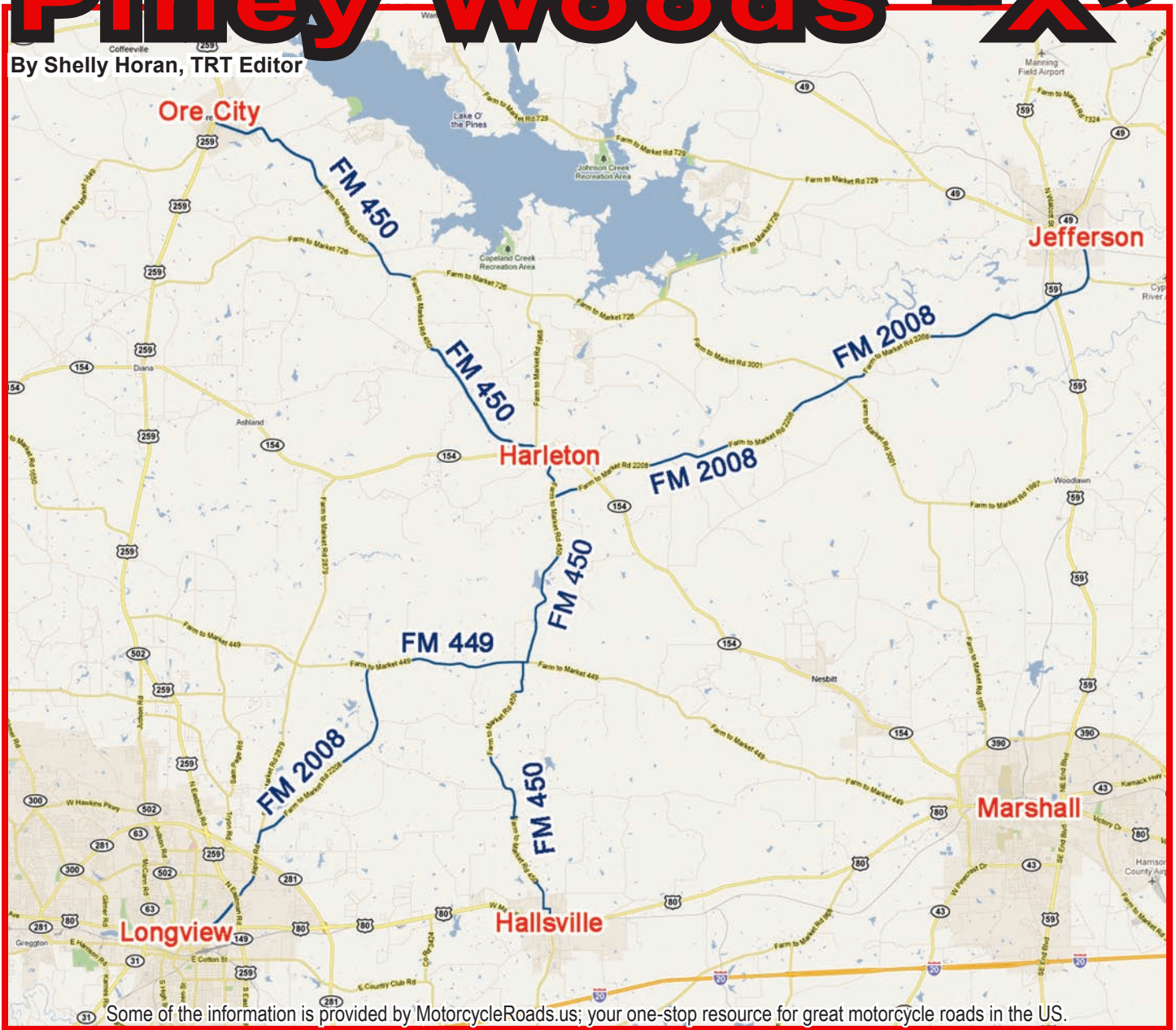


Piney Woods "X"

By Shelly Horan, TRT Editor



Some of the information is provided by MotorcycleRoads.us; your one-stop resource for great motorcycle roads in the US.

RIDE MAP

There are a couple large events coming to the East Texas Piney Woods this fall; the Oldest Town in Texas (OTT) Rally (Nacogdoches; September 15-18) and Boo Benefit (Jefferson; October 7-9). So, we're giving you a map from the area to take along with you. It's an "X" crossing through the small town of Harleton. Do both runs in a single day or

do one "cross" during the OTT Rally and revisit the area during the Boo Benefit. Either way – they promise to be great roads and a good time.

