

Interpretive Guide to:

LAKE BROWNWOOD

STATE PARK



Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the recreation hall is a beautiful example of their expert craftsmanship and use of native materials.

NEAR THE GEOGRAPHICAL CENTER OF TEXAS, LAKE BROWNWOOD STATE PARK FEATURES RUSTIC FACILITIES, MILES OF SHORELINE, WINDING TRAILS AND ABUNDANT WILDLIFE. THE 7,300-ACRE RESERVOIR OFFERS SWIMMING, FISHING, BOATING AND SKIING.

IN THE 1930s, THE EMERGENCY CONSERVATION WORK PROGRAM AND TWO CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS COMPANIES BUILT THE PARK'S ROADS, CABINS AND POPULAR RECREATION HALL, WHICH SITS ON A HILLTOP OVERLOOKING THE LAKE AND SURROUNDING HILLS. BUILT FROM TIMBER AND NATIVE ROCK FOUND IN THE PARK, THESE FACILITIES GIVE THE PARK AN EARTHY, ORGANIC CHARACTER.



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Whether it's a quiet picnic or large family reunion, the park offers a wide variety of opportunities for enjoying the outdoors.

Lake Brownwood State Park, comprising 537.5 acres, is located approximately 16 miles northwest of the city of Brownwood. The park offers an atmosphere of rustic beauty and tranquility, with miles of shoreline where wildflowers, white-tailed deer, ducks, raccoons, armadillos, squirrels, and a variety of birds can be observed in a natural setting. A fishing pier and boat ramp offer easy lake access for boaters, water-skiers and anglers. Other activities include swimming, camping, picnicking, hiking (2.5 miles of hiking trails and a .5-mile nature trail), nature study and birdwatching. Good viewpoints are found along the hiking trail, especially atop Council Bluff, a high ridge overlooking the lake. History buffs will find the recreation hall, stone pavilions and cabins, and other structures built by the CCC to be a fascinating, tangible link to the past. The large group facilities make the park ideal for family reunions and other group get-togethers. Lake Brownwood State Park is a great place to relax and escape the hectic pace of modern life.

For more information about programs, volunteering or joining the Friends group, contact the park or visit our website.

Lake Brownwood State Park
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NATURAL BEAUTY

The park lies in an area of mixed habitats. The plants and animals of this area are a combination of species from the Edwards Plateau and Grand Prairie to the south and east, the Western Cross Timbers to the north, and the Rolling Plains to the west. Typical vegetation for the Edwards Plateau is grassland with live oak on level to gently rolling terrain, but slopes and stream bottoms are generally wooded or brushy. The Western Cross Timbers usually supports woodlands of dwarfed post oak and blackjack oak. The Rolling Plains supports grasslands with shrubby vegetation growing on the rougher sites; woody plants usually grow along river bottoms. These three vegetation regions of Texas overlap around Lake Brownwood, making the park an excellent place to study the area's natural diversity.

Though used by many Native American cultures long before Europeans arrived, the land in Brown County was first associated in eighteenth-century Spanish colonial histories with the Lipan, or eastern, Apaches. By the middle of the 1700s, the Comanche had mastered the horse and were quickly amassing a territory where they hunted and camped in a nomadic fashion. Captain Randolph B. Marcy of the U.S. Army, who led a patrol in the area in 1851, reported that Pecan Bayou was a favorite of the tribe. The Comanche and earlier Native American groups were drawn to this area by water and abundant game.

Captain Henry S. Brown, a Texas Revolutionary soldier, was the first white man known to traverse the area. In 1828, Brown, with about 25 men and a Native American guide, trailed a Comanche raiding party into what is now

Brown County. Other settlers soon followed and began farming the floodplains and ranching the hill country. The county was organized in 1857 and named for Captain Brown.

DEVASTATION CONTROLLED

After a devastating flood in 1900, Brown County residents, and especially citizens of Brownwood, became interested in ways to control the periodic surges of Pecan Bayou and its tributary, Jim Ned Creek. They also needed to regulate the availability of water for domestic, agricultural and ranching use. This effort became increasingly critical as the population of the county and Brownwood grew. Results of a 1926 election showed overwhelming support for the organization of the Brown County Water Improvement District and the construction of a dam.

Beginning in 1926, the Brown County Water Improvement District acquired seven tracts of land for the purpose of damming and impounding the waters of Pecan Bayou at its confluence with Jim Ned Creek. Construction commenced, and the dam was completed in early 1932. Skeptics predicted it would be years before the lake would fill with water. In July of the same year, a record-breaking flood swept down Pecan Bayou, and the lake filled to a level covering more than 7,000 acres practically overnight. Since that time, the reservoir has provided a constant supply of drinking water and irrigation water, tamed the uneven and sometimes destructive flow of Pecan Bayou, and provided recreational opportunities. In 1933, the Texas State Parks Board acquired the park's 538 acres by deed from the Brown County Water Improvement District for the purpose of establishing a state park on the lake.



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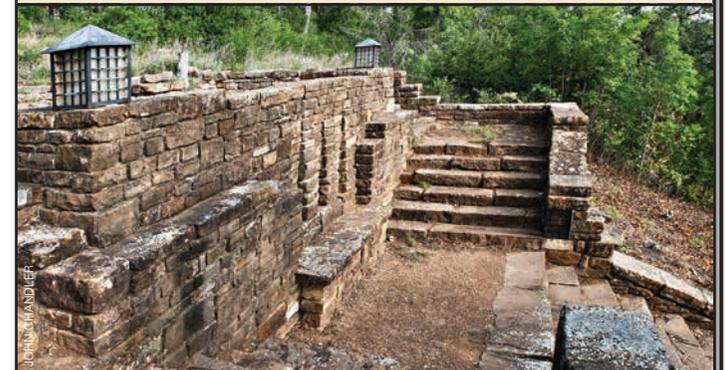
A RICH HISTORY

Construction on the park began in 1933, after approval of county and state applications for relief work programs under Civil Works Administration (CWA) authority. The CWA employed local men who were part of Emergency Conservation Work programs, the forerunner of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

Part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal recovery program for a Depression-wracked nation, CCC work camps established across the country in the 1930s offered work to unemployed young men and improvements to state lands. Lobbying efforts by county and state officials resulted in a CCC company at Lake Brownwood in November 1934. Company 872 arrived at Lake Brownwood from Tecumseh, Oklahoma, and continued the unfinished construction begun under the CWA and started work on additional park facilities. In November 1935, Company 872 was transferred after their one-year assignment, and the camp was abandoned. A second CCC unit arrived in October 1936. Company 849 continued the work at the park and remained there until February 1942, when the camp was closed.

The locally quarried rock used on the outdoor patios and stairs gives the park a timeless feel. Fire pits, curved benches, culverts and picnic tables, designed by the National Park Service and built by the CCC, are scattered throughout the park. The recreation hall sits on top of a hill, and its rooftop observation deck gives a good view of the park, lake and surrounding rolling hills. By the time they left, the CCC men had completed 17 cabins and nearly 100 other structures.

During World War II, the park served as a rest-and-recreation site for soldiers stationed at Camp Bowie. After the war, Texans returned to the park for its vast recreational opportunities.



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