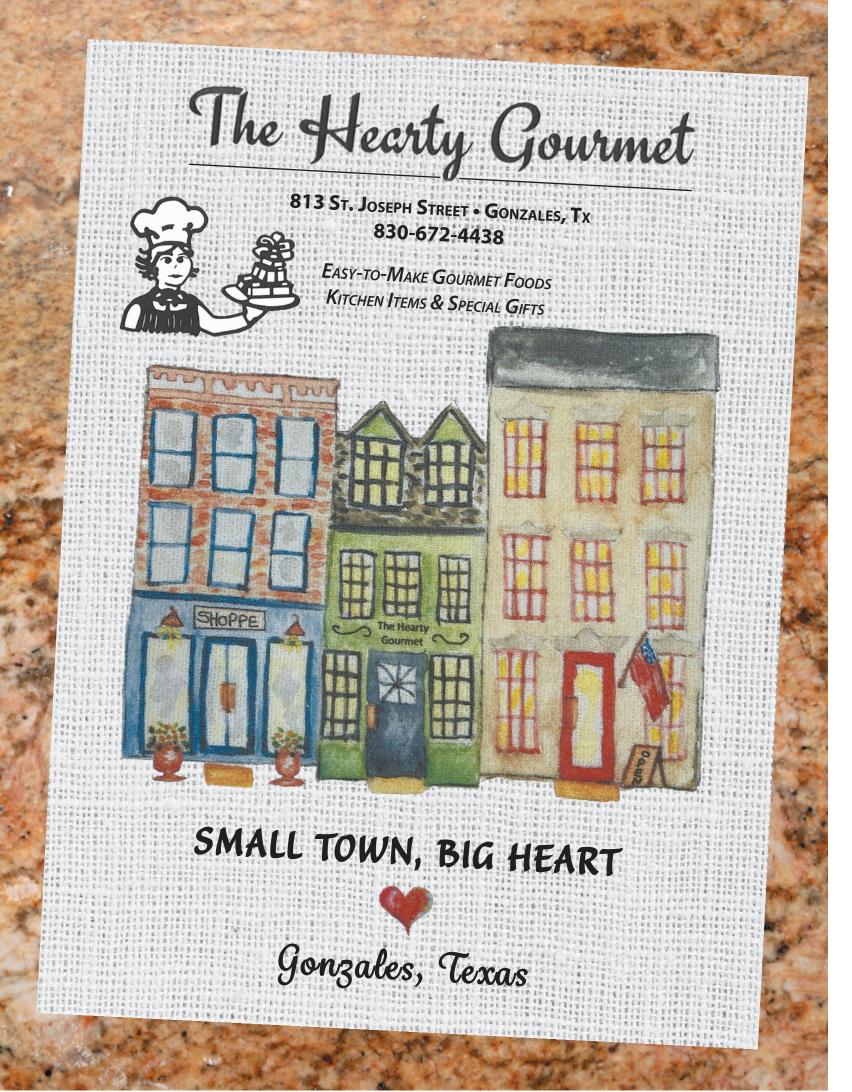
Casino Night: The Gonzales ISD Education Foundation hosts its annual Casino Night Fundraiser each year, with the 2022 event being held Feb. 26. This event features an evening of excitement with Las Vegas style gaming, including blackjack, craps, roulette and poker, as well as dinner and opportunity to win fabulous prizes. The event benefits the Education Foundation, which partners with the community to provide resources to enhance teaching, inspire learning,



Lions Splash Pad: The newest addition to the city playscape. Located between St. Lawrence and St. Louis streets in Lions Park. Water is activated by sensors on each end. Open to the public.



Shiner Music Fest: The annual festival happens in October at Green-Dickson Park. Expect festival-style concerts and camping. www.shinermusicfest.com.



HEALTHCARE THAT'S CLOSE TO HOME



Feel the Difference

G onzales Healthcare Systems is dedicated to serving our community with state-of-the art services and equipment and meeting the needs of our growing community.

We as a healthcare system have evolved and have brought our community more services closer to home since opening the doors in 1978. There have been many new additions to our hospital over the years and in the future of Gonzales Healthcare Systems, there will continue to be updates to our facility, as well as bringing new services to the community.

