

Casper is exploring again - in West, Texas! Read about Belton's warm & wonderful Christmas activities. Also some great stuff in Blanco, Sealy, Brenham and Schulenburg.

 [Backroads Newsletter from the RTTC](#)

[Exploring Texas with the Rural Texas Tourism Center  
November 2012 Volume 14](#)

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Howdy Partners!

The light from the Halloween jack-o-lanterns has barely faded and already Christmas carols are in the air and Santa is grabbing his car keys to go out for a milk and cookie run. If you're in the mood for some Christmas cheer, you'll find it in just about all of our little towns this month.

We're got two great features for you in this issue. First Belton sparkles with An Old Fashioned Christmas and Christmas on the Chisolm Trail. It's holiday magic with family festivities, arts & crafts, food, music and enjoying cookies and a cup of hot cocoa with Santa.

Next, you'll enjoy reading about our Rural Reporter, Casper's latest adventures in West, Texas. "West-The Czech Point of Texas", the next in his series of *Traveling the Back Road of Texas*, Casper explores the historic spots of West and samples some of the local cuisine. Kolaches!! It makes me hungry just thinking about it.

--See you on the trail



**EVENTS CALENDAR FOR  
November**

Click to  
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Calendar PDF  
(500KB)





**Christmas is in the Air in Belton TX  
on December 8, 2012**

Christmas in Belton, Texas means shared memories and a little something different to nearly everybody. To set the tone for the celebration is the Christmas parade. People from the community gather together and enjoy turkey legs, barbeque, and the sounds of Christmas as the Christmas parade makes it way through Downtown Belton.

**An Old Fashion Christmas: Downtown Belton on  
Central Avenue, 10am to 7pm**



Stroll down beautiful Central Avenue, decorated in holiday spirit to shop with over 40 Vendors and local merchants. Clothing, crafts, candles, and food, are just a few of the holiday elements to be on display. Set back and watch the kids enjoy their free cookies and hot chocolate with Santa Clause while listening to Mrs. Clause read a Christmas story.

**Christmas on the Chisholm Trail: Yettie Polk Park 3pm  
to 7pm**

An annual family fun filled event celebrating the sights and sounds of the holiday season in Yettie Polk Park. This event is packed with seasonal vendors and holiday festivities for the whole family. Beautiful sounds from area choirs and musical talents fill the air. Bring the children out for all the fun of jumping around the inflatable bouncers, trying their turn with the mechanical bull, and save the best for last, a trip to Santa's wonderland. Come with all your wishes! Enjoy funnel cakes, turkey legs, hot cocoa, and barbeque to fill your belly with warmth of the season, while you shop for last minute gifts for loved ones at over 50 vendor booths.



Following the end of the festivities, attendees make their way to the Bell County Expo Center for the Cowboy Christmas Ball starring Michael Martin Murphy. Good food, good music, good dancing, and great entertainment to top off your funfilled day in Belton, Texas.



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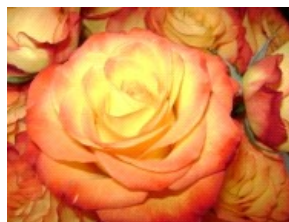


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289 West Railroad  
Giddings, TX 78942

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**25th Annual Fall Festival  
of Roses in  
Independence**

The Antique Rose Emporium (ARE) is hosting its annual Fall Festival of Roses November 9-11, 2012. Enjoy three days of garden-related seminars presented by nationally and internationally known speakers.

All programs are free and the award-winning Veritas Gourmet Food Truck will be offering tasty treats Saturday from 11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Antique Rose Emporium, with its 8 acres of landscaped grounds, is located at 10000 FM 50 in Independence, Texas. Hours are Monday-Saturday 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. and Sunday 11 a.m.-5:30 p.m. For more information about the Fall Festival of Roses, call 979-836-5548 or visit [www.weAREroses.com](http://www.weAREroses.com).





## Traveling the Back Roads of Texas: West – Czech Point of Central Texas

By Casper

The town of West [pop. about 3000] is located in McLennan county, about 20 miles north of Waco and 80 miles south of Dallas, just east of I-35. First settled as the Anglo-American community of Bould Springs in the 1850's, West was established in 1881, with the arrival of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas [Katy] Railroad. Czech and German settlers began arriving before 1900 and the town is very proud of its Czech heritage. Today the railroad tracks run parallel with Main Street, the main shopping center for the town.

