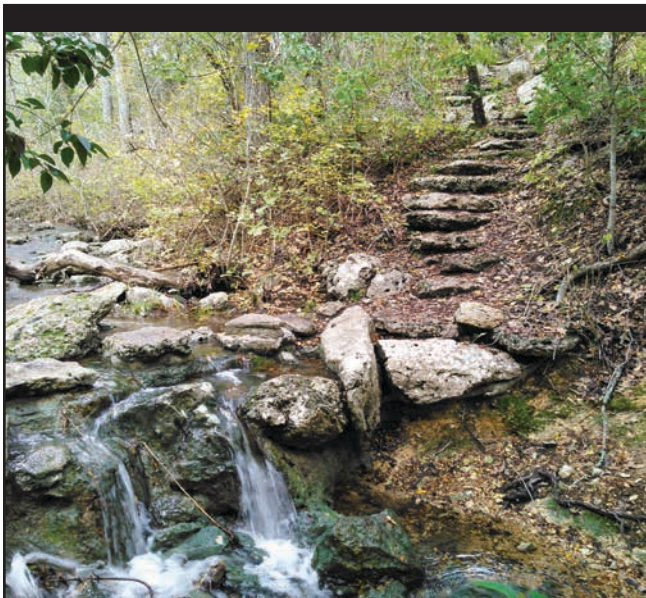
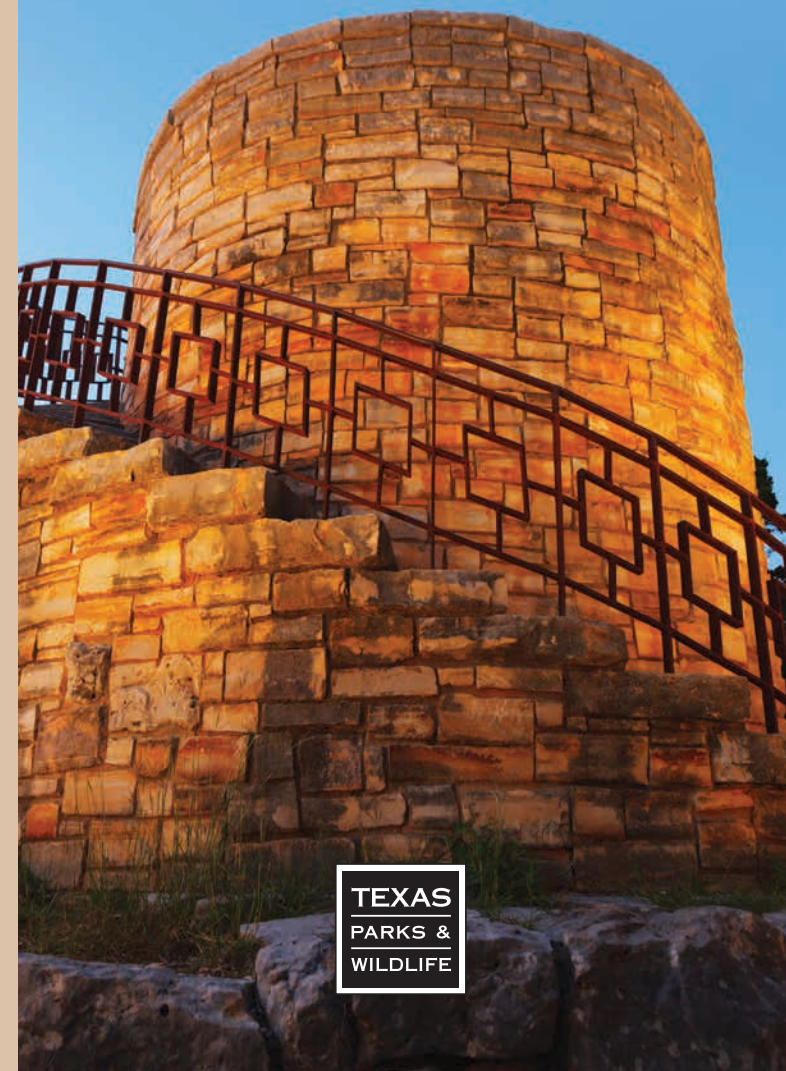




INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

MOTHER NEFF STATE PARK



WELCOME TO MOTHER NEFF STATE PARK! THE INSPIRATION FOR OUR TEXAS STATE PARK SYSTEM STARTED HERE ALONG THE SHADY BANKS OF THE LEON RIVER. PEOPLE HAVE BEEN COMING TO THIS SPECIAL PLACE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS—IT'S NOW YOUR TURN! EXPLORE REMINDERS OF THE PAST AND MAKE MEMORIES OF YOUR OWN.



In 2015 Mother Neff State Park suffered a series of devastating floods. A half-mile logjam and record area rainfall caused the Leon River to flood and submerge more than 80 acres. The flood water destroyed structures and campsites in the lower section of the park. Areas of the park remain closed while we work to clear debris, restore habitat and rebuild structures. We appreciate your patience while we recover!

- Preserve the integrity of the historic CCC structures by using them with respect.
- Hike on designated trails only and stay out of closed areas.
- Leave no trace! Keep your park and river clean by not littering.
- Preserve the park for future generations and leave plants, animals, and fossils where you find them. Don't pocket the past.