Some of the highlights over the years include a remodeled emergency room, expansion of the outpatient area, remodeled inpatient rooms and nurses' station, expansion of Sievers Medical Clinic, creation of the Jane Johnson Women's Center and 3D mammography, construction of thrive Healthplex, and currently in the building phases: a new Waelder Medical Clinic.

Currently, Gonzales Healthcare Systems proudly offers these services to our community members: radiology, laboratory, pediatrics, family medicine, OB, an infusion center, occupational health, emergency room, surgery, home health, inpatient care, as well as thrive Healthplex which includes fitness, med spa, and therapy. The Surgical Clinic inside thrive houses our general surgeon, orthopedic surgeon, and cardiologist.

Gonzales Healthcare Systems also features a Specialty Clinic that houses many types of specialty physicians throughout the month. While not only providing great care, we offer the convenience of having these services available to our residents so there is no need to drive out of town. Our Specialty Clinic currently offers Neurosurgery, Urology, Podiatry, Nephrology and so much more! The monthly specialty calendar is printed in each "Gonzales Inquirer" edition.

Gonzales Healthcare Systems is here to make sure all of your family healthcare needs are met. Visit us, and let us show you why we are THE choice for healthcare close to home.

GONZALES

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Imaging

Therapy

Foundation

Outpatient Specialty Clinic

HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

Feel the Difference

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Sievers Medical Clinic Sievers Medical Clinic- Waelder Sievers Medical Clinic- Shiner Surgical Specialty Clinic Home Health Agency THRIVE Healthplex Med Spa Inpatient Services Emergency Services Occupational Health Laboratory

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GonzalesHealthcare.com

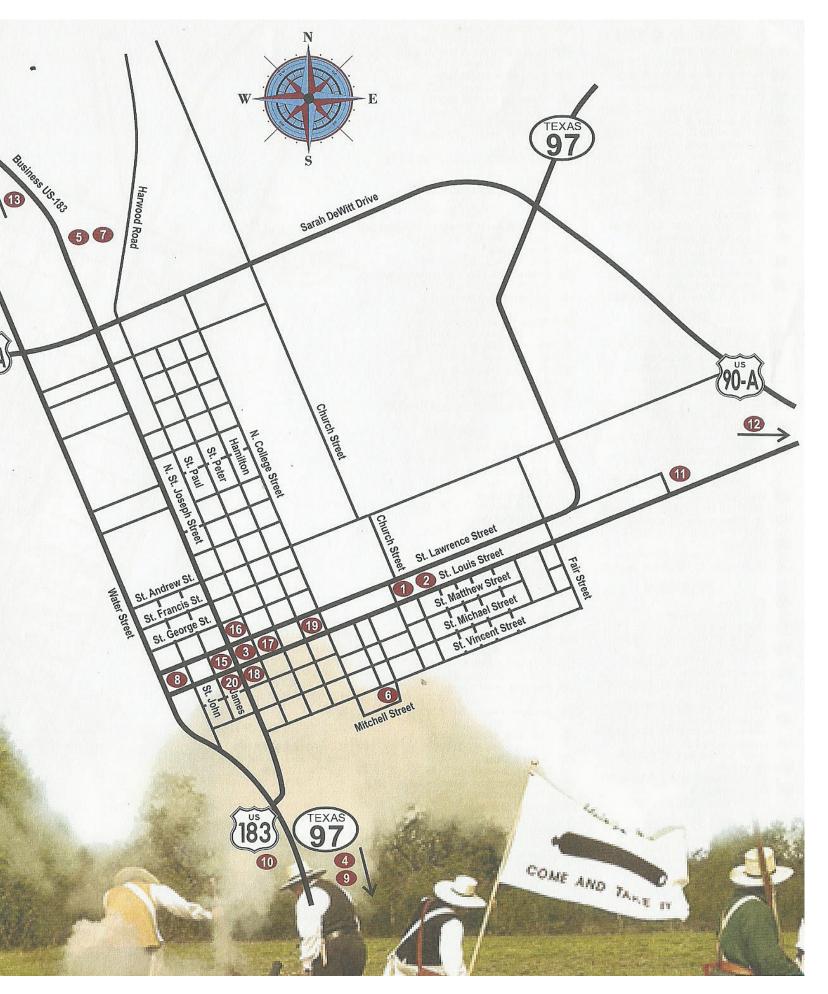
Points of Interest

- **Gonzales Memorial Museum**
- 2 The Eggleston House
- 3 Central Square Old Jail Museum, Courthouse, Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center
- **4** Come and Take It Battleground
- 5 Gonzales Pioneer Village & Living History Center
- 6 JB Wells House
- 7 Fort Waul CSA

