

Dear Bfrog,

Where did the word "Barbecue" come from?

Thanks,

Carnivore

Dear Carnivore,

Barbecue comes from the Haitian word *barbacoa*, meaning a framework of sticks for smoking or roasting meat. The African slaves in Haiti traditionally cooked meat this way, and when they came to the South as slaves, the plantation owners there found that style of cooking meat more desirable for their palates, particularly pork. The plantation owners began to serve "barbacoa" to their guests, and soon the word morphed into meaning not only the way of cooking meat, but the social gathering as well. If you want to discover the history and recipes of Texas read *A folk history of Texas Foods* published by the TCU Press.

Dear Bfrog,

Where did the term "square deal" come from?

Thanks,

All about business

Dear All about business,

A square deal refers to a card game that has not been rigged. Square cards are harder for the dealer to cheat with, so games where square cards were used were considered more fair. It was also Teddy Roosevelt's 1904 Re-election campaign slogan. When someone is "square," that means they are straightforward and trustworthy. If you want to find out more interesting definitions for western terms read Dictionary of the American West published by the TCU Press.

Dear B-Frog,

I am a pure Texas Country music fan. Who do you consider to be the greatest Texas country star?

Thanks,
Twangy

Dear Twangy,

Many consider Earnest Tubbs to be the greatest Texas country music star of all time. He sang over 250 songs in his long career, and sold more than 30 million records. He is credited with creating the "honky tonk" sound by amplifying his band to overcome the loud noises in southern dance and beer halls. This sound became a standard for country music after Tubbs's bands, The Texas Troubadours, implemented it. Tubbs is known for creating a program in Nashville for rising country stars to perform on. This program would be known for helping out the careers of Hank Williams, Hank Snow, and Loretta Lynn. You can find out more about Earnest Tubbs or other famous Texas country singers by reading Texas Country Singers by Phil Fry and Jim Lee published by the TCU Press.

Dear BFrog,

Can you share a little history of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence?

Thanks,
Forever Lone Star

Dear Forever Lone Star,

The first thing you should know is the Texas signers were nothing like the group of men that signed the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The U.S. signers were educated men, doctors, lawyers, ordained ministers, and plantation owners. The Texas signers were elected from their respective counties, and were rowdy frontiersmen. One of them had even been to prison in North Carolina, and he was banished from that state for cheating at cards! Most of the delegates came to sign the declaration and then returned to their homesteads. Many of them never held public office in their entire lives (except for the signing, of course), and the only reason they are still in our memory is because a large population of Texas counties are named after them. The one signer that was known for his education was Lorenzo de Zavala, a Mexican aristocrat fluent in English, Spanish, and French. He was at one time a delegate to the Spanish Congress and later the Mexican parliament, the Secretary of the Treasury for Mexico, and later a Minister to France. He was immediately elected ad interim vice president of the Republic of Texas, but he passed shortly thereafter from pneumonia; but the brave conference that he and his fellow Texians assembled for on March 1, 1836, remains his greatest memorial. To read more interesting short essays about Texas, read *Texas, my Texas: Musing of the Rambling Boy*, by Lonnn Taylor, published by TCU Press.

BFrog

Dear BFrog,

I understand that Fort Worth was a fort at one time, but why did it go away? Was it torn down, and where it was originally?

Thanks,
Fort Worth Resident

Dear Fort Worth Resident,

Fort Worth itself was “established on the south side of the West Fork of the Trinity River,” according to Brevet Major Arnold, the commanding officer that established the fort. The exact location (and a rather fitting one) of the fort’s headquarters building is where the criminal courts building in Fort Worth sits. The fort itself used to be on the frontier, and was only meant to keep Indian raiding parties from reaching settlers east of its location. Once settlers reached Fort Worth, a new line of forts was established much farther to the west, and Fort Worth was abandoned as a military outpost. To answer your question, the buildings in Fort Worth became homes and businesses as people moved into the area, and eventually were torn down to build newer ones. So the buildings in and around the Tarrant County Courthouse are where the fort was originally. To learn more about Fort Worth, I suggest reading the book *Fort Worth: Outpost on the Trinity* by Oliver Knight, published by the TCU Press.

BFrog

Dear BFrog,

Do you like poetry? And if you do, can you share one of your favorite Texas poems?

