

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A white egret is perched on a dark, bare branch. The bird is facing right, with its long neck curved slightly. Its feathers are bright white, and its long, pointed beak is a pale yellowish-brown. Below the bird, a nest made of dry twigs and sticks hangs from the branch. The background is a soft-focus blue sky with some green foliage visible at the bottom.

## STARK BEAUTY

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through an East Texas family's legacy

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

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Story and Photos by Julia Robinson

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By Charles Lohrmann

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*Find these stories online if they don't appear in your edition of the magazine.*

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*Hunting Topaz*  
By Brenda Kissko

**Texas Faces**

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**NEXT MONTH**

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



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



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

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## iViva Conjunto!

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

BRUCE LAMB | VIA FACEBOOK

## Get to the Point

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

ANITA CARSWELL | GEORGETOWN PEDERNALES EC

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

## Masterful Illustration

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

ELIZABETH WALTERS | BURNET PEDERNALES EC

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

## Squeezebox Cues

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

BARB SCHROEDER | SCHULENBURG | FAYETTE EC

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

JOE FLARITY | OAKHURST SAM HOUSTON EC

## Around the Clock

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

DAN TEED | MCKINNEY COSERV

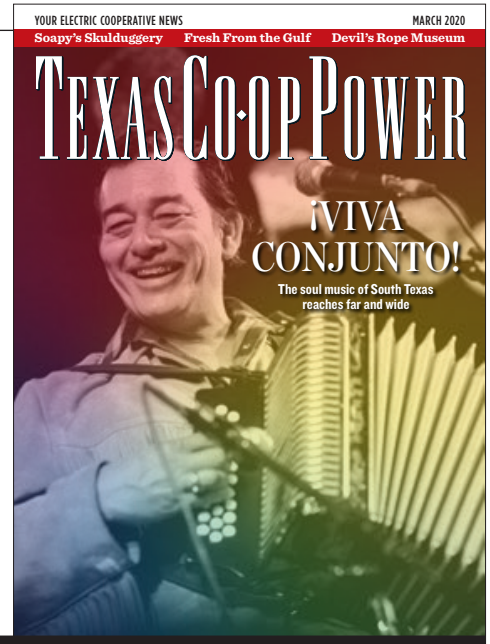
## A Mother’s Love

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

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

FRED SMITH JR. | BUNA JASPER-NEWTON EC

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



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

DONALD GRUBBS | VICTORIA VICTORIA EC

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   **Texas Co-op Power**

**TEXAS CO-OP POWER VOLUME 76, NUMBER 11** (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 75 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power*’s website is [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com). Call (512) 454-0311 or email [editor@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:editor@TexasCoopPower.com). **SUBSCRIPTION PRICE** is \$4.20 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues are available for \$3 each. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Texas Co-op Power* (USPS 540-560), 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. Please enclose label from this copy of *Texas Co-op Power* showing old address and key numbers. **ADVERTISING:** Advertisers interested in buying display ad space in *Texas Co-op Power* and/or in our 30 sister publications in other states, contact Elaine Sproull at (512) 486-6251. Advertisements in *Texas Co-op Power* are paid solicitations. The publisher neither endorses nor guarantees in any manner any product or company included in this publication. Product satisfaction and delivery responsibility lie solely with the advertiser.

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## RURAL LIVING

# The Future Looks Bright

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



## NATURE



THE FIRST CULTIVATED CARROTS WERE PURPLE OR YELLOW.

## TECH KNOWLEDGE

### Current Favorite

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

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

## SOCIAL STUDIES

### Counting on You

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

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

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



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

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

Quickly find a way into your heart?

AL AND JUDY WILSON | NORTHLAKE COSERV

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

KAY STRICKLIN | SEGUIN  
GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

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

EMILEE ENSMINGER | FORT WORTH TRI-COUNTY EC

Go to sleep so fast?

ELIZABETH AND GEORGE MORGAN  
SAN ANGELO | CONCHO VALLEY EC

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

MIKE CATES | BELLS | GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

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

DARLA REGNER | BARTLETT | BARTLETT EC

To see more responses, read Currents on our website.