8

- Market Square State Association of Texas Pioneers Museum
- 9 JB Wells Park
- **10** Independence Park & Golf Course
- 11 Disc Golf Course
- **12** Braches House & Sam Houston Oak
- **(13)** Palmetto State Park
- 14 Lake Wood Recreation Area
- **15** Texas Hero Square
- **16** Confederate Square
- (17) Church Square
- **18** Military Square
- (19) Cemetery Square
- 20 Robert Lee Brothers, Jr. Memorial Library





THINGS TO DO





Winterfest: Downtown Gonzales turns on its holiday lights on the first weekend of December. Downtown merchants keep their doors open late Friday for the Jingle Mingle while Saturday is a full slate of activities including the lighted parade that begins at 7 p.m. with a guest appearance by Santa.





Pioneer Village: From blacksmithing to butter churning, the Pioneer Village Living History Center is a place where folks of all ages can go to learn about life in the late 19th Century. Located north of the intersection of Business US HWY 183 and US HWY 90A, Pioneer Village is open 1-5 p.m. every day except Monday.

Independence Park Golf Course: Play a round at the city's 22 acre, 9-hole course with native pecan trees along the Guadalupe river. Open 7 days a week. 830-672-1324





Luling Watermelon Thump: Just north of Gonzales is Luling's annual Watermelon Thump, always the last full weekend of June since 1954. Live music, carnival rides, a petting zoo and, of course, watermelon! The Watermelon Thump is fun for kids and adults all ages.





High school football: What better way to spend your Friday night then to support the local high school football teams? The Gonzales Apaches are a Class 4A team that competes at Apache Field. The Nixon-Smiley Mustangs are a Class 3A, the Shiner Comanches (2A) and the Shiner St. Paul (private school) share the same field and the Luling Eagles are Class 3A.





Spoetzl Brewery: Home of Shiner Beer just 20 minutes east of Gonzales. Stop in for a free brewery tour. Food available on Saturdays. www.shiner. com/brewery/tours



Gonzales County Go Texan Steak Night: Enjoy the thickest, juiciest steak in town while supporting local agriculture students. Held each January at the J.B. Wells Expo Center.

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Historic Homes Driving Tour: Get a map at the Gonzales Chamber of Commerce and have a self-guided driving tour across town.



Texas Water Safari: Called the world's toughest canoe race, it makes its way through Gonzales County via the San Marcos and Guadalupe rivers the second Saturday in June. Find a good spot and cheer them on as they head to the Texas coast. www. texaswatersafari.org

THINGS TO DO



Palmetto State Park: A little park with a lot to offer just off of U.S. 183 and near I-10. Enjoy swimming, camping, fishing the San Marcos River, bird watching, and summer camps for the kids. 78 Park Rd. 11 S., Gonzales 78629. 830-672-3266.





Texas Junior High Rodeo state finals: The TJHRA state finals take place from May 22-28. Cheer on the local junior high cowboys and cowgirls as they compete for buckles and statewide titles.



Robert Lee Brothers Jr. Memorial Library: Book it over to the Robert Lee Brothers Jr. Memorial Library. Services include but are not limited to 35,000 books, magazines, and audiobooks available for check out; 3,000 DVDs & Blu-Rays; downloadable e-books and audio books; 16 public internet computers, and 2 computers available for genealogy research. The library also houses the Mary Elizabeth Tinsley Texas History Center.







Chasin' Tail Crawfish Boil: On April 18th at the Brickyard Pavillion, the third annual bash features all the crawfish you can eat, a corn hole and washer board tournament, great music, chicken poop bingo, BBQ and other activities takes place on the Guadalupe River. Contact Btitney Banderas at (830)203-8019 for details.

VICTORIA COLLEGE PLAYS A VITAL ROLE

Victoria College's Gonzales Center, located at 424 E. Sarah DeWitt Drive in Gonzales, recently celebrated 10 years of training the local workforce and preparing students in Gonzales County and neighboring counties to take their higher education to the university level.

The Gonzales Center opened in May 2007 and offers day, night and online classes. Students can obtain college credits that can be used toward Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees and transfer to fouryear universities.

