

Doans Picnic

Area Meeting Facilities



Since 1884, the Doan's Picnic has offered a time of celebration, heritage and tradition. On the first Saturday in May, hundreds of visitors gather beneath the tall trees on the lawn of the Doan's adobe north of Vernon for the oldest continuous celebration of its kind in Texas. The adobe, which still stands and serves as the site of the event, is the oldest structure in Wilbarger County.

The Doan's picnic grew out of a time when the pioneer Doan's family celebrated May Day with a picnic in nearby Watts Grove. The group repeated it the next year, and the picnic then became a tradition.

The late 1880s was a time of cowboys and cattle drives, Indians and pioneers when land was being settled, homesteads were carved out of the wild country, and thousands of longhorns were taken down the Western Trail through what is now Vernon. The cattle were taken across the Red River near Doan's Crossing, so called after the establishment of the Jonathan Doan's trading post nearby. Although the once thriving community is gone, the picnic continues as a tribute to early-day settlers, cattle drivers and pioneers.

In 1880, C.F. Doan took over the store and built a 30-by-50-foot building for the trading post. He also constructed corrals, branding chutes and furnaces for the trail drivers. Within a few years, he had his store in a large double building, and

the firm of C.F. Doan and Company was doing a successful business. In fact, when the town of Vernon was settled, a branch store was opened.

In 1881, an adobe home for the Doan family was built. The structure, which underwent refurbishing in the 1990's, still stands today as the oldest house in Wilbarger County. It is located at the end of FMR 924, six miles north and east of the intersection at Hwy. 283 between Vernon and Altus. The adobe building was approved in 1977 for listing in the National Registry of Historic Places and is marked with a medallion from the Texas State Historical Commission.

At one time, Doan's was a thriving community with several homes, the Bat Cave Café, McBride Hotel, Doan's store and adobe warehouse, Louie's blacksmith shop, Dr. F.C. St. John's drug store, Hufstедler's wagon yard, Charles Cleveland store, the Cowboy Saloon, headquarters and warehouse of Bar-H Ranch, churches, schools and other buildings.

Doan's was said to be the largest supply house outside of Fort Worth in 1892. Trail drivers, cowboys, buffalo hunters, pioneers, settlers and Indian made Doan's their stop along the trail.

But gradually the Fort Worth and Denver Railroad approached the prairies, and freight cars eventually replaced the trail herders to northern shipping points. Eventually, the community be-

came deserted and now only a few homes occupy the land. The adobe house and granite markers pay homage to the history of the area.

The picnic for many years included a variety of event and activities including horse racing, carnival rides, political speeches, music, food and even airplane rides. Crowning of a queen began in 1911, and a king was added in 1939. In 1968, the Doan's Picnic Association began honoring a man or woman of the year, which changed some 10 years later to honoring both a man and woman.

The traditional picnic was held for many years at the original site of Watts Grove, but due to flooding some years back, the event has now been moved to the spacious lawn which surrounds the Doan's adobe. There visitors can settle beneath the shade of many large trees and watch as a Doan's Picnic king and queen are crowned, pioneer ranch brands are recorded, Northside High School serves up taste-tempting Texas barbecue right on the spot, and visitors can still walk through the adobe and sign the guest book there.

While the picnic is a much simpler event today than it has been in decades past, it remains as a celebration of heritage, tradition and honor of those early pioneers whose fortitude and determination settled the land.



WILBARGER AUDITORIUM

The Sky Room seats 20. The large main auditorium seats over 1,980. The professional stage, lighting and sound system make the auditorium a top-quality facility for any presentation. For additional information and rental fees call 940-553-3901.

COVERED EVENT CENTER

The newest of the county-owned facilities is the \$1,260,000 multi-purpose covered events center which was completed in 2008 and hosted its first events in early 2009.

The Wilbarger Covered Events Center is located at 301 Wilbarger and is adjacent to the Bradley 4-H Arena and the Wilbarger County Exhibit Building.

It includes seating for 400 people and space for indoor equine events such as rodeos, horse shows and other activities that can be held year-round regardless of the weather, along with various other events. It has been the site of the Cowboy Mounted Shooting competition, Oklahoma

and North Texas Little Britches Rodeo, Sparkles and Spurs Women's Ranch Rodeo, NBHA barrel racing, a number of 4-H events, high school rodeos, and the Battle of the Red Cow Dog Trials. Information on the Events Center is available by calling 940-552-7362.

WILBARGER COUNTY EXHIBIT BUILDING

The Wilbarger County Exhibit Building, located at 2215 Harrold, includes a large indoor exhibit area utilized for livestock shows and other events.

It also includes facilities such as a dining room, kitchen and meeting room, which can be rented for banquets or other occasions. Rental information is available by calling 940-553-4422.

BRADLEY 4-H ARENA

The Bradley 4-H Area, located next to the Exhibit Building, is a large outdoor arena with stadium seating and space for rodeos, horse shows and other events.