

The Big Thicket Guidebook Exploring the Backroads and History of Southeast Texas

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Editor: Maxine Johnston and Pete A. Y. Gunter

Contributor: Maxine Johnston and Pete A. Y. Gunter

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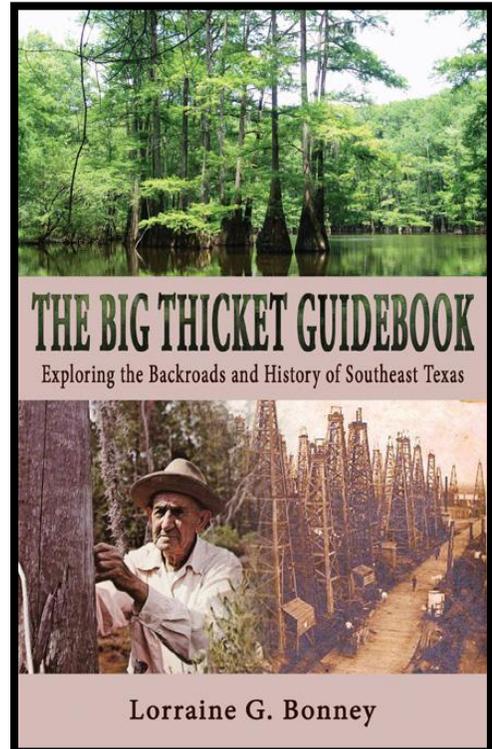
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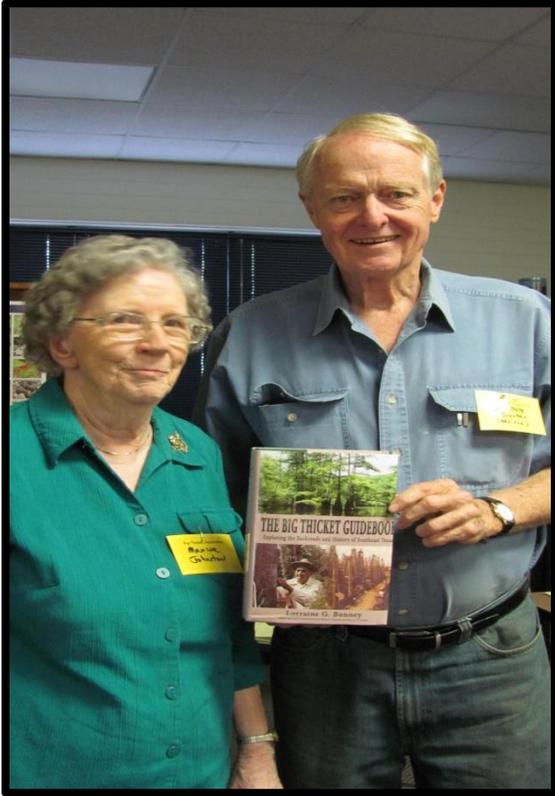


**NEW RELEASE- Big Thicket Guidebook Published
Big Thicket Association
P.O. Box 198, Saratoga, TX 77585-0198**

The Big Thicket Association announces the publication of Lorraine G. Bonney's *The Guidebook; Exploring the Backroads and History of Southeast Texas*.

The format of the book follows that of the old WPA Federal Writer's Program book, *Texas: A Guide to the Lone Star State*. The first section covers background, e.g., Indians, pioneers, geology, and forest industry. The second section includes city and town histories. Then 15 tours (often with side trips) provide a wide-ranging introduction to the landscape – a fascinating mix of history, ecology and people.

For those who insist on a definition of Big Thicket, there are several – all encompassed in this work: the Traditional or “Bear” Thicket, the pre-settlement Thicket of 3,500,000 acres, and the Thicket based on vegetation and geology.



A general introduction and a bibliography were supplied by Dr. Pete Gunter, Professor / Author / Conservationist, who also served as editor of the work. Maxine Johnston, Librarian / Conservationist, provided notes on sources of information and participated in reduction of the text from 1200 to 800 pages.

Bonney was born in Canada and married the late Orrin Bonney, a Houston attorney. Both of the Bonneys had a long involvement in efforts to preserve portions of the Big Thicket. They began research for the book in the 1970s, but after Bonney’s death, the project was dormant while other books were completed -- books on the Grand Tetons and Wyoming Mountains.

Work resumed at the turn of the century, and all sites were revisited; however, change is inevitable – hurricanes plus massive changes in land ownership. Still, it is fine source information on local—and lost--history.