"We are proud to be a part of the Gonzales Center," says Victoria College President Dr. David Hinds. "It serves approximately 380 credit students and over 300 noncredit students per



year. Many of those students would not pursue anything beyond high school if the Gonzales Center was not here."

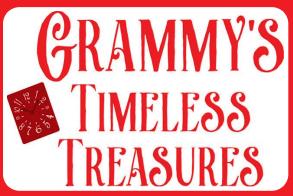
VC's Gonzales Center also offers a Vocational Nursing Program and training in truck driving, welding, HVAC, electrical trades and other industrial trades. Adult education, financial aid and advising services are also available.

"Gonzales ISD students have an amazing benefit through shared services offered by Victoria College's Gonzales Center," says Gonzales ISD Superintendent Kimberly Strozier. "The ability to gain both high school and college credits through a dualcredit program right in our hometown serves our students tremendously in preparation for their futures. Additionally, advanced vocational course opportunities in areas such as welding and nurse aide provide our students the ability to gain training for immediate job opportunities and garner additional certifications in specified areas. The partnership with VC's Gonzales Center is a gift for our students and this community."

VC's Gonzales Center recently unveiled its new Tutoring Resource Center and remodeled nursing skills lab. This fall, the Gonzales Center will begin offering Carpentry Level 1 and Plumbing Level 1 courses. A Drywall Level 1 course will begin in Spring 2019.

For more information about VC's Gonzales Center, call (830) 672-6251 or visit VictoriaCollege.edu/ GonzalesCenter. ★





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Gonzales Center



PIONEER VILLAGE

'My favorite thing is just being here in the peace'

Pioneer Village manager Brandy Low chats with docent Bradley Avant churning butter during school tour, above. Opposite page, docent Beverly Pirkle greets visitors at the Muenzler House.

he Pioneer Village board of directors announced that Anna Hathaway retired after serving in the role for six years and that Brandy Low has taken over as manager. The Village opened for its 2022 season on Feb. 1 with a busy schedule of docent-led tours for schools and organizations with former ag teacher and event coordinator Lowe preparing for busload of eager elementary students. Although she has previously been a board member and planner for weddings and other afterhours special events, her interest in preservation, maintenance and restoration of the historic Pioneer Village has only grown.

"When you enter the grounds, you're entering a whole new peaceful serenity no matter why you're here, no matter where you're from. This is what brought us here. This is how our ancestors survived, the whole reason we're here. My favorite thing is just being here in the peace," said Low.

Though keeping the lights on, fixing a loose board when needed, and advertising to let people know about the village has required a team effort for many years, Lowe said she believes it is very important work.

"Texas history is valuable and when it's gone, its gone and then we can't share it," Low said, particularly in the Muenzler House, which was built in 1892 and still displays the home's original Biedermeier dining room table.

She explained her interested in protecting the equipment remaining

WHEN YOU ENTER THE GROUNDS, YOU'RE ENTERING A WHOLE NEW PEACEFUL SERENITY NO MATTER WHY YOU'RE HERE, NO MATTER WHERE YOU'RE FROM. THIS IS WHAT BROUGHT US HERE. THIS IS HOW OUR ANCESTORS SURVIVED THE WHOLE REASON WE'RE HERE."

from the era when the clinic was founded by Dr. Sievers to give younger generations a better understanding of what life was like without Teladoc. The opportunity to help provide learning experiences to children through activities like churning butter have been a valuable part of her experience with the village. Low also mentioned her fondness for Miss Piggy, a friendly potbellied pig who has wandered the village for the past 15 years.

The Pioneer Village extends the community an invitation to "step back in time and see how people lived," said Low. **★**

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CUVUQ HISTORY

'STARS IN THE VILLAGE' EVENT FEATURES OLD-FASHIONED FUN

The Pioneer Living History Center hosts a Christmas from the past with a "Stars in the Village" event that includes live music provided by the O'Neal Brothers Band in the 1870's era Hamon Chapel. The event features old-fashioned fun with candle-making, a corn cob game and blacksmith demonstrations. Visitors can make ornaments and enjoy campfire popcorn, cookies, hot chocolate and wassail. Santa brings a toy for every child, as well.

