

Study Guide

to



Crossroads

A Television Production
of the
Baylor University
Institute for Oral History



Waco, Texas
1991

STUDY GUIDE TO *CROSSROADS*

The purpose of this study guide to the documentary *Crossroads* is to provide teachers and other viewers with background material and offer some suggestions for projects which will build on the ideas and subjects presented in the program. The discussion questions and projects are meant to encourage viewers' direct involvement in their own communities. The aim is to reinforce the idea that every community can be studied in the way that *Crossroads* presents. History is not something that happens only to other people.

Crossroads can be broken down into three parts. Part one covers the prehistory of the area; part two, settlement of the land through the Civil War; and part three, the post-Civil War era to the present. Although the videotape is under thirty minutes in length, this breakdown may suggest places to stop for discussion.

LOCATIONS

Crossroads focuses on the role geography plays in shaping history. The following sketches provide background information about sites mentioned in the program.

1. Horn Rock Shelter: This archeological site is located on private land along the Brazos River in McLennan County and is not accessible to the public. The dig was operated by the Central Texas Archeological Society and Baylor University, but in 1990 it was filled in to preserve the site until funding for future exploration can be obtained. Based on radiocarbon dating, the burial is believed to be among the oldest ever discovered in the Western Hemisphere, dating back to the end of the Ice Age, around 8,000 B.C. The site is also significant because the arrangement of the bodies and the relics which were buried with them had been undisturbed, making it possible to see for the first time what Ice Age humans might have believed about death. In addition to the bone needle and turtle shells mentioned in the program, grinding tools, a piece of red ochre, and a necklace of sea shells were found alongside the skeletons.

2. Mammoth Dig: This archeological site was located on private property in the Steinbeck Bend area between the Brazos and Bosque rivers just north of Waco and is being reassembled for exhibition by the Strecker Museum at Baylor University. When discovered, it contained the largest herd of prehistoric elephants found to date which were killed at the same time in the same place. It was also unique in representing a kill which was the result of natural causes and not the result of hunting by humans.

3. Hard-Rock Crossing: The area shown in the program is located in Waco in Indian Spring Park, just south of the Suspension Bridge and along the River Walk in the 100 block of South University Parks Drive. At Waco, the Brazos River cuts through the rocky surface of the Austin Chalk Escarpment, making the river bottom firm enough for early crossings by wagons and cattle herds. Here also are springs, providing fresh water for the people and animals who crossed there.

4. Emmons Cliff, Cameron Park, Waco: This limestone cliff, towering above the Brazos River, is one of the highest crests of the Austin Chalk Escarpment, also called the White Rock Escarpment, and part of a rocky ridge that runs across Texas from the Red River to the Rio Grande. This escarpment connects with another one in the southern half of the state called the Balcones Escarpment, running from Austin to Del Rio. Covered by soil for most of its length, the Austin Chalk Escarpment is exposed where rivers cross. The underground limestone of the escarpments collects rain water, which comes to the surface at springs. Paralleling the Austin Chalk and Balcones escarpments is the Balcones Fault Zone. Though it produced earthquakes millions of years ago, the Balcones Fault Zone region is fairly stable today. Its principal effect on human activity is to cause occasional problems for the foundations of buildings.

5. Wichita Tribal Community Center and Indian City, Anadarko, Oklahoma: As settlers moved westward and southward into Texas, the Waco Indians were pushed out of their home, first by other

Indians and ultimately by the United States government. In 1856 the Wacos were forced to move to a reservation near Fort Belknap, in Young County, Texas. Their numbers rapidly dwindled until 1859, when they were moved to Oklahoma. Considered to be a sub-tribe of the Wichita, the Wacos became part of the Wichita Agency in the Washita Valley, near Anadarko. Today, they regularly hold ritual dances, which are family and community affairs. Nearby Indian City, in Anadarko, offers similar dances and fine examples of various forms of Indian dwellings.

6. St. Olaf's Kirke: Located between Clifton and Cranfills Gap in Bosque County, this Lutheran church was established in 1886 to serve the expanding Norwegian community which had first settled west of present-day Clifton in 1854. Because it was constructed of stone in a time when most frontier churches were built of wood, St. Olaf's is also called "The Rock Church." It was built in traditional Norwegian style.

7. Torrey's Trading Post: Situated on Trading House Creek, a branch of Tehuacana Creek, which flows into the Brazos River, this site is on private pasture land twelve miles southeast of Waco on F.M. 216. A large, stone Texas State Historical Marker is there, but located well off the road. A smaller marker is located on Texas Highway 6, near Harrison, Texas. The exact location of the nearby Indian council grounds is unknown.

