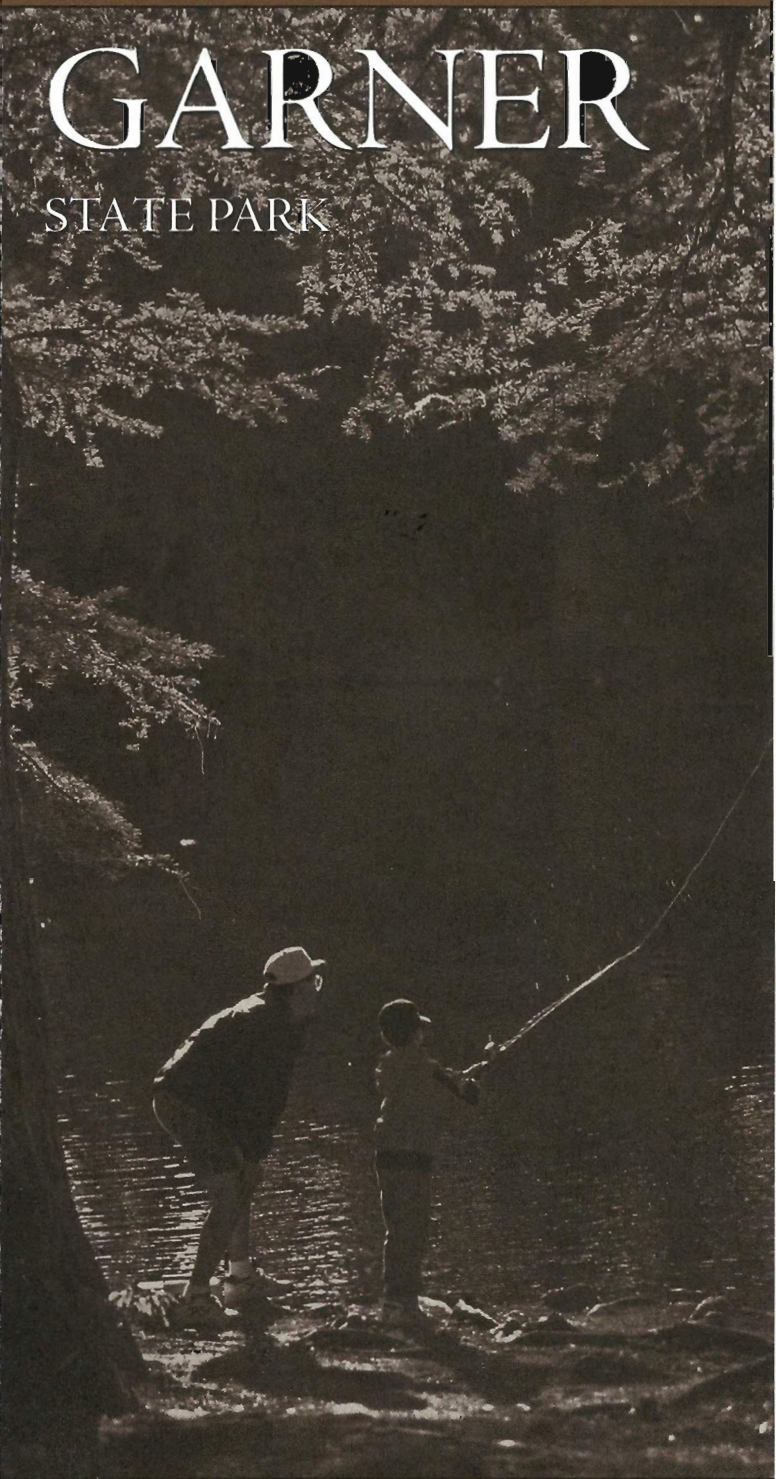


TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

Interpretive Guide to:

GARNER

STATE PARK





Prehistoric Native Americans built large earth ovens of heated rock for cooking roots and tubers.

game and other resources, as had those who lived off the land before them. In the immediate vicinity of Garner State Park, the first settlers were two German immigrant families, the Magers and the Streibs.