Freshly churned butter is served with crackers on the porch of the Gates log cabin, which was built in 1856. The village smokehouse, school and antique doctor's office are all open for a full living history experience. ★

A blacksmith demonstrates heating metal in the shop at Pioneer Village.



WE ALL FILLO ATTENDED DOWN HERE

FLOAT FEST Set for 2022 Return

fter three years off, organizers of Float Fest say the festival will officially return in 2022 to its new location in Gonzales on July 23-24 — bringing with it about 25,000 people to the area for that weekend.

"We're so excited to be back

in 2022! Float Fest 2022 will take our event to the next level. Our lineup will be our best yet, and we have worked endlessly to create a premier fan experience in every aspect of our festival," said Marcus Federman, founder of Float Fest. "Since Gonzales is known as the

36 DISCOVER GONZALES COUNTY





birthplace of Texas Independence, moving the festival here gives us the perfect opportunity to celebrate our roots as the first Texas music festival centered around floating the river and camping — true Texas traditions. See you next summer!"

The event will be staged at a 765-acre private ranch off U.S. 183, south of the city limits, in a venue organizers say is three times the size of their previous venue — the Cool River Ranch Toob Rental and Amphitheatre in San Marcos — which should allow for "more camping options, floating accessibility, additional parking, and enhanced spaces for fans to enjoy the full Texas experience."

The festival is expected to feature more than 25 bands on two stages in a pecan grove with more than 450 acres of trees which will create "natural shade canopies" over the larger camping sites. Festival goers also will have immediate on-site access to nearly two miles of the Guadalupe River for private floating on the river daily between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Guests also have the opportunity to arrive as early as Friday, July 22, for camping, floating the river and more, organizers said, noting as many as 25,000 people could attend the festival.

There will be food and beverage and general merchandise vendors on site at the ranch, but organizers also pointed out they expect the festival will generate commerce for the grocery stores, retailers, hotels and restaurants in Gonzales and other communities as well. Float Fest will also offer a shuttle service to attendees from both Austin and San Antonio.

Ticket and artist lineup will be announced soon on the festival website at floatfest.net. Float Fest began as a summer music festival in 2014 and the last festival, held in 2018, was even featured in Spin magazine. It has welcomed a number of national artists, including Weezer, Tame Impala, Snoop Dogg, Lil Wayne, Cage The Elephant, and more.

The festival also organizes a river cleanup project, Keep the River Clean, which includes cleaning up the river before, during, and after the festival with divers and boats to ensure a safe and clean zone.

In 2019, Guadalupe County commissioners voted to deny the festival a permit to continue and Federman announced Float Fest would move to a new location in Gonzales County. However, they were unable to get the site ready in time to hold a 2019 festival. COVID-19 caused the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 events. ★



★ DID YOU KNOW?



Gonzales was the only city to send aid to defend the Alamo in 1836. All 32 men died in the siege; they became known as the "Immortal 32."



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Backstage WITH THE O'NEAL BROTHERS BAND

In January 1969, four guys who grew up in Gonzales decided to start a band. They've gone their separate ways at times, but the members of the O'Neal Brothers Band have made a lot of music and memories together in the past fifty-two years. After hearing them perform Amazing Grace, I wanted to share their story from City Lights to Stars in the Village.

STORY BY LIZ ADAMS

B rothers Larry and Bobby O'Neal learned to play the guitar by watching their father. Both recalled playing and singing on the front porch of their family's house, which has since been torn down.

"Their mom and dad were like a second mom and dad to me," said drummer Larry Fortune, "every time I'd go over there, they'd treat me like one of their boys."

Fortune remembers a time when he was in the National Guard and he could hear music from their house through an open window at the armory, which is now the Victoria College campus on Sarah DeWitt.

Victoria College campus on Sarah DeWitt. Lead guitarist Thomas "T.I." Hill lived on Waelder Highway with his family where they raised chickens, hogs and cattle.

"My daddy played a little acoustic guitar and my brother got to be a pretty good steel player but I was the picker of the family ever since I was little. What inspired me was when I saw Chet Atkins on the Grand Ole Opry back in the '50s. I said I want to play like that guy. I was about eight years old," said Hill.

"We've always been close," said Bobby O'Neal, explaining that Fortune and Hill were like his brothers, too. All four members of the group played by ear.

"When I wasn't working or doing chores, I'd be playing music and learning chords,"

Hill told me. Fortune said he chose the drums because drumsticks didn't cost much.

