



# Background of Echo Valley

Echo Valley is located ~10 miles northeast of Coleman, Texas on Highway 206 where a town called Echo once stood. Coleman County was founded in 1858. Not long after, the route for the Western Cattle Trail began near San Antonio and ended in Ogallala, Nebraska. In Coleman, herds often trailed right through town, traveling along Colorado Street. North of Coleman, herds forded Jim Ned Creek before continuing north.

It was on a cattle drive in the Spring of 1884 that an ambitious cowhand by the name of J.P. Morris accompanied several thousand steers. Morris always kept his eyes open for good grazing land and he wanted a well-watered place with strong soil that could grow grass in abundance.

While waiting a couple days for the flood waters of Jim Ned Creek to recede, Morris set out on his horse to explore the area. On one of these trips, he first laid eyes on the lush grass and broad valley that would someday become his home (this place borders Echo Valley). At the confluence of Indian and Jim Ned Creeks, his search for the perfect ranch that he so patiently waited, came to an end. The land had everything that he wanted in a ranch: broad, well-watered creek valleys filled with lush grasses, which would support year-round cattle grazing.

I grew up about 14 miles southwest of Coleman on Highway 67 and my best childhood friend Cole Dodson grew up a few miles from Echo. He was always talking about how special it was but I did not understand at the time why he thought that (I do now). When Andrea and I lived in New York and traveled back to Texas for Christmas, we would land in DFW, rent a car, put in the car seats, and drive nearly 1,000 miles going to 4-5 different places, since both of our parents were divorced. Andrea had a desire for us to have a place where we could come back to, and people could come visit us instead. Although we moved back to Texas in August 2009 before purchasing any property, the desire to have a place to relax didn't go away.

In December 2010, we acquired 381 acres, and through four additional transactions, we were able to acquire another 312 acres. We named the 693 acres Hay Creek Ranch because Hay Creek runs through it. In early 2014, we had the opportunity to purchase our neighbor's property (2,194 acres) – bringing the total to 2,887 acres. It was more land than we originally wanted or needed, but the land had great diversity and potential, with two creeks (Jim Ned Creek and Indian Creek) running through it. As we acquired additional land, including property where the former town of Echo was located, we decided to rename the ranch Echo Valley. The initial plan was to invest in improvements and sell about half of the land to reduce our basis.

We invested capital to improve the ranch, including building several structures: a 3,200 sq ft equipment barn with an 800 sq ft apartment, a 2,400 sq ft cattle barn, a 1,440 sq ft bunkhouse with two bedrooms and two bathrooms, and a 2,653 sq ft lodge with four bedrooms and 4.5 bathrooms. We also installed over six miles of new fencing, reclaimed about 200 acres of creek

# Background of Echo Valley (cont'd)

bottom that were overgrown with thick mesquite thickets, and cleared underbrush around the live oak trees. Additionally, we created seven new tanks and cleaned out 10 others, built about two miles of road, and installed an iron bridge over Jim Ned Creek.

We've also developed five protein stations to help grow the wildlife population, and we've set up nine blinds and feeders across the property. We have a five-stand shooting station that offers night-time shooting, offering a unique experience for guests. In addition, improvements include a long-range shooting station and a game preparation area that includes a skinning station, bird cleaning station, and a cold room for meat.

Although we originally planned to sell a portion of the land, no one made an offer that we found acceptable. In hindsight, this was a blessing, as the value of the land has since increased significantly

When we purchased the ranch, there were no livable structures on the property (unless you wanted to sleep in an old hunter's cabin full of rattlesnakes). In spring 2013, we built a barn with an apartment that had one bedroom and bathroom with bunk beds in the small family area, which gave us a place to stay. In fall 2017, we tore down an old barn, at least 80 years old, and used the materials to build the bunkhouse that includes nine bunk beds, a double bed, and a king-size bed. This gave us more room as our family grew.

