

Partners in Palo Duro Canyon Foundation

Issue No. 57

On the Edge!



Shelter in the Lighthouse Trail parking lot.

Built by the Wood Brothers, shown here.

A job well done!

On The Lighthouse Trail (Kind of) by Editor

For the second time during my life, I entered Palo Duro Canyon State Park. This was in the 1950s. The first time was in 1935 when I was four-years-old. If the state park is primitive now, you should have seen it then.

A four-year-old boy doesn't retain many memories, but I do remember a couple of things. One is that of a high-school boy along for the yearly school trip from Rhea, a small school approximately 15 miles west of Friona, Texas, near the New Mexico state line.

While climbing around the cliffs of the canyon, the high-school boy fell and rolled downhill to be stopped by a large rock on the edge of a sheer drop off. His face was covered with blood that he declined to wash off. He wore his "red badge of courage" on the school bus back to Rhea. (By the way, Rhea no longer exists as a school where my mother was a teacher.)

The other "thing" was a concrete, cellar-like structure. The structure had concrete walls and a concrete bottom but no top. At the bottom of the "cellar" in one corner was a skunk at which the high-school boys were throwing rocks. No park staff existed to make intervention, because, to my knowledge, no park staff existed except for the man at the entrance. I don't know the fate of the skunk, but I can guess as can you.

After looking for the "cellar" for several years, I finally found where I believe it to be—near the maintenance barn. A warning! If the cellar is there, don't fall in. high-school boys may be nearby.

Back to the point! My intent on that day in the 1950s was to walk the Lighthouse Trail—except that I could find no Lighthouse Trail. To my knowledge, no developed trails existed at all in the Park. I learned later that a trail to the Lighthouse formation was built between 1933 and 1937. At any rate, I knew the general direction to the Lighthouse, so I headed southwest from where I had parked my car beside the road. Yes, a road did run through the Park.

Stumbling and bumbling through the mesquite-clinging brush, prickly pear, and dirt until after approximately one mile I came across a dry stream bed and an anomaly.

I continued on toward the Lighthouse formation and found it. I sat at the foot of the formation too tired to climb to the next level. On the return to my car, I missed the place of the anomaly.

Nowadays, when someone asks about the Lighthouse Trail, it is easily found, well developed and enticing for moderate hikers, and this brings me to the cover page of this publication. A new shelter now exists at the entrance of the Trail, built by the Wood Brothers. (Another shelter exists where the Trail intersects the Gilvin, Spicer, Lowery Trail, this shelter was built as a boy-scout project.)

The Lighthouse parking lot is a parking lot—not just a place to park your car alongside the road. If you walk the Lighthouse Trail, enjoy the hike and enjoy the shelter which now exists for your pleasure. Oh yes! Take a couple of gallons of water—at least. *Cf*





David Fischer
Park Superintendent

Spring is my Favorite Time

Spring is still my favorite time of year at Palo Duro Canyon State Park. —even this year with abnormal weather and a lingering drought.

March, especially, is when things really pick up. It's our busiest time of the year. Spring Break brings a surge of visitors, and the Park shifts into a different gear. Campgrounds fill up, trailheads stay busy, and our staff moves constantly just to keep up.

From an operations side, the pace is demanding, but it's also a good reminder of how important this place is to people across the state.

Even during dry conditions, spring has way of pulling folks outside. The weather is mild, the Canyon starts to green up where it can, and there is more daylight to work with. You don't need a perfect wildflower bloom to appreciate it. Most visitors are just glad to be here, taking the scale of the Canyon, and getting a break from their day-to-day lives

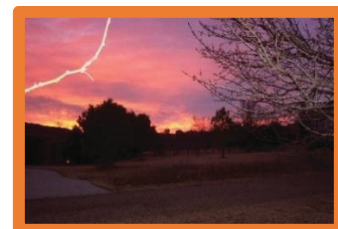
The seasonal shift has been happening here for a long time. Long before

it was a state park, this canyon saw generations of people adjusting to the same cycles we deal with now—wet years, dry years, and everything in between. Spring would have been a practical turning point, a time to move, to hunt, to take advantage of whatever the land offered. That hasn't really changed, even if what we're doing here today seems different.

From a resource standpoint, drought makes spring more noticeable. You see where the landscape is holding on and where it's stressed. Water resources matter more. Vegetation responds quickly—or doesn't. Spring puts a spotlight on how dependent everything is on a few good rains. From the Park side, spring reinforces how important it is to manage, use, and protect what we have, especially during peak visitation.

But even with those challenges, spring still stands out. The Canyon feels active again—both in terms of the landscape and the people in it. Families come to the Park on their first visit, regulars come back, and staff works hard to keep things running smoothly during this busiest time of the year.

Spring is not the easiest season to work, and it's definitely not the greenest time this year, but it's the one that shows the Park at work—balancing use, history, and the realities of the environment—all at once. And, like most folks in the Park right now, I'm still hoping we get the rain to back it up. *Df*





Ann Coberley
A Poem from Ann

Spring

Somewhere
between lime green and lemon,
spring leaves flutter,
lithe and young, intoxicated
with sunshine and warm breezes.

And people awaken
jaunty as sprigs of fresh mint
in an afternoon julep,
full of plans for longer days
and sweeter nights.

But we live on the prairie
where spring is a chimera,
briefly glimpsed from the corners
of our hopeful eyes
as she races by toward summer.

And April never ends
without wishing for October.

Editor's note: The following article was first published by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Press Office. A picture of the Time Capsule was provided as well.

