

Fandangle and Cowboy Reunion highlight summer

By J.T. SMITH

THE Fort Griffin Fandangle celebrates its 71st anniversary as Texas' oldest outdoor musical with six performances at Albany, Texas.

Performances are June 18-20 and June 25-27.

The musical starts about 8:30 p.m. in the Prairie Theatre, a mile from Albany.

The Fandangle began in 1938. It evolved modestly from playwright Robert Nail writing a drama for his old hometown, so the Albany senior class could raise funds for a school trip. That first play was performed on a football field. But Shackelford County folks were so enthusiastic that they wanted to perform another play the next year. As a result, Nail wrote the "Fort Griffin Fandangle," depicting the coming of settlers and the old cowtown of Fort Griffin, which preceded today's Albany. ("Doc" Holliday, who's portrayed in the show, lived in Griffin before he moved to Tombstone.)

From the real Texas Longhorns as "actors" to the stagecoach, train and wild prairie fire, the Fandangle dazzles. The *Dallas Morning News* called the Fandangle "as professional as a multimillion-dollar Broadway musical, with sets and costumes to match, with a cast of 300."

Texas rancher Watt R. Matthews was a staunch Fandangle supporter until his passing at 98 in 1997. The Princeton University graduate once quipped of the use of Texas Longhorn cattle: "That's something they don't have on Broadway!"

An optional barbecue at the historic Shackelford County Courthouse will precede each evening's performance. Renowned chuckwagon cook Bill Cauble of Albany will serve.

For more information on the Fandangle, call Susan Waller at 325-762-3838.

Texas Cowboy Reunion

The 79th Texas Cowboy Reunion is July 1-4 at Stamford, Texas, with 8 p.m. nightly rodeo performances in the world's largest gathering of working cowboys.

The TCR Art Preview Party will precede the Reunion at 6:30 p.m. June 30 at the John Selmon Memorial Art Gallery.

The TCR Grand Parade through the downtown will officially kick off the four-day event at 4 p.m. July 1. The parade includes the Hardin-Simmons University's Six White Horses program.

The reunion also features nightly dances and a chuckwagon cook-off. Meanwhile, the Texas Cowboy Old-Timers can enjoy daily activities at their facilities throughout the reunion.

Gary Mathis, TCR president, Stamford, says the rodeo accepts contestant entries from June 1-27. Call 325-773-3138.

Monsanto gift to AgriLife to speed cotton mapping

By J.T. SMITH

MONSANTO has made the largest private donation of cotton technology in history to Texas AgriLife Research.

The gift of 4,000 cotton molecular markers will speed up mapping of the cotton genome. It now brings the total number of molecular markers in the effort to more than 10,000.

David D. Baltensperger, professor and head of Soil and Crop Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station, says the information will be housed at the main campus there.



PURCELL

"Texas A&M has a long history of cotton research," says John Purcell, global cotton technology lead, Monsanto Co., St. Louis. "So it's great to be partnering with Texas A&M University."

In addition, Purcell says the enormity of the donation shows Monsanto clearly is committed to cotton research for the long haul.

The molecular markers and associated information will be offered to the public domain through the globally accessible cotton genome databases — a move that will benefit cotton research programs and breeders.

Beyond speeding up the mapping of the cotton genome, the gift also should

Key Points

- Monsanto makes largest private donation of cotton technology to Texas A&M.
- Gift of 4,000 cotton molecular markers will speed mapping of cotton genome.
- Donation to Texas AgriLife Research should speed improvements in cotton.

provide major contributions to cotton farmers and their land.

"Farmers are looking for ways to increase productivity on their farms to meet growing demand for food, feed and fiber," Purcell says. "Last year, we announced a challenge to double production by 2030, using 2000 as the base. We think that's possible through our research and by working with others in the industry through efforts like this."

Big effort

Richard Percy, research leader for USDA Agricultural Research Service's crop germplasm research unit in College Station, manages the cotton database, which will house the information. He says the donation greatly increases the number of markers now available to the public.

"The cotton genome is very large and complex, compared to other plants that have already been mapped," Percy notes. "This donation will stimulate research and development in the cotton industry by providing powerful tools

that will ultimately help cotton farmers get more out of every acre. This information — once full publication is made in the coming months — will benefit all breeding programs that use the database."

Scientists often use genetic markers as a flag to pinpoint the specific location of a genetic trait on a chromosome. That lets breeders produce plants more efficiently and accurately.

"Molecular markers serve as a key way that plant breeders can tag genetic traits for fast access the next time — much like you could make a useful tip in a cookbook and highlight it," Purcell notes.

"Monsanto researchers have found areas of the cotton genome that, for example, have disease resistance or high-yield potential," he says. "Adding markers helps researchers easily find specific traits, where and when they need them. Markers let us screen a lot of cotton varieties in the lab before even going to the field. This saves a lot of time and money."

Bill McCutchen, associate director for AgriLife Research, says the Texas A&M System and its Texas AgriLife Research have many projects aimed at increasing yield, improving fiber quality and boosting disease resistance.

"So, the more information our faculty have in the form of markers, the faster we can make improvements to benefit cotton farmers," he adds.

Conaway: Spending out of control

By J.T. SMITH

U.S. Rep. Mike Conaway, a Republican from Midland, Texas, is known as a fiscal conservative and a staunch supporter of agriculture in Congress.

While honored this spring by agricultural leaders on a visit to San Angelo, Texas, Conaway made it clear that Capitol Hill is a wild place these days, with spending absolutely out of control.

"This country is headed for a financial wreck — and fast," he lamented. The impact of the wreck will be long felt, he added.

"Obama's 10-year budget will triple the national debt," he noted. "That's permanent debt every future generation will have to pay the interest on."

That means the interest must be paid, and the principal will just keep being rolled forward. "To actually pay off the debt, you have to have a surplus, and we don't have that," the 11th Congressional District representative said.

Conaway said Republicans had their own economic stimulus plan that he said would have created more jobs — and for less than half the cost — than the Obama administration's \$787 billion

Key Points

- U.S. Rep. Mike Conaway is recognized for his support to agriculture.
- Congressman says spending in Washington has gone completely wild.
- The Texan is not surprised by the recent "Tea Parties" protesting taxes.



CONAWAY

stimulus package. Conaway doesn't find it difficult to understand why "Tea Party" tax protests were so big in Texas, and the rest of the country, during April. He said the Tea Party gatherings amounted to everyday, hard-working American citizens coming together at once and saying: "Enough is enough!"

Agricultural advocate

Conaway has been lauded for his support of production agriculture and conservation. He's a strong advocate for West Texas agriculture and supports many initiatives benefiting the region.

The Wool and Mohair Research

Program, Pierce's Disease Research (winegrape industry) and the Rio Grande Initiative for the conservation of water in the Rio Grande Basin are among a few he has supported.

Which way now?

Conaway said questions still remain on the overall direction of the Obama administration's farm policy.

The lawmaker is encouraged that he has been able to work well in a bipartisan manner with U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin C. Peterson, D-Minn.

Perhaps it is their professional backgrounds — both are accountants — but Conaway says he finds Peterson open to good ideas.

Conaway said he expects growth in the wind industry to continue and for renewable fuels to get some additional support from the economic stimulus package.

But overshadowing it all is the general economy.

"The biggest threat to the U.S. right now is not thugs and bad guys," he said. "It's the nation's own gone-wild spending, completely irresponsible on every level."