8. Earle-Harrison House: Relatives of James Edward Harrison mentioned in the program lived in this Greek-Revival style house, built in 1858 and maintained today by the Pape Foundation. The house is located at 1901 North Fifth Street in Waco, where it was moved in 1968 from its original site in the 800 block between South Fourth and South Fifth streets.

9. Harrison: This community is located in McLennan County, ten miles east of Waco on Texas Highway 6, and was settled by the former slaves of James Harrison, descendents of which were interviewed for the program. It is often called "Harrison Switch" because in 1872 the Houston and Texas Central Railroad set up a station there. Residents prefer to call it Harrison.

10. Oakwood Cemetery: This historic cemetery is located at 2124 South Fifth Street in Waco. Once the site of a race track, the cemetery was organized in 1878. Three governors of Texas are buried here, along with numerous Confederate soldiers and officers and other prominent Texans.

11. Leonard Native Prairie: Maintained by the Texas Nature Conservancy, this tract of native prairie is located just northwest of Marlin on Highway 6.

12. Poston-Odle Family Cemetery, Mosheim, Bosque County: A private family cemetery established in 1875.

13. Nancy Willis family farm: Just west of Grandview in Johnson County.

14. Locks on the Brazos: These rusty relics are located on private land southeast of Waco. Authorized by an act of the United States Congress in 1905, the locks were part of a planned waterway system to make the Brazos navigable. The flood of 1913 changed the course of the river, and the project was abandoned shortly after World War I.

15. Falls of the Brazos State Park: This little park is located on the Brazos River east of Marlin and contains the next hard-rock crossing of the Brazos south of Waco. The next hard-rock crossing north of Waco is at the deserted town site of Kimball, near Lake Whitney in Bosque County.

16. Fort Fisher and the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame: Fort Fisher was originally a Texas Ranger outpost set up in 1837 to fight Indians. After only three weeks, however, the post was considered to be too far into Indian territory, and the Rangers retreated to their post near the hard-rock crossing at the Falls of the Brazos. Today, a replica of an 1840 fort serves as a museum on the original site, which is located along Interstate 35 on the banks of the Brazos River in Waco.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who were the first settlers in your community? Where did they come from? Why?
2. What natural resources have most shaped your community's historical development? How have they changed over time?
3. What kinds of land formations and soils are found in your area? How does agriculture in your area differ from that in other areas because of the difference in soils?
4. Explain these statements which are a part of *Crossroads*:
 “Our lives are shaped by the ground under our feet.”
 “The prairie was a barrier.”
5. Why do you suppose settlements survived at the hard-rock crossings on the Brazos at Waco and Marlin, while the community at Kimball Bend, the next hard-rock crossing north of Waco, became a ghost town?
6. How did the American Civil War affect your community? Find the evidence for your answer.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Use the map in the study guide to label rivers and to position towns and natural features which affected the settlement of Texas. Escarpments are already drawn in.
2. Organize an oral history project to interview people who have lived in various parts of your community. Collect and display photographs to go with the interviews.
3. Locate and visit the cemeteries of your community and learn about their historical significance. Learn about the ethnic, racial, family, and religious influences on the founding and development of the cemeteries.
4. Locate and visit your community's most significant physical geographical sites, noting how each has shaped the lives of residents from earliest times to the present.
5. Gather enough information on your community's weather and climate to interpret how these factors have shaped local development.
6. Collect a series of maps to show how and why your community developed. Find or draw maps that also show features other than the road system, such as waterways, woods, prairies, etc.
7. Compare the land and what people have done with it on the east and the west of the Austin Chalk Escarpment and Balcones Fault Zone.

8. Visit a nearby general museum to learn why and how prehistoric peoples came to your community's geographical location.
9. Learn about Native Americans or other groups who once lived in the vicinity of or passed through your community and their reasons for selecting or not selecting that area for their home.
10. Compare the settlements at various places that have springs and hard-rock or easy river crossings such as Dallas, Waco, Salado, Georgetown, Round Rock, Austin, San Marcos, New Braunfels, San Antonio, Uvalde, and Del Rio.
11. Show *Crossroads* to some of your community's older residents and invite them to tell the story of its development during their lifetimes and compare their accounts. What stories did they hear from older residents when they were growing up?
12. Find or draw maps showing the various branches of the Chisholm Trail.

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Texas Historical Commission. *Texas Historical Commission Presents Texas in the Civil War*. Austin: Texas Historical Commission, 2001. [Map showing battles, towns, fortifications and troop movements; includes a representative list of historical sites in Texas.]

- ◆ Label the rivers of Texas.
- ◆ Mark and label the location of major cities.
- ◆ Mark and label the location of important natural features such as mountains, lakes and reservoirs.

