



# The Texas Fiddler



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TEXAS OLD TIME FIDDLERS ASSOCIATION  
277 DIAMOND LN N, BURLESON, TX 76028

FEB 2016

## Llano Fiddle Fest Weekend: April 1-3

Grab your gear and head to Llano the weekend of April 1-3! Llano Fiddle Fest weekend, featuring the 39<sup>th</sup> Llano Open Fiddle Contest, will start the 2016 contest fiddling season. Llano is a fiddle crazy town with a terrific venue at the LanTex theater, and a large, appreciative audience.

The weekend’s activities begin with the always-entertaining Air Fiddle Contest at around 6 p.m. at the Badu House. Get there early and compete. It’s a fun contest where image is everything! The Anything Goes – Tricks & Licks Contest starts at 7 p.m. and you’re going to need a real fiddle to compete in that one.

Registration for the TOTFA-approved fiddle contest begins at the LanTex Theater at 9 a.m. Saturday morning, with the contest starting at 10 a.m. The Llano Open Fiddle Contest is made up of three divisions for fiddle: Youth (age 0-15), Senior (age 65 and up), and Open (any age), as well as an Accompanist division. Each contestant may compete in only one division. Divisions will play in order of Senior, Youth, Open, and Accompanist. The contest will culminate in a final round where the top 5 fiddlers will compete for the championship. Contest prizes are listed on page 7. We hope to see a strong turnout from our membership!

Questions? Contact John Caballero, 325-247-3979, [cab@wildblue.net](mailto:cab@wildblue.net)

## Birthdays

Lewis Brandin	Feb 3
Elmer (Pete) Thackerson	Feb 9
Ashley Jordan	Feb 13
Bobby Christman	Feb 14
Ted Williams	Feb 21
Hyatt Hopkins	Feb 25
Evan Meeker	Feb 27
Brad Riley	Feb 28

# From the Prez

## Unavoidable Overlap in Contest Dates

I have been in contact numerous times with Sherry McKenzie concerning the date of the Greenville contest, in an attempt to schedule it at a time when it wouldn't conflict with any of the TOTFA contests. The McKenzies are working in concert with the Greenville Chamber of Commerce and their financial backers on this event, so they unfortunately aren't in control, or have final say on the date it must be held.

Due to other commitments by the organizations that operate the different venues that will be utilized during the Greenville event, the only weekends available to them are coinciding with TOTFA contests. A date had to be selected, and unfortunately, it is the same date for the Seguin contest. It is regrettable for Joey and Sherry, as well as for myself and TOTFA, but a conflict of dates was unavoidable. Speaking as a representative and president of our organization, I appreciate their attempt to avoid the conflict and felt that I should relay this information to the members through the newsletter. -- Bart Baker, TOTFA President

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## TOTFA Board Meeting Minutes

January 24, 2016, 1-2 pm

Location: Baker residence, Alvarado TX

**Board Attendees:** President: Bart Baker, Directors: Jason Andrew, Cliff McCall, Elijah Stone, Charlie Walker

**Other Attendees:** Jill Baker, John Crawford (scribe)

Meeting started: 1:40 pm. Meeting ended: 2:41 pm.

### 1. Fundraising

- a. Board discussed ideas: Grants for funding and scholarships – Foundation library, Texas Commission for the Arts, Texas Folklife Organization, San Antonio & San Marcus area, hotel tax from state, county, city. • Education events – Workshops, camps, 1 day or series of clinics. • Silent auction

and lunch or dinner – Consider regional fundraisers to make it easier for the nearby fiddling community to support it.

Possible locations: Llano, Alvarado, Whitewright, Gilmer. •

Fiddle camp option – This was discussed. Consensus is that this could be costly for the attendees, and previous camps were break-even efforts. • Texas Music Educators

Association – Discussed attending convention to introduce Texas style fiddling and possibly sell educational materials. •

Alcohol sales at fundraising events – There are risks and TOTFA could find itself in legal trouble. If this option is pursued, then best course of action would be for a distributor to provide a sponsorship and serve it themselves.

