Fort Parker State Park is a great place to spend the day with your children. Whether you are looking for a shady picnic spot with room for the kids to run-and-play, spectacular hiking trails, or a visit to our Nature Center, there is plenty of fun for the entire family. Visitors can enjoy fishing, mountain biking, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, bird-watching, swimming, and many other outdoor activities. Historic Springfield Cemetery, located within the park, is a reminder of a once clamoring city. In 1860, Springfield’s population of 4,537 was over twice the population of Dallas, Texas (2,000) and rivaling the city of Houston (4,845) at that time. We offer weekly interpretive programs about the native wildlife and unique cultural history during peak season. Amenities include facilities for camping – including a Boy Scout Wilderness Area, picnicking, family and large group events. Playgrounds, group barracks and dining hall, open pavilion, and a recreation hall provide modern comforts for most any size group. The park’s Annual Trout Clinic is a favorite for young fishing enthusiasts – what a thrill to catch your first rainbow trout!

Fort Parker State Park
194 Park Road 28, Mexia, Texas 76667
(254) 562-5751 • www.tpwd.texas.gov/fortparker

Cover photo: Susan Metcalf Loomis, TPWD.

THE AREA WAS ALSO A CROSSROADS FOR NATIVE AMERICANS. THE COMANCHE WARRIORS WHO RULED THE GREAT PLAINS CROSSED THE NAVASOTA RIVER NORTH OF HERE TO RAID THE PARKER FAMILY STOCKADE. ON THE MORNING OF MAY 19, 1836, A BAND OF COMANCHES, KIOWAS AND KICHAIK Attacked the Parker Fort. Five settlers died and another five were kidnapped, including nine-year-old CYNTHIA ANN PARKER.

CAMP MEXIA

WITH LOCAL ECONOMIES STRUGGLING DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION, LIMESTONE COUNTY BUSINESSMEN SOUGHT A CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC) CAMP TO BUILD A RECREATIONAL PARK NEAR THE HISTORIC SITE OF PARKER’S FORT.

THE YOUNG MEN OF CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS CAMP 3807 (C) REPORTED TO CAMP MEXIA IN JULY OF 1935. THE “C” STOOD FOR “COLORED,” AND 3807 WAS ONE OF THE FIRST SEGREGATED CAMPS OF YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN MEN. MOST OF THE TWO HUNDRED YOUNG MEN WERE FROM THE LIMESTONE COUNTY AREA, MANY OF THE SONS OF SHARECROPPERS STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE IN FARMING COMMUNITIES LIKE MART AND COOLIDGE, TEGE AND SPRINGFIELD. OF THE $30 A RECRUIT EARNED EACH MONTH, $25 WAS SENT HOME TO SUPPORT HIS FAMILY.


LIFE WASN’T ALL WORK AT CAMP MEXIA. IN THE EVENINGS, THE MEN COULD GET PASSES TO GO INTO TOWN OR GO HOME. MANY EARNED THEIR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS IN NIGHT CLASSES WITH THE CAMP TEACHER. OCCASIONALLY WOMEN FROM MEXIA AND GROESBECK WERE INVITED TO DANCES ON THE OPEN TERRACE OF THE CONCESSION BUILDING. THERE, CAMP MUSICIANS CREATED THE BIG BAND SOUNDS OF COUNT BASIE WITH SAXOPHONES, TRUMPETS AND CLARINETs. CCC MEN WITH SHOES SHINED AND TIES STRAIGHT AT EVENING INSPECTIONS WERE Rewarded With CAKE AND ICE CREAM ON FRIDAY AFTERNOONS. UNLESS THEY DREW KITCHEN POLICE DUTY FOR DISCIPLINARY INFRACTIONS, THE YOUNG MEN USED WEEKEND PASSES TO GO HOME.