TEXAS

THE LONE STAR STATE *Became a state December 29, 1845 (28th)*

Texas is the biggest state after Alaska, and it was once a country of its own. It has piney woods, sandy beaches, desert mountains and wide plains full of cattle.



Why the Lone Star State?

Texas was once its own country. In 1836, Texans led by General Sam Houston won independence from Mexico at the Battle of San Jacinto. The new Republic of Texas flew a flag with a single star. A stone tower now marks the battlefield. It stands about 567 feet tall and is topped with a star that weighs 220 tons.



A State Named Friend

The Caddo people lived in the woods of east Texas when Spanish explorers arrived. The Caddo word taysha means friend. The Spanish used it as a name for the Caddo and their land, and they spelled it Tejas. In time Tejas became Texas. The state motto is still one word, Friendship. Caddo Lake carries the nation's name.



The Gusher at Spindletop

On January 10, 1901, drillers on a low hill near Beaumont struck oil more than 1,100 feet down. It became a gusher, a well that shoots oil into the air, and it blew more than 100 feet high. About 100,000 barrels poured out each day for nine days. Beaumont's population tripled in three months, and the Texas oil boom began.



Houston, the Eagle Has Landed

In 1961 NASA picked Houston as the home of its astronauts. Since 1965, a room there called Mission Control has guided American crews in space. When Apollo 11 landed on the Moon on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong radioed, "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." Astronauts still train in Houston today.



The Giant Flier of Big Bend

In 1971 a student named Douglas Lawson found a huge fossil wing bone in Big Bend. It belonged to Quetzalcoatlus, a flying reptile from the end of the age of dinosaurs. Its wings stretched about 36 feet, which makes it one of the largest flying animals ever found. Scientists think it stood about 12 feet tall, higher than a basketball hoop.



Cattle That Walked to Market

Texas longhorns come from Spanish and settlers' cattle that mixed and ran half wild on the open range. They had long legs and hard hoofs, just right for walking. In the twenty years after 1867, cowboys drove five to ten million cattle out of Texas to be sold. Longhorns were so tough that some even gained weight along the trail.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 31.7 million (2nd most)
Size	About 268,600 square miles (2nd largest)
Highest point	Guadalupe Peak, 8,751 feet
Counties	254
Neighbors	New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mexico to the south

DID YOU KNOW?

- Each summer, as many as 1.5 million bats live under one bridge in Austin. They pour out together at dusk.
- Kemp's ridley sea turtles nest on Padre Island. They are the smallest sea turtles, only about two feet long.
- Texas has more counties than any other state.
- A pharmacist in Waco first served the soft drink Dr Pepper in 1885.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to Palo Duro Canyon?
3. In what year did the oil gusher at Spindletop blow?

Answers: 1. Austin 2. Lubbock 3. 1901