"I taught myself," said Fortune.

Larry O'Neal learned rhythm but switched after hearing bass player Jody Gold with Jesse Lee and the Texas Valley Boys.

"I was just in awe of that bass guitar," said Larry O'Neal, who is lefthanded, but plays righthanded.

"Larry is also an excellent harmony singer," Hill said.

When Bobby O'Neal bought his first guitar, it was 1968 and he was listening to Merle Haggard, Buck Owens and Johnny Bush.

They found themselves performing for school talent shows in high school, then on to Hermanson's Hall, where they made \$51.62 each. Fortune said that was enough to convince him to take the gig.

"My mom and dad were out there all the time because they like to dance. There were dances every Saturday night and the parking lot was full. We sometimes played four nights a week and we were all working full time," said Bobby O'Neal.

They made their way through the region's dancehalls playing anything that was on the radio. If a song was extremely popular, they told me they might find themselves playing it two or three times a night. Larry O'Neal soon lost his enthusiasm for "Matilda" by Cookie and the Cupcakes.

"We started out as a country band but we knew we would need to play rock and roll for young people," Hill explained.

They learned to play hits by Credence

Clearwater Revival and the Eagles. Gonzales native Robert Ramschel joined to play steel guitar with the band.

"A song that was really hot back then was by the Hollies. It was called Long Cool Woman in a Black Dress." said Fortune.

They described playing together from Cuero to Yorktown, Weesatche to Shiner, Seguin to Hallettsville. In San Antonio, they played at the Golden Stallion and the Skyline Club. They played at the Broken Spoke in Austin.

They talked about a brawl that took place during a show at the American Legion in Westoff after a trail ride from Victoria. Bobby O'Neal described playing backup for Eddie Rabbit at the Silver Dollar in Austin and they laughed as he explained that he couldn't remember the name Norvell Phelps when it was time to introduce him. It wasn't his favorite way to do a set because he didn't always know the songs, but Fortune said they had played behind acts like Cal Smith, Johnny Russell and Stoney Edwards.

Fortune left when his daughter was born in 1975. Hill also took time for other responsibilities.

"We had a variety of other musicians that we hired. We had a piano player out of Weatherford. We had a drummer out of Kalamazoo, Michigan. We had a lead guitar player out of Spokane, Washington," Larry O'Neal said.

He described them all as great musicians but said they had all stopped by the early '80s. They didn't play together again until one day in the '90s when Bobby O'Neal called them over for some hamburgers and hot dogs.

"And all four of us were together and, of course,

we ended up playing music," said Larry O'Neal. Bobby O'Neal chimed in, "I couldn't remember what I did yesterday, but I could still remember the words to songs we hadn't played together in a decade.

Although Hill and Fortune no longer live in Gonzales, the band still plays at Pioneer Village every year and they usually play for a Luling class reunion every June. They've performed for the Watermelon Thump and Come and Take It.



"We'll still do the old country music but we mostly play gospel now," said Bobby O'Neal, who has written a few gospel tunes of his own and often leads music worship at Eastside Baptist Church.

Fortune plays regularly for the Abiding Word Lutheran Church. The longtime members of the O'Neal Brothers Band agreed the atmosphere for their music is different than it once was in the glow of city lights.

"We took a lot of pride in what we were doing on that stage. I'm glad I stayed with it. It was profitable in the long run. The Lord really blessed me," said Hill. ★



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UNVEILS NEW CITY HALL & COMMUNITY CENTER

The City of Nixon officially moved into its new City Hall and Community Center building at 302 E. Central Ave. this month and city officials are hoping residents will take advantage of the amenities the facility has to offer.

City Hall, which is located next to the Dollar General, has a fully-modern council chambers, complete with flat-screen TV displays and a state-of-the-art sound system as well as office space for city administrative departments and a drive-up window for the utility department.

Also in the building is a community building that seats 315 people (250 at tables) with a full-service kitchen that can



be rented out for parties, weddings, banquets, meetings and other special events.

"It's for the community and for the kids," said Mayor Pro Tem Justin La Fleur. "No one else has anything here in the city of Nixon that is climate controlled like this."

"And if you live in the city of Nixon, your rate is lower since it is taxpayer money that paid for the building, so we're going to give them a little break on the rental, but we still have to be able to pay for our insurance and our electric bill and the water bill," added City Manager Harold Rice.