## LIFESTYLE

### SPLASH ACROSS TEXAS

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

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

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

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



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

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

## CO-OP PEOPLE

### Badgers Got Your Back



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

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

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

## SPORTS SECTION

### SPORT OF KING

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



# FIRMLY ROOTED

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



STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY JULIA ROBINSON



## THE STORY OF

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

## STARK MUSEUM OF ART

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

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

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

## W.H. STARK HOUSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

AUDUBON: COURTESY STARK MUSEUM OF ART



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



## SHANGRI LA BOTANICAL GARDENS AND NATURE CENTER

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

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

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

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

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

### WEB EXTRAS

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

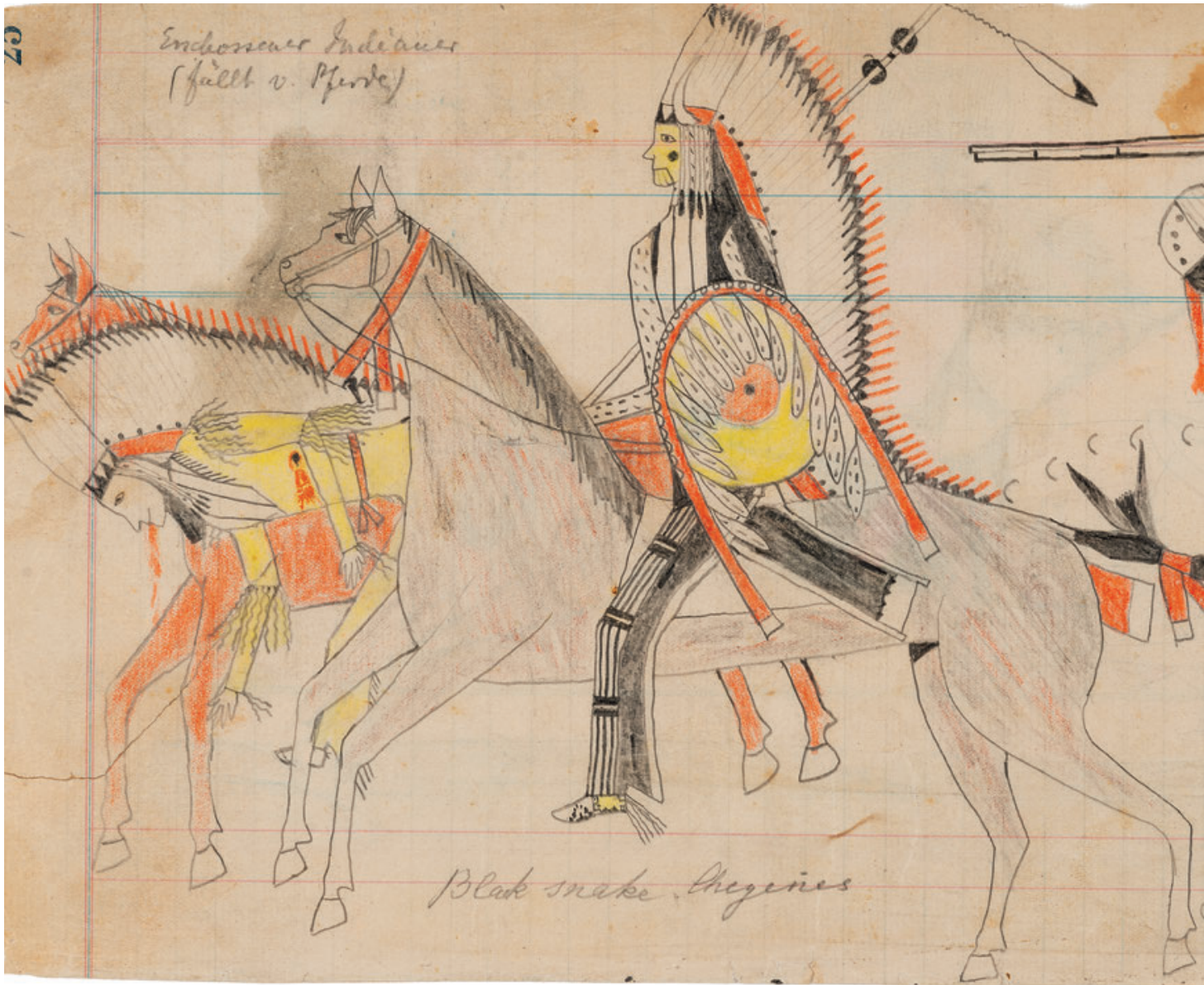
"I really love teaching outside," says Nelligan. "The kids get out here and think, yay, we're out of school. But we are a school; we're just a school without walls."