David Fischer, Park Superintendent, provided this article and picture.

Centennial Time Capsule

The Centennial Time Capsule, which encompasses 100 years of Texas State Parks history, is on the move once again as it roams for 50 years over the Lone Star State on a quest to visit every park.

The Time Capsule houses one object from every state park and support program. It has now visited four parks, each for six months at a time.

“Having the Texas State Parks Time Capsule here at Palo Duro Canyon State Park is something we’re really excited about,” said Park Superintendent, David Fischer. “It’s a great opportunity for us to connect the Canyon’s deep natural and cultural history with the future of our state park system. The Canyon has always been a place where stories are shared and passed down, and this capsule adds a new chapter to our legacy. We are proud to serve as stewards, share this piece of history with Park visitors, and see the future generation open it in 2074 to see what we have left behind. Guests are invited to view the Capsule and make their own memories while it’s at Palo Duro, leaving a piece of their story for the

generations who will someday view its opening.

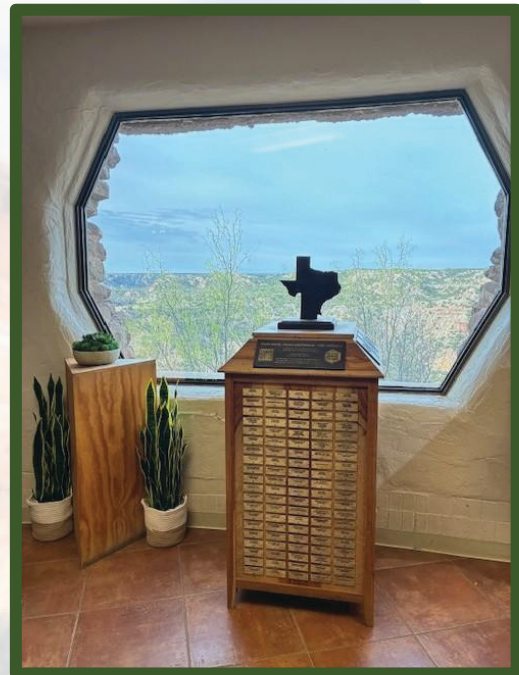
“The Centennial Time Capsule has been a treasured presence at Davis Mountain State Park, serving as a symbol of the legacy and future of Texas State Parks” said Superintendent Torrey Bonham. “During its time here, it has done more than commemorate history—it has inspired it. Visitors of all ages,, from young stewards experiencing the parks for the first time to those connected to the enduring legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corp, have engaged with the Capsule and reflected on their role in preserving these special places.

The five-foot-tall wooden time capsule weighs more than 300 pounds and was made from pecan trees harvested at Mother Neff State Park, the site widely accepted as the first Texas State Park opened to the public. It is made from solid wood and bronze and is large enough to hold more than 100 items. Sitting atop the Capsule is a sculpture in the shape of Texas with all park locations marked. Additionally, there are 100 name plates recognizing all contributing parks and programs, six regional bas relief panels, and a plaque on the front with a message to the future.

For the contents of the Time Capsule, Park staff had to choose an item that would tell a story about that site, fit in a box the size of a coffee mug, survive 50 years, and be strong enough to travel the roads of Texas.

“Time capsules are usually buried in the ground and forgotten until its time to

open them, but ours will remain on display, so we wanted it to be a work of art and showcase the excellent craftsmanship of our exhibit team,” said Stephen Garrett, Exhibits Manager for Texas State Park. “This is something totally unique, and I don’t think anyone’s ever made a time capsule quite like this before. I’m proud of the thought, care and work that went into the Capsule’s creation and hope park visitors enjoy seeing it as much as we did creating it.”



**Centennial Time Capsule
On
Display
In the Visitor Center/Canyon Gallery**



And . . .

by Editor (cont.)

And . . . I stood for a moment staring at a car. Well, staring at what once was a car. Four wheels attached to the four corners of a platform upon which rested a seat with a steering wheel protruding from the engine compartment (or “motor compartment” in the vernacular of most hot rodders.) The “car” was bogged down in the creek bed, now dry, which, obviously, at one time was far from dry.

I was surprised at this abnormal addition to the Canyon. The driver, unable to extract his vehicle from the mud, simply left it there. So, I wondered at the time, will TPWD drag this wreck from the Park? To this day, I don’t know. Surely TPWD was or is aware of the remains.

After continuing my hike to the Lighthouse, resting, and heading back to my car parked beside the Park road, I evidently took the wrong non-trail, because I did not find my anomaly again.

What has happened to this castoff during the past seventy or so years? If this wreck still sits where I found it, it is no longer just a wreck but a relic. It should be dug up, air lifted and deposited in a museum. (Note: I said “a museum,” not “our museum,” the fate of which is unknown at this time.)

On to my car, the name of which I have no recollection now. I doubt that it deserves a designation of “relic” anyway. The memory of the wreck (a.k.a.relic) is immortalized in my memory. So be it!



Another Poem from Ann

A Wave of Grass

The sky is blue
but wears a beard of gray clouds
that curl along the horizon
threatening wind and rain
across the open plains.

The wind comes first.
inciting a wave of grass
that ripples across
the ocean of pasture land,
then bends back toward its source.

I watch the rain come,
watering once virgin fields
and wonder if the memory
of an unplowed prairie
is somehow sewed into this land





Into the Canyon
Painting by Jack Sorenson on display in the Mack Dick Paviion



Jack Sorenson
Member: Cowboy Artists of America



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