2. Convention: TOTFA is aiming for an independent contest and convention, earlier in the year than November. This will provide an additional contest in the year to members. Scouting for locations.
3. Charlie proposed and volunteered to poll our membership for feedback, ideas, and actions the membership would like to see from the board.
4. Prospective new contest in Marble Falls – Jason is pursuing.
5. Bart will call for next meeting after survey results are in.

Instructors  
Mia Orosco  
Danette Schuh  
Katie Glassman  
Daina Volodka Staggs  
Megan Lynch Chowning

*Saturday Night @ 7:30*  
*Student & Instructor*  
*performance followed by*

*The Western*

*Flyers*

with special guest

*Leon Rausch*

*McKenzie's*  
*Fiddle & Suzuki*  
*Workshop*

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# TEXAS ★ OLD TIME FIDDLERS ★ ASSOCIATION

Presents...

## A Texas Old Time Fiddling Fundraiser

*All donations and proceeds will go to  
the preservation of Texas fiddling!*

Sunday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2-7 p.m. at  
**Down South Railhouse**  
107 E. Center St., Kyle, TX 78640  
(512) 256-5082



**Down South Railhouse**

<http://www.downsouthrailhouse.net>

- 2 p.m. Meet & Greet
- 2:30 Jams begin
- 3 Instruction
- 3:30 Band performance
- 4 Raffle
- 4:30 Texas history & Music lecture  
presented by Carter Blackburn
- 5 Out of the Hat fiddle contest
- 5:30 Band performance
- 6 Texas fiddling showcase
- 6:30 Conclusion / Raffle Winners
- 7 Railhouse Band performs

**For more information, contact Elijah Stone (830) 377-5213**

## 2016-2017 TOTFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### PRESIDENT

#### **Bart Baker**

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### DIRECTORS

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The  
Texas  
Fiddler

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### **Texas Old Time Fiddlers Association**

277 Diamond Ln N  
Burlison, TX 76028  
<http://www.totfa.org>

# 2016 Calendar

Here is a listing of contest dates in 2016. We'll continue to update the list as more dates are confirmed. **TOTFA contests are listed in bold.**

Date	Location
<b>April 2</b>	<b>Llano, TX</b>
April 23-24	Hallettsville, TX
<b>May 7</b>	<b>Groesbeck, TX</b>
<i>New! May 21</i>	<i>More details to come!</i> <b>Godley, TX</b>
May 28	Athens, TX
<b>Sep 9</b>	<b>Alvarado, TX</b>
<b>Oct 1</b>	<b>Bowie, TX</b>
Oct 8-9	Greenville, TX
<b>Oct 8</b>	<b>Seguin, TX</b>
<b>Oct 15</b>	<b>Gilmer, TX</b>
Oct 22	Crockett, TX
<b>Nov 12</b>	<b>Glen Rose, TX</b>
<b>TBD</b>	<b>TOTFA Contest &amp; Convention</b>

## Yes, we accept PayPal

You can renew your TOTFA membership, or make TOTFA donations or purchases through PayPal at **TOTFAPayPal@totfa.org**. Of course, sometimes the old ways are best, and we can handle that too. Send your check to the address listed below.

## TOTFA Newsletter Email Address

Want to contact *The Texas Fiddler* newsletter? You may email **TOTFANewsletter@totfa.org**. You can also mail content through the postal service by sending to:

TOTFA Newsletter  
c/o John Crawford  
277 Diamond Ln N  
Burleson, TX 76028-6729

## The Guadalupe County Fair Fiddle Contest

Each year at the Guadalupe County Fair Fiddle Contest in Seguin, Texas one contestant is chosen to receive the J. Box Roberts award. It is an honor given by Roberts' descendants who organize and keep this fiddle contest going. I spoke with Jesse Roy Hart and Mary Ann (Hart) Norris, grandson and granddaughter of Mr. Roberts, to learn more about him and the fiddle contest itself.