"We give county residents a break, too, on rentals because they come through here and spend money



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

GONZALES CITY HALL 830-672-2815

NIXON CITY HALL 830-582-1924

WAELDER CITY HALL 830-788-7331

> **CITY OF SMILEY** 830-587-6220

GONZALES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE 830-672-6532

GONZALES INQUIRER NEWSPAPER 830-672-2861

GONZALES COUNTY COURTHOUSE 830-672-2327

> **GONZALES ISD** 830-672-9551

NIXON-SMILEY CISD 830-582-1536

WAELDER ISD: 830-239-5600

GONZALES COUNTY GAME WARDEN 830-857-5436 Gonzales County Sheriff's Office: 830-672-6524

CITY OF GONZALES POLICE DEPARTMENT 830-672-8686

CITY OF NIXON POLICE DEPARTMENT 830-582-1395

CITY OF WAELDER POLICE DEPARTMENT 830-788-7270 in our stores and some of our budget is dependent on the sales taxes that are generated in the community," La Fleur said. "With this hall, for a small donation, youth groups in the community are allowed to use it at no charge, which is something they didn't have before."

The entire project was three years in the making and came about when the state notified the city of deficiencies and health hazards at the old police station at 106 W. Third St., La Fleur said.

The process began in earnest in the fall of 2018 and procured the parcel the building was on about a year and a half ago for \$85,000. Then, after the design phase was completed with Tim Gescheidle of TSG Architects AIA in Gonzales, the city signed a contract with Northstar Elite Construction and Consulting of New Braunfels to build the new building in November 2020 at a cost of about \$2.2 million. The city then bought an additional parcel next door to make sure there was ample parking space available.

"The lengthy part of the process was getting back the architectural plans to the council and for all of us to agree on what needed to be done — going 'add this, no change this.' That was a six-to-eight month process," La Fleur said. The city took out a 30-year note with Third Coast Bank that is being paid through the debt service tax rate, and Rice said the city also retired some of its outstanding debt early to help achieve savings.

"We've got roughly \$150,000 in debt that came off and was paid off early. Our police cars, Well No. 6, and a jet machine for the outside laborers all came off the books to help lower the amount of debt the city had in order to offset this cost. Actually, we saved a little bit more money by doing that," Rice said.

"We also tried to stay as local as we could when it came to who we used to help build the building to cut down the costs."

Nixon residents can rent the building during weekdays for \$200 per day with a \$500 deposit, or for \$500 per day or \$1,250 all weekend on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. County residents pay \$300, \$750 and \$1,850 with the \$500 deposit, while out of county residents pay \$400, \$1,000 and \$2,500.

There is also a conference room that can be rented in addition that serves nicely for a bridal suite for weddings, Mayor Dorothy Riojas said.

For more information about how to rent the Nixon Community Center, call (830) 582-1924. ★



PLACES OF WOVShip

IN GONZALES COUNTY

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD Gonzales Family Church Assembly of God 320 St. Andrew

First Assembly of God 509 E. 3rd St., Nixon

New Life Assembly of God Corner of Church St. & Jessie Smith St., Gonzales

BAPTIST Clark Baptist Church FM 794, Gonzales

Country Baptist Church Highway 87, Smiley

Eastside Baptist Church Seydler Street, Gonzales

Efeso Iglesia Bautista Highway 87, Smiley

Elm Grove Baptist Church 4337 FM 1115 Waelder, TX, 78959 First Baptist Church 422 St. Paul, Gonzales

First Baptist Church 403 N. Texas, Nixon

First Baptist Church Highway 108 N., Smiley

First Baptist Church 406 N. Avenue E, Waelder

Greater Palestine Baptist Church S. of 90A (sign on Hwy 80)

Greater Rising Star Baptist Church

Harwood Baptist Church North of Post Office, Harwood

Iglesia Bautista Macedonia 201 S. Congress, Nixon

Iglesia Bautista Memorial Highway 97, Waelder

Leesville Baptist Church E. of Highway 80 on CR 121 Memorial Heights Baptist Church 1330 N. College, Gonzales

> Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church 100 Capes, Gonzales

Oak Valley Baptist Church Highway 97, Bebe

Old Moulton Baptist Church 1121 N. College, Gonzales

Providence Missionary Baptist Church 1020 St. Andrew, Gonzales

> **Stratton Primitive Baptist** FM 1447, 9 miles east of Cuero

St. James Baptist Church Hwy 80, north of Belmont.