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

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

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

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



# Cultural Accounting

19TH-CENTURY DRAWINGS OFFER INSIGHT INTO PLAINS PERSPECTIVE

BY CHARLES LOHRMANN

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

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

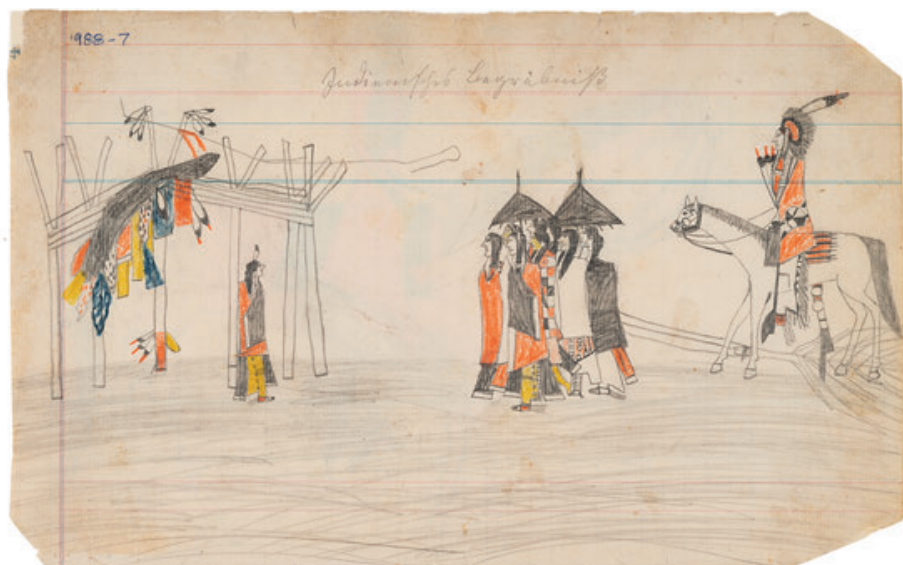
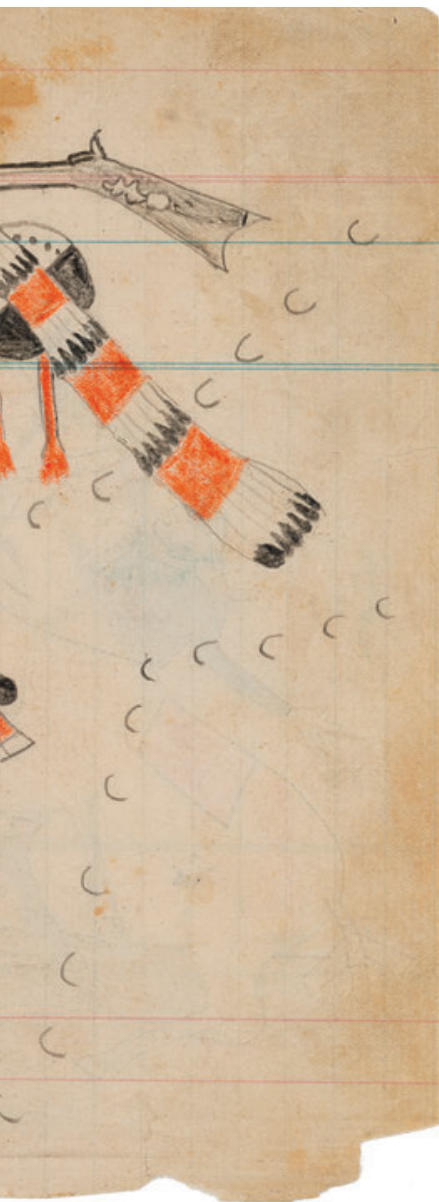
These drawings—many attributed to the Kiowa—were originally bound in an account ledger and dated 1840–1895. It is known as the Schild Ledger because it was purchased in 1895 by Dr. E.H. Tips in Fredericksburg from the estate of Herman Schild, believed to have been a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners.

“Because Kiowas had no written form of their language in

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

#### WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story online for more about ledger art.

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

widow in 1964.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

*Clogged and Smelly – Amarillo, TX*

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

This fast-acting bacteria multiplies within minutes of application and is specifically designed to withstand many of today's anti-bacterial cleaners, soaps and detergents. It comes in dissolvable plastic packs, that you just flush down your toilets. It's so cool. Plus, they actually Guarantee that it restores ANY system, no matter how bad the problem is.

**SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at [www.septicleanse.com](http://www.septicleanse.com) or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "TXS10", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.



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 provides monthly food distributions  
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**POWER OF OUR PEOPLE | SEPTEMBER 2019**

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\*Offer not available in all areas and ends 5/31/2020 and appointment must occur within 10 days of the initial contact. Discount applies to minimum required purchase. Deferred interest for 60 months available to well qualified buyers on approved credit only with minimum monthly payment required. Financing is provided by federally insured, federal and state chartered financial institutions without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex or familial status. Any finance terms advertised are estimates only, and all financing is provided by third-party lenders unaffiliated with Renewal by Andersen retailers, under terms and conditions arranged directly between the customer and such lender, all subject to credit requirements. "Renewal by Andersen" and all other marks where denoted are marks of Andersen Corporation. ©2020 Andersen Corporation. All rights reserved.




**HARD HATS FOR THE JOB.  
SOFT HEARTS FOR THE COMMUNITY.**

People need their power. But the strongest communities share more than just reliable electricity; they share simple values. The linemen of your co-op are proud to have helped members pass along both for generations. Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).

**WHARTON  
COUNTY**

**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**TOGETHERWESAVE.COM**



# WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE



MESSAGE FROM YOUR GENERAL MANAGER/CEO  
**GARY RAYBON**

## RESPONDING TO COVID-19

**AS I WRITE THIS MONTH'S COLUMN, IT IS APRIL 6, 2020.**

It is predicted that this will be the worst week for COVID-19 infections so far. It is my hope that by the time you read this in early May, we are looking forward to moving toward getting back to some semblance of normal.

Early in this crisis, Wharton County Electric Cooperative implemented the pandemic portion of our Emergency Operation Plan. We know that without electricity, maintaining any sense of normalcy as we hunker down in our homes would be impossible. Following this plan ensures that we continue to provide the reliable electric service you have come to expect from us during this type of crisis.

Outside of WCEC, our generation cooperative, South Texas Electric Cooperative, has taken extreme measures to ensure its workforce is healthy and its power plants are functioning as needed.

Here at WCEC, we've limited access to our lobby and building to prevent the spread of germs. Instead, we are encouraging members to use our drop box, online and phone payment options and the "good old" U.S. Postal Service to pay bills. We have suspended in-home appointments with our members including Internet installations, load management installations and testing, and energy audits.