THE MAKING OF A STATE PARK

As the automobile gained in popularity during the early 20th century, vacation camping became a popular pastime for many city dwellers. The cool clear waters of the river and the beauty of the canyons made this an ideal location. During the 1920s, the Magers family opened a piece of their land on the west side of the Frio River in the present location of Garner State Park, for camping.

With the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the nation faced a debilitating unemployment crisis. With more than half the young men under 25 years of age out of work, President Franklin Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to provide employment opportunities. The program put young men to work developing state and national parks, as well as rehabilitating forests and controlling soil erosion.

Civilian Conservation Corps Company 879 constructed the park between 1935 and 1941. June 1, 1941 marked the grand opening and dedication of Garner State Park, named after former Vice President John Nance Garner, a local son.

THE DRAW OF THE WATER

For thousands of years the cool, clear waters of the Frio River have drawn people to its banks. Between 10,000 and 12,000 years ago, prehistoric peoples came to the area attracted by an abundance of game, useful plants, and stone for making tools. The river provided a dependable source of perennial water and helped to cool the canyons, providing an inviting setting which still pulls people here.

As early as the 16th century, Spanish explorers made entradas into the Americas and brought horses with them. The Comanche and Apache quickly adapted to their use, pushing all other Native American groups from the area in the 1700s.

In the 1850s a trickle of Anglo settlers began making their way west of San Antonio. The lifestyle was one of self-sufficiency, and the people of the area farmed, raised cattle, hogs and goats, grew tobacco, cotton and corn, and produced tallow and hides. They harvested the local bounty of pecans,

CCC-constructed facilities at Garner, many still in use today, include roads, picnic tables, water fountains, a lodge, overnight cabins, and a dance pavilion.

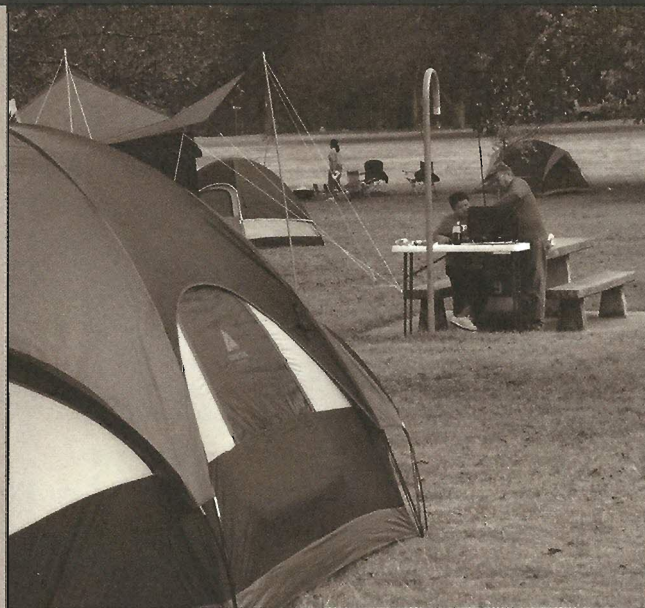




Dancing at Garner

Garner boasts the only CCC-constructed dance pavilion in a state park still used for dancing.

ALIVE WITH TRADITION, SEVERAL GENERATIONS FREQUENT GARNER STATE PARK, SUSTAINING CUSTOMS UNIQUE TO THIS PLACE. THE MOST POPULAR OF THESE TRADITIONS, THE DANCE, HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE PARK'S GREAT DEPRESSION-ERA CONSTRUCTION. AN INEXPENSIVE FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT, LOCAL DANCES BECAME A POPULAR PASTIME OF THE DAY. WHEN THE PARK OPENED, LOCAL BANDS PERFORMED IN THE BEAUTIFUL NATIVE LIMESTONE AND CYPRESS DANCE PAVILION. LATER, A JUKE BOX REPLACED THE BANDS, AND THE TRADITIONAL DANCES CONTINUE TO THIS DAY.



Garner State Park leads the state in overnight camping and has since it opened in 1941. The rich cultural history of the park and its facilities, the attraction of the clear waters of the Frio River, and steep wooded canyons combine to form a very inviting setting for a great variety of park visitors.

FURTHER READING

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The Handbook of Texas Online:
www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online

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