

Believe it or not: Colorado River version!

assembled by Robert Mace, November 18, 2016

- My history with the Colorado
 - It's "my" basin.
 - Always lived within a quarter of a mile of Shoal Creek
 - Confusion over the Colorado...
 - MS advisor...
 - Reporters...
 - The "other" Colorado
 - BuRec report
- What is thy name?
 - Colorado means "red" or "reddish" in Spanish (Wikipedia)
 - Was probably called the Kanahatino by the Caddos (Handbook of Texas)
 - Pashohono by some of the other Indian groups (Handbook of Texas)
 - Juan Domínguez de Mendoza and Nicolás López named it San Clemente in 1684. (Handbook of Texas)
 - René Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle named it La La Sablonnière ("Sand-Pit") in 1687
 - Originally, the Colorado was called the Brazos de Dios and the Modern-day Brazos was called the Colorado by Alonso De Leon in 1690, which makes more sense since the Brazos runs red (Wikipedia; Handbook of Texas)
- What are you like?
 - The Colorado is the longest river in Texas with both its source and mouth in the state (Wikipedia)
 - The basin extends a wee bit into New Mexico (Wikipedia)
 - Head in Dawson County (Handbook of Texas)
 - In Dawson County, just north of Lamesa, one of these formations contains a small spring that has run continuously for as long as anyone can remember. This spring is usually

described as the headwaters of the Colorado River. (Texas Monthly)

- Escarpment (Staked Plains) of the Ogallala
- Total length 845 miles (USGS)
 - Flows 600 miles (Handbook of Texas)
- Catchment of 42,318 square-miles
- Second longest river in Texas by length (TWDB; Rio Grande #1)
- Sixth largest by average annual flow 1.9 mAFY (TWDB; Brazos #1 @ 6.1 mAFY)
- Early history
 - Eagle Lake is the original colony founded by Stephen F. Austin, the town site was dedicated in 1856 and named for the lake it borders.
 - The Old Three Hundred, folks that received the first land grants from Stephen F. Austin, followed the Colorado inland and settled on its shores. (Handbook of Texas)
 - In 1844, when both England and France were working to prevent the annexation of Texas by the United States, the British minister in Mexico secured a written avowal from Antonio López de Santa Anna to recognize the independence of Texas with the Colorado River as its boundary. (Handbook of Texas)
- Flooding
 - Worst flood on the river was in July 1869 when it crested at 51 feet in Austin (LCRA)
 - Lyndon Johnson and the Brown Brothers cemented what would be a lifelong relationship in building the first couple of reservoirs, Buchanan and Mansfield.
 - Robert Caro, in one of his books on LBJ, noted that the story of the creation of the Highland Lakes warranted its own book.
 - Even when all six lakes are brimming, the cushion Travis provides is generous enough to accept the most punishing storm LCRA officials imagine ever confronting. “Forty inches in three days,” said Birdwell. (Texas Monthly)

- Buchanan Dam was the longest multiple-arch dam in the United States when LCRA completed it in 1937. More than 2 miles long and 176 feet high, it creates a lake covering 36 square miles, holding more than 323 billion gallons of water.
Lake Travis sports the only clothing-optional public park in Texas.
 - I've been there once...
 - Might be a good stop for next year!
- Rice
 - Early Anglo settlers at the Austin Colony in 1828 grew rice.
 - Was called "Providence Rice" because they didn't rely on irrigation.
 - Most Texas rice is grown in ~~the Colorado River Basin~~ LCRA's service area (which extends outside the basin proper) (LCRA)
 - Well screens introduced in Texas due to a drought and the need for more wells for rice. (Land of Underground Rain)
 - Pitless pumps were also invented due to rice fields. (Land of Underground Rain)
- Matagorda Bay
 - Bay was created when the glaciers melted about 10,000 years ago and swamped the old channel and lower basin.
 - The present Caney Creek channel was the channel of the Colorado until about a thousand years ago, when the river cut into a wide estuary in the present Caney Creek area and redirected its flow to the west. (Handbook of Texas; Caney Creek is at the most northeastern part of East Matagorda Bay)
 - Matagorda Peninsula was known by Native Americans as Snake Island.
 - Matagorda Bay and East Matagorda Bay used to be a single bay.
 - By 1839, a log jam formed 10 miles up from the mouth to 50 miles upstream.
 - By 1858 the situation in Matagorda and Wharton counties had become so bad that the state appropriated funds for the

construction of a new channel around the raft. (Handbook of Texas)

- Locals first cut a channel through the log jam in 1926; worked for a few years.
- They then dynamited the jam in 1929.
- A flood in 1929 then pushed the jam into the bay.
- Flood debris created a large and growing delta (500 acres a year) clear to the other side of the bay.
- In the 1930s, locals dug a canal to bypass the delta, splitting the bay.
- The Colorado was redirected back into Matagorda Bay in 1992.
- Federal forces captured Cavallo Pass in 1863 and abandoned it in 1864 for the Red River Campaign to capture Shreveport. (Handbook of Texas)
- Matagorda Peninsula was eminent domained by the US government in 1941 and used as a bombing and machine gun range. (Handbook of Texas)
- Matagorda Bay is the second largest estuary @ 244,490 acres (TWDB; also includes Lavaca and Tres Palacios rivers; Trinity-San Jacinto is the largest @ 345,280 sq-miles)
- Water use
 - First direct-potable reuse plant in the US.
 - Corpus Christi has a pipeline that dips its toes into the Colorado.
 - 1,266 parties hold the water rights to all of its bounty
 - The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that there are more than 20,000 abandoned wells in the Colorado river basin that may still be flowing salt water today
- Misc.
 - Columbus is the oldest, continuously occupied Anglo-American community in Texas and is known as the "City of Live Oaks." Once an Indian village called Montezuma, the town was laid out in 1823.
 - Be careful when eating TexMex in Columbus...

- Columbus is also home to the Mary Elizabeth Hopkins Santa Claus Museum.
- The Regency Bridge was the area's (San Saba County) first bridge over the Colorado River. It has been rebuilt twice, and is one of the last remaining suspension bridges in Texas. It has just one lane and a timber floor.