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FRONTIER TEXAS





FRONTIER *Texas!*

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Cover: *Buffalo Soldier*,
William Reese at
Fort Griffin Living
History Days.

Left: *For God & Country*,
Fort Griffin Living
History Days.

Photos: Troy Myatt (2025).



G U A R D I A N S

O F T H E

F R O N T I E R

**FRONTIER TEXAS
MARKS 250 YEARS
OF THE U.S. ARMY**



On June 14, 1775, the Continental Congress created a standing army for a fragile new nation. Two hundred fifty years later, that decision still echoes on the plains of West Texas. With *Guardians of the Frontier: U.S. Army in Texas, 1845–1895*, Frontier Texas invites visitors to step into that story and see how soldiers on the far edge of the republic helped shape both Texas and the United States.



Page 5: Austin Long, Fort McKavett; Eric Abercrombie, Fort Griffin State Historic Site.

Above: *The Big Guns*, 1870s U.S. Army Artillery Demonstration at Fort Griffin State Historic Site.

Left: *Marching to the Beat*, David Martinez from Fort Lancaster State Historic Site.

Photos: Troy Myatt (2025).



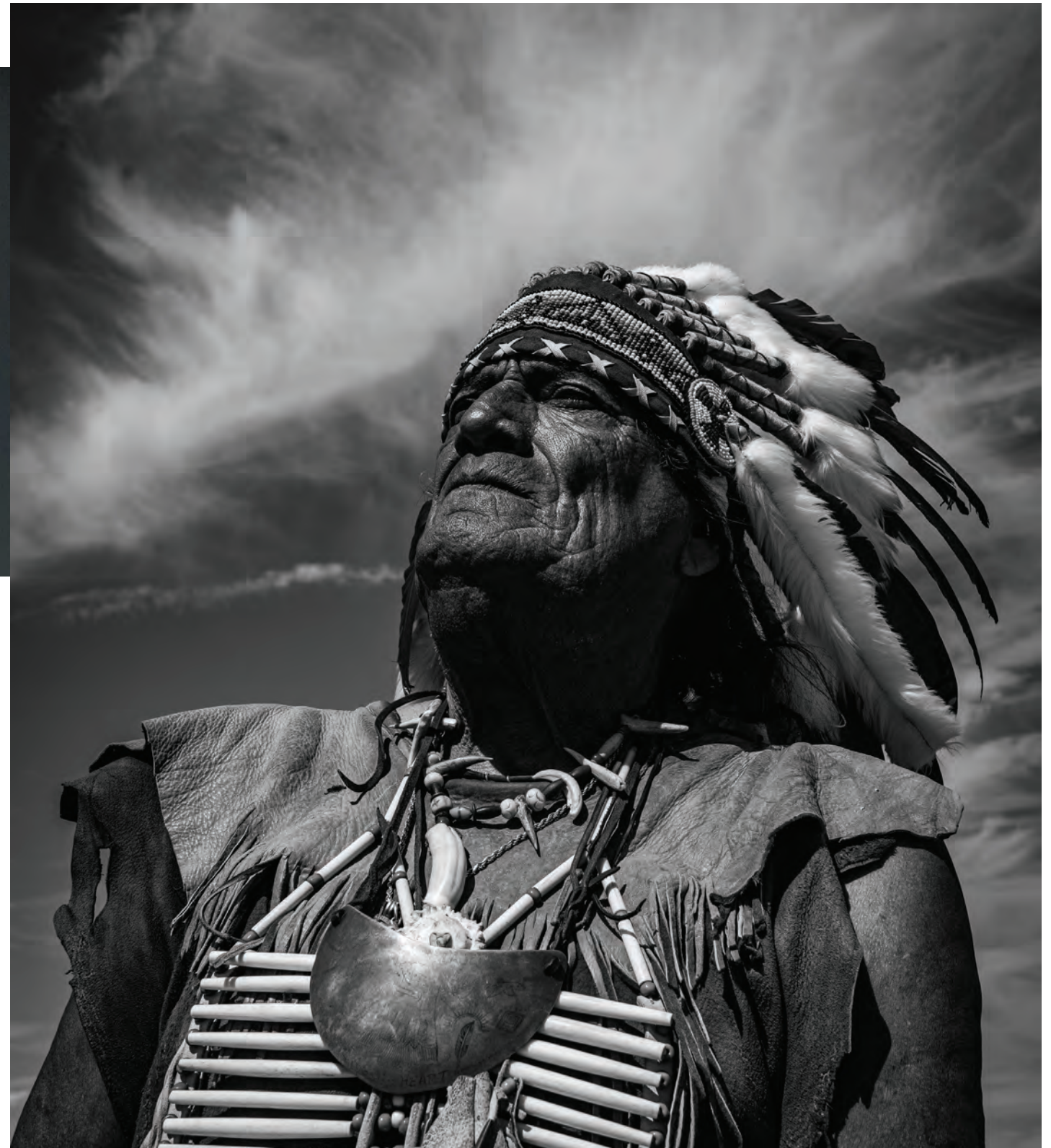
Presented in the new Jim & Jerri Alexander Gallery from October 2025 through February 2026, Guardians of the Frontier is one of Frontier Texas's signature contributions to the nationwide America 250 commemoration. The exhibit explores the U.S. Army's presence in Texas from statehood through the closing of the frontier, a fifty-year span when small detachments of soldiers lived at remote posts, patrolled dangerous trails, and navigated complex relationships with Native peoples and incoming settlers.



Above: Guardians of the Frontier exhibit at Frontier Texas.

Right: The Warrior, Ray Hernandez, Chief Broken Eagle, Tonkawa.