I spent the night at Czech Inn in order to get an early start in the morning. The Inn is clean, quiet, and comfortable, and has a very helpful staff who will offer suggestions on their favorite places to eat in town.

At the suggestion of a local resident, I started the day with a great home-style breakfast at the Stockyards Café, located on the west access road just south of the Czech Inn. Then I headed into town and stopped at Gerik's Old Czech Bakery for another cup of coffee and a couple of their wonderful kolaches.

My first stop was City Hall to visit the Chamber of Commerce. I found the Chamber offices temporarily closed, but city staff members were full of information on things to see and do while I was in town.

My first stop on Main Street was Divine Designs, a flower and Christian gift shop filled with interesting items and the wonderful smell of fresh flowers. I also stopped by the Old Corner Drug Store which was doing a lively morning business.

The West Public Library, located on the south side of town, is nicely decorated and well-organized, and has a good selection of books for adults and children. The library is closed on Fridays and Sundays. There is a small but very interesting local history and Czech heritage display in the library and a nice genealogy/local history research room. Nancy, the librarian on the desk, is a member of the committee which is organizing the establishment of a new heritage and local history museum downtown and hopes it will be open within a year.



Nancy suggested St. Mary's Cemetery as an interesting stop while in town. This large cemetery, located about 2 miles south of downtown West, was established in 1893 and contains the gravesites of early pioneers, immigrants, veterans, and many members and clergy of St. Mary's Church of the Assumption in West. The earliest burials were dated 1892 and 1893. The large cemetery is beautifully maintained and the many carved marble and ornamental metal grave markers are fascinating. As with many of the Czech and German cemeteries, many markers display small portraits of the people buried there and are worded in the Czech language. This is a peaceful and quiet place, rich in the local cultural heritage.

There are many good places in town to eat lunch or dinner, including Wild Bill's Outlaw Steakhouse, Pizza House, the Czech



### RTTC Members

- Angleton TX, City of
- Bellville TX Chamber
- Belton TX Chamber
- Blanco TX Chamber
- Bridgeport TX Chamber
- Brenham/Washington County
- Brownfield TX, City
- Brownwood TX Chamber
- Burton TX Chamber
- Cameron TX Chamber
- Canton Economic Development
- Clute Visitor's Bureau
- Columbus TX Chamber
- Comfort TX Chamber
- Cuero TX Chamber
- Diboll TX, City of
- Dimmit County Chamber



### Stars in the Park at Blanco State Park

Saturday, November 3rd from  
6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The program begins with an overview of space using Stellarium, a real-time computer generated view of the heavens. After this sneak peak at what will be shining, you will step outside to amateur astronomers waiting to guide you through the night sky. Each of the telescopes will be trained to a different planet, star, or galaxy. Please bring a flashlight and dress for the weather. (Put a red balloon or piece of red cellophane over the flashlight lens if you can in order to preserve our night vision. If not, we'll have red covers available as you arrive.) Event is free with paid park entry.

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/state-parks/blanco>

### RTTC Members

- Elgin TX, City of
- Ennis Convention & Visitors

American Restaurant, Nors Sausage and Burger House, and Leo's Mexican Café. I headed for Nors on



Main Street. One of their most recommended items is the Sausage Burger on a jalapeño-cheese bun. This burger is made with a ground sausage pattie and filled with fresh vegetables. For desert, I walked around the corner to The Village Bakery and sampled their kolaches. There are many great bakeries in West, including the famous Czech Stop, but this one was my favorite.

After lunch, I visited Olde Czech Corner Antiques on Main, which had been closed earlier in the day. This large store is filled with fascinating gifts, antiques, books, and decorative items for children's' rooms. Plan a extended stay here to see the items contained in a number of rooms. I also stopped by Czech Point Antiques, but found them open only later in the week. I've found it common in many smaller towns that specialty stores, such as antique malls, are only open later in the week [Thursday thru Saturday] after 1 pm.

Another attraction in town is the restored KATY



Depot, which is open during weekdays in the afternoon. I was greeted by Mr. Clark, who was born and raised in West and has recently "come home". He is a strong supporter of his town and is a good source of information about West. The depot proudly houses the Wall of Honor, a memorial of pictures of the hundreds of men and women from West who have served in the military. The depot also houses many historical photographs of the people and notable events in West, including The Crash at Crush, a spectacular staged crash of two large locomotives near West in 1896.