Many of our employees are working from home. We've divided departments into shifts so that they can practice social distancing even when in the office. If you call, the phones will

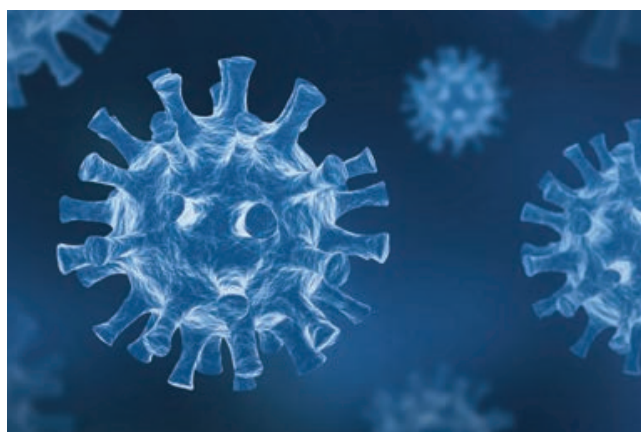
be answered as always. We have separated our line crews from other employees and even from each other to limit possible spread of the virus. Our Wirehand Wireless technicians have been working tirelessly to ensure that our users stay connected.

Our management team is meeting constantly to fine-tune this plan. We are in constant contact with the other electric

cooperatives in Texas and with our statewide organization, Texas Electric Cooperatives, which in turn is working closely with our national association. We are also staying up-to-date with local, state and federal guidelines.

So far, it is working well, and everyone has adapted to the new norm.

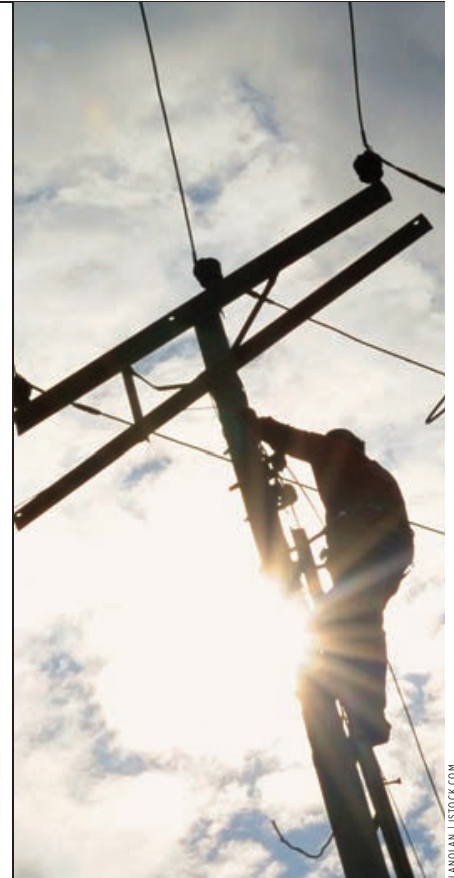
Our focus here is on doing our part to keep your life as normal as



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possible through this situation. We are also concerned about your wellbeing and financial stresses. Therefore, we have temporarily paused residential disconnects. You can read more about this on page 20.

The cooperative way of doing business has brought us this far, and the cooperative way will help us through this crisis. All the best to everyone. Stay healthy, stay home and we will get through this together the cooperative way!



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# Keeping You Connected In Uncertain Times

On March 30, 2020, Wharton County Electric Cooperative began voluntarily pausing disconnects for non-payment on residential accounts.

“We know that our members are facing financial hardships due to efforts to flatten the COVID-19 curve,” says GM/CEO Gary Raybon. “We ask members who need assistance to call our office and speak to our staff to make arrangements if possible. Pausing residential disconnections is a temporary measure to help those in serious need.”

It is important to note that regular billing cycles will continue and disconnect notices will still be generated. Members who cannot make full payments are encouraged to make partial payments to avoid large account balances over time. As we all transition back to normal, WCEC will work to set up payment arrangements for members who may remain behind on their electric bills. Additional assistance may be available through community resources listed on our website.

“Unfortunately, as more family members are home during the day, our members could see an increase in their usage. This means higher electric bills,” Raybon says. “Members can keep tabs on their usage through our SmartHub app or online portal. We also have energy-saving tips available on our website and on Facebook and Twitter. If you haven’t taken advantage of these tools to help you save, now is a good time to do so.”

WCEC is a member-owned electric cooperative that operates on a not-for-profit basis. As a cooperative, WCEC members will not qualify for funds from the Texas Public Utility Commission’s COVID-19 Electricity Relief Program.

Unfortunately, scammers like to take advantage of crisis situations. Members should be on the lookout for suspicious emails, phone calls, or persons impersonating business employees or charitable organizations. If you get a call from anyone claiming to be with WCEC and demanding payment, hang up and call us at 1-800-460-6271 or 979-543-6271. We will verify if any payment is needed on your account.

For more information about payment options or updates on WCEC’s COVID-19 response, please call our office at 979-543-6271 or visit [MyWCEC.coop/COVID19](http://MyWCEC.coop/COVID19).

## We Invite You To Give Us a Hand

### WE’RE NOT ASKING FOR APPLAUSE.

We’re asking you to help us spot anything that looks amiss along our electric lines.

Weather conditions and accidents—and sometimes vandals—can dislodge or break a pole. Wires can sag or break.

Though we can’t check every mile of line every day, our safety goals can be achieved with your help.

Contact us immediately if you think you see a problem. Our crews will check it out right away.

And you can be sure your help and cooperation will win our grateful applause.

