



GROOM

Approaching Groom, drivers can't help but be overwhelmed by the town's two looming landmarks. The first is The Leaning Tower of Texas, a water tower built with one leg shorter than the others to attract tourists, with the name "Britten, U.S.A." splashed across its face. The second is The Largest Cross in the Western Hemisphere, a Bible-Belt Goliath some 19 stories high that weighs in religiously at two-and-one-half million pounds.

Groom was named for Colonel B.B. Groom, the first general manager of the Francklyn Land and Cattle Company. Colonel Groom was loose with his money. His spending brought about the bankruptcy and reorganization of the Francklyn Company as the White Deer Lands Trust. But the good colonel had his good sense, too: He was the first man in the Texas Panhandle to hire workers to drill water for cattle.

Route 66 nostalgia is alive and booming in Groom. The classic 66 Courts have long been abandoned, but their sign survives to thrill shutterbugs.

Road warriors wanting something to snack on can sidle into the Golden Spread Grill. Local Ruby Denton bought this venerable cafe in 1957, and it remains one of the tastiest havens to be found anywhere along Route 66.



EXIT 112

OR DRIVE 66!

**From I-40 Exit 124 (TX 70),
follow the south service
road west into Groom.**



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LARK

Named for Lark Stangler, a local rancher, Lark was born in 1903 during construction of the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway. Two brothers, Q.W. and Joe Krizan, operated the site's first store.

Lark never could compete with its larger neighbors, Groom and Conway. In 1915, the town had ten residents. Through the 1930s, the population never increased. In 1946, *A Guide Book to Highway 66* author Jack D. Rittenhouse found a gas station, a store and a few railroad houses in Lark. But by 1957, the town's post office had flown away, and the future looked dark for Lark.

Today, Lark rests on the Texas landscape like a shadow of a shadow—a fading snapshot filled with fields of grain elevators and yesterday's dreams.

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OR DRIVE 66!

From Groom, continue west on the I-40 south service road into Lark.



CONWAY

Even cowboys have to go to school. That's one reason modern motorists are able to visit Conway.

This venerable community—the last to be reached on Texas Route 66 before giant Amarillo—shares its origins with those of the Lone Star School. The Lone Star was the first rural school in the Texas Panhandle to endure. It was established in 1892 to educate the children of area ranchers and homesteaders.

After J.D. Delzell and P.H. Fisher planned a new town in 1905—and named it for former Carson County commissioner H.B. Conway—the Lone Star moved its one-room schoolhouse inside city limits.

Although Conway claims its share of old Route 66 buildings and businesses, the true star here is the road itself. Heading out of town, Route 66 veers away from Interstate 40 and into a landscape that is all its own. The independence of the road—its sense of freedom—the thumpety-thump that meets your ears as the pavement section lines smack your tires and roll away into yesterday—all will tell you, as we tell you here: this is a segment that **MUST** be driven if you want to understand old Route 66.

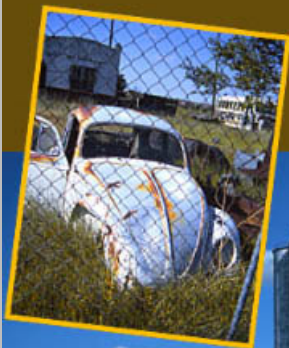
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AMARILLO

Amarillo's origins harken back to 1887. During that year, graders working for the



From Lark, continue west on the I-40 south service road into Conway.





EXITS 85 TO 62 A-B

OR DRIVE 66!

From Conway, continue west on the I-40 south service road. At the junction with I-40 Exit 89, cross to the interstate's north side. Take the I-40 north service road west. Proceed some four miles to the intersection with Business 40. Turn right to follow Business 40 into Amarillo. Turn left onto Pierce St. Turn right onto 6th St. Angle left onto Bushland. Turn right onto 9th Street. Pass under Amarillo Blvd. Turn left at the light onto Business 40.



Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad established a construction camp along Amarillo Creek at the eastern edge of the Frying Pan Ranch. They called their tent city "Ragtown."