Late in the afternoon I visited with Al Vanek, an enthusiastic supporter of West and one of the leaders in ideas to increase tourism. I was also introduced to local resident Nancy Vidrine, who took me on a tour of the First United Church, which I believe is the oldest existing church building in town. The building has original painted cedar planks on the exterior and the unique details of the sanctuary include beautiful exposed beams with carved panels supporting the ceiling. The bright windows of hand-colored glass and the wood floors are also original. West has churches of many denominations and one of the most prominent is St. Mary's Church of the Assumption, which includes St Mary's School, established in 1899 and still active.



Before heading home, I finished the day with dinner at the Czech American Restaurant on Main Street. The staff is friendly and attentive and the food was great.



West sponsors a number of events each year, including the West BBQ Cook-off and the Central Texas Ceramic Expo in March, the West Rodeo in August, and the popular Westfest on Labor Day

Bureau

Fireman's Park, Giddings

George Bush Library

Giddings TX Chamber

Giddings Swap Meet

Gonzales TX Chamber

Hamilton TX Chamber

Henderson TX, City of



### "Don't go to Heaven 'til you eat at Holman"

Holman Valley Steakhouse has been in business since 1987 and is located in the historic Holman Valley General Merchandise building. Owners David and Judy Hajovsky, 4th generation Holman Valley descendants, specialize in delicious steaks and seafood. But that's not all they serve! You can count on having a great selection of chicken, sandwiches, and burgers, or let 'em fatten you up with some homemade pie or cheesecake!

Open Thursdays from 5:00-?

**Fridays & Saturdays 5:00-10:00**

Call in orders and reservations gladly accepted

10204 FM 155

Between LaGrange and Weimar

979-263-4188

<http://holmanvalleysteakhouse.com>

*It's worth the drive!*



### RTTC Members

Iraan TX Chamber

Lee County Fair, Giddings

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Livingston TX Chamber

Luling TX Chamber

Magnolia TX, City

Matagorda County

Marketplace Taylor - Taylor TX

Mexia TX Chamber

Mineral Wells TX Chamber

Mount Enterprise, City



weekend.

Websites – [www.westchamberofcommerce.com/](http://www.westchamberofcommerce.com/)  
[www.West-tx.com/](http://www.West-tx.com/)

[www.texasescapes.com/CentralTexasTownsNorth/West-Texas.htm](http://www.texasescapes.com/CentralTexasTownsNorth/West-Texas.htm)

\* "If you reject the food, ignore the customs, fear the religion and avoid the people, you might better stay at home." – James Michener



### Holiday Home Tour & Trunk Show Returns to Brenham

Combine lovely Heritage Belles in period dress with beautifully decorated heritage homes, plus a trunk show and antiques shopping opportunities, and you'll experience a great event to kick off the holiday season.

Join in the annual Heritage Home Tour and Trunk Show November 16-18 beginning at Giddings Stone Mansion in Brenham. On the evening of Nov. 16, a preview party featuring wine and hors d'oeuvres will showcase Trunk Show vendors and their wares. Preview party tickets will be available at the door. On Nov. 17-18, shop from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and enjoy festive tours of historic homes from 1 p.m.-4 p.m.

Step into yesteryear at the Mansion. Shop the trunk show with unique specialty items for home and hearth, clothing and accessories, plus sweets and sugarplums to delight your family. There's something for everyone on your gift list, including yourself!

Stop by tour headquarters at the Giddings Stone Mansion, 2203 Century Circle in Brenham, to purchase tickets for the tour and to shop. Tickets are \$15 per person and good for both days. For more information, call 979-836-1690.



### Poinsettia Celebration in Brenham

Kick off the holiday season with the wonders of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Poinsettia Celebration on November 17-18. View thousands of brilliant poinsettia plants at Ellison's Greenhouses. From 10 a.m.-4 p.m. each day visitors can tour the greenhouses brilliantly filled with blooming

Munday TX, City

Nocona TX, City of

Onalaska TX, City of



### RTTC Members

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Schulenburg TX Chamber

Sealy TX Chamber

Smithville TX Chamber

Spoiled Doves of Texas, Lago Vista

Taylor Chamber

Texas Word Wrangler Festival  
 Giddings Public Library &  
 Cultural Ctr

The Village Bakery, West



### 1st Annual Blanco Western Showcase November 2, 3, 4, 2012

### Buggy Barn Museum & Carriage Hills Ranch Festivities begin at 9:00 am

11th Annual 2012 Central U.S.  
 Knife and Tomahawk Throwing  
 World Championship