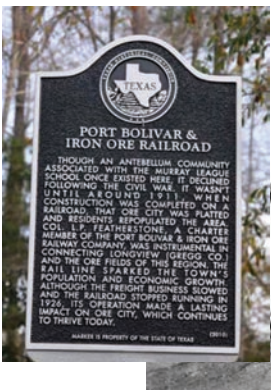
The first leg of our "X" runs along FM 450, from Ore City to Hallsville. This is approximately 27 miles, with about 1 hour of ride time. The route has been described as "great high speed sweeping turns up and down hills with very scenic desolate roads."

the ore. In 1911, the railroad purchased land for the city and planned it out. Unfortunately, World War I halted further expansion of the rail lines and the ore company failed. The town got a brief respite when the US government built a steel plant to mine the ore to build weapons and vehicles for WWII. But the war ended just as the plant was completed and it was sold to a Texas group who operated it as the Lone Star Steel Company. In 2007, the plant was sold to the US Steel company and it still operated there today.

Our "cross-town", Harleton, has a brief history and is good for a fuel stop, but not much more. It was originally founded as Fontana in 1890. The name was changed to Harleton in 1892, after JW Harle who owned a sawmill operation and built a railroad tram connecting Harleton and Marshall to move the timber from his mill. In 1937, the railroad abandoned the town, but it still grew and in 1946, saw a small revival thanks to a gas field identified and opened nearby.

Your final destination, Hallsville is the epitome of a town that

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Ore City was first settled in the 1850s by the Murray League, a Methodist Episcopal group out of Tennessee. After the Civil War, rich iron ore deposits were discovered in the area. Sporadic and minimal mining efforts were taken up from the 1860s to about 1910. It was then that Colonel LP Featherstone set up shop with a full scale mining effort to go after the ore. He encouraged the Santa Fe Railway to finance a railroad link to Port Bolivar to help export

Piney Woods "X" ... continued

operates primarily around the education system with Texas tradition of Friday night high school football games the most popular activity in town. The town is so proud of their high school and football team, that the school runs a popular Bobcat Radio that can be listened to from around the world via the internet.

Hallsville was originally Fort Crawford and located one mile west of the current location in 1839. The Fort was built in the "Neutral Zone" between Texas and Louisiana to protect settlers against Indians, renegades, and outlaws. The Neu-

nic, around 40 miles of fun." It's about 35 miles long and (pro- estimated to take an hour to ride.

Jefferson has a significant place in Texas history and has become a tourist destination for a few reasons: 1) they boast the most antebellum era homes for touring; 2) are touted as one of the most haunted places in Texas (see article in our October 2009 issue), and 3) it is considered the Bed and Breakfast Capitol of Texas with no less than 60 B&Bs to choose from in the area.

The city was named for Thomas Jefferson and was the largest inland port in Texas during the steamboat era (1845-1875). As a large inland port along the border of Louisiana and Texas, it served an important role in the Civil War, aiding in moving supplies around the Confederacy. With the clearing of the "Great Red River Raft" (as the Caddo Indians called a naturally occurring log jam on the Red River) by the Army Corps of Engineers, the steamboats could no longer reach this once booming port town. Around the same time, railroads were being built, crisscrossing the nation. As with so many other small towns of the era, Jefferson was bypassed by the railroads. These two situations caused population and business to decline. There is a rumor that the town leaders turned down a railroad magnate's (Jay Gould) attempt to put a railroad through the area. The leaders felt being a vital port was all they needed. Gould bypassed the town though another, more receptive one, close by out of spite. The story is not only unsubstantiated, it has been proven false, but it still persists as folklore in the area.

Once boasting about 30,000 residents in its hey-day, Jefferson's population today is around 2,000. However, that swells in October, as the Boo Benefits hits the small, historic town with about 50,000 bikers. Aside from that weekend in October, there are many tourism activities you can enjoy: take a walking ghost tour; ride in horse drawn carriages and trolleys with historical presentations; ride a steam train taking you back into the 19th Century; tour the historic homes in the area, take a tour of Cypress Bayou (once Cypress River that brought the steamboats into port); visit the local museum; or visit Jay Gould's private rail car. If you visit in February, you'll experience Mardi Gras Upriver or if there in May, attend the reenactment of the Battle of Port Jefferson (Civil War; 1864). And, of course with most small historic

towns, there is a multitude of antique and boutique shopping and dining experiences.