Thanks,

Aspiring Poet

Dear Aspiring poet,

I do like poetry, and thankfully Texas has many poets to choose from. One of my all-time favorites is Pat Mora who received a National Endowment for the Arts Poetry fellowship in 1994. She wrote a wonderful poem titled "Ode to El Paso," and here are a few lines:

"Cada primavera, lizards play between your toes and young again, you sip the yellow breeze, desert fountain of youth, your breath soft as dawn. You blush at the wind's whispered invitations at the feathery caresses of ruby-throated hummingbirds and began your slow spin." You can read the entire poem, as well as other selected poems, short stories, and essays from famous El Paso writers in *Literary El Paso*, published by TCU Press.

Dear BFrog,

I've heard people talk about finding buried treasures in Texas. I think it's just made up legends. Is there really buried treasure in Texas? Cause if there are, I need to go get my shovel and start digging!

Thanks,

Skeptical but hopeful

Dear Skeptical but hopeful,

There has been many treasures discovered in Texas, and there are many others that are still to be found, but don't grab your shovel just yet! You need to go research the stories about buried treasure, and then find out if you can get permission to go search for the treasures. Also, you might want to be cautious about the hazards. For example, two men from Wise County Texas uncovered a man hole sealing an Indian cave, purported filled with gold stolen from wagon trains. The legend goes that whoever uncovered the hole first would die because the cave was cursed. Within one year, both men were dead from strange causes. But, later on, one of the men's sons uncovered the cave and found treasure inside. The legends are just legends of course, but there are some wild stories about Texas treasures. You can read about them in the book Lone Star Lost: Buried Treasures in Texas.

Dear BFrog,

I love the Texas Bluebonnet, and the fact that it is our state flower. Can you talk a little bit about it?

Thanks,

Flower Connoisseur

Dear Flower Connoisseur,

Perhaps you would like to know how it became our state flower. In 1893, at the National Congress of Women, it was determined that each state should be represented in a garland of flowers, with an individual flower as the "state flower" to be designated by each state legislature. The job to convince the Texas legislator fell to the National Society of Colonial Dames Texas Branch. They brought the request to the state house of representatives, and a debate over which flower should be chosen ensued. One member, Philip Clement, wanted cotton as the state flower, since it was so important to the state's commerce! John Green rose to the defense of the Bluebonnet, and after a painting of the flower in a vase was shown to the entire house, it was unanimously accepted. There was only one problem: There are 6 different varieties of bluebonnets in Texas. Originally, the only variety that was represented was *Lupinus subcarnosus*, because it is considered the bluest bluebonnet. But in 1971, a resolution was passed officially declaring all 6 varieties of bluebonnets to be considered the state flower. If you want to learn more fascinating stories from Texas, then read *Texas, my Texas: Musings of the Rambling Boy* by Lonny Taylor, published by the TCU Press.

Dear BFrog,

Texas to me is drinking a cold Dr. Pepper with a friend on a hot, West Texas day at an old gas station. Can you talk a little about Texas summers and soft drinks?

Sincerely,
Sugary Sweet

Dear Sugary Sweet,

Texas does have a long history with America's favorite summer treat, as it should! In the blazing summer heat, nothing soothes the soul like a savory bottle of coke, sweating frigid beads of water. Back in the 1930's, most all Texas gas stations had a large icebox out front, emblazoned with the coca cola logo, and filled with glistening frozen chips, fresh from a local ice house. Glass bottles occupied the space in between the ice, differentiated by their different colored metal caps: The classic Coca Cola, Dr. Pepper, 7-Up, Pepsi-Cola, Royal Crown Cola, Squirt, NuGrape, Delaware Punch, Big Red, Grapette, and Nehi Orange. For a nickel, a person could pull one out, pop the cap on the bottle opener attached to the box, and relieve their summer thirst. By the 1950's, the icebox was replaced by a machine that cooled the sodas with refrigerant. The soda's cost rose to a dime, but the bottle and the pleasure were the same. To find out more interesting stories from Texas history, read *Texas Road Trip* by Bryan Woolley, published by the TCU Press.

Dear BFrog,

I know that former House Speaker Jim Wright is more known for the scandal surrounding his resignation, but is there a better story that might be told about the speaker? I know he did some good in his tenure at congress!

Sincerely,
Politically Savvy

Dear Politically Savvy,

There were many major accomplishments by Speaker Jim Wright, most notably, he was one of the longest serving congressman in the state's history, serving from 1955 until 1989. He won his congressional seat against a 4-term incumbent. Wright took out a full half hour of television time from a local TV station and took out several ads with the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, one of them being the day before the election. He won the district with 60% of the vote. Once at congress, he requested a seat on the Foreign Affairs Committee, but later he was convinced to be on the Public Works Committee by then-speaker Sam Rayburn. The appointment turned out to be a great fit. Wright helped improve legislation by Dwight Eisenhower in the post-war era, including helping pass the Interstate Highway Act. He was an innovator at congress, supporting solutions for peace with the Soviet Union, paying down the national debt, reformed campaign finance, and better relations with Latin America. In his last speech, President John F. Kennedy said of Jim Wright's Fort Worth district that no other city, "is better represented in the congress." Speaker Wright is also known for his great oration, and he used this skill to bring Southern Democrats into his party leadership's fold. To read more about Jim Wright and other powerful Texas political leaders, read *Lone Star Leaders: Power and Personality in the Texas Congressional Delegation* by Jim Riddlesperger Jr. and Anthony Champagne.

