

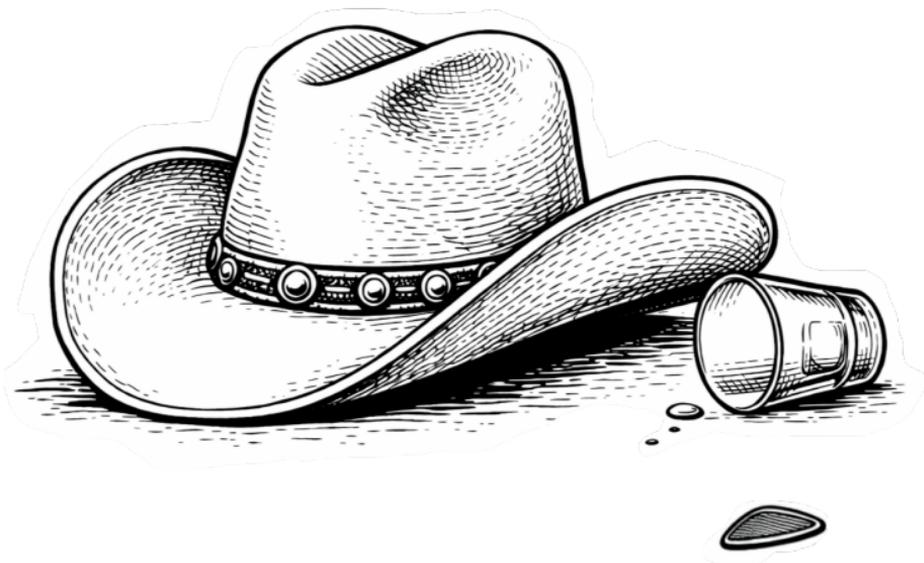
FREE!

Amaze your friends!
Mystify your enemies!

Stuff you might not have known about

Austin, Texas

even if you live here



Winter 2025



It's Winter in Austin, when the ebb and flow of tourists and festival-goers recedes for a moment, leaving room for the curious natives to explore things a little.

H. sapiens austinensis is naturally adapting to its winter mode -- huddled under a heat lamp on a patio, with a drink in one hand, and a vape that looks more like a little computer than a nicotine delivery system, in the other.

In this issue's pages you'll find interesting factoids for the curious downtown Austinite -- or off-season visitor -- decidedly devoid of stops on Dirty Sixth.

We'll take a haunted walk down Shoal Creek, ponder the contrasts of Clarksville, and consider the legacy of the moon towers. There's also a quick look at some local businesses, and a round-up of Austin's sister cities.

Take a breath, here at low tide, and ponder the cool stuff around you!

- Buttons the Gnome
Winter, 2025



Shoal Creek Ghost Tour

(D.I.Y. Edition)

You already know Shoal Creek for its packs of healthy-living humans running the trail. But it has a morbid and terrible past, too, which means -- ghosts.

Seiders Springs, roughly between thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth, is where an ill-fated gentleman by the name of Gideon White decided to settle in 1842, despite warnings that it was Comanche territory. A plaque marks the spot where he was killed, and it's said that he and a Comanche warrior haunt the location, fighting to this day.

General Custer's forces were camped along the creek in 1865 when a Cholera outbreak killed more than forty soldiers. Their hastily buried remains were later exhumed ... but not all of them. Many bodies remain unaccounted for at unknown locations along the trail.

In 1894, the writer **O. Henry** started a gold rush in **Pease Park** (around fifteenth) when he started digging holes looking for \$3m in buried treasure. He fled when he heard screaming, but others continued to search the area, digging large holes throughout the location.



What's with Waterloo?

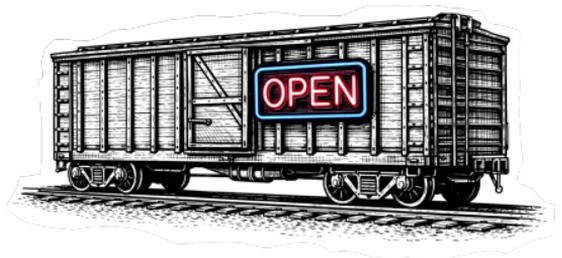
While many notable Texas towns were originally train stations and post offices, **Waterloo** was simply an 1835 settlement of four families living roughly where the modern-day Congress bridge lands on the north bank of the Colorado River.



It was an 1838 visit by the soon-to-be third president of the Republic of Texas -- Mirabeau **Lamar** -- that led to the proposal that it be built-up as the Capital of the republic.

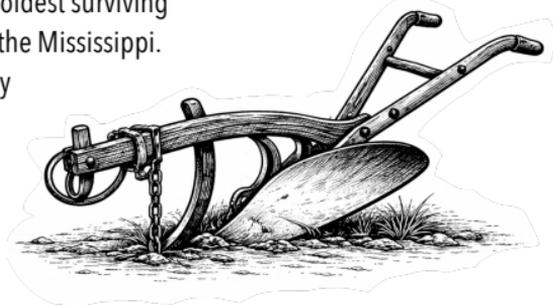
While legend has it that Steve **Austin** negotiated at the treaty oak to take the land, the town's name was actually decided by an act of the nascent republic's Congress. By law, the Capital city -- wherever they chose to put it -- was to be renamed Austin.

Austin's first railroad station had to wait until 1871, when the Houston and Texas Central Railway would run along what is now Fifth street. (Donn's Depot, anyone?)



