



## INTERPRETIVE GUIDE



THE RUGGED LIMESTONE BLUFFS COVERED WITH FORESTS OF DARK GREEN CEDARS INFLUENCED THE NAMING OF THIS AREA. SETTLERS CAME HERE FOR THE RICH SOILS AND ABUNDANT GRASSES OF THE TALLGRASS BLACKLAND PRAIRIE. THIS PARK HARBORS ENDANGERED PRAIRIE REMNANTS AS WELL AS REMNANTS OF THE PENN FAMILY FARM, ONE OF THE EARLY SETTLERS TO THIS AREA.



We hope you enjoy your visit to Cedar Hill State Park. Here are some things to do at the park:

- ✦ Learn more about the plants and wildlife in the park by attending an interpretive program.
- ✦ Tour historic Penn Farm. Check the event calendar for guided tours or explore on your own with a self-guided brochure.
- ✦ Attend special events hosted by the park, such as the Harvest Heritage Festival in October.
- ✦ Wet a line in Joe Pool Lake or at the Perch Pond in the park.

### THANK YOU FOR VISITING!

While enjoying this natural beauty, please remember that everything you see in the park is protected. Artifacts, rocks, plants, and animals (even snakes) are all part of the region's rich cultural and natural heritage. Help us keep recreational use sustainable for the future and protect these resources by leaving things as you find them. We hope you will visit these other state parks while visiting North Texas:

Ray Roberts Lake State Park – Johnson Branch  
100 PW 4153 Valley View, TX 76272-7411 (940) 637-2294

Purtis Creek State Park –  
14225 FM 316 N. Eustace, TX 75124 (903) 425-2332

Cleburne State Park –  
5800 Park Road 21 Cleburne, TX 76033 (817) 645-4215

Visit [www.tpwd.texas.gov](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov) for more information on these and other Texas state parks and historic sites.

Cedar Hill State Park  
1570 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill, TX 75104  
(972) 291-3900 ✦ [www.tpwd.texas.gov/cedarhill/](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/cedarhill/)



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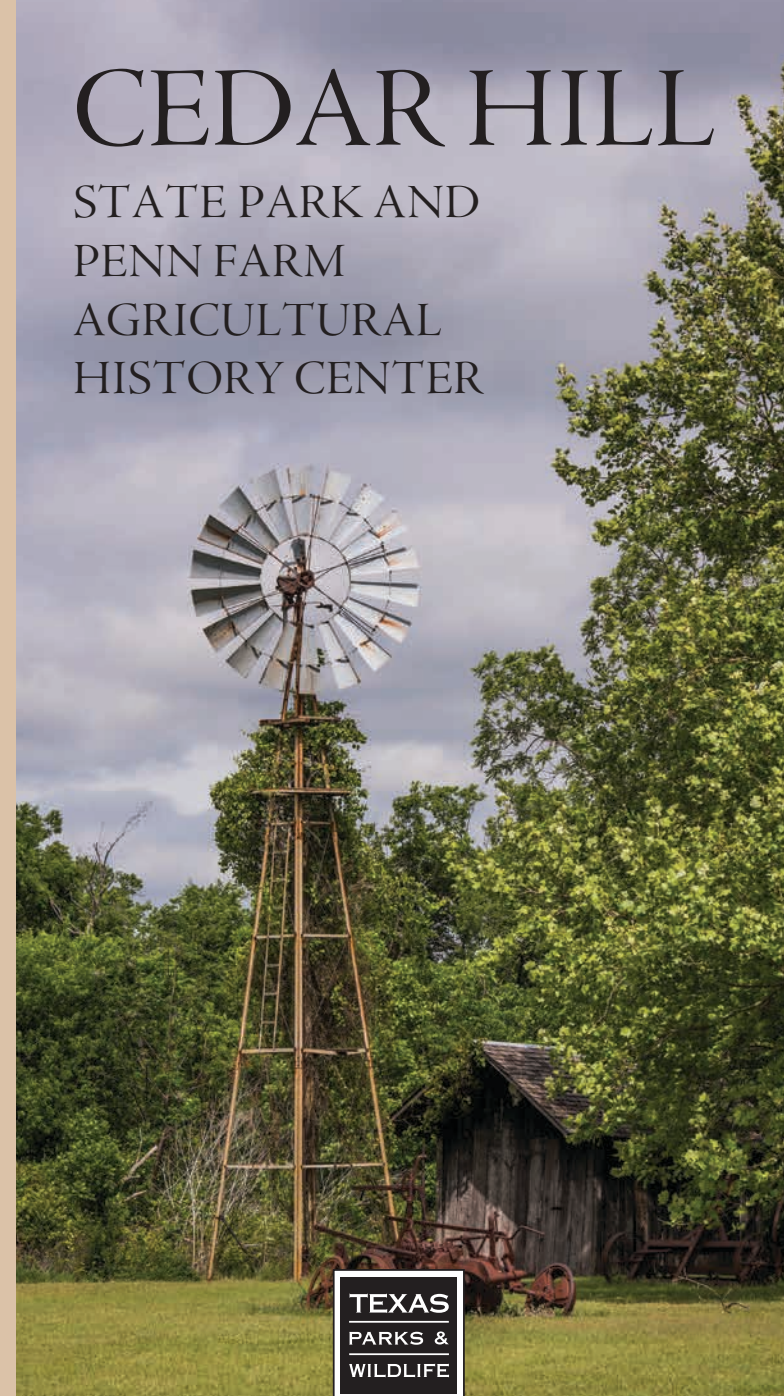
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# CEDAR HILL

