

PIONEER FARMS ANNUAL REPORT 2023

An update to our growing community of benefactors, with sincerest thanks for their continued, generous support



Pioneer Farms

Our blacksmithing classes are big draw for women, men.

BLACKSMITHING BONANZA Folk Arts School A Regional Draw

More than two dozen new blacksmithing classes have been added to the 2024 schedule as the Texas Folk Arts School has become the largest such program in Texas.

Five levels of hot-metal skills are now being taught, in addition to specialty classes such as bladesmithing and a 10-month training course accredited by the Artists and Blacksmiths Association of North America.

Classes in making hammers, tomahawks and axes, more than dozen other projects are also offered. Prices have been adjusted to give more Texans the opportunity to learn about forging hot metal at a time when its popularity is skyrocketing.



Pioneer Farms

Fixing a lunch on a real wood-fired hearth at our 1873 Jolly Cabin was one of several popular history adventures in 2023.

THE NEXT STAGE Big Steps On Eve of 50th Anniversary

Pioneer Farms will turn 50 next year, a major milestone that showcases the can-do spirit, no matter what the odds, that makes Texas history so empowering.

Christened in 1975 by the heirs of the Jourdan-Bachman family who deeded the land to an Austin preservation society two decades earlier to open a Pioneer Settlers Park honoring the first homesteaders, the site was first run seasonally by two volunteer groups, then the city parks department.

But it never became self-sufficient and the city pulled out. In 2002, it was turned back to the landowner, the Heritage Society of Austin. That group charted a plan for success and deployed a small group of volunteers to see if they could turn things around.

Within two years, Pioneer Farms was self-sustaining — operating with a completely volunteer staff that brought in donations, operated weekly programs and made much needed repairs to the historic buildings. A few years later, it spun off into an independent non-profit foundation.

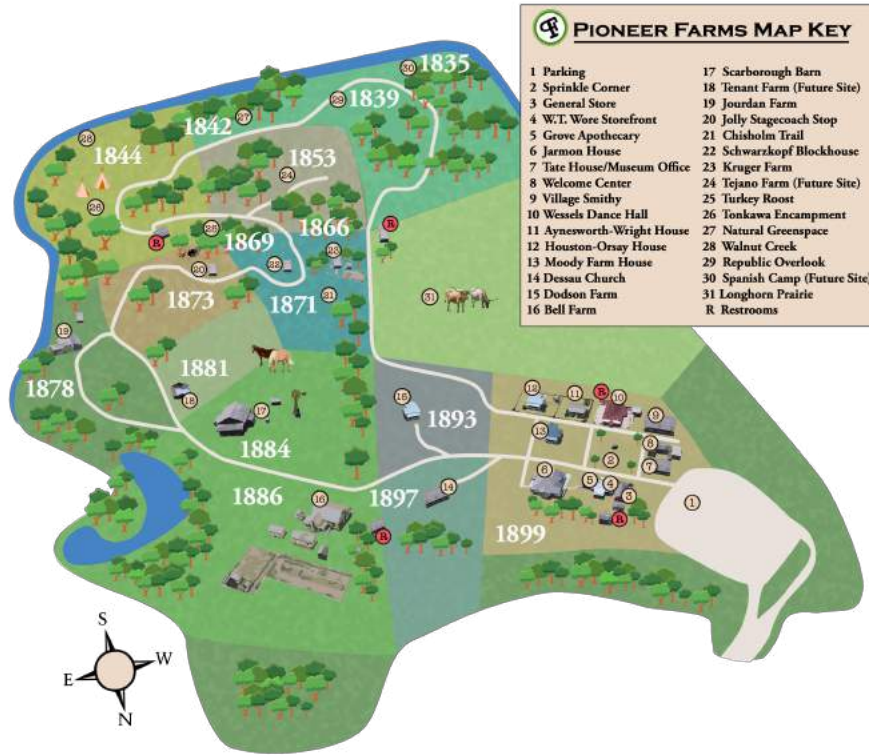
With support from generous donors, our large corps of volunteers continues to make Pioneer Farms an entrepreneurial success story, a treasure where unique history programs and exhibits have greatly expanded. We remain the largest volunteer-staffed history museum in the region.

The strong spirit that made Texas great continues to power Pioneer Farms toward its Big Five-O. To those who come out to see and touch Texas history, we extend our grateful thanks for your continued support

Michael Arnold

For The Board of Governors of the
Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farms Foundation

PLAN TO DOUBLE OUR 1800s HISTORY SITES Growing Attendance, Generous Donors Make It Possible



BIGGER HISTORY PICTURE Spans Texas From 1835 to 1899

Where we now have 10 history sites, we soon will have 16 — offering visitors much more to experience about Texas' storied past.