Clarksville's Contradictions

You may know the official story, purchased by **James Clark**, the area was the oldest surviving freedman's community west of the Mississippi. Its vision: a place where formerly enslaved people could re-unite, free to direct their own lives.



Ironically it was bordered by **Governor Pease's** plantation ... who "gave" the land to his former slaves, hoping they would stay in the area and work it with only slightly modified economics.

The **Sweet Home Baptist Church** -- originally organized in the home of **Mary Smith** on the Haskell homestead -- has been rebuilt three times.

The 1928 Austin master plan sought to "encourage" residents to move to the **East side**, by making public services only available there. They didn't even have electric street lights.

Clarksville is "**bottomland**" which basically means all water (and waste) flow into it. It sometimes flooded with the run-off from more affluent neighbors.



In 1968, residents fought (unsuccessfully) to prevent the **MoPac freeway** from plowing straight through their community. Its concrete and asphalt were in contrast to Clarksville's lack of paved streets even into the 1970s.

In the mid-1970s, Clarksville was placed on the **National Register of Historic Places**. Developers moved in and began flipping houses.



The **Clarksville Natural Grocer** was founded in 1978. In 1980 it merged with SaferWay to become **Whole Foods**. The first horseman of gentrification saddled up.

By the 2000s, only **2.1%** of the former freedmen's town identified as Black.



The **Clarksville Community Development Corporation** keeps the story alive today. →



Moon Tower Mayhem

"Well actually ..." the technical name is
"moonlight tower."



Austin is the only town still operating these **nineteenth century** marvels.

Like so much vinyl, ours were pre-owned. (Purchased off **Detroit**.)

Thirty-one of these suckers were installed in 1895, ostensibly in reaction to Austin's **first serial killer** a decade earlier. Today, seventeen still stand, with only six in their original location. (And the existence of the Rainey Street killer runs counter to the argument that they are a deterrent to crime.)

It took until 2024 to get them all changed over to **LEDs**.

The one in Zilker Park gets turned into an **xmas tree** every year.



"Party at the moon tower!"

They never burn out because **UFOs** refuel them.



They're all **mapped**, here.



Business Backstories

You go past them all the time, but how much do you actually know about **local business**?

Amy Simmons of **Amy's Ice Creams** was pre-med at Tufts when she set out on her own. Now she has fourteen locations. (Each with a photo booth, by the way.)



It's called **Alamo Drafthouse** because they wanted to alphabetize before all the other theaters in the phonebook, including AMC.

Torchy's founder was a corporate chef at Enron (and then Dell) before starting his own thing. They got their devil mascot after an "epiphany" when a customer's feedback described them as "damn good."

Kendra Scott really did start with \$500 and a spare bedroom, then turned it into a \$1 billion business. What have you done with your life?

Chuy's gained fame in 2001 when George W. Bush's twin daughters were cited for trying to use a fake ID there.

Aaron Franklin was first written up by a journalist from Marfa (in the Big Bend Sentinel) while feeding friends at a backyard party.



Tacodeli was co-founded by a burned-out IT consultant after the Y2K panic passed.

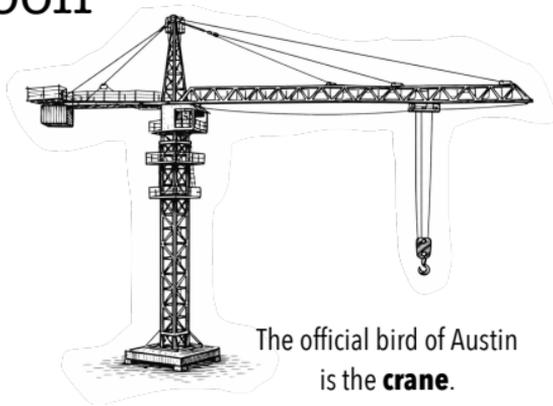
Elevator Tycoon

The **Capitol building** was the tallest building in Austin for eighty years (until the 1960s).

The **Capitol View Corridor** law requires that the Capitol building be completely visible from four key locations. It's why some downtown buildings are randomly shorter than their high-rise neighbors.

The top of the **Jenga Building** (Independent) didn't originally light up. That was only added after public outcry about it being ugly.

The **Waterline** (that monster over by Rainey) is now Texas' tallest building. The hotel portion of it will be the first phase to open.



The official bird of Austin is the **crane**.



None of the architects of the **Frost Bank Tower** have any connection to Rice University or its **Owl** mascot. The owl is a symbol of the Illuminati.

The **Sail Building** ("Block 185," technically) was supposed to house Google employees, but is currently empty. Every floor has a terrace that shades the one below it.



Sisters

Saltillo, Mexico, is Austin's oldest sister city (1968) and was the original capital of Texas, when it was Mexican.

Maseru, Lesotho, is the site of Africa's largest hydroelectric plant.

Adelaide, Australia, received a bronze statue of a longhorn that sits in their Mayor's office, today.

Taichung, Taiwan, exchanges students with Anderson High School.

Lima, Peru, is a place.

Oita, Japan, is famous for its wild Japanese macaques.

Antalya, Turkey, enabled ACC to teach Turkish classes.

Koblenz, Germany, created a dual degree with UT and a local university.



Angers, France, is just an hour and a half from Paris by high-speed rail.

Chiang Mai, Thailand, has over 300 temples.

Gwangmyeong, South Korea, sends exchange students to ACC.

Limerick, Ireland, is the latest addition, in 2024.

Pune, India, is a "friend" city ... the first step towards becoming an actual sister city.

Scrollable, printable,
accessible, and back issues
available online:

