

Along the Llano Branch From Llano to Kingsland

Welcome to the Llano County Historic Railroad District.

Your trip along this stretch of track is the result of many years of planning, arranging, and persuading. It was not easy to save the railroad from scrapping in 1992 and it was even more difficult to raise the funds to restore the track and structures. One of the great steps to save the line from Kingsland to Llano was the entry of the National Register Historic District - 29 miles from Scobey to Llano - in 1997. Funds from federal transportation grants and Capitol Metro capital investments in 1996 and 2000 have resulted in stabilization, upgrades, rail replacement and bridge repair.

The extension of the Austin and Northwestern from Fairland to Llano was completed in 1891 and 1892. The original line went to Burnet in 1882, to Granite Mountain in 1885, and to Marble Falls in 1889. Over the years the line carried thousands of cattle and goats, hundreds of flats and gondolas of granite and construction stone, cedar posts, general merchandize, building materials, and other products. Passenger service ended in 1937.

If you are riding from Kingsland to Llano, reverse the order of information and "read up" as the old railroad schedules used to say.

Locations are marked with a milepost marker based on Mile 0 at the "Austin Wye" at east 5th Street in Austin, where the old Northwestern line left the Southern Pacific Main line at Mile 0.

>> **MP 98.8** Llano Wye and spur to the north crossing Hwy 29. New Llano Station and museum is the end of the railroad excursion. It will be built with funds from a TEA-21 state/federal grant. The grant also allowed for the rehabilitation of the Llano wye.

>> **MP 98** A switch at this location "provided access to the stockyard loading pens near Teichville."

>> **MP 97.8** Stockyards located here once loaded thousands of head of cattle for shipment to Fort Worth, Houston and other stockyards.

>> **MP 97.4** Town site of Teichville. Frank Teich was a pioneer in the granite industry in Llano County. Teich had a studio, granite yard and several homes in the community from 1901-1920.

>> **MP 96.9** Abandoned Boxcar

>> **MP 95** Granite outcrop. You are provided with an up close and personal look at an outcrop of granite along the track. The railroad construction gangs had to blast their way through the very hard stone in order to find a safe roadbed for the railroad over 100 years ago.

>> **MP 95 -87** Llano River valley (to south of rail line). Anywhere from MP 95 to MP 87, you can view the magnificent sweep of the Llano River valley, one of the most beautiful scenes in Texas and the most scenic stretch along any tourist railroad in the state. The river runs over granite boulders and leaves wide sweeping sandbars. Our view from the rail line is far better than that from parallel Texas Highway 29.

>> **MP 94.2** Wright's Creek Bridge - double span bridge just east of Llano.

>> **MP 93.5** "Iron Spur Station" (abandoned Mine). In the July 29, 1993 edition of the Llano News, Wilburn Oatman, Jr., wrote "...the land upon which the the town of Bessemer was laid out (1894) comprised about 130 acres...which fronted on the Llano River on the north side about eight miles from Llano...(with) 420 lots ...on each side of the Austin and Northwestern Railroad".

>> **MP 93** Sandstone Mountain (across the river)

>> **MP 92** Geology of Llano County - Ancient Pre-Cambrian era rocks in Llano County have been exposed in what is called "The Central Mineral Region" by geologists. Massive formations of granite in thirteen different varieties can be found. Talc, graphite, iron ore and feldspar were also produced over the years. (Handbook of Texas) The county is a "geologist's dream", and local legend abounds with mysterious stories about Spanish gold and silver mines in the 17th and 18th century.

>> **MP 91.4** Little Llano River (two span truss bridge). This bridge is the most imposing bridge

in Llano County and the longest span of any bridge along the line today. Like the five other truss bridges, was moved to Llano County in the 1930s to replace older timber structures.

>> **MP 90.5** Stolz Station - abandoned granite quarry - The only remaining siding along the line west of Kingsland once served a gray granite quarry first operated by Pete Stolz north of Highway 29. You can see the rails curving away across the highway. Stone was used for Galveston Jetties in the 1980s.

>> **MP 89.3** Miller Creek Bridge - truss bridge

>> **MP 87.7** Graphite. Abandoned mine.

>> **MP 86** Granite Hills Ranch A lonely milepost marker at MP 86 signals that we are approaching beautiful Granite Hills Ranch, just across Highway 29 to the north of the track. The large tract of land has been ranched since the 19th century and modern improvements made the ranch a showplace in the 1950s.

>> **MP 85-99** Trees and flowers, wildlife and livestock in Llano County . Depending on the time of year, you will be richly rewarded by wildflowers, prickly pear cactus, groves of Live Oaks, herds of fat cattle, clusters of goats. Llano County's wildflower season, from March to May, is magnificent, with bluebonnets, Indian Blanket, coreopsis, and other flowers in profusion.

>> **MP 85.7** Pennington Creek Truss Bridge

>> **Near MP 85.** Packsaddle Mountain (to south across River) . One landmark of Llano County is Packsaddle Mountain, located across the river. It was the scene of a fight between eight cowboys and twenty-one Apache Indians in 1873. The Apache band had quietly entered the county, planning to prey upon cattle and settlements nearby. The cowboys attacked the Indian camp on the slopes of the mountain, and, after killing the Indian's leader and two others, the Indians fled. It was the last Indian raid into the county. (Llano News, April 17, 1986)

>> **MP 84.1** "Hobart Station"

>> **MP 83.6** French John Creek and the first of the "railroad bridges of Llano County"

>> **MP 83.3** Construction of Buchanan Dam and the wye at Beverly . In 1931, the Hamilton Dam project began at Lake Buchanan. Construction stopped for several years as the depression deepened. After the creation of the Lower Colorado River Authority, the dam was completed in 1937. A railroad spur ran from Beverly through Long Valley to near the dam site. The county road just west of the highway crossing was the basic route of the west leg of the wye. . There was a triangle of track ("wye") at Beverly which allowed for turning around of locomotives bringing trains of materials for the dam. (See Journal of Texas Short-Line Railroads, Aug-October, 1998, pp. 53-57, for some excellent photos.)

>> **MP 81.5** Long Mountain. Long Mountain, to the north of the tracks, dominates the landscape west of Kingsland. Towering above the track just east of Beverly, it is a major landmark along the line west of the Colorado River.

>> **MP 79-81.** The town of Kingsland, located at the junction of the Llano and Colorado Rivers, was founded in 1885. Impressive Lookout Mountain, just to the east, provides a magnificent view of the lake. Ask your HCRA representative if you would like more information about Kingsland (LCVG, 1999) Don't miss "Aqua BOOM!", the popular summer festival, in August!

>> **MP 79.1** Antlers Hotel complex, built by Austin & Northwestern Railroad in 1901. Hotel, Railroad Crew House (west of Hotel), passing siding, old Muldoon Station, Old I & GN 1800s "combine" car (both moved on site in 1999), and three cabooses used as Bed & Breakfast units are found on the property. The amazing rehabilitation of the Antlers Hotel complex stands as a wonderful gift to the Hill Country. 325 388 4411; 800 383 0007

>> **Mile post 78.8** Kingsland Bridge over Colorado River, constructed in 1963. The modern bridge, built in 1963, was put in place by the Southern Pacific Railroad in one of the last major building campaigns by the railroad. The modern structure replaced one built in the 1890s. The pressed concrete bridge spanned Lake Granite Shoals and the Colorado River. (You can see the railroad bridge from FM 1431 just east of Kingsland.)

Join the Hill Country Railroad Association, Box 383, Llano, Tx 78643. \$10 annual dues.

Brian Schenk, July, 2004. Terry Nathan, HCRA Member, provided notes about milepost points.