The title is No. 6 in the “Temple Big Thicket Series,” published by the University of North Texas Press and subsidized by the T.L.L. Temple Foundation. The first two titles in the series include reprints of *Tales from the Big Thicket* by F. E. Abernethy, and *Big Thicket Legacy* by Campbell and Lynn Loughmiller. Other titles include *Saving the Big Thicket*, by James Cozine; *Big Thicket Plant Ecology*, by Geraldine Watson; and *Reflections on the Neches*, by Geraldine Watson.

Dr. Pete Gunter likened *The Big Thicket Guidebook* to the Encyclopedia Britannica of Southeast Texas and shared that is available through University of North Texas Press. <http://untpress.unt.edu/>

Photo: Editors of Bonney’s original 12,500 manuscript and co-contributors Maxine Johnston and Dr. Pete A.Y. Gunter

Big Thicket Day Brings Smiles and Rain!
Houston Regional Group- News, Sierra Club
Nov. 2011

Report by Brandt Mannchen

It was a great and happy time at the 47th annual Big Thicket Day that was put on by the Big Thicket Association on October 8th. There was a report by the National Park Service about the operation of Big Thicket National Preserve (BTNP). Wendy Ledbetter gave a great presentation about the All-Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (called the Thicket of Diversity – in other words count all the critters and plants in the Big Thicket). The continuous slide show impressed me and showed the myriads of critters and happy people which can be found in the Big Thicket. Dr. Carl Knight of Eastfield College gave a delightful presentation about Project Pathways. This \$1.8 million grant from the National Science Foundation not only introduced students to the Big Thicket but demonstrated that no matter where you come from people respond to Nature which teaches science and math better than any classroom. Dr. Knight's presentation kept the audience in stitches while providing hope that we can get folks back into the outdoors so that they fall in love with Nature like we have.

Then Pete Gunter made a short speech about the long awaited "The Big Thicket Guidebook" that Lorraine Bonney worked on for 40 years. Lorraine, unfortunately, was still hiding in Wyoming but her spirit of irascible playfulness was in attendance, front and center. We were urged to "buy, buy, buy" and I was taken in by this consumerist tide and after a few minutes cradled four copies of the 800 page tome. This book is to die for and will give you more adventure stories, history, science, and travelogues than any book I know. If you want one book on the Big Thicket this is the one for you!

Lunch was great with pasta and delicious deserts as well as a green salad for the more health conscious. Good conversation was had by all. An old timey country group serenaded us as we ate.

But the best part of the day for me, other than buying all those books (great Christmas presents) was meeting Carol and Robert and taking them to see the Lance Rosier home site in the Lance Rosier Unit of BTNP. We drove down that long, lonely, beautiful green road and finally came to the home site. The only indication of the home site is the presence of a 150 year old Live Oak that was

planted when the Rosier family moved to the Big Thicket in the 1860's. The diameter of this tree must be about 5-6 feet in width and to say it is huggable and at the same time majestic is an understatement.

After our visit to the Rosier home site we attempted to go to Teel Cemetery. I say attempted because we met some folks whose vehicles were in front of and behind a large tree that had fallen across the road. They were chopping with small hatchets and had already called for help. Made me glad we had not decided to go to the Teel Cemetery first. You just never know what will happen in the Big Thicket! On the way home it started to rain and continued raining during the evening. Who says Mother Nature does not have a sense of humor.

All in all Big Thicket Day was great fun and I certainly look forward to the next one. Buy those books and get out into the Big Thicket. You will be glad you did.

**REVIEW: A Change of Scenery IS JUST DOWN THE ROAD
Events Guide, June 2012**

By Shelly Vitanza

Get a Guide... Free

One of the best resources for touring Jefferson County is a free downloadable guide called *Big Thicket Auto Tour focusing on Jefferson County*. This 8 ½ by 14 document was compiled by Mary C. Johnston, President of the Big Thicket Association. (Most people call her Ma Thicket) as a result of a grant from the Jefferson County Tourism Committee. The booklet guides drivers in all directions of the County for three days of tours, highlighting 28 venues or points of interests. The booklet includes locations, websites and brief directions as well as information about the Big Thicket, its impact on our area and its preservation. Download the booklet at www.setxsocialcenter.com/images//autoguide.pdf (It can also be found on the Big Thicket Association website under Exploring the Big Thicket.)

For more extensive touring, purchase *The Big Thicket Guidebook Exploring the Backroads and History of Southeast Texas* by Lorraine G. Bonney. It is for sale through University of North Texas Press and includes 15 tours in and around the Big Thicket.