St. Paul Baptist Church SE 2nd Street, Waelder

Shiner Baptist Church Union Lea Baptist Church St. Andrew St., Gonzales Union Valley Baptist Church FM 1681, NW of Nixon

CATHOLIC St. James Catholic Church 417 N. College, Gonzales

Sacred Heart Catholic Church St. John St., Gonzales

St. Joseph Catholic Church 207 S. Washington, Nixon

St. Patrick Catholic Church Waelder

St. Phillip Catholic Church Highway 87, Smiley

CHRISTIAN First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) 712 Crockett, Luling

CHURCHES OF CHRIST Church of Christ 1323 Seydler St., Gonzales

Church of Christ (Iglesia de Cristo) 201 E. Second St. Nixon

> **Church of Christ** E. 3rd & Texas, Nixon

Church of Christ, Belmont

CHURCHES OF GOD Community Church of God 1020 St. Louis, Gonzales

Gonzales Memorial Church of God in Christ 1113 Hastings, Gonzales

New Beginnings 1020 St. Louis, Gonzales

New Way Church of God in Christ 514 St. Andrew, Gonzales

EPISCOPAL Episcopal Church of the Messiah 721 S. Louis, Gonzales

EVANGELICAL La Vos del Evangelio, Mision Capilla del Pueblo W. Central at Hwy. 87, Nixon FULL GOSPEL Camp Valley Full Gospel Hwy 80, 7 mi. north of Nixon

> **Full Gospel Church** 1426 Fisher, Gonzales

JEWISH Adat Haderech, a Messianic shul HashemYeshua1@yahoo.com

LUTHERAN First Evangelical Lutheran 1206 St. Joseph, Gonzales

Abiding Word Lutheran Church LCMS 1310 St. Louis, Gonzales

> METHODIST Belmont United Methodist Highway 90A, Belmont

> **Dewville United Methodist** West of FM 1117 on CR 121

First United Methodist 426 St. Paul, Gonzales

First United Methodist 410 N. Franklin, Nixon

Harris Chapel United Methodist S. Liberty St., Nixon

Harwood Methodist Church Harwood

Henson Chapel United Methodist 1113 St. Andrew, Gonzales

Monthalia United Methodist CR 112 off Highway 97

Smiley United Methodist 1 blk. S. of Hwy. 87, Smiley

Webster Chapel A.M.E. 1027 Church St., Gonzales

NON-DENOMINATIONAL Agape Ministries 512 St. James, Gonzales

Bread of Life Ministries 613 St. Joseph, Gonzales

Christ the King Church 1262 U.S. Highway 77, South Hallettsville Cowboy Church of Gonzales County J.B. Wells Show Barn

El Centro Cristiano "Agua Viva" 403 Highway 90 W, Waelder

Emmanuel Fellowship 1817 St. Lawrence, Gonzales

Encouraging Word Christian Fellowship Highway 80, Leesville

> Lighthouse Church of Our Lord 1805 Weimar, Gonzales

New LifeTemple for Jesus Christ 16214 US 90 W, Harwood

River of Life Christian Fellowship 207 Steele St., Smiley

Two Rivers Bible Church 1600 Sarah DeWitt Dr., Suite 210, Gonzales

> INTER-DENOMINATIONAL Faith Family Church 1812 Cartwheel Dr., Gonzales

PENTECOSTAL Faith Temple Hwy. 80 (N. Nixon Ave.), Nixon

HolyTemple of Jesus Christ No. 2 1515 Dallas, Gonzales

Iglesia Pentecostes Filadelfia 893 S. Magnolia Ave., Luling

Temple Bethel Pentecostal 1104 S. Paul, Gonzales

Thompsonville Community Church CR 423, Thompsonville Between Harwood & Waelder off old Hwy. 90

Life Changing Church of Gonzales 3.3 miles north on Hwy 183, right on CR 235, then right on CR 236

> PRESBYTERIAN Pilgrim Presbyterian Church CR 210 off FM 1116

Presbyterian Church of Gonzales 414 St. Louis, Gonzales

Cheapside Presbyterian Church, Cuero





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