

“Adventure in a good trail” series pt 2

Topic: *Bicentennial Park* in Pantego, TX Author: Eoin Donovan

Our Texas Summer rages on! The battle between harsh sun and sporadic storm clouds has made for an interesting time while exploring the local parks this month. Grab plenty of sun screen and electrolytes so you can join me outdoors as we will make our great escape from the daily grind, experience living in the present moment, and explore the nature around us that we’ve taken for granted. This month, I will be covering some of my exploits at Bicentennial Park in Pantego.

Bicentennial Park

Neighborhood: Just west of Bailey Junior High

Street Address: 3206 Smith Barry Rd, Pantego, TX 76013

Park hours: 7am-10pm

Website: <https://www.townofpantego.com/bicentennial-park>

I had a rush of nostalgia as I pulled off Smith Barry Road into the northern parking lot of Bicentennial Park for the first time in close to a decade. I would come here a lot as a child with family and again as a teenager where my friends and I would get into all sorts of mischief. As I was putting on my sunscreen, I noticed the UV index was at 11 and made sure to put on an extra layer so I wouldn’t inadvertently become a lizard person while trying to enjoy some laps around the park. I put on my sunglasses, headphones, drank plenty of water, and I was ready to go.

The northern end of the park is much smaller than the rest of the park. It was empty, but I had a flashback of some birthday party I went to in elementary school in this spot. There, we had lots of blue cake with the best icing and the playground had a stationary toy excavator where the kids would wait in line to take turns digging into the dirt. Unfortunately, it seemed that the excavator had become the excavated because it was nowhere in sight when I was walking towards the southern end of the park.

The southern end of Bicentennial Park has always been a great place for families to bring their children because it has a very large, safe, covered playground right next to a small splash pad. As I was rounding the corner to the larger parking lot, I had a feeling of anticipation because I couldn’t wait to see the big pirate ship that boldly displayed its Jolly Roger. I honestly felt a little bit sad when I realized that it was no longer there but was soon remedied by a feeling of contentment when I noticed that the splash pad was up and running. There were many families playing in and out of it getting wet without a care in the world. I knew I would have to come back and join in the fun at a different time, so I called my friends Melissa and Heather Conklin-Pierce. Together, we had a blast playing frisbee, tossing a football, and cooling off underneath the overflowing bucket in the splash pad! Would it have helped had I brought a towel so I wouldn’t get my car all wet on the drive home afterwards? Probably...

As I continued my walk across the bridge to the southernmost part of the park, I noticed a few turtles that had jumped into the creek that leads into the neighboring property of Camp Thurman that triggered another flashback to my teenage years. I would hear stories of kids using this creek to sneak into the premises and explore the grounds where they would make their own adventures. It was evident to me that throughout the years, the camp had become all too keen on the fact that some young urban

explorers would find their way in and posted extra signage discouraging the act. To my excitement, I noticed the addition of sand volleyball just past the bridge. Through the years, I had all but forgotten about it and honestly cannot wait to get a game together with friends now that summer is back. I continued walking through the trail and came to another covered platform which was the former site of an outdoor workout equipment area. Yet another flashback came through my mind of the days I was convinced of my participation as a contestant on American Ninja Warrior. This was one of many training grounds I would go to in my late teens to practice my balance, jumping, and climbing abilities with friends while concurrently escaping the stresses of fast-approaching adulthood. The rest of the park is filled with beautifully constructed seating areas, plenty of small trees for cover, and statues of children playing. Even though I still miss the old relics like the giant seesaw among other things, I was very pleasantly surprised with the changes to the park over the years.

For those wanting to spend a day here, I believe bringing an ice-chest for drinks and snacks, a swimsuit and towel for the splash pad, a volleyball for the court, plenty of sun screen, and an easy-going attitude will set anyone up for success at Bicentennial Park.



Bicentennial Park 1



Bicentennial Park 2



Bicentennial Park 3