

Luckenbach, Texas

by Robert Odendahl

In 1977, the song "Luckenbach, Texas (Back to the Basics of Love)" sung by Waylon Jennings was 25th on the Billboard record chart. I always liked that tune. Still do. When I moved to Austin in 1998, I asked where I could find Luckenbach. The only people who knew were motorcyclists. I did not own a motorcycle at the time, so I forgot about it. Then July 4 came around and Willie Nelson was having his annual picnic in Luckenbach. I didn't go and I sorry that I missed it. That was the last year Willie held that picnic in Luckenbach.

In August 1999, I bought a Harley and began riding in the Texas Hill Country. The first place I discovered was Wimberley. The second was Luckenbach. Rather than get there on US 290, I rode the back roads using a South Central Texas map as a guide. For the first timer on his own, Luckenbach is not easy to find. You have to be looking for it to find it because it is in the middle of nowhere.

The General Store is unique. At first glance, it appeared to be an old unpainted building housing a bar and souvenir shop. Many of the sights are in the rafters. If you look around will find a dubious collection of hats, signs, photos, flags, stuffed animals, police and firefighter patches from around the world, a ton of dust, and a coffin.

According to Marge, Sheriff and bartender, Luckenbach was never a town. Luckenbach was the name of the



post office originally located in the Engel house on Luckenbach Town Rd near 1376. The General Store was first opened in 1886 and the post office was moved there. It still stands and houses the beer

joint and the souvenir shop. Luckenbach post office was established in 1849. One of the first settlers in the area was Jacob Luckenbach but he is not credited with then naming. Rev. and Mrs. August Engel bought the land and moved there from Fredericksburg. When the Engels applied for a post office, Wilhelmina Engel selected the name of her finance', Carl Albert Luckenbach who was the son of Jacob Luckenbach. C.A. Luckenbach is also credited with naming the town of Albert, TX a few miles south of Stonewall, TX.

The Trading Post/General Store was said to have catered to area farmers and Comanche Indians alike. In 1879, a steam-powered cotton gin was built along Grape Creek, which runs through present day Luckenbach. It fell victim to a flood in 2002. The town also had a blacksmith shop and a school. The 2002 flood, also heavily damaged the

blacksmith shop with stood across Grape Creek from the cotton gin. The school still stands on Luckenbach Road north of 1376. It was closed in 1967.

In 1970 the Engel family, which owned the property all those years, put the place up for sale in a local paper. Hondo Couch, Guich Kooock and Kathy Morgan bought the 10 acres of land including the General Store, bar, dance hall, cotton gin, blacksmith shop and what became known as the cellular pone booth. Then the fun began. Hondo proclaimed himself Mayor, Marge the Sheriff, Guich the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Ray Petsch the Minister of Agriculture. He also appointed ambassadors to foreign countries. Luckenbach hosts various fun events such as St. Valentine Hug-Ins, Luckenbach World's Fair, a chili cooking contest sponsored by the Luckenbach Ladies Lynchin' League, a Mud Dauber Festival, the Hill Country Run, Willie Nelson picnics through 1998, and the annual 150th Luckenbach Anniversary, since 1999.

Luckenbach is a destination for motorcyclists. Motorcycle only parking is provided across from the General Store under a large live oak tree. The bar provides beer, soft drinks and water. There is a food stand at the end of the dance hall.



How do you get to Luckenbach? That depends on whom you ask.

My directions -

- o From Austin, travel south on Mopac to its end.
- o Turn left (West) on 1826. Pass Salt Lick to 150.
- o Turn left on 150 through the small town of Driftwood to Hays City.
- o Turn right (West) on 3237 at the Diamond Shamrock.
- o At Wimberley, turn left (South) on 12 to 32.
- o Turn right (West) on 32 and you ride the Devil's Back Bone.
- o Continue on 32 to its intersection with US281 just south of Blanco.
- o Turn right (North) on US281.
- o In Blanco, turn left (West) at the light onto 1623.
- o Turn left on 1888, 5 miles West of Blanco.
- o At the intersection of 1888 and 1376, turn right on 1376.
- o Luckenbach is approximately 25 miles from Blanco.

You could follow Hondo's directions:

- o "You get on I-10, go to 87, get off on 290, you know... where the dead deer is in the ditch.

- o “Then you take a right on the farm-to-market road. You know, where the cattle guard is? And that mawkin’ bird nest?
- o “Then take a left, go through the bump gate, two wooden gates, and wire gap.
- o “Then you’ll find Luckenbach in the canyon. No, well, it’s more like a rut.”

Maybe you should use the South Central Texas map and find your own way there.

For more on Luckenbach visit www.luckenbachtexas.com the information source for this article.