At each site, visitors can step back in time to experience Texas as it once was — to see, touch and smell Lone Star history.

New: An 1842 Native Greenbelt site along historic Walnut Creek, an 1869 German Blockhouse, the oldest Texas farm still in agricultural use interpreted for 1884 and an 1897 rural church.

Updated: An 1899 Sprinkle Corner rural village, an 1886 cotton planter's farm, an 1873 middle-class farmstead, an 1873 stagecoach stop, an 1866 German farmstead and an 1844 Tonkawa camp and Turkey roost.

Upcoming: An 1835 Spanish Army camp, an 1853 Tejano farm, an 1881 Tenant Farm Cabin and an 1893 Freedmen's farmstead.



Pioneer Farm

Raptor Show featuring birds of prey drew a huge crowd.

ATTENDANCE NOTCHES UP Programs, Festivals Fuel Growth

More than 130,000 people visited Pioneer Farms in 2023, the seventh straight record year. That makes us the sixth largest tourism destination in Central Texas and compares with 127,000 in 2022.

Much of that growth came from the Pumpkin Nights Halloween lights festival in October, the Austin Celtic Festival in November, Victorian Christmas in December and special programs such as Chisholm Trail Day and Independence Day.

Pioneer Farms has now been visited by residents of all 50 states and 67 foreign countries.

19th CENTURY MEETS 21st New Digital Wayfinding, Info Project

You can now take an aerial tour of Pioneer Farms on our website, and click on links to learn the history of each of our history-discovery sites.

The first phase of the project using Google360 technology, went online in December. The next phase expected in early 2024 will offer digital wayfinding and video tours use cutting-edge modern technology to teach people about 19th century Texas.



Pioneer Farm

Aerial view of Sprinkle Corner is on our virtual tour.

TOUCHING TEXAS HISTORY Raves For New Interactive Programs

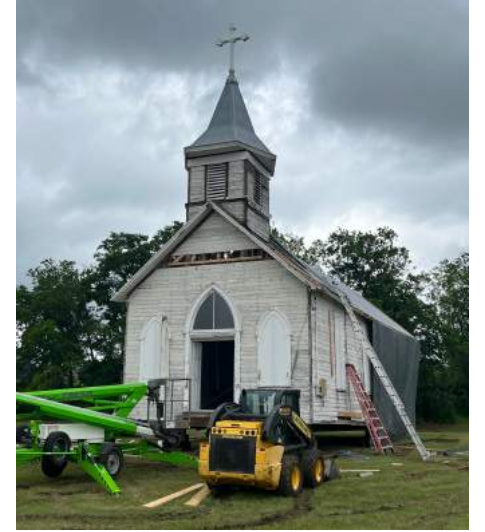
New programs that allow school groups and visitors to literally put their hands on Texas history were sell-outs for most of 2023.

Candle-dipping, cowboy roping, weaving and other 1800s activities that were featured will be expanded this year. These new Hands-On History programs are making Texas history a hands-on experience.



Chris Twigg/Courtesy

WHEELS: A program and exhibit about 19th century bikes allowed visitors to experience how Texans lived in the 1800s.



Pioneer Farms

Dessau Church as it appeared just after its relocation.

PRESERVATION SUCCESSES Historic Dessau Church Relocated

Overcoming a five-year odyssey of red tape, the historic Dessau Church was moved to Pioneer Farms in May to save it from growing vandalism and eventual destruction.

It is widely being considered the biggest save for historic preservation in Austin in years, a place built by early German emigrants where Elvis Presley once sang hymns at a Sunday service in 1955

The 1876 church is now located in a field just east of our Sprinkle Corner entrance village — a place where it appears much like its original spot.

Weathered in and with its interior cleaned up, the sanctuary is now undergoing a top-to-bottom restoration to showcase the histories of the early settlers who came from German to settle in Texas.



Pioneer Farms

MOODY FARM HOUSE. Exterior restoration completed on an 1880s Queen Anne-style gem to be used for exhibits.



Pioneer Farms

SCHWARZKOPF BLOCKHOUSE: 1850s stone fortress built by German settlers for protection was rebuilt by volunteers.



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TATE HOUSE: 1857 Samuel Tate House in our Sprinkle Corner village is being restored to feature a 19th century telegraph station/post office and a new entry exhibit area.



OUR TEXAS HISTORY HEROES!

A ROUND OF APPLAUSE, PLEASE, FOR OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS.

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Join these Texas History Heroes

Make a donation today at PioneerFarms.org/donate



Philip Waters/Courtesy

STEEL HISTORY: Power hammer under restoration in our Village Smithy is among several new projects to preserve Industrial Age history in operating exhibits at several sites.