We love having guests out at the ranch and needed more space as our children got older. With their bedtimes gradually getting later, the bunkhouse was no longer ideal for all of us. In 2023, we began building a 4-bedroom, 4.5-bathroom lodge to provide additional room for everyone. We also built a pool, as we found ourselves not visiting much during the summer and knew it would make the ranch more enjoyable for our kids, guests, and future grandchildren.

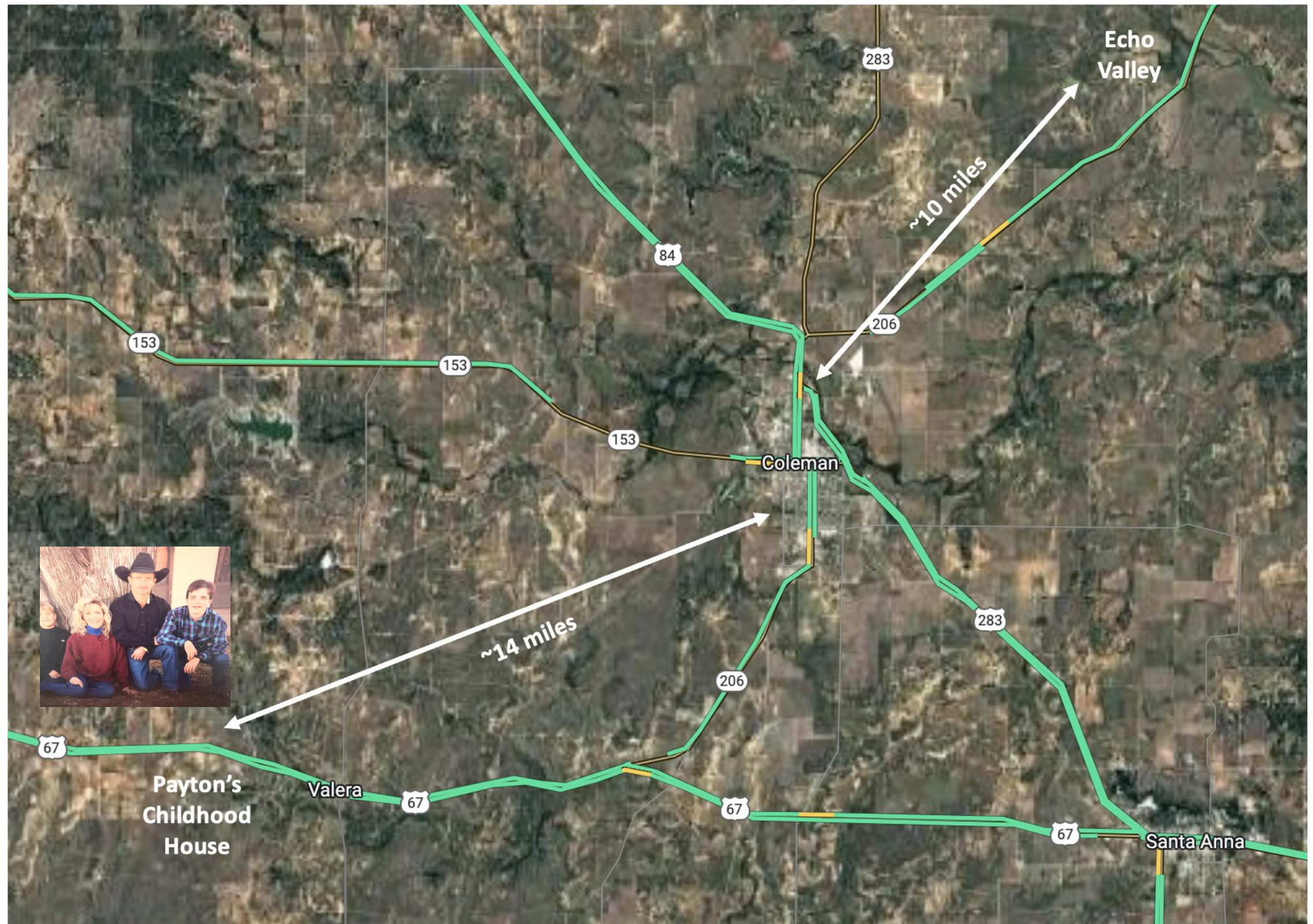
We're also blessed to have Sean Gordon, who is married to my cousin Johanna and has a 30-year track record at 3M, managing the ranch.