Photos: Troy Myatt (2025).



Rather than focusing only on battles and forts, the exhibit asks a simpler, more human question: Who are these guardians? Visitors meet young recruits standing their first lonely sentry duty, seasoned officers who lent their names to frontier posts, Black “Buffalo Soldiers” serving on a segregated frontier, and family members who make communities out of rough-hewn posts.

One of the popular features is an interactive touch display, *People Behind the Fort Names*, which lets visitors tap on a map of Texas forts to learn about the real people honored in their names. Was Fort Griffin named for a battlefield hero, a seasoned commander, or a fallen officer? The exhibit turns those names from abstractions on a highway sign into stories of service, ambition, sacrifice, and, sometimes, controversy.



Right: *The Buffalo Soldier*, William Reese at Fort Griffin Living History Days.

Photo: Troy Myatt (2025).



Below: *The Camel Corp*, Gil Hernandez at Fort Griffin Living History Days.

Photo: Troy Myatt (2025).

Uniforms and equipment form another visual anchor. Carefully researched illustrated panels and selected items help visitors see how Army clothing, weapons, and gear changed over the five decades covered in the gallery. For younger guests, it is a chance to compare what they imagine a “soldier” looks like with what frontier duty actually required.

The exhibit also places the Army’s story within the broader context of life on the Texas frontier. Rather than offering simple judgments, it encourages visitors to think about

how military posts, Native nations, and new settlements all occupied the same landscape, often with competing needs and perspectives. In doing so, *Guardians of the Frontier* reflects the kind of honest, nuanced history that is central to both the America 250 initiative and the Frontier Texas mission.

For Abilene, those frontier stories naturally connect to the community’s later military history—bringing Camp Barkeley to the area during World War II and later securing Dyess Air Force Base. Some local visitors recognize that the region’s long relationship





◀◀
Left: Artifacts in the Guardians of the Frontier exhibit.

Left: *The Battle of Palo Alto 1846*. Painting displayed in Guardians of the Frontier exhibit.

Below: Documentary film playing in mini-theater in Guardians of the Frontier exhibit.

with the U.S. military stretches from lonely frontier posts to modern bases that still shape life in West Texas.

The exhibit opened with a reception on October 9, 2025, bringing together history enthusiasts and regional partners. Standing in the Alexander Gallery surrounded by period imagery and interpretive displays, guests heard about the years of research, design, and collaboration that made Guardians of the Frontier possible. For many, it was moving to see soldiers' stories told with such care in a community that still sends sons and daughters into uniform.

Another key element of the exhibit is a documentary-style film that gives visitors a vivid, narrative overview of the Army's story in Texas. The film is narrated by Bob Bluthardt, site manager of Fort Concho National Historic Landmark in San Angelo, whose deep knowledge of frontier military history



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Above: The U.S. Army 250th Birthday celebration, June 14, 2025. Soldiers depicting WWI uniforms parade past the Commander in Chief.

Photo: Troy Myatt (2025).



adds both authority and warmth to the presentation. Additional historical context and video content were contributed by The Texas Center at Schreiner University, extending the exhibit's collaborative spirit.

For Frontier Texas, *Guardians of the Frontier* is exactly what the expanded museum is built to do: present big, complex stories in ways that are immersive, interactive, and rooted in West Texas. It showcases the flexibility of the new gallery, the creativity of staff and partners, and the museum's commitment to

connecting local audiences to statewide and national commemorations.

As the nation moves through the 250th anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Army and the United States itself, *Guardians of the Frontier* stands as a reminder that the grand story of America is made up of thousands of smaller ones. On the Texas frontier, those stories played out at lonely posts under endless skies—where ordinary men tried, in their own time and with imperfect understanding, to be guardians of the place they called home. ■



T E X A S

H E R I T A G E

T R A I L S

**W H E R E T E X A S H I S T O R Y
M E E T S T H E
O P E N R O A D .**

W

hen travelers spot the blue Texas Heritage Trails signs along the highway, they're seeing a visible part of a long-running statewide effort to connect visitors with Texas history and the communities that preserve it. For more than half a century, those markers have pointed the way not only to historic sites, but also to a new way of thinking about tourism, preservation, and community identity in Texas.



The Texas Heritage Trails story begins in 1968, when Texas was preparing to welcome the world to HemisFair '68 in San Antonio. State leaders knew that visitors would not stay in one place; they would want to see more of Texas. To help them do that, Governor John Connally championed the creation of ten themed driving routes that would guide travelers beyond the interstates and into the towns, landscapes, and historic sites that help define the state.

Those original routes were marked with distinctive blue roadside signs. At first glance, the idea was simple: a set of scenic drives that linked missions and courthouses, frontier forts and Spanish presidios, downtown squares and historic neighborhoods. But even in this early form, the trails did more than move traffic. They encouraged visitors to leave the main corridors, spend time in smaller communities, and discover authentic places instead of just passing through.

Over time, the Texas Historical Commission (THC) recognized that these lines on a map could become much more than a wayfinding system. Working with local partners, the THC gradually transformed the driving routes into a heritage tourism program with statewide reach. The Texas Heritage Trails Program emerged as a network of ten regions, each organized around a distinct geographic and thematic story. The mission expanded from "show the way" to "share the story, support the sites, and strengthen local economies."

In this modern form, each Heritage



JACKSBORO VISIT — Gov. John Connally, right, stopped at Ft. Richardson in Jacksboro yesterday on his two-day tour of the Texas Forts Trail. With him are Mrs. B. Y. Peacock, prominent in Jack County civic affairs, and State Sen. Tom Creighton of Mineral Wells.



