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A Real Cowboy Reunion

By James M. Decker

[Author's Note: This is an updated and refreshed version of an essay about the Texas Cowboy Reunion that appeared in several print and digital outlets in 2016 and 2017.]

The year was 1930. America was reeling from the onset of the Great Depression, but rural communities had been suffering for several years from severe drought, cratering crop prices, and heavy farm debt. In the West Texas city of Stamford, thirteen community leaders met to propose a celebration to boost morale amidst the hard times. Given the area's rich ranching history, Stamford's leaders settled on a rodeo centered around July 4th. So began the Texas Cowboy Reunion.

This event would provide a diversion from the region's struggles but it would also promote the rapidly-declining legacy of the West Texas cowboy. The first year was a success. Over 12,000 people watched three days of calf roping, bronc riding, steer riding, and the first-ever performance of wild cow milking in a rodeo. The Old Timers' Association, composed of retired cowboys, was formed for historical commemoration.

From there, the event took off. Permanent facilities were built in a natural amphitheater on the edge of Stamford. Upwards of 70,000 visitors would attend as rural America's population peaked. Ranches would bring chuckwagons and teepees and

their cowboys would camp on the grounds for the entire event. The TCR would inspire other innovations beyond the wild cow milking. Double mugging (a Texas rodeo staple in which two cowboys must rope and tie a yearling steer) was also created. The signature cloverleaf pattern in barrel racing was first laid out in Stamford's arena. In 1940, the recently-formed American Quarter Horse Association held its first show in Stamford. Above all, contestants were primarily working cowboys, billing the event as the "world's largest amateur rodeo."

In 1935, legendary cowboy humorist Will Rogers quietly came to town and was spotted watching from the grandstand. After some prodding, he thrilled the crowd with a roping demonstration in what would be one of his last public appearances before his death. Rogers wrote in his nationally syndicated column that he "went to a real cowboy reunion...not a professional rodeo like you see everywhere else, but a real celebration in a real cowtown by real old timers."

Today, countless volunteers and community leaders strive to uphold the founders' mission and the vision described by Will Rogers. On June 28 - July 2, 2022, Stamford will host perhaps 20,000 visitors from near and far. Real cowboys and

cowgirls will ride rope calves, race barrels, ride broncs and bulls, wrestle yearlings, milk wild cows, and more. Old timers will rope calves and race barrels. Texas cowboy culture will be presented through art, chuckwagon cooking, poetry, and music. Cowboys and cowgirls will square off in an old-fashioned matched horse race. Every night after the rodeo, visitors will sit under the stars and take in western swing and Texas country music. The Old Timers' Association will meet to preserve the legacy of the West Texas cowboy.

Today, there is a video replay board. Some of the buildings have air conditioning. RVs and horse trailers have replaced teepees as preferred accommodations. Professional cowboys enter in a few events, but the entry sheet still includes a large number of amateurs and working cowboys and cowgirls,

In 1930, West Texas was consumed by discouragement. The weather and economy weren't cooperating. The government wasn't much better. Stamford's leaders had spent three decades building a new community on the dusty Rolling Plains and they would not be deterred. They chose to make Stamford the center of something memorable.

92 years later, that legacy lives on. Rural economies still face boom and bust. Weather and

Death Notices

Sanchez

Manuel Sanchez was welcomed to heaven on June 22, 2022.

He is survived by his brother, Marcus Sanchez; his children, Eliseo Sanchez, Albert Sanchez (Annette), Rosa Worley, Janie Martinez (John), Susan

DeLaGarza (Martin), and Michelle Penner (John); 22 grandchildren, 53 great-grandchildren, 7 great-great-grandchildren, and two specially loved grand-dogs (Josie and Abbie).

Visitation was held at Shaffer Funeral Home in Bronte on Friday, June 24, 2022, from 5 pm until 7 pm. Funeral services were held at First Baptist Church of Bronte on Saturday, June 25, 2022, at 10 am.

Services were under the direction of Shaffer Funeral Home.

UPCOMINGS!

Day Camp slated for July 30

Glory Road Cowboy Church will hold a Day Camp on Saturday, July 30, from 8:30 am until 1 pm at the Ballinger Community Center. The event is open to kids in 6th grade and below (under 5 years of age must have supervision). Activities for the kids include archery, air rifles, goat roping, horseback riding, crafts, and a hot dog lunch.