We're passionate about providing opportunities for high school students to develop a strong work ethic at the ranch. Previously, we ran about 150 mama cows on the property, but we decided to reduce that number to around 30 to focus more on the hunting and recreational aspects of the ranch.

Looking ahead, we plan to build a chapel, additional housing, and a facility for hosting events like meetings, wedding receptions, and other gatherings, all in God's timing.



# Echo Valley is ~25 miles from where Payton grew up





# Bunkhouse







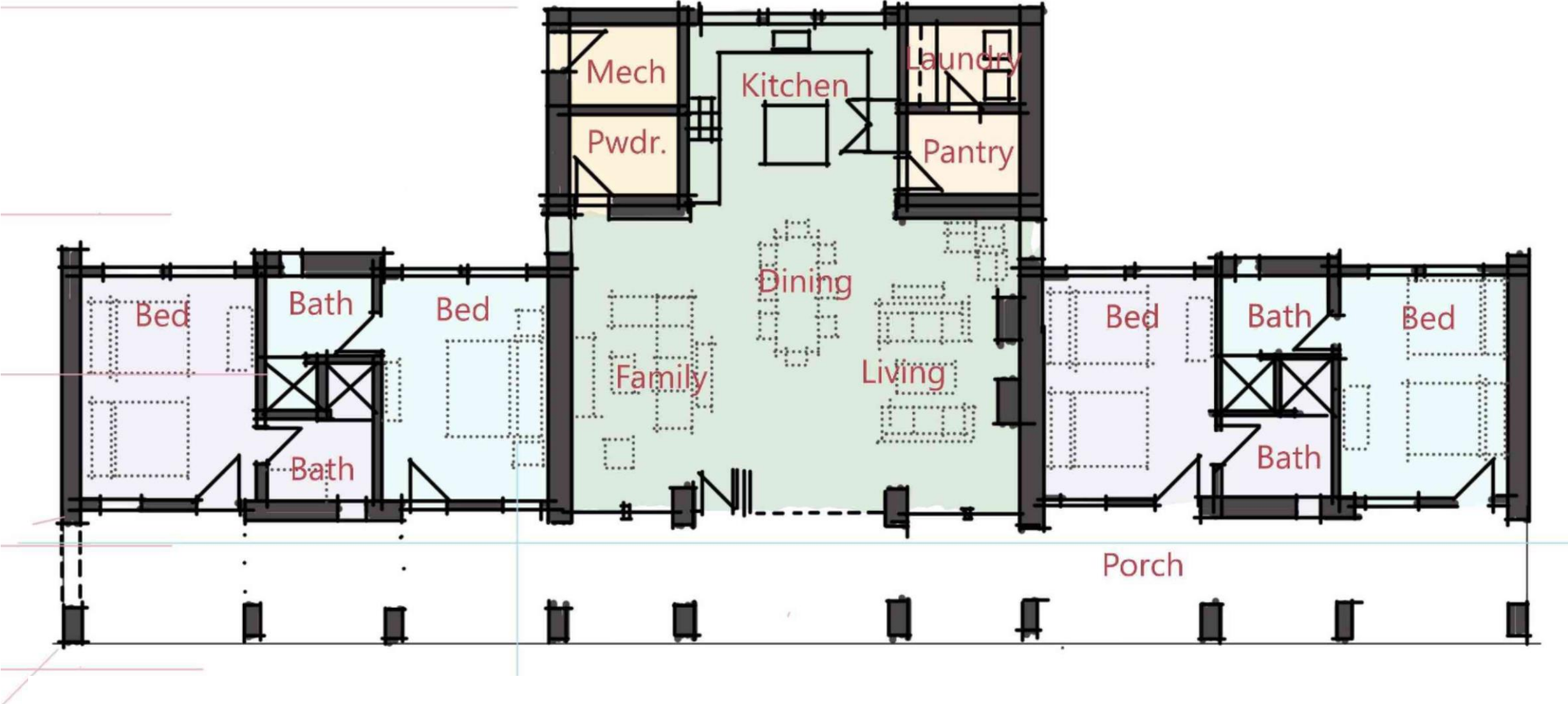




This was a very old house that served as a hunter's cabin and was infested with rattlesnakes. Given the beautiful oak trees surrounding it, we decided to put the lodge here.