**WHARTON  
COUNTY**  
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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# This May, Take Time To Plug Into Safety

**MAY IS ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH, AND WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IS DEDICATED** to sharing safety tips and helping raise awareness about the dangers of electricity. We all depend on electricity to power our lives, but accidents can happen when power sources are improperly used.

WCEC's concern for safety extends beyond our employees. We care deeply about the safety of our members, and this month, we encourage you to plug into safety. According to Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of Americans are critically injured or killed annually as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes.

To promote safety education in our local communities, we offer safety programs to area schools and community groups and regularly provide electrical safety content in these pages. We encourage you to contact us if you see a downed power line or any other dangerous electrical situation.

We strive to provide our communities with safe, reliable and affordable electricity and to serve as your trusted energy adviser, now and well into the future.

We believe it is our duty and responsibility to raise awareness about the importance of electrical safety. We encourage you to take a moment to plug into safety. For more on electrical safety, visit our website at [MyWCEC.coop](http://MyWCEC.coop). Look for the Safety and Savings tab.



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# Reminders for National Electrical Safety Month

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

## Indoors

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

## Outdoors

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

## Head Outdoors Safely

WHEN THE WEATHER WARMS UP, gardeners and do-it-yourselfers head outdoors. If that includes you, here are five tips for working safely with and around electrical equipment.

**1. Look up before setting up a ladder to paint or climb on the roof.** Your ladder should not come within 10 feet of an overhead power line. Touching a power line with anything puts you at risk of injuries or worse.

**2. Unplug your power tools when you're finished using them.** A plugged-in tool could overheat and cause a fire. Unplugging saves energy because anything that's plugged in continues to draw some electricity, even when it's not in use.

**3. Don't use damaged tools, even if they still work.** Tools with frayed power cords or cracked parts are dangerous.

**4. Water and electricity do not mix.** Don't use your hose while you have power tools plugged in nearby. If the grass, garage or patio is wet, don't use an electric tool while standing in or on it.

**5. Teach your children how to work and play safely around electricity.** Caution them about climbing trees or flying drones too close to power lines. Remind them to never touch a power line in the air or on the ground with anything.



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# Downed Power Lines Never Safe

**STORMS, ACCIDENTS AND OTHER EVENTS CAN CAUSE POWER LINES TO HIT THE GROUND,** creating a very dangerous situation for anyone nearby.

**Here's what every member of your family needs to know about electric shocks:**

- ▶ If someone comes into contact with electricity, do not touch that person or anything the person is touching. Instead, call 911.
- ▶ If the source of electricity is an appliance, grab the plug—not the cord—and pull it out of the outlet. If you cannot safely remove the plug, turn off the power at the fuse or circuit breaker.
- ▶ If a power line falls on your car, do not get out of the car. You are safe inside your vehicle because your tires are conductors of electricity.
- ▶ If an electric wire falls on your car and there's a risk of fire, **take these steps to safely exit the vehicle:**

1. Open the door, but do not step out of the car yet.
2. Make sure that you jump completely free of the vehicle with both feet together, avoiding contact with the car and the ground at the same time.
3. Remember, once you jump from a car with a power line on it, the danger may not be over. Electricity can spread out through the ground in a circle from any downed line. Hop or shuffle (keeping both feet on the ground at all times) as far away as possible from the vehicle.
4. Do not try to help someone else from the car while you're standing on the ground. If you do, you will become a path for electricity and could be injured.

▶ When a wire falls to the ground, it may still be live, even if you don't see sparks. Call 911 and your electric cooperative if you see a downed wire. Warn others to keep their distance.

▶ Wood is a poor conductor of electricity, but it is still a conductor, especially when wet. Do not use a wooden ladder—or any other type—near a power line. If a ladder begins to fall into a power line, don't grab it. Let it fall and call us.

▶ Don't try to handle electric emergencies at home, even if you're wearing rubber gloves or shoes.



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# CULTIVATE FARM SAFETY

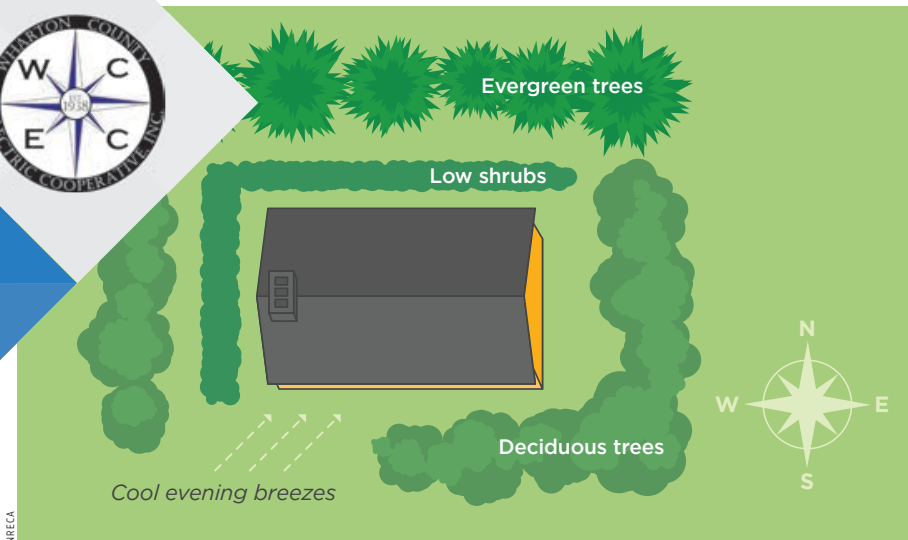
Because many pieces of farm equipment reach heights of 14 feet or higher, always remember to look up to make sure there is enough room to pass beneath electric lines. Here are some rules to follow:

**The No. 1** electrical farm hazard is the potential contact from a grain auger to a power line. Always look up before raising or moving an auger.