This route will cross through Harleton, then on to Longview, home of our friends, the Alan Fox Band. They will be playing at the OTT Rally again this year. Originally founded as two rural communities, Earpville



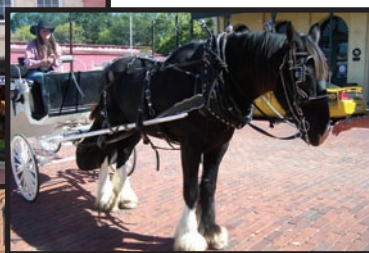
tral Zone was disputed land between the two states and attracted all sorts of not-so-lawful groups. When the Cherokee War broke out in 1839, settlers sought refuge in the Fort. Unfortunately, the Fort's stores weren't sufficient for the numbers and many had to leave in order to survive. The original fort site is now located on private land and no ruins can be seen. However, a cemetery still remains there that can be seen from the road.



When the Southern Pacific Railway bypassed the Fort location, Hallsville was born. The name comes from a railroad officer, Elijah Hall, (as was common for the time period). The town became a hub for the railway, housing offices, and machine shop to service the railroad. Texas and Pacific Railroad purchased Southern Pacific Railway and moved the offices to nearby Marshall in 1872. This caused the population and business to decline. At this time, the town lost its incorporation. In the 1920s, the US Post Office added an "s" to the name, renaming the town to Hallsville and the town reincorporated in 1935.

If you visit Hallsville during the first weekend of October, you'll be in the middle of their annual Western Days. Started in 1972 as a fundraiser for a city park, the event has grown from a one-day local event to a three-day tourist attraction; complete with a street dance, craft booths, downtown parade, chili cook off, bike decorating contest, live bands, a Fun Run, a Civil War reenactment, and a Miss Hallsville Western Days competition.

The second leg of our "X" is FM 2208 from Jefferson to Longview. A rider who recently took this route (May 2011) commented that it is... "a nice road, friendly traffic..." and "very sce-



nounced "Arp-ville") in the east and Pine Tree in the west, today's small town was created in the early 1870s, when Southern Pacific Railroad extended its track from Marshall into Gregg County. The railroad bypassed Earpville and created a new town to the west on land purchased from Ossamus Hitch Methvin, Sr. Railroad employees called the settlement Longview, thought to be based on a comment made by someone from Methvin's house, referring to what a "long view" there was from the hill. Apparently it was an impressive view from the house which was located on what is now Center Street. Earpville disappeared from the map, but Pine Tree survived. It was later known as Awalt, Willow Spring, and Greggton; and eventually annexed by Longview in the 1960s.

Longview became a hub for multiple railroad lines, so it flourished. During The Great Depression, the town was fortunate to be in the middle of oil fields, so they felt less of the disastrous effects than the rest of the nation.

Today, a community movement is working to preserve the oldest buildings in downtown. Along with these buildings, there are interesting places to visit:

- Downtown hosts Heritage Plaza, a park with a series of brick walls covering the town's progress from 1870 through 1970.
- Campbell Honeymoon Home – Home of Texas Governor Thomas Mitchell Campbell when he married Fannie Bruner while serving as a Gregg County Clerk.
- Stagecoach Stop Museum – One of the few remaining homes from Earpville, dating from the 1860s.
- Gregg County Historical Museum – Located in the historic Everett Building, originally the Citizens National Bank.
- The Post Office Mural – A 1942 "WPA" mural.

If you visit Longview in July (okay, so missed this one by a month), you can enjoy the Great Texas Balloon Race. A 32-year event and now the Balloon Federation of America's Hot Air Competition Division has announced that Longview will be host to the US National Hot Air Balloon Championship, 2012-2014. Thanks to this long-standing tradition, the Texas Governor designated the town as the Balloon Capital of Texas in 1985 (AKA a qualified Points of Texas destination). Hosting a whole bunch of activities, this national event promises to be something to plan for in 2012.

We hope you enjoy this "X" route. We'd love to see pictures when you use these maps, so please take a lot and send them to shelly@thunderroadstexas.com. If you have a route to suggest, you can email those as well.



RIDE MAP