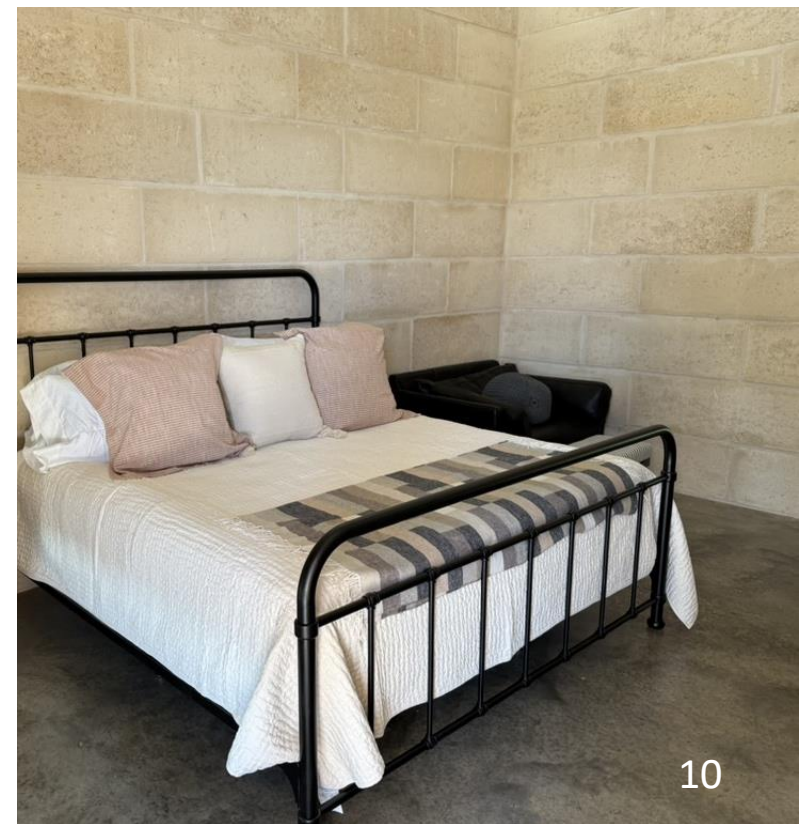