**The same is true** of metal irrigation pipe, often stored along fence lines under an electric line. Never raise or move irrigation pipe without looking up.

**Ensure that the wiring** in your workshop is adequate to handle your tools and be sure they are in good working order.

**Read labels** and handling instructions carefully and follow them when using chemicals and herbicides. Store them in a locked cabinet and safely dispose of empty containers.



# The Power of Planting

**THE DECISIONS YOU MAKE AND THE STEPS YOU TAKE IN PLANNING YOUR HOME'S** landscaping can help you stay cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. With summer just around the corner, let's look at how strategic planting can help cool your home.

Direct sunlight hitting windows is a major contributor to overheating homes during summer months. By planting trees that block sunlight, you can improve comfort and reduce your air conditioning use. If the trees eventually grow tall enough to shield your roof, that's even better.

The most important windows to shade are the ones facing west, followed by windows that face east. Also, an eave on the south side of your home can help shade your windows during midday sun.

Planting deciduous trees, which lose their leaves in the fall, will shield your windows in summer and allow sunlight in during winter to help warm your home. A simple approach that can deliver some shade the first year is to plant a "living wall" of vines grown on a trellis next to your home.

One cooling strategy is to make sure your air conditioning compressor has some plants near it—but not too close. The compressor should have 5 feet of space above it and a 2- to 3-foot gap all the way around so that it gets enough air to do its job.

Choosing native plants and trees that require minimal watering can contribute to your savings.

Landscaping can provide similar impact in cold months. A solid windbreak can cut harsh winter winds. The best solution for this is a solid row of trees (preferably evergreen) on the windward side of the home, with shrubs underneath the trees to keep the wind from sneaking through. In warmer climates, you don't want a wind barrier as wind flow will help cool your home.

If you live in a climate that isn't too humid, planting a row of shrubs a foot from your home can provide more efficiency. By stopping air movement, it can form a dead air space around the home that acts as "bonus" insulation. In a humid climate, however, leave several feet of space between landscaping and the home as airflow is necessary to avoid moisture-related home damage.

Before you begin any landscaping project that requires digging, remember to dial 811 to ensure all underground utility lines are properly marked.

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH



RICK PATRICK

### Breakfast Cookies

- 2 cups unsalted butter, melted
- 2 cups light brown sugar, packed lightly
- 3 cups sugar, divided use
- 6 eggs
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups quick-cooking oats
- 2 cups Texas pecan pieces
- 12 ounces bacon, cooked crisp and roughly chopped
- 4 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1 1/2 tablespoons baking powder
- 4 cups cornflakes
- 2 tablespoons cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, mix butter, brown sugar, 2 cups sugar, eggs and vanilla until well blended. Fold in oats, pecans and bacon. Add flour, salt and baking powder, mixing well. Add cornflakes and mix until combined evenly. Do not overmix.
2. Drop cookie batter onto parchment at least 1 inch apart using a 4-oz. scoop. Flatten each cookie into a 2-inch disc.
3. Mix cinnamon and remaining sugar. Sprinkle atop each cookie. Bake 10–12 minutes or until cookies are set but not crunchy.

► Makes 36 cookies.

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



# Current Contact Information Means Better Service



MONKE BUSINESSIMAGES

## AT WHARTON COUNTY ELECTRIC

Cooperative, we are constantly striving to improve our efficiency so we can provide the most reliable electric service possible for you, our members.

We rely on data for nearly every aspect of our operations, which is why we need your help. By making sure we have your most accurate and complete contact information, we can continue to provide the high level of service that you expect and deserve. Accurate information enables us to improve customer service and enhance communications for reporting and repairing outages. It also allows co-op members to receive

information about other important programs, events and activities.

While we always do our best to maintain service, we occasionally plan outages to update, repair or replace equipment. In these instances, we can provide advance notification to affected members through automated phone messages, text messages or email—but only if we have your updated contact information and communication preferences.

Keeping the co-op updated with your information also helps us when there's a question about energy use, billing, or discrepancies on your account.

Many of you have been members of the co-op for years, and it's likely that your account information hasn't been updated for some time. Many members now use a cellphone as their primary phone service, and we might not have that number in our system.

We will never share this information with any third parties. It is only used by WCEC to send important information to you. Please take a moment to confirm or update your contact information through our website or by phone. By doing so, you help us improve service and efficiency to better serve you.

**MAY HOLIDAYS**  
Cinco de Mayo  
Tuesday, May 5  
Mother's Day  
Sunday, May 10  
Memorial Day  
Monday, May 25  
Our offices will be closed in  
observance of Memorial Day.