Above: Texas Governor John Connally on the Forts Trail Caravan. Fort Worth Star Telegram, July 30, 1968.

Left: Two of the original Texas Heritage Trails brochures published in 1968.

Trail region functions as a collaborative hub. Rather than promoting one attraction at a time, the regions promote entire itineraries. They encourage visitors to connect multiple sites, experiences, and communities into a single trip. Marketing materials and websites help travelers plan everything from day trips to extended road journeys. Behind the scenes, regional staff and volunteers work with museums, historic sites, tourism bureaus, and local governments to improve interpretation, coordinate events, and support preservation efforts.



Coordinator sees benefits for region

By KEN ELLSWORTH
Senior Staff Writer

ABILENE — Lisa Sanders, the regional coordinator of the Texas Forts Trail pilot project, is doing what she likes best and what she has been doing since she graduated from college — marketing.

During various phases of her career she has marketed beef and women's apparel at her shop in Albany. Most recently she marketed Albany itself as executive director of the Albany Chamber of Commerce.

So, when the opportunity came to market a 650-mile string of historic Texas forts and the entire West Central Texas region, she jumped at it.

"This was appealing to me personally because I believe that tourism is

Lisa Sanders, shown here at Fort Phantom Hill, is the regional coordinator of the Texas Forts Trail pilot project. She will be spending the next few years promoting and marketing the trail, its eight forts and the entire West Central Texas region as a tourist destination.

eight forts on the trail and visited attractions within and outside of the trail proper last week. State agencies represented were

- Trail map, 14A
- Fort Chadbourne, near Bronte, to be restored, 15A

Please see FORTS, 14A

Please see SANDERS, 15A

The Texas Forts Trail is one of those ten regions—and it played a crucial role in shaping the current statewide model. Stretching across central and western Texas, the Forts Trail links a chain of 19th-century U.S. Army posts and the communities that grew up around them. The route takes visitors from stone ruins on wind-swept hillsides to restored forts and active museums, tracing the shifting frontier line and the many peoples whose lives were changed along it.

In August 1998, that story took a pivotal turn. Texas Historical Commission staff came to Abilene to announce a \$50,000 grant to estab-

lish the first Heritage Trails regional office in the state. The Texas Forts Trail would become the pilot region for a new, staffed model of heritage tourism. Instead of relying solely on volunteer committees or statewide promotion, the Forts Trail now had dedicated personnel who could focus on marketing, itinerary development, and partnership building across a wide geography.

Later that year, in December 1998, Lisa Sanders (now Lisa Perini) was named the first Executive Director of the Texas Forts Trail. Under her leadership, the organization began the slow, careful work of turning



Above: Abilene Reporter News feature story on the Forts Trails, April 11, 1999.

Below: Frontier Under the Milky Way, Fort Griffin State Historic Site.

Photo: Troy Myatt (2025).



a line on a map into a functioning network: meeting with site managers and local officials, building a recognizable brand, and helping communities see themselves as part of a shared regional story. Tim Yandell took over as Director in April 2002.

In 2004, leadership passed to Margaret Hoogstra, who would guide the Forts Trail for the next fifteen years. During her tenure, the region expanded its programs and partnerships, from coordinated marketing and travel guides to bus tours, teacher workshops, and special events. The Forts Trail helped demonstrate how heritage tourism could benefit communities of all sizes, particularly in rural areas where historic forts, courthouse squares, and small museums are major anchors for local identity.

Since 2019, Executive Director Tammie Virden has carried that work forward. Today, the Texas Forts Trail operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a volunteer board and a network of partners that includes historic sites, museums, cities and counties, tourism organizations, and private stewards of historic properties. Together they embrace a simple but powerful motto:



CONNECT

Connect communities and stories across a large region, showing how individual sites fit into a broader narrative of the Texas frontier.

EXPLORE

Explore the forts, landscapes, main streets, and museums that bring that narrative to life, encouraging visitors to experience multiple places rather than a single stop.

PRESERVE

Preserve the historic resources that make these experiences possible, from structures and artifacts to archival collections and cultural landscapes.



Top: Fort Phantom Hill was the first stop on the March 2024 Forts Trail Caravan; Margaret Hoogstra (left), reenactor Tim Phillips (right).

Above: Texas Forts Trail Executive Director Tammie Virden hosts a tour of the Smithsonian Crossroads exhibit at Buffalo Gap Historic Village, Frank Sharp listens attentively.

That framework has tangible results. By encouraging travelers to plan multi-day itineraries instead of quick, isolated visits, the Forts Trail helps direct visitor spending into local businesses, lodging, and services. Heritage travelers tend to stay longer and seek out deeper experiences, which in turn supports preservation projects, educational programming, and community development. In many towns along the route, the Forts Trail has been an important partner in keeping historic sites open, interpreted, and visible to the wider public.

The Forts Trail has also influenced how communities tell their stories. By placing multiple forts and communities on the same map, the region invites visitors to think about the frontier as a connected landscape rather than a series of isolated episodes. Interpretive materials and programs encourage people to consider the military, civilian, and Indigenous perspectives intertwined in this history—how federal policy, migration, conflict, trade, and cultural change played out across the posts and surrounding settlements.

Below: Forts Trail promotional items designed by the Texas Forts Trail Vice Chair, Troy Myatt.



Frontier Texas, located in Abilene, was one of the institutions shaped by this regional vision. When the Forts Trail office was launched as a pilot project in 1998, local leaders began to imagine a museum that could serve as a gateway to the broader frontier story. Frontier Texas would eventually open with immersive exhibits interpreting life on the Texas frontier, and it still bears the subtitle “Texas Forts Trail Visitor Center.” While the museum is only one partner among many, its role reflects a central principle of the Heritage Trails program: no single site can tell the story alone.