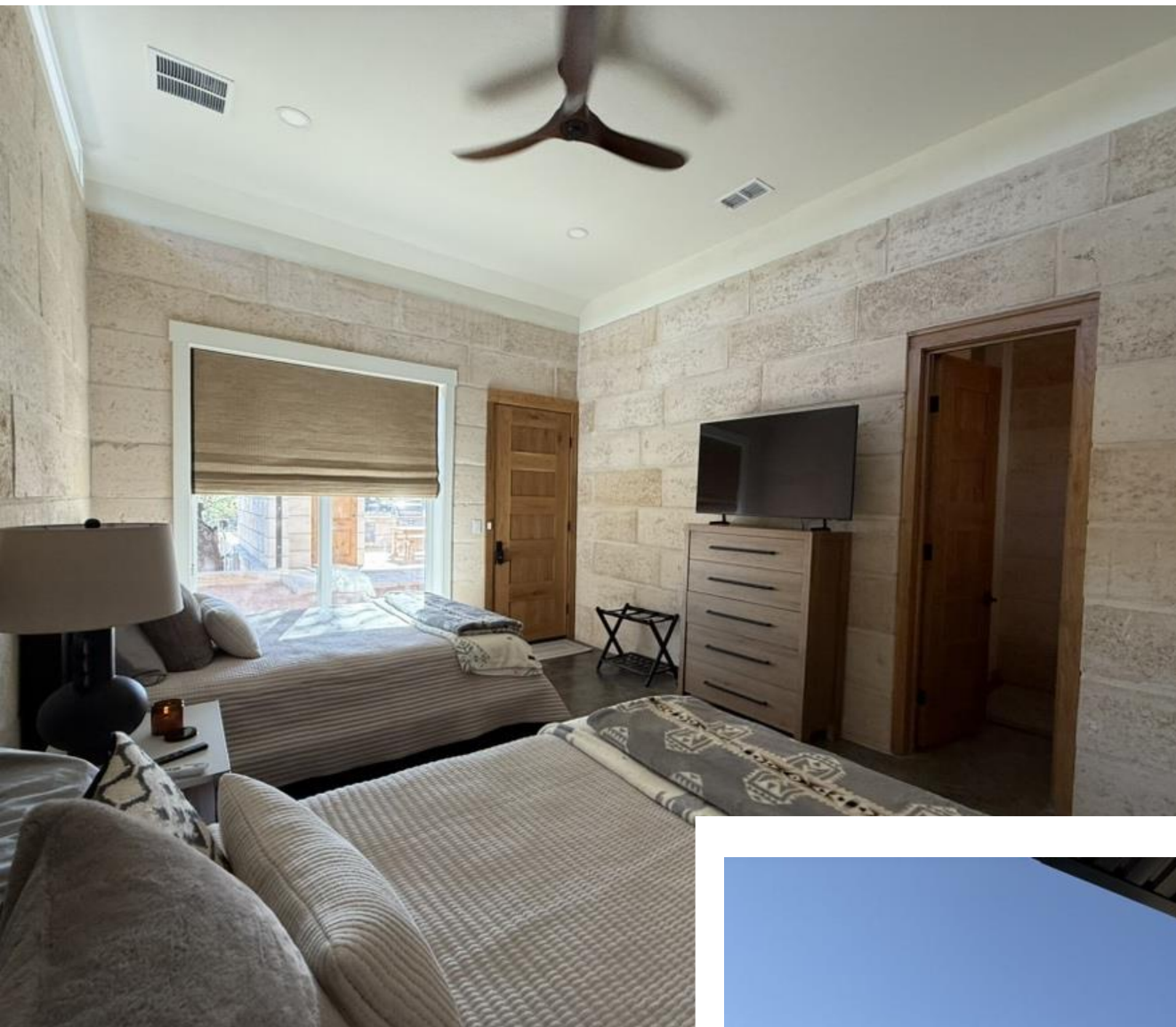
# Lodge