J. Box Roberts was born on August 8, 1872 and learned to play fiddle from his 2 uncles, both of whom served in the Confederate army during the Civil War. The "J" stands for James. His Uncle Austin was known for his breakdowns and his Uncle Aaron: waltzes. As he matured, Roberts traveled and played in and around Guadalupe County. He met his future bride, Augusta Gregory, playing a house dance, and he would later form his own band, "Box Roberts and the Boys."

Roberts never reached fame or fortune as a musician, but he had a passion for fiddling music and he wanted it preserved. He began to take notice of the fiddlers who came to compete at various fiddle contests and came to a troubling conclusion: that they were all elderly. As his grandson, Jesse Roy puts it, "This was one of my Grandfather's [concerns] that worried him the most: there would be no young people to take over; it was going to be a dying art." Hart's sister, Mary Ann later added, "Young people, years ago, were not encouraged to pick [the fiddle] up, because they might [damage] it. Well, if you don't pick it up, you sure can't learn anything."

Around the year 1947, Roberts began traveling by bus to aid in creating new fiddle contests near Seguin. He and others established an organization called the Old Fiddlers Association of Texas. He served as president and Dan C. Crider served as vice president along with other officers and members. Much like the Texas Old Time Fiddlers Association, the organization worked to place individuals who were knowledgeable and familiar with fiddle music as contest judges. When Roberts traveled, he not only packed his fiddle, banjo, and a suitcase; he also carried a wire recorder which he used to capture fiddle tunes and record his own. He submitted 2 sets of recordings to the Texas state archives and he amassed his own collection of recordings, only to have them stolen, along with his records and tapes, some years later.

J. Box and Augusta had 7 children, none of whom ever played the fiddle. The youngest daughter, Evelyn, met and married James C. Hart, and together they had 3 children: Jesse Roy, Mary Ann, and Karlene Fey.

Roberts died in 1960 at the age of 87 years, and the annual 3-day fiddle festival and contest in Seguin, which had always been held in the city's Starcke Park, also faded away.

In 1972, a new fiddle contest was established as part of the Guadalupe County Fair. It was held in the cattle barn. The next year, it was relocated to a newly poured concrete "dance slab." In 1974 it was again on the dance slab. A tent was used to provide shade but temperatures soared. By the time of the 1975 contest, the dance slab had been permanently covered and it was now the "dance pavilion." Mary Ann was asked by the county fair association if she would take over and run the contest. She agreed and, with the help of her siblings, the descendants of J. Box Roberts are still running the contest, and the dance pavilion is where it is still held today in October.

In 1977 Mary Ann and the Norris family attended the Berges Fest in Boerne, Texas. Son, Morgan, age 11, watched as two young fiddlers competed against each other in the fiddle contest that was held there every year. According to Mary Ann, when Morgan saw \$15 being awarded to first place winner, Jimmie Don Bates, he decided that he needed a fiddle too. Morgan's brother, Kevin, followed suit and the fiddling tradition that had skipped 2 generations was restarted.



"Box Roberts and the Boys" from 1951.  
Front row, left to right: E. H. Mitchell,  
Dan Crider. Back row, left to right: J.  
Box Roberts, Earl Seay.  
Photo courtesy of Leon Studios.

## Llano Contest Prize Listing

Senior: 5 places: \$200, 90, 75, 60, 50

Youth: 5 places: 1<sup>st</sup> place: Belt buckle, other prizes and gifts awarded to all youth entrants

Open: 15 places: Grand champion \$700; 1<sup>st</sup> runner up: \$500,  
2<sup>nd</sup> runner up \$300, 3<sup>rd</sup> runner up \$250, 4<sup>th</sup> runner up \$200,

6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> place: \$150, 11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> place: \$75

Accompanist: 5 places: \$200, 125, 80, 50, 25

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