Sincerely,
BFrog

Dear BFrog,

Whenever I visit Galveston I always have a good time. The sun and the beach are just perfect there, and there is always someone interesting that I meet. Do you have any fun stories from Galveston?

Sincerely,
Beach lover

Dear Beach lover,

During prohibition, Galveston was smuggling hub for Caribbean rum transported to the major U.S. cities in the Midwest and Southwest. The profits from the contraband eventually were greater than the profits from legal imports, and the bootleggers began to fight over control. Two gangs emerged: the "Beach Gang," so called because they landed their cargo at west beach. Their leader was Ollie Quinn, a well-known citizen of Galveston. John preferred to be cautious, presenting himself as an upstanding citizen. He even attended the local baptist church every Sunday, to give a \$100 bill. The other gang was the "Downtown Gang," run by Jack Nounes, notorious for his wild recklessness. His favorite past time was outrunning Coast Guard cutters pursuing his launch, Cherokee, the fastest boat on the island. He smuggled booze with many wild personalities, including a journalist named Frank Nitti. Frank stole \$24,000 from Jack and his partners, and escaped north to Chicago, where he became Al Capone's righthand man, and earned the nickname "The Enforcer." One night, Jack and another associate found Nitti at a Houston bar, and dragged him back to Galveston. Over a plate of spaghetti, they "convinced" him that he needed to make amends. He was able to leave in the morning with his life, but not until he handed over \$24,000 with interest. To read this and other exciting tales from Galveston, read Galveston: A History of the Island by Gary Cartwright, published by the TCU Press.

Dear BFrog,

Do you know a good recipe for squirrel? I was just given some squirrel meat by a friend who hunts them and I don't know how to cook it.

Thanks,

Meat Eater

Dear Meat Eater,

I do know a good recipe! It comes straight from a collections of recipes from the pioneer period and it is very simple: Rinse skinned squirrel in water. Dip in buttermilk and corn meal, and fry in hot lard. When fried, add a cup of water and steam covered.

Now, if you have to skin the animal, I can't help you there! But, you can find out how to skin a squirrel and find other great Texas recipes in *Grace and Gumption, the Cookbook* published by the TCU Press.

BFrog

Dear BFrog,

I recently moved to Texas, and I am still trying to learn the vocabulary down here. I heard someone use the term "light a shock" the other day. Do you know what it means?

Thanks,
Still Learning

Dear Still Learning,

It's a good thing you are trying to learn the Texas dialect, but I am telling you now, you won't have to memorize this expression since only older folks use it. To "light a shock" means to leave quickly. The term comes from around cowboy's campfires. Since corn was a universal food and was carried around in its shuck, you would often come to a fellow cowboy's campfire and discover that it was surrounded by empty corn shucks. When a cowboy would go from one fire to another, he would find himself in the darkness for a few seconds in the blackness. When he would come to another campfire, his eyes would not be adjusted to the light, so he would light a shuck; the shuck would burn bright, but only for a few seconds. Thus, "lighting a shock" meant you had to go because the shuck would burn out too fast. You can learn more interesting terms from the west in the Dictionary of the American West, published by TCU Press.

BFrog

Dear BFrog:

I keep hearing on the news about how the elections are coming up in November, and how certain states are famous for being first caucus or primary states in the nation or in a region. All this talk got me wondering: Is Texas known for something during election years? I think if we aren't famous for something, then we should be!

Thanks,
Big Texas Fan

Dear Big Texas Fan,

As a matter of fact, we are famous for something. Texas hosted the first ever Vice-Presidential debates, on October 15, 1976. The debate was held at Houston's Alley Theater and it was between then-Senator's Bob Dole of Kansas and Walter Mondale of Minnesota. The event was hosted by the League of Women's Voters and was broadcast to an audience of 43 million viewers. Walter Mondale would go on to live in 1 Observatory Circle in Washington D.C. after he and his running mate, President Jimmy Carter, won the election. You can find out other bragging bytes about Texas in the book *Braggin' on Texas* published by the TCU Press.