

TEA TIME TALK

(BY WILMA J. MARCH)

To early Americans "Tejas" meant "Friendship". To-day the word "Texas" still means friendship and more. It means a land of opportunity, a land of fabulous natural resources, of rolling ranges, of rich black farmlands and health-giving climate. It means unlimited water-power, thriving cities, humming ports and the true western spirit of up and doing. This year, 1936, Texas is decked in holiday dress, celebrating her hundred years of freedom. The entire State is celebrating in various manners characteristic of each section. Fort Worth has a Frontier Exposition; Austin has a University celebration; Dallas has the leading celebration, one which has cost \$25,000,000.00. For this latter one the attractions have been assembled from the four corners of the nation and many parts of the world. The magnificent buildings, designed in Aztec and modern classic influence are mostly permanent structures. Lights on the grounds are visible to motorists fifty miles away and to aviators 200 miles distant. The new Texas State building is one to go down in history and the magnificent pageant, "The Cavalcade of Texas", with a cast of 500, marks this fair as the finest ever held in the great southwest.

Texas has well been called "The Land of Contrasts". Practically every type of scenic beauty in America is to be found within the borders of the state. In east Texas there are beautiful pine forests and the heart of the world's greatest oil fields, in the vicinity of Tyler, Henderson and Longview. Nature has been lavish in her mineral gifts too. Oil is produced in practically every section of the state, but the eastern portion has wells so large that should the present wells be opened up to capacity, the production would more than supply the needs of the entire world. But there is a government quota placed upon the production to keep the output down to the present requirements. Strange as it may seem too, that in those oil regions are some of the beauty spots of the state. At Tyler one sees acres and acres of roses, for it holds the record of being the largest rose growing centre in the world. The annual Tyler Rose Festival has wide significance. Then nearby is the tomato section where the markets hold national importance. Each year this community celebrates the tomato harvesting season with a mardi gras or fiesta, as colorful as those of old France or Spain. A century ago Nacogdoches was a meeting place for homeseekers; it was literally a frontier. The old stone fort built in 1778 is to-day a sight-seeing mecca.

For the sportsman too east Texas calls. The well-stocked streams and lakes lure the angler. Primarily a lumbering region east Texas now raises much cotton. One sees the negro, his mules and cart, his cotton sack upon his back and you know that he is a vital part of this life. Rich soil and mild winters give a variety of crops such as berries, pecans, fruit, vegetables and sugar cane.

In north and west Texas you'll cross vast plains to get to gorgeous canyons, plateaus and mountain peaks that reach 9000 feet. Fort Worth lies on the borderline of the western frontier. It is the headquarters of the rancher, the oilman and the stockman. The Big Bend country in the extreme west is a favored resort of travellers who seek the unusual in scenery. One may spend weeks climbing mountains, exploring deep canyons, studying curious rock formations, rare flowers and plants or hunting down wild animals in their lair. Such famous rivers as the Colorado, the Red, the Pecos and the Rio Grande, the latter forming the boundaryline between Mexico and Texas, make the State outstanding from the standpoint of drainage, transportation and navigation. The St. Helena Canyon on the Rio Grande throws its walls to the heavens to the heights of more than half a mile in various places for a distance of 14 miles. "West of the Pecos", that region between the Pecos River and the Rio Grande forming the most westerly portion of the state, is still more or less untouched by civilization. There one sees raw scenery, Texas in the rough as it

were, off the beaten path. Within this territory are found rocks of nearly every geological age represented in Texas. The altitude ranges from less than 200 feet above sea level in the lower Pecos Valley to a plateau of about 4000 feet and mountain peaks reaching from a mile high to close to 10,000 feet.

The western section of the state ends at El Paso, the gateway to Mexico and the distributing and marketing centre for West Texas as well as New Mexico and old Mexico.

Going northward from Fort Worth to the panhandle district of Texas one finds a variety of attractions. Before reaching Amarillo the Palo Duro State Park calls for your attention. The Palo Duro Canyon is one of the world's most beautiful and most colorful canyons. A distinct line of demarcation rises between the lower west Texas plains and the high floor of the Panhandle and southern plains. A narrow strip of broken country rising sharply carries one to the level expanse of the high plains. This is known as the "cap rock" and it forms an interesting geological study for those wishing to delve into the history of the past. In the vicinity directly south of the panhandle is a stretch which is so level that in ages past the early explorers had to drive stakes to trail crossings so as to find their route upon the return trip. The city of Amarillo is the largest Panhandle city and is a typical ranching, dairying and industrial city of the plains. If one wishes to see cowboys in reality, then head for the panhandle. The King ranch includes more than the whole of King county and is the largest cattle ranch in the world. Dude ranches are popular in America but they smack of the superficial in comparison with these north-western Texan ranches, where thousands of cattle graze upon the grassy plains and where the cowboys are not there to entertain the guests that might wander in.

And now we have covered the state with the exception of the south, that portion which borders on Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico. Beginning at Austin, the State Capitol, which is rather centrally located, one must mention the University of Texas. This important centre of learning has been and is conducting its own Centennial Exposition, and puts out its weekly official program. The \$20,000,000 physical plant, unique not only in its architectural beauty and facilities but also in its method of financing whereby no part came from taxation, the priceless libraries, the rare collections of departmental exhibits, its laboratories and the actual activities in teaching more than 9000 students, all of these things make it one of the outstanding universities on the continent. The curriculum of the University includes about 1000 courses and ranges from specialized fields such as engineering and law to the purely academic courses of the College of Arts and Sciences. Work completed in this University is accepted for credit by other leading educational institutions the world over.

