

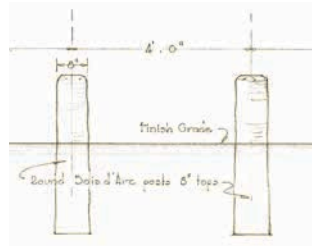
MORE THAN A TREE

Interwoven through the park's natural and cultural histories, the bois d'arc tree tells the stories of Bonham State Park. The park is located adjacent to Bois d'Arc Creek, which is considered to be the epicenter of the plant's range.

The Caddo Indians in this area saw the bois d'arc tree as a weapon just waiting to be carved. The highly coveted bows made from its wood travelled the trade routes as far as Arizona, Montana and the Great Plains.

In less than 200 years, European settlers to this area would also discover the benefits of this tree species. Upon its original settlement in 1837, the town of Bonham was referred to as Bois d'Arc up until 1844. As this site is in the northern range of the Blackland Prairie, farmers had a difficult time finding cheap wood to fence in their prairie properties. Enter the bois d'arc. Referred to as Osage Orange or "hedge apple," this species was ideal for creating fence-like hedges that very quickly became "pig tight, horse high and bull strong." Once grown in, these fences were too dense for a pig to squeeze through, too high for a horse to jump, and too strong for a bull to push over.

During this park's construction, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) quarried stone, constructed fences, and transplanted over two thousand trees. This park is unique in that it showcases four examples of the National Park Service rustic style: the boathouse, dance pavilion,



This CCC schematic outlines using bois d'arc posts.

concession building (now park headquarters) and the water tower. The CCC also found a use for bois d'arc in their construction of the park; on the single-lane road crossing the dam, bois d'arc posts were used to create the guardrail.

While the original posts may not stand along the dam, the legacy this tree left behind stands tall as ever. Bois d'arc is all around us but rarely noticed. Take a moment to reflect, a single tree species helped shape this park's past. How can it shape your future?

CCC LEGACY

This 261-acre park epitomizes the CCC-park formula—an earthen dam impounds a small lake, refectory, and landscape features for the purposes of erosion control and public recreation. Between 1933 and 1936, CCC Company 894 camped on this high ground in Fannin County surrounded by long-used cotton fields. The enrollees fashioned a pleasant oasis from rocky, scrub brush hills and built a 65-acre lake which has remained a favorite retreat for Bonham swimmers and anglers alike.

Construction of the Dam, 1934. Using hand tools, enrollees in Company 894 work the sloped side of the earthen dam.



MAN AND ANIMAL ALIKE



In this area, the bois d'arc tree benefits more than just its human inhabitants. Tucked in amongst the Eastern red-cedar and burr oak trees, the bois d'arc trees stand tall and proud. Migrating songbirds rely on the thorny foliage for shelter, a place to rest along their journey. Watch for fox squirrels digging through the fruit in late summer, scavenging for seeds. Young saplings provide the perfect post for bucks to rub the velvet off their antlers.

As you explore the park, keep your eyes open for the orange-tinted bark and large, green, brain-like fruits, also known as "horse apples." What wildlife do you see using the bois d'arc tree here at Bonham State Park?