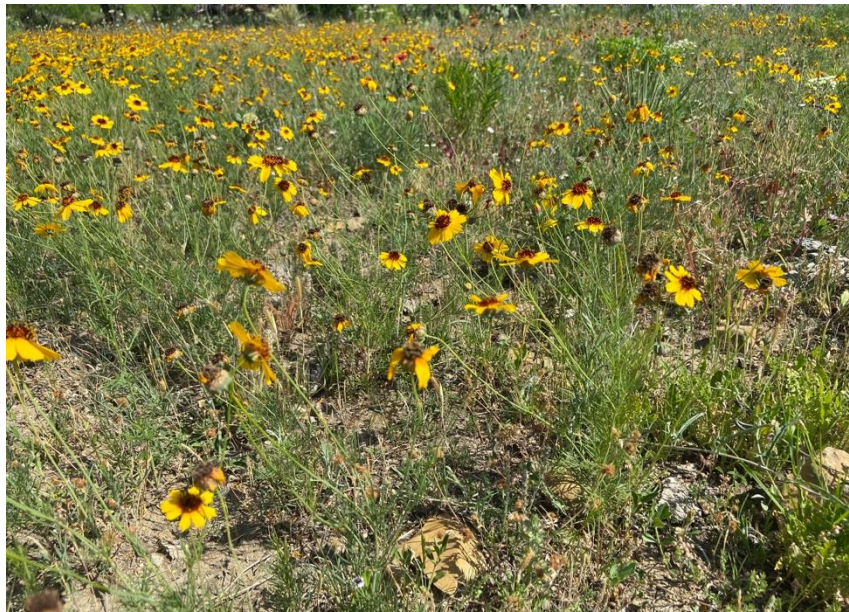
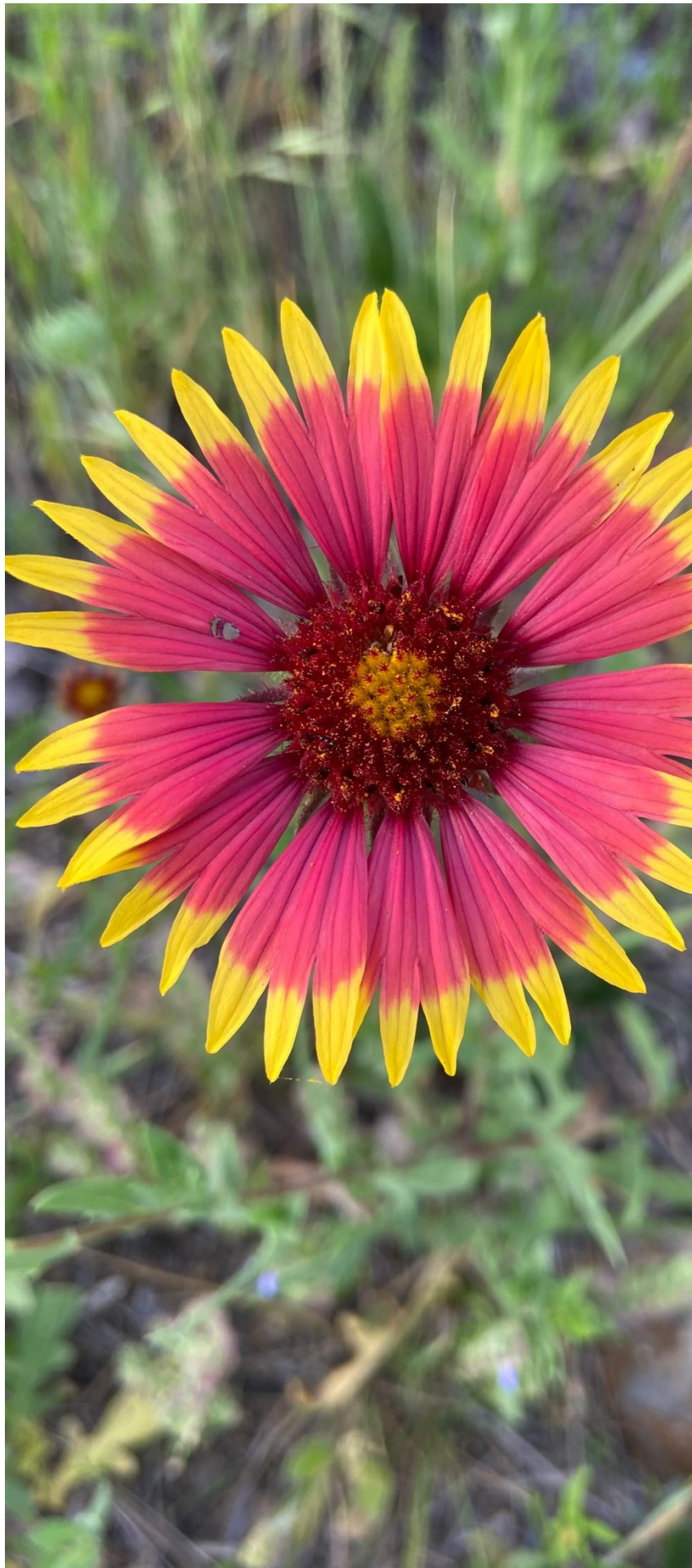


