## STATE PARK AND PENN FARM AGRICULTURAL HISTORY CENTER





JASMINE RODRIGUEZ, TPWD

## MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY PLACE

The beauty of this area is only one of the reasons early settlers came to Cedar Hill. The convergence of the limestone formations of the White Rock Escarpment meet the rich soils of the Blackland Prairie, forming a biologically diverse area. The grasslands of the Texas Blackland Prairie and the upland forests of the White Rock Limestone Escarpment create a transitional habitat zone, supporting plants and animals commonly found in North Central Texas, East Texas, or the Texas Hill Country.



A rich combination of grassland and forest provides an ideal habitat for migratory birds. Search year-round for the eastern bluebird or great horned owl; come spring and summer, look for bright flashes of the colorful painted bunting. But, wildlife aren't the only ones attracted to the rich resources found in this area.

Early settlers to the Dallas area sought the Cedar Mountains, the highest point in the county. Today, many acres of prairie grasslands lie beneath the surface

of Joe Pool Lake, as it captures the waters of Mountain Creek and Walnut Creek. Preserved within the park is the farmstead established by John Wesley Penn in 1859, a reminder of the agricultural legacy of early Dallas County.

## A FAMILY TRADITION

The Penn family owned this farm for over a century, running cattle and tenant farming throughout several generations. Small, middle-class farmsteads, like this one, once occupied this margin of Dallas County. The site shows an evolution of structures constructed or adapted by the Penn family as needs changed and modern conveniences, like electricity, were added.

The farm serves as a reminder that humans made the greatest impact on the tallgrass prairie. Farmers such as John Wesley Penn utilized the rich natural resources of the land to build farms and provide shelter for their families. The Penn family grazed cattle and horses on the native prairie grasses for over a hundred years.

Over time, most of the tallgrass prairie in Dallas County vanished – plowed under and replaced with crops of wheat or cotton. Despite most of the prairie land losing its battle to development, some pockets remain intact here at the park. The continued survival of these prairie remnants depends on our efforts to conserve them by managing, appreciating, and protecting them from encroaching development.



DANIELLE BRADLEY, TPWD

## PRAIRIE ROOTS RUN DEEP

In the early 1800s a vast tallgrass prairie stretched from Texas to Canada, covering the continent like an ocean. Close your eyes and try to imagine it. Today, less than one percent of tallgrass prairies survive, mostly in isolated patches resembling scattered islands in a great sea. In Texas, less than 5,000 acres remain today.

The first wave of destruction came in the 1800s as farmers converted the prairie to farmland. Today urban development consumes the vanishing prairie landscape. Most remnant prairies, like those preserved in the park, survived because farmers used them as hay meadows, or the land was too rocky to plow.

Prairies may contain more than 250 different plant species. Grasses such as big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass and switchgrass dominate the Texas Blackland Prairie. A wide variety of wildflowers burst into color during spring and summer, including the purple coneflower, Maximilian sunflower, and the celestial ghost iris. Deep-rooted grasses and wildflowers survive cold winters, hot summers, drought and erosion.

Fire is an essential element in maintaining a healthy prairie ecosystem. These sparks increase plant diversity, growth, and the flowering of plants. Fire prevents invasive woody species such as mesquite and cedar elm from transforming a prairie into a woodland. Native Americans used fire as a tool to create an island of fresh grass to attract bison.