COMING ATTRACTIONS Five New History Projects On Horizon



Philip Waters/Courtesy

Descendants of Jack and Mary Jane Dodson pose on the steps of the Dodson House, being restored for a new historical site.

Dodson Farm

Project: New Freedman Farm site showcasing history of formerly enslaved Texans in the late 1800s, interpreted for the 1890s at the restored home of Mary Jane and Jack Dodson, leaders in the Freedmen's community in Travis County.

Status: Dodson House rescued from demolition, moved to Pioneer Farms and weathered in, awaiting funding for restoration and development of history site with exhibits.

Cost: Projected \$450,000



Wikimedia Commons/Courtesy

Vaqueros were expert horsemen in early-day Texas.

Tejano Site

Project: Hispanic Heritage site, on a site adjacent to bucolic Walnut Creek, will highlight Texas' rich Spanish and Mexican heritage made Texas what it is today — in horsemanship, ranching to food, music and language.

Status: Research is currently underway for the 1850s creek-side site to include a dwelling, corrals and adjacent support structures to properly interpret this important Texas history.

Funding: Projected \$350,000



Hand-Tool Wood Shop

Project: Our hand-tool woodworking programs are currently housed in a single room at the 1851 Scarborough Barn that severely limits enrollment and class offerings. Funding would allow this program to move to the town square, across from the blacksmith shop where it would be properly located for the late 1800s.

Status: The new shop would feature enlarged work and teaching areas, exhibit space for a collection of 1800s woodworking tools and a viewing area/safety deck of the working shop.

Funding: Projected \$50,000



Telegraph Office/Post Office

Project: Many small towns in Central Texas with a post office added a telegraph station in the same place. Creation of an exhibit space would allow for exhibits on 1800s communications, classes in Morse and the opportunity to build a telegraph line to another part of the museum where message could be sent and received.

Status: Exhibit space has been designated, most artifacts have been collected and an expert volunteer team is ready to begin work once funding is secured.

Funding: Projected \$12,000

POLLINATOR PROJECT Supporting Honey Bees, Butterflies

As part of our ongoing initiatives to maintain wildlife-friendly grounds, the next phase of a native plants project to support pollinators is to begin in 2024.

The project launched five years ago supports bees, butterflies, beetles, moths, hummingbirds and other pollinators with specific plant species and wildflower palettes.

The project to date has restored native grasses and wildflowers, protected underbrush and plant growth between our history sites and has added more bee hives at our farmsteads.

Plans call for a class on honey bees and supporting pollinators to be added to our Texas Folk Arts School schedule in 2024.



Wikimedia Commons/Courtesy

The history of legendary Texas rodeo star and Wild West Show performer Bill Pickett was featured in a hands-on program in February, as part of Black History Month.

OUR HIDDEN HISTORIES More Of Texas' Past Now Featured

A "Hidden Histories" guided tour featuring stories of Texas' past that has been overlooked or ignored will be offered again in 2024 after a successful debut.

The program focuses on the enslaved and free people of color, Tejanos, Indigenous people and other marginalized groups.

Sites and interpretive plans have been revised with more details for visitors about Texas' rich cultural fabric.

HISTORY ON STAGE 19th Century Music, Theater

With the authentic 1800s experience at our history sites, our period music and theater shows are drawing wide applause.

Music events in our historic Wessels dance hall continue in 2024, along with a new interactive exhibit about the styles and origins of Texas' rich musical past.

In addition, Austin's Archive Theater will return in 2024 after staging a three-week sellout run of "Raven-Winged Hours" show in September.

A special holiday show in December featured Damien Gillen, an award-winning actor, playing his hit one-man children's show.



Show poster from the fall theater performance that played to sold-out shows in our Wessels dance hall.

ENGAGED LEADERSHIP

Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farms Foundation

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2023: YEAR IN REVIEW



Joe Ramirez and Emma Lea Mayton/Courtesy

JUNETEENTH: A special June program about Emancipation and African-American history drew approximately 200 people to presentation in Wessels Hall. An array of speakers and community leaders (top) presented the history of the holiday in words and song, and in period clothing (bottom).



Pumpkin Nights/Courtesy

FESTIVALS: Pumpkin Nights drew sell-out Halloween crowds in October to its nighttime extravaganza, one of five history-themed community events staged during the year including the Austin Celtic Festival, below.



Chris Twing/Courtesy

ARCHAEOLOGY: Digging for history was showcased during a successful November program at our 1886 Bell Farm.



Pioneer Farms

AUTHENTIC: Our new Second Saturday history showcases are a popular weekend destinations for families in the area.



Regina Mellyvain/Courtesy

MOVING: Historical interpreter Thom McNeil sings with a longhorn steer at our 1866 farm on Chisholm Trail Day.