Taken together, the Texas Heritage Trails and the Texas Forts Trail show what can happen when tourism, preservation, and storytelling are woven into a long-term partnership. A set of blue signs that began as a way to guide World’s Fair visitors has grown into a statewide network that supports local economies, encourages stewardship of historic places, and helps communities share their histories with the world.

For those who work in museums, historic sites, and tourism organizations, the sight of a Texas Heritage Trail sign is a reminder that they are part of something larger. For travelers, it is an invitation: slow down, take the next turn, and see where the trail leads. In both cases, the destination is the same—stronger connections to the people, places, and stories that define Texas. ■

Left: The newly redesigned Frontier Texas lobby featuring 25 longhorn skulls from the Official State of Texas Longhorn Herd.



RANCHING

HERITAGE

AN

INNAUGURAL

EXHIBIT

by Jeff Salmon



O

n the evening of March 1st, as guests gathered for our Grand Reopening dinner, I slipped into the new Jerri & Jim Alexander Exhibit Gallery a few minutes before the doors officially opened. The paint was still fresh, the lights newly focused, staff members had just placed some final labels on the walls, and in the quiet before the crowd, I took in the title of the first exhibit in this space: *This Land, Across Generations: Texas Farming & Ranching Heritage*.

It felt exactly right that this gallery's story would begin with the land.



A GALLERY ROOTED IN STEWARDSHIP

When we decided to name our new temporary exhibit gallery for Jerri and Jim Alexander, we weren't just honoring generous supporters—we were recognizing a family whose life's work embodies what this museum is about. In 1969, Jim and Jerri purchased the Fort Phantom Hill site and chose preservation over development. They opened the fort to the public in 1972, welcoming school groups, historians, and curious travelers and created the Fort Phantom Hill Foundation. Under their care the site became a place of archaeological research, historical study, and community gatherings.

Decades later, Jim received the Texas Historical Commission Chairman's Award for exceptional stewardship. As Chairman John Nau observed, Fort Phantom Hill likely would have vanished like so many other sites if not for Jim's commitment to preserving it. That same passion carried over to his remarkable collection of Texas frontier and ranching artifacts, now housed here at Frontier Texas. Those artifacts, and the values behind them, inspired the first exhibit to occupy the gallery that bears the Alexanders' names.



⌄
Above: Jerri & Jim Alexander at the public opening of Fort Phantom Hill historic site, June 9, 1972, *Abilene Reporter News*.

TELLING THE STORY OF LAND AND LEGACY

This Land, Across Generations grew out of a simple but powerful idea: the story of Texas is the story of people and land, bound together across time. Working with the Fort Phantom Foundation and the Texas Agricultural Land Trust (TALT), we set out to explore that relationship through four themes—The Land, Generations, The Work, and Stewardship—using artifacts from the Alexander collection and stories of modern conservation.

The first section, *The Land*, asked

visitors to imagine arriving in an unfamiliar landscape and needing to read the land for survival. Water came first—springs, creeks, and rivers that sustained people, livestock, and wildlife. From there, the exhibit moved to soil and vegetation: which ground would grow corn or cotton, and which was better suited for grazing cattle or goats? Maps, survey tools, and photographs showed how Texans divided, measured, and made sense of this land, even as it continued to shape their lives and livelihoods.



Top: Guests at the exhibit opening reception.

Above: Texas Agricultural Land Trust CEO Chad Ellis and Frontier Texas Executive Director Jeff Salmon at the museum's Ranching Heritage Symposium, April 2025.

Right: Jessie Roberts & Alma Gibson, of Van Horn, Texas, circa 1910. This photo showcased the important role of commercial hunting on ranches. Photo courtesy Clark Hotel Museum, via The Portal to Texas History.

FAMILIES, WORK, AND CHANGING TIMES

In Generations, we followed the arc so many Texas families know well. The story began with a couple—or a small cluster of families—breaking ground, building a house, and raising children who learned to ride, mend fences, and judge a storm by the feel of the wind. By the third generation, those children often carried lessons from the ranch into new roles in nearby towns as teachers, business owners, and other professionals. By the fourth generation, some heirs were still ranching while others moved into new ventures when the land revealed hidden resources like oil. This section included paintings by artist Brad Braune (1951-2019) of his grandparents who farmed and ranched in southern Taylor County starting in the early 1900s.

Artifacts from the Alexander collection—branding irons, saddles, spurs, tools, photographs, and everyday objects—brought these transitions to life. In *The Work*, visitors saw how farming and ranching evolved from hand tools and horse-drawn equipment to mechanized tractors, improved breeding, and modern veterinary practices. The exhibit traced the journey from cattle drives and open-range ranching to fenced pastures, oil derricks, and, more recently, wind turbines on the horizon.

What emerged was a picture of Texans who continually adapted: shifting from subsistence farming to commercial ranching, from drilling oil to harnessing wind and solar energy, all while maintaining a deep connection to the land beneath their feet.

STEWARDSHIP FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

The final section, Stewardship, connected this history to the choices landowners face today. Here the partnership with the Texas Agricultural Land Trust came to the forefront. Two touch-screen kiosks invited visitors to explore TALT's website, where they could read about working





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Top: Guests at the
Ranching Heritage
Symposium, April 2025.

Right: Cathey & Rick
Weatherl in front of the
new gallery sign honoring
her parents, March 2025.

ranches across the state and learn how conservation easements help families keep land intact and productive.