# Echo Valley

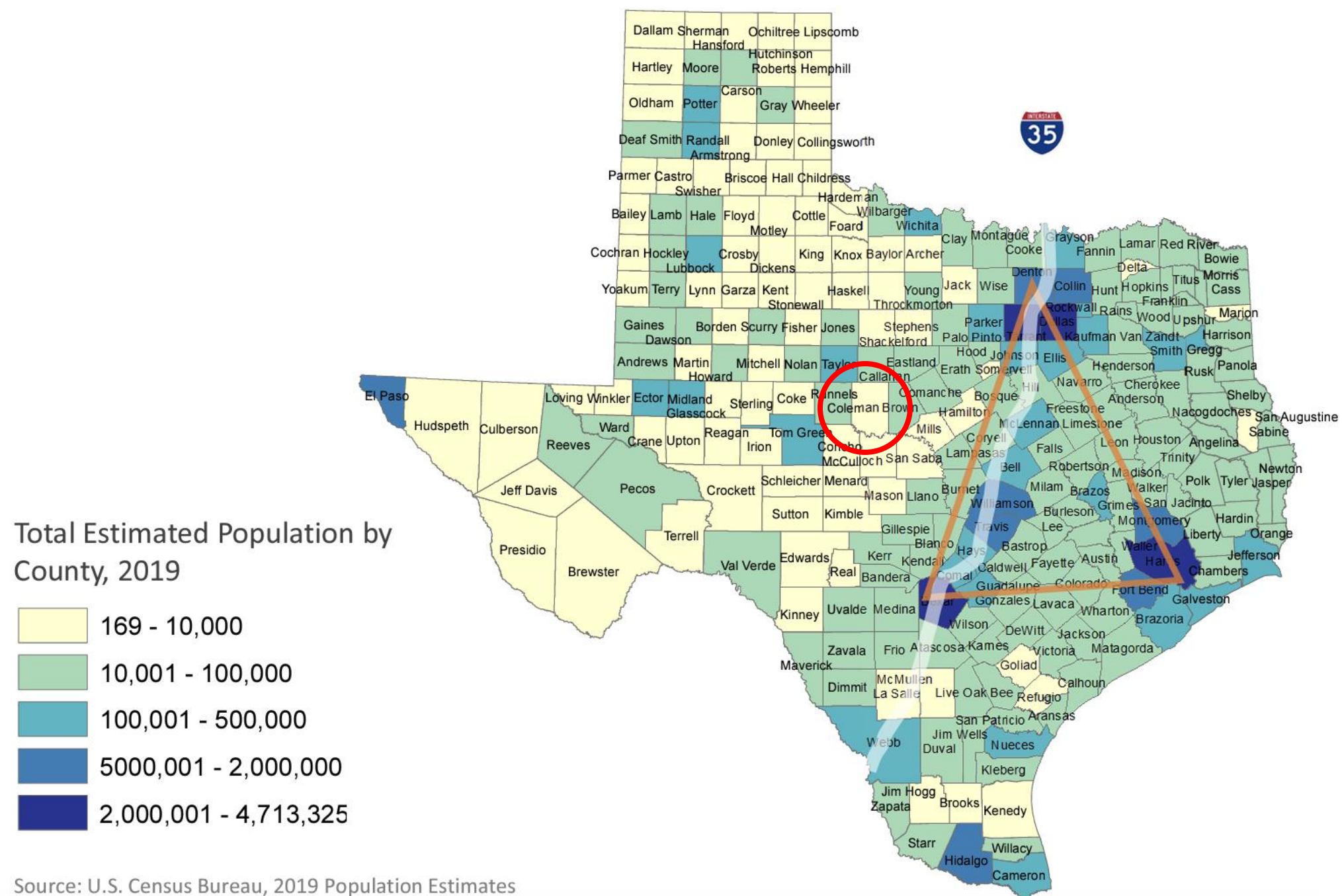
## GOAL: Utilize the ranch to advance God's Kingdom