For more information, contact Myron Halford at (325) 365-6371.

Hunter Education course to be held August 2

The classroom portion of the Hunter Education program will be held on Tuesday, August 2, at Robert Lee High School. The course is available to those

ages 9 and all course materials will be provided.

Those interested must register online at <https://tpwd.elementlms.com/course-category/hunter-education-classroom-course/> and search 76945 zip code.

Save the date for golf tournament

The 1st Annual Veterans Memorial and Peace Garden Golf Tournament will be held on Saturday, September 24, at Mountain Creek Golf Course in Robert Lee.

All proceeds from the event will go directly to 'phase two' of the park. More details will be available at a later date.

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Area Churches

Invite You to Worship

Bronte

Bronte Church of Christ

PO Box 346
 118 S. Jefferson • Bronte
 Sun. 10 am & 6 pm, Wed. 7 pm
Central Baptist Church
 324 S. Franklin • Bronte
 (325) 473-4811
 Dale Patterson, Pastor
 Sun. 10 am Sunday School
 11 am & 5 pm Worship

First Baptist Church

424 S. Washington • Bronte
 (325) 473-2331
 Pastor George Cooper
 Sunday 9:45 am Sunday School,
 10:55 am Worship, 6 pm Bible
 Study & Worship
 Wednesday 6 pm RA's & GA's,
 6:30 pm Youth & Adults

First United Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes
 Bronte
 (325) 473-3281
 Rev. Stacy Sprinkle, Pastor
 Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School
 11:00 am Worship

St. James Catholic Church

215 N. Washington, Bronte
 (325) 365-2687
 Rev. Yesu Mulakaleti, Jr., Pastor
 Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am
4C Cowboy Church
 Drawer R • Bronte • (325) 895-4080
 Robert Lemmond, Pastor
 Sunday, 10:30 am - Texas Theater
 Wednesday Bible Study 6 pm -
 4C Feedlot Youth Building

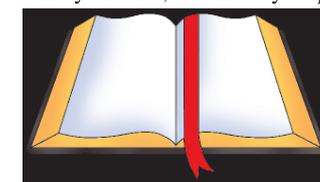
Robert Lee

Bible Baptist Church

PO Box 938 • 9th & Austin
 Sunday 10 am Sunday School,
 11 am and 5 pm Worship,
 Wed 5 pm Bible Study

Emmanuel Pentecostal

PO Box 794 • 1004 Hillcrest
 Pastor Brantly Robertson
 (972) 841-2009
 Sundays 10 am, Wednesdays 7 pm



First United Methodist Church

PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne
 Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417
 Cyndi Weidner, Pastor
 Sun. 10 am Sunday School
 11 am Worship,
 5 pm Choir Practice

Iglesia Bautista Betel

101 Houston • Robert Lee
 Sun. 9:45 am • Sunday School
 11 am Service • Bible Study Wed. 6 pm

Robert Lee Cowboy Church

James Brunson, Pastor
 (469) 834-3932
 10:30 am Sunday • Robert Lee Rec Hall

Southside Church of Christ

PO Box 698 • 8th & Houston
 Robert Lee (325) 453-2176
 Recardo Reyes, Preacher
 Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
 11 am & 6 pm, Worship

Northside Church of Christ

PO Box 508
 9th & Chadbourne • Robert Lee
 (325) 453-2685, (325) 763-2118 or
 (325) 473-1053

Services: Sun. 10 am

Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church

601 W. 10th, Robert Lee
 (325) 365-2687
 Rev. Yesu Mulakaleti, Pastor
 Saturday Vigil Mass 5 pm
Robert Lee Baptist Church
 PO Box 493 • 22 W. 11th
 (325) 453-2724
 Chris Walls, Pastor
 Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
 11 am & 7 pm, Worship

Wed. 7 pm, Prayer Meeting

Victory Assembly of God

(325) 453-2208, PO Box 638
 202 E. 6th Street, Robert Lee
 Rev. Rocky Youngblood, Pastor
 Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
 10:45 am & 6 pm, Worship
 Wed. 6 pm, Bible Study

Coke County

Pecan Baptist
 PO Box 542 • 12 miles West of
 Robert Lee on Sterling City Hwy
 (325) 453-2065, Bill Hood, Pastor
www.pecanbaptistchurchrl.com
 Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
 11 am & 7 pm, Worship

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 submit
 information to
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 is Monday
 at 5 pm.