The panel text and digital stories emphasized that stewardship is more than “using” the land—it is caring for soil, water, wildlife habitat, and open space so they endure. Hands-on education, from teaching children to mend fences or monitor wildlife to involving them in range management decisions, was a key part of the narrative. It was a philosophy the Alexander family lived out at Fort Phantom Hill and on the Alexander Ranch, and one we hoped visitors carried with them after they left the gallery.

A MEMORABLE FIRST SEASON

By the time we opened the gallery doors after dinner on March 1, the room filled quickly. Donors who helped fund the museum’s renovation and expansion walked through alongside members of the extended Alexander family. I watched as family

members lingered over a photograph of Jim and Jerri standing at Fort Phantom Hill on opening day in 1972, then went in to see some of the very artifacts Jim collected now interpreted for new audiences. Nearby, another guest stood at a kiosk, scrolling through stories of ranch preservation from across Texas.

From that first night through the exhibit’s closing on August 31, I saw visitors make personal connections in this space—a rancher recalling hard years of drought, young families talking about grandparents’ farms, students discovering how conservation ties the past to their future.

Looking back, I’m grateful that the Jerri & Jim Alexander Exhibit Gallery opened with this particular story. The gallery was designed to be a flexible space for changing exhibits, but its first show did something more: it set a tone. It affirmed that Frontier Texas will continue to tell stories that are rooted in place,



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Left: Phil & Jane Guita
looking at artwork by Brad
Braune during the exhibit
opening, March 2025.



grounded in real people, and honest about both the challenges and opportunities of caring for the land.

As we plan future exhibits in this gallery, I’m thankful we began with ranching heritage and land stewardship under the name of two people who lived those ideals. The Alexanders, the Fort Phantom Foundation, the Texas Agricultural Land Trust, and all of our supporters helped us open this space in a way that honored the past and pointed clearly toward the future—one in which Texans continue to work, love, and protect the land across generations. ■

Leadership Statement

To our friends and supporters,

As we look back on 2025, what stands out most is not drywall, glass, or new technology—it is the people who made this a year of transition and trust. Frontier Texas belongs to a wide circle of supporters, and your belief in our mission carried us through every construction meeting and busy museum day.

Thank you to our donors and capital campaign supporters whose generosity turned plans on paper into new galleries and workspaces. The Abilene–Taylor County venue tax, affirmed by local voters, continues to provide a vital foundation for operations and expansion. Together, you have helped secure Frontier Texas as a lasting part of the cultural and educational life of this region.

We are equally grateful for our partners: educators who bring classes year after year; foundations and businesses that sponsor programs and events; and community organizations that look to Frontier Texas as a gathering place. Volunteers and docents give our stories a human voice, and our small staff has shown remarkable resilience in a year of change.

We also thank the families and individuals who share their history with us through artifacts, documents, and stories. Recent gifts—from frontier collections to original artwork—remind us that preserving the past is a shared responsibility and equip us to serve future generations.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are eager to put our expanded spaces to work. New temporary exhibits, including projects tied to the America 250 commemorations, will invite visitors into deeper conversations about the Texas frontier and its ongoing legacy. Our priorities are clear: steward resources wisely, strengthen community partnerships, and ensure that every visit—whether from a fourth or seventh-grade class or a longtime member—feels worthwhile and memorable.

Thank you for walking with us, investing in us, and allowing Frontier Texas to remain a place where West Texans can understand their past and imagine their future.

With gratitude,



DEREK HOOD
Board of Directors
President
Frontier Texas



JEFF SALMON
Executive Director
Frontier Texas



The Year in Review

OCTOBER 1, 2024 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

ANNUAL ATTENDANCE **27,315**

OF THOSE FROM OUT OF TOWN **14,613**

ADMISSIONS REVENUE FISCAL YEAR 2024-25
\$107,884.29

VISITOR POINT OF ORIGIN PERCENTAGES

VISITORS FROM ABILENE **46.51**

FROM TEXAS EXCLUDES ABILENE **37.02**

OTHER STATES **13.58**

FOREIGN COUNTRIES **2.89**



GIFT SHOP NET REVENUE **\$41,982.34**

MEMBERSHIP REVENUE **\$4,210.00**

SCHOOL TOURS **3,225**

COMING FROM **55+** SCHOOL DISTRICTS

DOCENTS **15**

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS **40** FOR EVENTS AND TOURS

BOARD MEMBERS **25**

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS SERVED IN 2024 **1,124**

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS **35,354**

FACEBOOK VIEWS **1,730,503**

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS **2,585**

INSTAGRAM AVG. REACH IN VIEWERS **61,393**

FRONTIER TEXAS HAD VISITORS FROM



52
US STATES & PROVINCES



47+
COUNTRIES

443 TRIP ADVISOR

Travelers' Choice
TripAdvisor
Best of the Best

★★★★★
EXCELLENT (5-STAR) REVIEWS #1 OF 73 THINGS TO DO IN ABILENE!



FRONTIER
Texas!

The Mission of Frontier Texas is to present a historical experience that attracts, entertains and educates guests with the rich social and cultural heritage of Central West Texas, and further stimulates them to visit other local and regional attractions and venues.