The grounds of the main University consist of the original campus, a high-lying tract of forty acres set apart in 1839 in the days of the Republic, as the site for the University, and approximately 181 acres adjoining the original campus, purchased since 1921. Including construction now in progress since 1925, at Austin, Galveston and Mount Locke, fourteen and a half millions has been spent for buildings, improvements and equipment. The Agricultural and Mechanical sections are located at Bryan and the Medical College at Galveston. The University was long ago endowed with oil stocks and the profit from these must be spent in buildings, improvements and equipment.

We visited the planetarium and saw Saturn. In the electrical building we heard our heart beats reproduced; and felt the prick of a million and a half volts, which for some reason or other, only affected the surface of the body and did not cause any injury. We saw too, the home of O. Henry, a pretty little white cottage. At Barton Springs is a municipal swimming resort of much beauty. The water is crystal clear and very cold, fed by springs running 17,000,000 gallons daily.

We had a picnic supper cooked over an outdoor fireplace, the fire fueled with mesquite branches, a dry brittle shrub which produces a long pea-pod of seed. There too, I saw my first cactus growing on the sides of the cliff. Years ago on the Saskatchewan prairie I had seen the low ground cactus with the bright yellow blossom, but until that day in Austin I had never actually seen the original tall variety. That told me I was out where the West begins.

We must not omit the marvellous Capitol building in the centre of the city. In fact the city has grown around it. Across from it is the Governor's mansion. And just close by is the beautiful First Baptist Church which I visited with much interest as it was built during the pastorate of our pastor here in Zephyrhills. He and the architect together planned it and may I say that it won the first prize for its compact plans throughout America as regards Baptist Churches. The pews are made of mahogany and the circular steps leading to the pulpit and which extend across the entire platform are constructed of the finest black walnut. I sat in his chair, stood at his pulpit and read from his Bible. Then I felt, after saying a prayer, that I had paid my respects to my pastor, who, though absent, is still a loyal native son.

The capitol building is seven feet higher than the Washington capitol and its appearance from a distance is quite similar to it. The huge circular dome is graceful indeed with its rows of pillars. There are 444 steps leading to the top, but the view is well worth the climb. Billy purchased for himself as a souvenir of Texas a small folding camera and from the peak of the dome he took several fine pictures of the surrounding portions of the city. The ground floor with its gorgeous lobby and rows of hallways leading from it has had a new floor of gleaming granite and marble in rich subdued tones. The lobby has a magnificent pattern, characteristic of the six flags which have floated over the state. The cost of this new floor was \$127,000. The building itself is made of Texas granite in a pinkish, red tone. It is said to be more valuable than any other state capitol, having been paid for by the State in land amounting to three million acres and now that land is worth numberless millions, as it has since been discovered to be rich in oil. Texas owns its own lands. That was part of the agreement when she entered the Union in 1845. There is no question about it that Texas does her own thinking and has in the past. Austin is the capitol of the largest State in the Union and her capitol building is the largest, and it is located on the site chosen for the Capitol by Stephen F. Austin. It is a city of 70,000 and covers more than 16 square miles and has the record of 88 churches representing 20 denominations. It is the heart of the state educational system and the headquarters of all state government agencies. It has one of the best equipped recreational park systems in the south. One can soon feel the cultural and educational status in many ways upon visiting the city. Her University had the second largest Summer School enrollment of any university in the entire United States last year. One third of her population is attending school of some sort. That alone speaks highly of any city.

From Austin one must surely travel less than a hundred miles southward to San Antonio, that sacred battlefield where stands the Alamo, as a reminder of blood-bought freedom. If one has the time they would undoubtedly decide to follow the picturesque trail from San Antonio down to Laredo gateway to Mexico. Then it is such a little way to the city of Monterrey over a paved highway. Mexico will call very strongly and unless Old Man Time calls more loudly you will find yourself headed for Mexico City. Oh the Gypsy Trail is a vagabond one, but it repays you in breath-taking pleasures, such as no monetary dividend can do. Who, only a starving person, would trade the joy of a beautiful canyon, a sunset over the Rio Grande or a cruise on the wild, unbroken Mississippi for a few paltry dollars? Zane Grey knew; he had the nature-hunger in his soul when he wrote his story, "The Call of the Canyon". As I stood bathed in moonlight on the banks of the Colorado high above the deep, murmuring waves and on



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the crest of the break-water lining the Mississippi as the sun set in all its glory I lifted my face to the sky from whence cometh our faith. I never felt more deeply stirred with the glory of God. True I have felt just as reverent, just as glad to be alive, back in dear old Ontario, walking through the colorful, crisp autumn leaves or standing on the ridge of the Kimberley Valley as autumn painted the glorious landscape with her loveliest colors. Canada, United States, Europe, Asia and the world over God has given richly of earthly beauties, if we but pause to open our eyes to see and our hearts to feel.

After a trip into Mexico, one will cross back into Texas at Brownsville and proceed along the Gulf of Mexico as closely hugging the shoreline as the road will permit. A short

side trip will take you to the interesting city of Corpus Christi, a deep sea fishing and all-year resort. After driving through virgin land from here, it will be a striking contrast to reach the Rio Grande Valley. There you will see palm trees, oleanders, acres and acres of citrus groves till one may think they are in Florida. Then farther north in the valley one enters the vegetable and semi-tropical fruit section. Then on to Houston through Goliad to the battlefields where, on March 27, 1836, almost every Texan in the hands of the Mexican enemy, was marched out and shot. Then Houston! That busy metropolis into which I am told families are moving so fast that housing them is almost an impossibility. In fact thousands are moving into all parts of Texas. The

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