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**Wharton County  
Electric Cooperative**

1815 E. Jackson St. • P.O. Box 31  
El Campo, TX 77437

## GENERAL MANAGER/CEO

Gary Raybon

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## Contact Us

### OUTAGES: 24/7

Office Hours:

Monday - Friday | 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

### CALL US

**(979) 543-6271** local or

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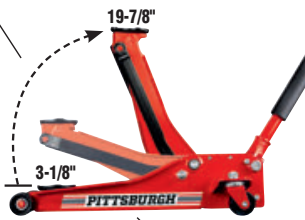
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COMPARE TO TEQ CORRECT  
~~\$189.99~~  
MODEL: T830018Z

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RE-ENGINEERED FOR GREATER PERFORMANCE

Customer Rating ★★★★★



Extra-low profile clearance



ITEM 56618/56619/56620/56617 shown  
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## WOW! SUPER COUPON

### SAVE 81%

#### 4-IN-1 SCREWDRIVER

PITTSBURGH

- Soft-grip handle
- Stores bits
- 2 slotted
- 2 Phillips head

**NOW \$74.99**  
~~\$199~~

LIMIT 3

Customer Rating ★★★★★

LIFETIME WARRANTY

COMPARE TO HDX MODEL: Y20S012D  
~~\$3.97~~

ITEM 39631/69470  
61988 shown

20375834  
Coupon valid through 7/1/20\*

## WOW! SUPER COUPON

# 20% OFF

ANY SINGLE ITEM\*

20371931

LIMIT 1 coupon per customer per day. Save 20% on any 1 item purchased. \*Cannot be used with other discount, coupons or any of the following items or brands: Inside Track Club membership, Extended Service Plan, gift cards, open box items, 3 day Parking Lot Sale Item, compressors, floor jacks, sales storage cabinets, chests or carts, trailers, welders, Admiral, Ames, Atlas, Bauer, Central Machinery, Cobalt, Country, Dayton, Diamondback, Earthquake, Fisher, Hercules, Icon, Jupiter, Lazer, Penlon, Predator, Tailgator, Viking, Vulcan, Zurich. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 7/1/20.

## PITTSBURGH

### LIFETIME WARRANTY

#### 301 PIECE MASTER MECHANIC'S TOOL KIT

SAE AND METRIC

Customer Rating ★★★★★

**NOW \$169.99**  
~~\$199.99~~

COMPARE TO KLUTCH MODEL: 43994  
~~\$299.99~~

ITEM 63464/63457/45951 shown

20375941

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## HARDY

### POWDER-FREE NITRILE GLOVES

#### PACK OF 100

• 5 mil thickness

12¢ PER PAIR

**NOW \$5.99**  
~~\$7.99~~

COMPARE TO VENOM MODEL: VEM145  
~~\$14.97~~

AVAIL. IN SM, MED, LG, XL, XXL

ITEM 37050, 64417, 61363, 68496, 68497, 61360, 61359, 68498, 64418 shown

20379575

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## SUPER COUPON

#### 200 LUMEN LED SUPER BRIGHT FLIP LIGHT

- Wireless, tool-free and easy installation

Customer Rating ★★★★★

**NOW \$1.99**  
~~\$3.99~~

COMPARE TO PREMIER MODEL: SW-SWITCH-12/24  
~~\$4.99~~

ITEM 64189/64723/63922 shown

20381252

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 7/1/20\*

## U.S. GENERAL

### SUPER COUPON

#### 44" x 22" DOUBLE BANK EXTRA DEEP CABINET

- 14,000 cu. in. of storage
- 2600 lb. capacity

Customer Rating ★★★★★

**NOW \$449.99**  
~~\$499.99~~

COMPARE TO SNAP-ON MODEL: KRA4813FP80  
~~\$2,735~~

SAVE \$2,285

ITEM 64446, 64955, 64443, 64954, 64133, 64956

20399275

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## SUPER COUPON

#### AMMO DRY BOX

Customer Rating ★★★★★

**NOW \$34.99**  
~~\$99~~

COMPARE TO RANGEMAXX MODEL: 1312-92  
~~\$99~~

ITEM 63135/61451 shown

20406675

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 7/1/20\*

## PITTSBURGH

### SUPER COUPON

#### 1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

Customer Rating ★★★★★

- Boom extends from 34" to 45"
- Crane height adjusts from 69-5/8" to 82"