Board of Directors

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|---|
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| BRENT HILL
Vice President
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Abilene CVB |
| | JESSICA HAILE | KAY RICHARDS
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| | BROOKS HUTCHINSON | |
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| | SCOTT TERRELL | |
| | | JEFF SALMON
Executive Director |
| | | TAMMY VIRDEN
Texas Forts Trail |

- | | |
|--|---|
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| PATRICE SHARBUTT
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Statement of Financial Position

FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024	YEAR ENDED SEPT 30, 2024 (TOTAL)	YEAR ENDED SEPT 30, 2023 (TOTAL)
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,135,182	\$ 1,062,743
Pledges Receivable	\$ 46	\$ 105,019
Inventory	\$ 68,219	\$ 65,628
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 35,952	\$ 38,670
Total Current Assets	\$ 2,239,399	\$ 1,272,060
Beneficial Interest in Assets	\$ 564,457	\$ 482,629
Capital Assets, Net	\$ 4,621,188	\$ 2,353,814
Non-Depreciable Assets	\$ 303,712	\$ 303,712
Total Assets	\$ 7,728,756	\$ 4,412,215

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	\$ 183,033	\$ 114,404
Accrued Liabilities	\$ 30,669	\$ 23,520
Unearned Revenue	\$ 19,460	\$ 13,350
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 233,162	\$ 151,274

Total Liabilities	\$ 233,162	\$ 151,274
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NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions	\$ 5,917,353	\$ 3,633,859
With Donor Restrictions	\$ 1,578,241	\$ 627,082
Total Net Assets	\$ 7,495,594	\$ 4,260,941

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$7,728,756	\$4,412,215
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AUDIT

The museum annually engages the services of an independent accounting firm to perform an audit of the museum's Financial Statements. As part of its audit, the firm also reviews the internal controls and various policies and procedures to ensure the museum's staff is adhering to the most current accounting practices. The museum's auditor, Roberts & McGee, Certified Public Accountants, has issued an unqualified opinion on the Financial Statements for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2024. Audits and the IRS Form 990s are available upon request.



BIG MOMENTS START HERE.

LEGACY HALL AT FRONTIER TEXAS

is Abilene's newest destination for meetings, celebrations, and community gatherings.



LEGACY HALL is a newly renovated indoor event space at Frontier Texas—designed for flexibility, comfort, and seamless production. In just nine months, it has hosted more than 25 events and welcomed over 600 guests, from corporate meetings and workshops to school groups, galas, and private celebrations.

With modern technology, movable furnishings, and direct indoor-outdoor access, Legacy Hall adapts to your vision and delivers a professional, stress-free experience in the heart of downtown Abilene.

AMMENITIES

- Large display screen + full audio system
- Microphone support for presentations
- Rolling tables & stackable chairs
- Built-in storage for fast transitions
- Accordion glass doors to outdoor space
- Ideal for meetings, receptions & education

FRONTIER
Texas!

NOW BOOKING 2026 EVENTS!

Contact us to plan your next event at:
(325) 437-2800
rentals@frontiertexas.com



Left: Museum docents and staff at the Docent Appreciation Luncheon at the Beehive Restaurant.



Above: Teachers attending the June workshop in the museum's Legacy Hall.

Above & Beyond

SCHOOL YEAR 2024/25 DOCENT APPRECIATION LUNCHEON

Frontier Texas' docents provided school tours for more than 3,200 students during the 2024 – 2025 school year. With a small force of nine docents, this means that each docent provided tours for more than 350 students during the nine-month school tour season. In appreciation for this small corps of dedicated volunteers, we wanted to honor them with a special luncheon at the Bee Hive Restaurant on June 5.

As the museum continues to welcome more and more groups from area public, private and home school

groups, we hope to begin recruiting more docents to assist with the growing number of student visitors.

If you love Texas history and want to share your knowledge with the next generation of young learners, please consider becoming a Frontier Texas docent. For more information, please contact the museum. ■

Region 14 Workshop

FOCUSED LEARNING FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF.

On June 18, Frontier Texas hosted a day-long Region 14 Professional Development Workshop. With the able assistance of Madison Galle, Region 14 Social Studies Consultant, Deputy Director, Shelly Crittendon, and Marketing & Development Director, Whitney Herrington hosted a dozen area educators. The teachers in attendance spent the day learning about the educational opportunities and resources provided by the museum, including our docent-guided school tours.

One of the highlights of the day for

the attendees was the museum tour provided by Paul Cannon, who is an active docent and board member. Paul was able to not only provide these educators with a tour of the museum itself, but provide them with the opportunity to see how they could incorporate a student school trip into their school year.

In addition to learning more about what Frontier Texas can offer to area educators, the workshop also included presentations on the world-famous white buffalo hide, the buffalo trade in Texas, Cynthia Ann Parker and

the life of frontier boys and girls. Educators were treated to lunch, followed by a competitive scavenger hunt through the museum. Scavenger hunt winners won prizes that they could use to start the new school year. To wrap up the day-long session, Madison Galle gave a presentation on TEKS [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills] and how teachers can incorporate timelines and geography into their history lessons. ■



« Above: Derek Hood receiving the Volunteer of the Year award at the Hearts for the Arts luncheon, October 23, 2025.

Derek Hood Recognized for Outstanding Service

HONORING HIS LEADERSHIP, SERVICE, AND UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR FRONTIER TEXAS.

The Abilene community has a wealth of nonprofits where individuals have ample opportunity to volunteer their time, and we are grateful to be among them. Our organization is fortunate to work with dedicated volunteers who consistently assist and support us. Earlier this year, we had the chance to recognize one of these deserving volunteers, Derek Hood, at the Hearts for the Arts Luncheon.

Derek Hood has been a dedicated volunteer, board member, donor,

and advocate for Frontier Texas since 2019. Derek currently serves as the museum's Board President (2022 – 2025) and is always happy to volunteer for events and activities. Derek provides a constant source of encouragement to museum staff and is always the first to offer his support. We are grateful for all that Derek does and for his continued leadership.