- Bowie Knife Collection
- Chuck Wagon Cook-Off & Meal on Saturday
- Entertainment featuring: Jack Dagger, Dan Mink, Mike and Rosa Gross, Buffalo Bill Leighton
- Western Music featuring Jean Prescott and K.R. Wood
  - Carriage Rides
  - Buggy Barn Museum

poinsettia varieties in all sizes, plus other blooming and foliage plants. The famous 6-foot "Texas-sized™" poinsettias will be on display, as well as the giant holiday poinsettia tree.

Plan to attend one of several mini-seminars during the Poinsettia Celebration from garden, interiorscape and floral design experts. Arts and crafts, fun activities and much more will be featured throughout the weekend.

Bring your camera for a family portrait with Santa in front of the giant poinsettia tree. Tour the greenhouses and experience the opportunity to buy the most beautiful plants in the entire Lone Star state - or shop to find unique items to take back to your friends and family.

Make a holiday memory at Ellison's Greenhouses, 2107 E. Stone, where quality is a deep rooted tradition. For more information, call 979-836-0084, 979-836-6011 or visit [www.ellisonsgreenhouses.com](http://www.ellisonsgreenhouses.com).

### Unity Theatre in Brenham presents "Nixon's Nixon"

Unity Theatre proudly presents the first Studio play in their 2012-2013 18<sup>th</sup> Season of Excellence! - *Nixon's Nixon* by Russell Lees. This political satire is playing at Unity Theatre for two weeks only October 25 - November 4, 2012.

It is August 7, 1974, the night before President Richard Nixon announced his resignation as the shadow of impeachment loomed. He has summoned Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the Lincoln Sitting Room and Kissinger arrives, expecting to find his President preparing to resign. But Nixon is in the process of wrestling with that very decision. Unstable, nostalgic, garrulous and paranoid, Nixon leads his Secretary of State on a journey through the high moments of his administration.

The journey borders on the surreal as Nixon pressures Kissinger into reenacting crucial scenes: Kissinger plays Nixon, Nixon plays Brezhnev, Kissinger plays Kennedy and Mao - the scenarios become dizzying! Meanwhile, Kissinger is subtly working to convince Nixon to step down so that he can pursue his geopolitical goals - and his own quest for historical glory - unencumbered by a weakened President. Nixon, however, can't face the lonely aftermath of such a decision; he envisions himself wandering some hellish golf course, waiting to die. As the evening and the drinking progress, the two concoct a plan to provoke an international crisis that would allow Nixon to leave office a hero.

*Nixon's Nixon* will play two weeks only in the Unity Studio, previewing on Thursday, October 25, opening on Friday, October 26, and playing through Sunday, November 4, 2012. Performances are Thursday at 7:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 4 p.m. Tickets are \$25 and the Unity Studio is open seating and limited so reservations are strongly recommended.

Tickets at \$15 are available for the preview and for any unsold seats 15 minutes prior to each performance. Reservations can be made through the Unity Theatre Box Office at 300 Church Street, open Monday- Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., by phone at 979-830-8358, or by visiting the web site at [www.UnityBrenham.org](http://www.UnityBrenham.org).

#### Tours

- Kids Corral
- Riding Longhorn



### Christmas Stroll in Downtown Brenham

The sounds and tastes of the season will delight young and old alike during the annual Christmas Stroll and Parade, Friday, November 30 in Downtown Brenham.

Don't miss this family event from 5-10 p.m., stroll past historic buildings filled with holiday lights, plus live entertainment along the square. Unique gift items and warming cider and cookies can be found in more than 50 shops, boutiques and restaurants in the historic downtown area.

Edible masterpieces will be on display downtown during the Gingerbread Tour of Homes. Designed as part of the event, decorated gingerbread houses will be auctioned with proceeds benefiting Washington County Habitat for Humanity.

The Parade of Lights begins at 6 p.m. Join this light-filled old-fashioned parade around the downtown streets complete with a special appearance from Santa!

For more details on both events, call 1-888-BREHAM or visit [www.downtownbrenham.com](http://www.downtownbrenham.com).

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