FURTHER READING

Texas State Parks and the CCC: The Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps by Cynthia Brandimarte with Angela Reed, Texas A&M University Press, 2013.

Parks for Texas: Enduring Landscapes of the New Deal by James Wright Steely, University of Texas Press, 1999.

The Land, The Law, and the Lord: The Life of Pat Neff by Dorothy Blodgett, Terrell Blodgett, and David L. Scott, Home Place Publishers, 2007.

Guided with a Steady Hand: The Cultural Landscape of a Rural Texas Park by Dan K. Utley and James W. Steely, Baylor University Press, 1998.

Flower of the Wilderness, Mother Neff and the State Parks of Texas by Martha Deeringer, Book Locker, 2014.

For more information about programs or volunteering, contact the park or visit our website and add us on Facebook.

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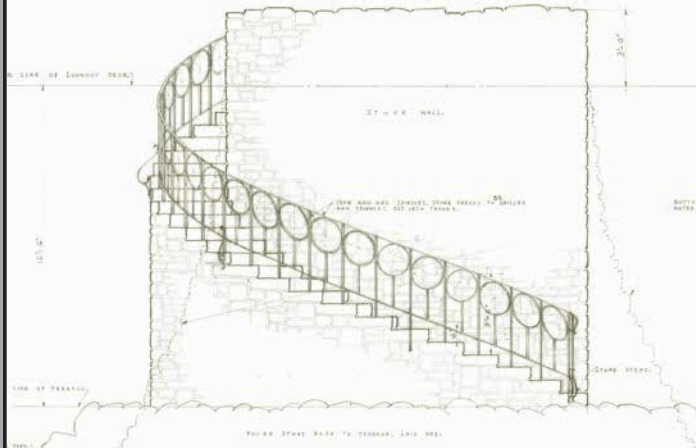


COURTESY OF THE TEXAS COLLECTION, BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

MOTHER NEFF'S GIFT IS THE HEART OF OUR STATE PARKS

Leaving behind her family plantation in Virginia, Isabella Eleanor Neff and her husband Noah travelled to the Texas frontier in 1854. The young couple purchased 900 acres along the Leon River and set to work building a home and a family. The Neffs raised nine children in their log cabin and later adopted three orphans. Despite long hours on the farm, Isabella Neff devoted herself to helping her community. She taught local children, organized the construction of a small Baptist church and offered a beautiful piece of her land as a gathering spot for picnics and events. Isabella's kind and generous nature earned her the nickname "Mother Neff."

In 1920 the Neff's youngest son, Pat Neff, became Governor of Texas. The following year Isabella passed away. In her will she left six acres of tranquil land along the Leon River to the public. Inspired by his mother's generosity, Governor Neff envisioned a system of parks



throughout the state. It was his dream to provide a "breathing spot for humanity" where Texans could "go back to nature" and find rest, recreation and relaxation. Neff provided an example of such a place along the Leon River. He and local resident F.P. Smith donated additional parcels to Isabella's gift, increasing the total area to 259 acres. In 1937 the site opened as Mother Neff State Park, named in memory of its original contributor. Isabella's legacy of generosity continues to benefit Texans today.

BUILDING HOPE

What would you do if you were given a chance to help your country and your family?

The Great Depression of the 1930s brought hardship to the nation. Many people faced desperate times with few jobs, no money and little hope. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1933 to help conserve America's natural resources, boost the economy and create jobs. The CCC gave unemployed young men the opportunity to gain skills and education while building parks and protecting resources. In return, they received housing, three square meals a day and medical care. Moreover, they each received \$30 a month, of which \$25 was sent home to support their families.

CCC Company 817 worked at Mother Neff from 1934 to 1938. The 200 men built roads, culverts, hiking trails, picnic areas and campgrounds. Architectural plans for larger structures, including a stone tabernacle and water tower with observation deck, called for local limestone and lumber, ensuring all man-made features blended in with their natural surroundings.

The men of the CCC built our state parks with their skill and determination. Years later, these structures are a reminder of their gift to Texans and state parks. There are reminders of CCC Company 817 throughout the park—can you find them all?



WHERE WORLDS COLLIDE

Did you know that within the boundaries of this 400-acre park are four vastly different worlds? Mother Neff State Park lies at the confluence of three ecological zones: the Lampasas Cut Plain and Washita Prairie (subdivisions of the Grand Prairie), and Blackland Prairie. Additionally, the natural geography of the park creates four distinct habitats: towering hardwoods grow in the Leon River bottomlands, Texas oaks thrive on the lower ravine slopes, Ashe juniper mature on the higher ravines and grasses ripple in the wind on the upper prairie. This rich diversity of habitats draws numerous species of plants, insects, birds and animals to this one special place.

Biodiversity, the variety of life, is important to us all. The stunning Texas wildflowers we enjoy each spring bloom thanks to the work of pollinators like bees, butterflies, birds and even bats. Did you find any scat (animal poop) on the side of the trail? Look closely and you may spot some seeds from berries or prickly pear fruit. Mammals like raccoons and coyotes dine on these tasty treats and disperse the undigested seeds in their droppings, helping plants spread to new lands.

Everyone has a role. Communities with high biodiversity are stronger and more resistant to changes in the environment. As you travel through these different habitats, look and listen for the variety of life in Mother Neff State Park.

