

BILL ANALYSIS

H.C.R. 49

By: Cook, Robby
Culture, Recreation, & Tourism
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Lee County welcomes visitors year-round to a multitude of festive events that reflect the area's rich heritage and hospitable spirit.

Giddings, the largest town in the county, was founded in 1871 along the line of the Houston and Texas Central Railway, and the city became the county seat when Lee County was created in 1874. As an administrative and judicial center, the town echoed with the voices of a highly diverse population, for the county's early residents included a large number of immigrants, especially Wends, Germans, Czechs, Moravians, and Danes. By 1890, nearly one out of every eight citizens in Lee County was foreign born.

Although cotton was the primary crop, agriculture in Lee County was relatively varied during the last quarter of the 19th century. The coming of the railroad in the 1870s provided a tremendous boost to cattle raising and hog production, and today livestock and livestock products account for the greatest part of the county's agricultural income. By virtue of its location on the H&TC, Giddings developed into a major shipping point for the area's farms, ranches, and businesses.

In order to promote a better understanding of forces that have shaped life in Lee County and the lives of many Texans across the state, the Giddings Economic Development Corporation has led in establishing the Rural Texas Tourism Center and Transportation Museum. This fine resource is to be located downtown in the former railroad depot buildings, which the corporation is currently restoring.

Lee County's colorful past, its cultural inheritance, and its strong communal bonds are particularly evident during a number of special events that take place throughout the year. Among those most prominent of these is the Lee County Fair and Rodeo, whose program includes the Charcoal Challenge, for barbecue aficionados, and the State of Texas Noodle Cook-Off. The rodeo is held in Giddings, which is also the site of the Lee County Junior Livestock Show and Sale, the National Old Timer's Rodeo, the Pro Bull Riders Fourth of July Bull Riding contest, the Bull Ball in the Fall, and the Rope and Smoke Tournament, sponsored by the Brazos Valley Chapter of the American Petroleum Institute.

In addition to events that bespeak the county's ranching heritage, other highlights of the year serve to mark major historical events, support civic organizations and worthy causes, and celebrate ethnic folkways and contributions. The scene of many such occasions, Giddings is home to the Lee County Juneteenth Celebration, Fireman's Fourth of July Celebration, American Legion Veterans' Day Breakfast, 911 Firefighters Appreciation, "Friends of the Depot" Wine and Jazz Festival, St. Margaret's Catholic Church and Immanuel Lutheran Church Fall Festivals, Rotary Club County Music Monday, Rotary/Sheriff Posse Fun Night, Lions Club Chili Bowl Cook-off, "Word Wrangler: Festival, and Lee County Heritage Valentine's Day Gala.

A short distance from Giddings, the community of Serbin, established in 1855, hosts a festival to celebrate the culture and achievements of the area's Wendish settlers, as well as an annual picnic and an Advent Candlelight Dinner.

The Lee County calendar is also dotted with such events as the Dime Box Homecoming and Mini Marathon, the Fedor Fish Fry, and the Lincoln Community Club Picnic and Crawfish Boil. Attractions in Lexington range from the Homecoming reunion and Fourth of July celebration to the Christmas Tree Lighting Festival and Chocolate Lover's Festival.

Altogether, Lee County features more than 200 events a year, offering a wide variety of entertainment for Texas families, and it is fitting that this outstanding corner of the Lone Star State be appropriately recognized.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

Lee County is designated at the official Festival Capital of Texas.