

Indians Long Ago Gave Up Hope Of Texas Becoming Tourist Trap

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MERTZON, Texas — On the days when I ride the fence over by the highway, I divert myself by wondering what travelers think as they roar across this section of the state.

It's doubtful if any of them yearn for easel and brush to capture the beauty of thousands of leafless mesquite trees. Nor is it possible to imagine them coming to a halt and whipping out their cameras to record on film the vistas of catclaw brush and dry, grayish-blue tabosa grass.

Something should be done to improve the scenery of Texas, if for no other reason than to attract enough tourist business so that our state politicians can get some rest. Every election year, the hopefuls and incumbents alike swear they are unable to get a good night's sleep for worrying about the sad condition of our tourist industry.

Tourists do come to Texas, and in greater numbers every season. We don't have so many sightseers as the Grand Canyon or Yellowstone Park, but at least all of our attractions reported an increase in business last year. And this improvement can be credited to the diligence of various organizations devoted to bringing more traffic to our already congested highways.

Historical societies have placed markers or monuments about the state in such volume that, if their activity continues at the present pace, a citizen may have to order his tombstone upon leaving college to assure delivery.

Parks have been designated throughout the state. One in the Big Bend country is amply large to accommodate all of last year's World Fair visitors without anyone suffering claustrophobia. In connection with the expanding park systems, plans are completed or soon will be to dam up every wash and gully in the state. The object being to create a water wonderland that will make Minnesota look like a desert by comparison.

Unfortunately there remain numerous factions who are dissatisfied with the growth of Texas tourism. These groups are hopelessly opposed to each other, as evidenced by their charges and counter charges. For example, the Democrats blame the Republicans for stirring up such a fuss at election time; Republicans hotly bame the Democrats for keeping Texas a one-party state. Tourists like a lot of parties. Then the Drys and Prohibitionist jump into the battle and claim the Wets are throwing too many beer cans on the highways. The Wets retort that the Drys are guilty of keeping the taverns from serving mixed drinks.

Proponents of pari mutuel betting say their enemies are to blame for a lot of people going somewhere else than Texas to watch horse races. The opposing camp answers that race tracks in the early 30's gave Texas a bad name, and it is no wonder the state isn't filled with tourists. Their is even an undertone of religious controversy in the polemics; some Protestants feel that if the Catholics would move the Vatican to Texas the state would enjoy a definite increase in the number of visitors. Some Catholics blame the Indians for burning their early churches, which would by now have become tourist attractions.

The Indians are supremely interested in whether Texas has one visitor a year or none at all. They have long since moved to other states more favorable to fleecing tourists.

Thus, while tourism is on the increase in Texas, its growth may be expected to be rather slow. Unless of course, some federal agency beats Arizona out of the Grand Canyon and moves it to our state.

I should like to submit a few humble suggestions for boosting tourist traffic in the state. (Note: The money to carry out these suggestions is expected to come from the same source as Chicken Licken's rock — the sky.)

1. Borrow Mr. Johnson's Job Corps and build balancing rocks on every 10-mile stretch of Texas highways.
2. Buy petrified wood from other southwestern states and distribute same over large areas of the state by airplanes.
3. Give away LBJ hats at every port of entry in the state.
4. Each summer, hire enough reservation Indians to carry out authentic Indian wars at old forts, using genuine arrows, real torches, and live ammunition.
5. Produce propaganda films to persuade native Texans to stop spending their vacation money into other states, i.e. a scene depicting how thrilling it is to stand around and watch a sand dune shift in size. — S.F.