**NOW \$139.99**  
~~\$189.99~~

COMPARE TO GOPLUS MODEL: GP-101040150  
~~\$229.99~~

ITEM 69512/61858 shown

20415564

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 7/1/20\*

## PORTLAND

### SUPER COUPON

#### 14", 9AMP ELECTRIC CHAINSAW

Customer Rating ★★★★★

**NOW \$39.99**  
~~\$49.99~~

COMPARE TO CRAFTSMAN MODEL: 071-45247  
~~\$80.74~~

ITEM 64498/64497 shown

20417913

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 7/1/20\*

## HaulMaster

### SUPER COUPON

#### 72" x 80" MOVING BLANKET

Customer Rating ★★★★★

**NOW \$5.99**  
~~\$9.99~~

COMPARE TO BLUE HAWK MODEL: 77280  
~~\$19.99~~

SAVE 70%

ITEM 69505/62418/66537 shown

20431719

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 7/1/20\*

## McGRAW

### SUPER COUPON

#### 8 GALLON, 150 PSI OIL-FREE AIR COMPRESSOR

- Air delivery: 4.1 SCFM @ 90 PSI

**NOW \$119.99**  
~~\$137.99~~

COMPARE TO KOBALT MODEL: 300841  
~~\$159~~

ITEM 56269/64294 shown

20434221

LIMIT 1 - Coupon valid through 7/1/20\*

## HaulMaster

### SUPER COUPON

#### 18" x 12" MOVER'S DOLLY

Customer Rating ★★★★★

- 1000 lb. capacity

**NOW \$7.99**  
~~\$10.99~~

COMPARE TO BUFFALO TOOLS MODEL: HDFOOLLY  
~~\$22.99~~

ITEM 60497/62399/63095/63096/63097/63098 shown

20437768

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 7/1/20\*

## TAILGATOR

### SUPER COUPON

#### 900 WATT MAX. STARTING 2 CYCLE GAS POWERED GENERATOR

- 5 hour run time

**NOW \$109.99**  
~~\$124.99~~

Customer Rating ★★★★★

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# Horses' Roundabout Trail

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

BY MARTHA DEERINGER

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

them when the Spanish arrived.

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

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

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

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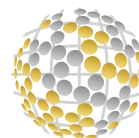
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# Spring Celebrations

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

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

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

**MEGAN MYERS**, FOOD EDITOR

## Spinach Artichoke Wonton Cups

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

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Arrange the wonton wrappers in two 12-cup muffin pans, then coat lightly with nonstick spray. Bake the wonton cups for 5 minutes, then remove from oven and set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, stir together spinach, artichoke hearts, sour cream, cream cheese, Parmesan, garlic and pepper until thoroughly combined.
3. Divide mixture evenly among the wonton cups. Bake 10–12 minutes until warmed and wonton cups are golden. ▶ Makes 24.

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

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

MEGAN MYERS



# Recipes

## Spring Celebrations



THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

MILLIE KIRCHOFF | NUECES EC

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

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

### Banana Bars

#### BARS

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

#### FROSTING

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

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

► Makes 3 dozen bars.

### Soy Brown Sugar-Glazed Salmon

CASSANDRA HUNTER | PEDERNALES EC

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

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

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

### Grandma Jewel's Italian Cream Cake

KAITLYN WILLINGHAM | CENTRAL TEXAS EC

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

#### CAKE

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



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

## FROSTING

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

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

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

## Almond Punch

DEBBIE SUGAREK | BLUEBONNET EC

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

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

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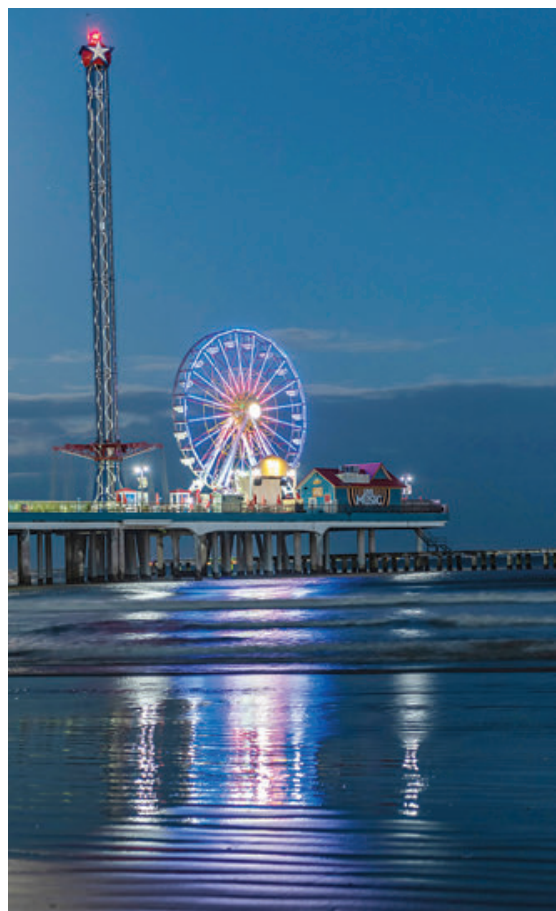
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**WEB EXTRAS** ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



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

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



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

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





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

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



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



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

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

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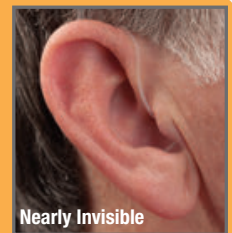
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# Spirits of Seguin

Historic Magnolia Hotel features encounters with the supernatural

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

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

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

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

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



Jim and Erin Ghedi with Chet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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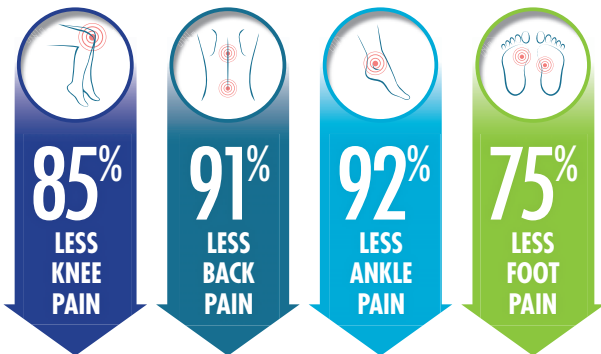
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