We are fortunate to work with volunteers like Derek, who help achieve the mission of Frontier Texas every day. ■



« Left: Jeff Salmon, Larry Sanders, Whitney Herrington and Derek Hood at the 2025 West Texas Wine Festival. Above: Festival guests tasting samples from a winery.

West Texas Wine Festival Success

RAIN CLEARED, CROWDS CAME, AND SUPPORT SOARED PAST \$20,000.

Even with a stormy start to the day for the third annual West Texas Wine Festival, the fundraiser proved to be a success! The early morning rain storm cleared up by the time the festival started and cooled down the temperatures for a pleasant afternoon. The festival took place on the outdoor parade grounds at Frontier Texas and included live music, food trucks, games, and of course, wine! This year we added a unique vendor booth and a coffee cart that provided

coffee throughout the day for guests, volunteers, and our winery partners.

We are pleased to report that this year was the most successful Wine Festival fundraiser, providing a net profit of over \$20,000.

Thank you to everyone who attended, supported, and volunteered during our the event! We had a wonderful time exploring wines from all over our Texas backyard. We are grateful for your continued support of this festival!

Save the date for the 4th Annual West Texas Wine Festival on Saturday, October 17, 2026. We look forward to seeing y'all there! ■



A New Home for History

PRESERVING THE PAST WITH PURPOSE AND CARE



In March of this year, Frontier Texas opened a dedicated collections and archives space designed to care for the artifacts that shape our stories for future generations. The new space provides secure storage, improved climate control, and work areas where staff can research, catalog, and photograph items in the collection.

The first major holdings to move into the archives are pieces from the Jim Alexander frontier collection. These artifacts—ranch tools, personal gear, documents, and photographs—offer a vivid window into the working lives of people on the Texas frontier. Housing them together in a purpose-built space allows our team to better protect, study, and share these materials with researchers and exhibit visitors.

The archives also now hold the

original museum exhibit mural paintings by Frontier Texas founder H.C. Zachry, recently donated by the artist. Preserving these murals alongside the collection strengthens the museum’s own institutional memory.

All of these materials are being digitally documented by Deputy Director Shelly Crittendon, creating high-quality records that will support future exhibits, loans, and online access to the stories preserved at Frontier Texas in the years to come. ■



Above: Artifacts from the Jim Alexander frontier collection in the museum’s new archive room.

Volunteers on the Trail

FRONTIER TEXAS TREATS ITS DOCENTS AND HELPERS TO A WELL-EARNED ADVENTURE.



“The month of April is Volunteer Appreciation Month and Frontier Texas is honored to have a corps of docents and event volunteers that work hard all year long to assist the museum staff with school tour groups and special events. This year, we took a day trip to Albany and Breckenridge to explore some of what these communities, a little closer to home, have to offer.

We departed the museum at 8 a.m. to head to our first stop, the Fort Griffin State Historic Site, where Assistant Site Manager, Eric Abercrombie, offered us a guided tour. Fort Griffin is a post- Civil War fort that was once home to over 465 soldiers, officers, their families, and civilians. We walked the grounds and learned about the restored buildings and

ruins of other buildings that once provided safety and accommodation for those who lived and worked there, including the Mess Hall, Barracks, Sutler’s Store and Bakery.

While we learned about some of the historic figures who once lived and worked at Fort Griffin, one of the highlights of the trip was visiting with some of the current occupants of the 506-acre compound. Fort Griffin is home to the Official State of Texas Longhorn Herd and our volunteers got up-close and personal with several longhorns from the herd.

After our longhorn encounter, we drove the short distance to Breckenridge where we enjoyed a nice lunch at the Blackhorse Mercantile, housed in a 1920s era historical building downtown. Our volunteers wrapped



Above: Frontier Texas volunteers at Fort Griffin, April 22, 2025

up the afternoon visiting the Swenson Memorial Museum which showcases Breckenridge and Stephens County’s rich history. Housed within the Beaux Arts- style 1920s First National Bank Building, the museum offers visitors a glimpse into the life and times of early pioneers and the oil boom that helped shape the area.

We are grateful for all the volunteers that we see at Frontier Texas and are glad we can celebrate them each year!” ■

The Value of History and Why It's Essential

The History Relevance initiative promotes strategies and other tools to mobilize history organizations in the United States around the relevance and value of history. It supports history organizations that encourage the public to use historical thinking skills to actively engage with and address contemporary issues and to value history for its relevance to modern life. It was developed as a cooperative effort between the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the National Council on Public History (NCPH), the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Historical Association (AHA).

THE VALUE OF HISTORY STATEMENT

TO OURSELVES

IDENTITY

History nurtures personal and collective identity in a diverse world. People discover their place in time through stories of their families, communities, and nation. These stories of freedom and equality, injustice and struggle, loss and achievement, and courage and triumph shape people's personal values that guide them through life.

CRITICAL THINKING

History teaches vital skills. Historical thinking requires critical approaches to evidence and argument and develops contextual understanding and historical perspective, encouraging meaningful engagement with concepts like continuity, change, and causation, and the ability to interpret and communicate complex ideas clearly and coherently.

TO OUR COMMUNITIES

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

History is the foundation for strong, vibrant communities. A place becomes a community when wrapped in human memory as told through family stories, tribal traditions, and civic commemorations as well as discussions about our roles and responsibilities to each other and the places we call home.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

History is a catalyst for economic growth. Communities with cultural heritage institutions and a strong sense of historical character attract talent, increase tourism revenues, enhance business development, and fortify local economies.

TO OUR FUTURE

ENGAGED CITIZENS

History helps people envision a better future. Democracy thrives when individuals convene to express opinions, listen to others, and take action. Weaving history into discussions about contemporary issues clarifies differing perspectives and misperceptions, reveals complexities, grounds competing views in evidence, and introduces new ideas; all can lead to greater understanding and viable community solutions.