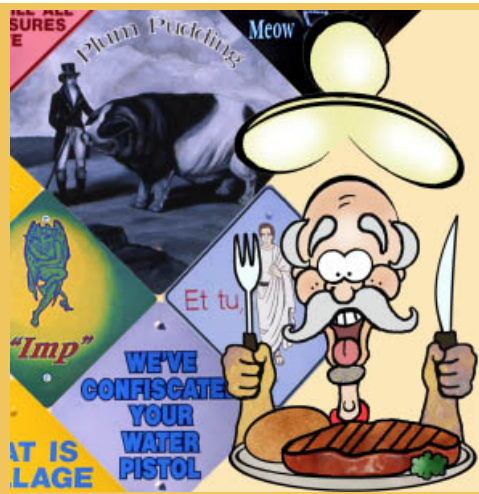
Activity at Ragtown sent several promoters scrambling to their drawing boards. Each sought to establish a permanent townsite on land most favorable to their personal pocketbooks, and each lobbied to see their site designated Potter County seat when a vote was scheduled in August of 1887. After the ballots had been tallied—and names like "Odessa" and "Plains City" had come and gone—the site selected was one proposed by Colonel James T. Berry. Originally called "Oneida," it became known as "Amarillo"—Spanish for "yellow."

Henry H. Lockett, a surveyor from Abeline, Texas, laid out Amarillo. By 1893, the city's population was listed as "between 500-600 humans and 50,000 head of cattle." In 1928, the discovery of the nearby Cliffside gas field led to the establishment of the United States Helium Plant west of town. Today, Amarillo continues to supply 90 percent of the world's lighter air. The cattle are still around, too.

Structures that survive from Amarillo's Route 66 days include the building that once fronted Fist Ansley's Prairie Dog Town—now the Bangkok Inn. The Amarillo Natatorium, opened in July of 1922 as an enclosed swimming pool and converted into a dance palace in 1926, greets shutterbugs at 6th and Georgia. The Big Texan Steak Ranch—which began life on Route 66 and later moved to its present location off Interstate 40—has been satisfying big appetites for more than four decades.

Amarillo is also ground zero to the Dynamite Museum, sponsored by fun-loving local millionaire Stanley Marsh 3. Known informally as "the only museum in the world without four walls," the Dynamite Museum's primary activity involves sneaking diamond-shaped road signs into Amarillo neighborhoods, setting them in cement and leaving them for citizens to find. If this sounds strange, it gets stranger: Signs are painted by individual artists. They carry everything from pictures of dueling pigs to dramatic passages by Shakespeare.

Folks who like their fun closer to the fender will want to visit Stanley Marsh's Cadillac Ranch west of town.


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BUSHLAND

On July 3, 1908, Chicago clothing king and real estate baron William Henry Bush dedicated land for a new townsite straddling the railroad between Amarillo and Wildorado. Bush had bought the enormous Frying Pan Ranch in 1898, and he had a knack for sealing deals. He called his new town "Bush Stop."

Some years later, William's wife decided that her husband hadn't quite hit the mark. Believing "Bush Stop" too plain a name to properly represent the family, she traveled to the train station and talked the station master into repainting the east and west walls of the depot with the name "Bushland."

Bushland never did bloom into the booming farming community the Bush family envisioned. The town's population topped out in the 1950s and has remained at a rough 130 people for the past 35 years. In 1917, local residents did organize Bushland's First Baptist Church. The church conducts services to this day.

Bushland boasts one other tribute to the days of William Henry Bush. Its north-south streets remain as Mr. Bush designated them—named for his friends and family members. Simmons was the married name of his sister, Hattie. Robinson was the married name of his sister, Clarissa.


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EXIT 57

OR DRIVE 66!

Follow Business 40 out of Amarillo. At the S-curve, turn right onto Indian Hill Rd. Jog left at the T, then right, onto the I-40 north service road. Take the service road west to Bushland.




[Eastward to Jericho](#)
[Westward to Wildorado](#)

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