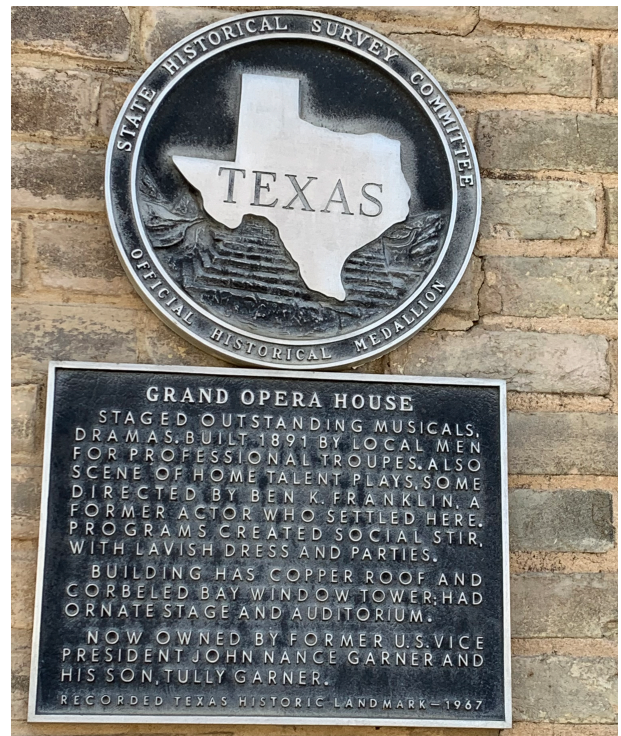


Trip 2 – Episode #17 – Seminole Canyon State Historical Park

When we left San Antonio, we weren't quite sure what our next stop would be. The town of Uvalde looked like it might be interesting. But when we got there, the day was still young and, aside from an impressive old opera house, there didn't seem to be much to see. Or do.



But we did learn that FDR's VP before Truman was John Garner. (Who knew??)



Our next potential destination was Seminole Canyon State Historical Park. So we pushed on toward it.

On our way we came across our first Border Patrol Stop, in which all traffic is funneled through a stop, and they check to make sure you're not transporting illegals.

This was over ten days ago, and we've now been through at least three of them. Of course, once we tell them we're Canadian they just wave us through. It felt kind of weird though.



Eventually we got to our destination, Seminole Canyon State Historical Park. We'd read that in the canyon, there were pictographs and petroglyphs that were thousands of years old, and when we got there, we signed up for a tour the next morning.



This park reminded us of our visit, last summer, to Writing on Stone Provincial Park in Alberta. The main difference here was we were definitely in the desert.



We settled in for the night. As you can imagine, this was a prime spot for stargazers, with guaranteed dark skies, and we're sure the campers who had their cameras and telescopes aimed at the stars that night got some great views.

The next morning we went on a tour of the park with a volunteer guide who took us into the canyon. (Unfortunately I didn't get her name.)

Our first stop was at the remarkable statue that was created for the park. Called "The Maker of Peace", the bronze sculpture was created by Texas artist Bill Worrell and is an interpretation of a shaman – in the form of a white tail deer. Our guide explained the significance of each of the symbols. It was so striking against the blue, blue sky we were gifted with that day.



From there we followed her into the canyon. She led us to the floor the canyon, and explained that, though it was very dry that day, the canyon could be, and often had been totally flooded with water in a short span of time. It was very dangerous when floods happened.



But more importantly, she explained that the canyon had not been carved by those river waters. The area had actually been underwater millions of years ago. And fossil evidence shows that it was not carved by runoff rainwater, but sea water.



She led us up to the side of the canyon where we could see the painted forms on the walls.





Of course, trying to interpret these painted figures is pure conjecture, and she offered some suggestions of what they might have meant. But what scientists *could* figure out was how old they were and what materials were used to paint the images. Our guide noted how amazing it was that the paints had lasted thousands of years (they're dated to have been painted 4200 - 2500 BCE), and the fact that the artists had created paints that would last centuries, indicated how important these images were to them, and their culture. Perhaps they were messages for future travellers, on how to survive in this rugged, unforgiving land.





Our guide also told us about the deterioration of the images now, due to environmental damage. She told us about a couple who realized some years ago that the original art would be lost in time. So they painstakingly drew and painted the images to scale, so that there would be an accurate record of the colours and lines as they were before they faded.



She also pointed out the way the feet were pointing in these paintings and suggested it was an attempt to show people standing in a circle, and if so, it could be one of the very earliest examples of perspective in art.



There were also some petroglyphs throughout the canyon, but these were the only ones we saw that day.



All in all, it was a worthwhile and interesting tour in a spectacular setting on a gorgeous day.



After the tour,
our guide
suggested a spot
for us to stop on
our way for a
few more great
views. So of
course we took
her advice. And
of course she
was right.





Our next little detour was a town called Langtry, historic for being the home of Judge Roy Bean. Again, I knew little about the story (I don't think I ever saw the movie with Paul Newman). But apparently Bean ruled from his front porch, and with an iron hand. He also named the town Langtry after the English actress Lillie Langtry, who in his opinion was the most beautiful woman in the world. He actually invited her to come and perform in their town, but tragically, by the time she accepted his invitation and arrived in the town named after her, Bean had died.



THE PECOS RIVER
IN LITERATURE AND FOLKLORE

NOTED FOR MINERAL-THICK WATERS AND SUDDEN FLOODS, THE PECOS RIVER SNAKES THROUGH TEXAS ON ITS WAY TO THE RIO GRANDE. HISTORIAN J. EVETTS HALEY AND FOLKLORIST J. FRANK DOBIE, WHO CALLED IT "A STRANGE RIVER," AND A "BARRICADE," ARE AMONG MANY WHO HAVE IMMORTALIZED THE PECOS IN WRITING. ZANE GREY WROTE, "RISING CLEAR AND COLD IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTHERN NEW MEXICO, ITS PURE WATERS CUT THROUGH ROUGH COUNTRY THAT CHANGED ITS FLOOD TO TURBID RED." STORYTELLERS HAVE LIKENED THE RIVER AND THE ARID LAND ALONG IT TO HELL, DEATH AND VIOLENCE. A NATURAL BORDER FOR SEVERAL COUNTIES, THE PECOS IS WHERE THE MYTHIC WILD WEST BEGINS, THE LAND THAT PRODUCED THE LEGENDARY JUDGE ROY BEAN AND FABLED PECOS BILL.

(2006)







After our little tour, we went back to the road.



Our next destination was Big Bend National Park, but we couldn't get there that day, so we overnighted in Marathon, Texas.

It was a tiny town with a surprisingly beautiful hotel, the Gage.





It had a great little coffee shop next door and a beautiful gift shop.



But we overnighted in a campground just down the street. It was adequate, and it offered what I thought would be an adequate sunset.



I took a bunch of photos and went inside, convinced there would be nothing more to see so there was no reason to stay out there taking photos. But a little while later, I looked outside and saw this:



Can't think of a better visual proof for the phrase "It ain't over till it's over."