LEADERSHIP

History inspires leaders. History provides today's leaders with role models as they navigate through the complexities of modern life. The stories of persons from the past can offer direction to contemporary leaders and help clarify their values and ideals.

LEGACY

History, saved and preserved, forms the foundation for future generations. Historical knowledge is crucial to democracy. By preserving authentic documents, artifacts, images, stories, and places, future generations have a foundation to build and understand what it means to be a member of the civic community.

Looking Ahead

26

JANUARY 10
COMMUNITY GENEALOGY
WORKSHOP

JANUARY 15
TEXAS FORTS TRAIL
TALK & RECEPTION

MARCH 2
DEFINING TEXAS EXHIBIT
OPENING & TOAST TO TEXAS

APRIL 24-26
XTREME FAST DRAW
STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

MAY 5
ABILENE GIVES
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF ABILENE

JUNE 12-13
CHILDREN'S ART AND
LITERACY FESTIVAL (CALF)

OCTOBER
EXHIBIT OPENING &
RECEPTION (TBD)

OCTOBER 17
4TH ANNUAL
WEST TEXAS
WINE FESTIVAL

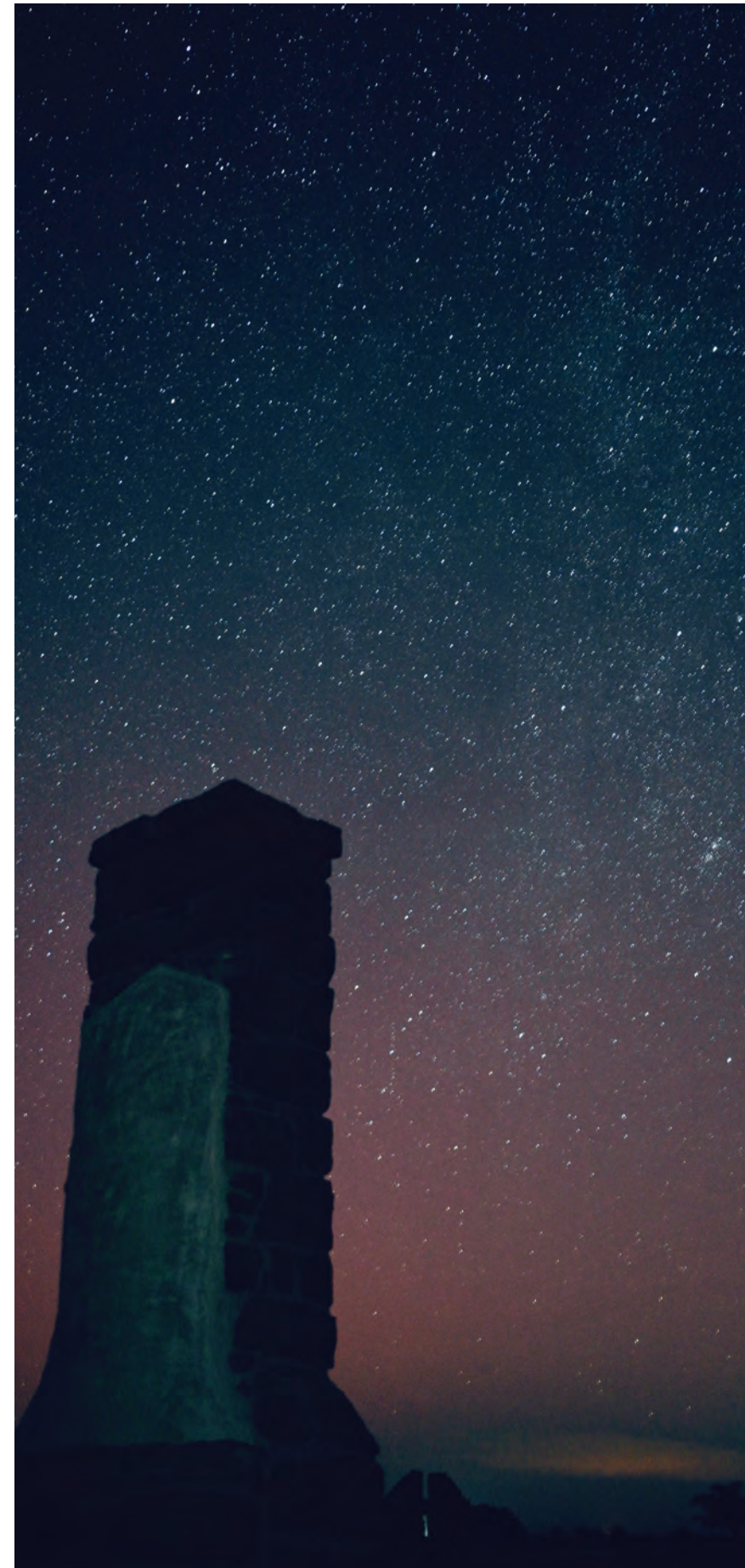
**2026 SATURDAY
SHOOTOUT SERIES**

MARCH 7
MARCH 14
MAY 30
JUNE 6
JUNE 20
JUNE 27



Left: Aurora over
Fort Griffin, Albany, TX

Photo: Troy Myatt (2025.)





Left: U.S. Springfield
Model 1873 .45-70
"Trapdoor" Rifle
displayed at Fort Griffin
Living History Days.

Photo: Troy Myatt ©2025.

Back Cover: Cannon
demonstration at Fort
Griffin Living History Days.

Photo: Troy Myatt ©2025.

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