- **Multipurpose retreat center for corporate retreats, weddings, and ministry events like.**
  - Marriage enrichment weekends.
  - Staff sabbaticals for churches and ministries.
  - Addiction recovery celebrations.
  - Special treat weekends for underprivileged children and families.
- **Create a "business" —a business that supports ministry without the need for constant fundraising.**
  - Corporate events, destination weddings, and hunting excursions.
  - Potential real estate ownership or shared experiences.
  - Revenue from for-profit activities subsidizes ministry-based initiatives.
- **Strategic Location Advantages:**
  - DFW is blessed to be centrally located in the US (~3 hrs from NYC and ~3 hrs from LA) with a [world class super hub international airport](#) that has the 2<sup>nd</sup> most passenger traffic in the world (>80M 2023).
  - Coleman/Echo is blessed to be centrally located in Texas and only ~2.5 hours from DFW airport, ~2.5 hours from Midland/Odessa, ~3 hours from Austin, ~3 hours from San Antonio and ~5 hours from Houston. There is a great municipal [airport](#) located within 8 miles of the ranch.
- **Economic and Community Impact:**
  - Ties into the ongoing revival of Coleman, Texas.
  - Recent attention from Texas Monthly [Just Back From Coleman: Is this small West Texas town poised to be the next Marfa?](#) and 2020 Dallas News article [Rancho Loma expands: How a self-taught chef is building a low-key restaurant empire in West Texas](#) highlights Coleman's potential
  - The retreat center can be a key player in Coleman's resurgence by creating jobs and boosting local tourism.



# Echo Valley

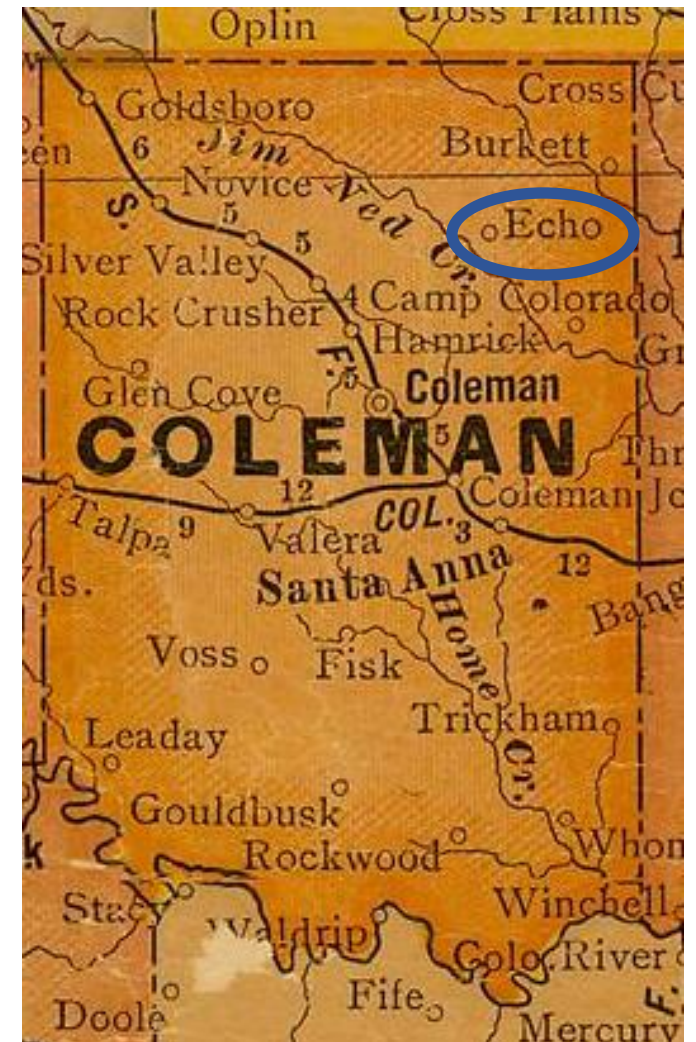
Although Coleman County is often referred to as West Texas because [~86% of the total Texas population is located in counties along and to the east of I-35](#), it is blessed to be centrally located and within a short driving distance of these population centers





# Echo

- Definition of an **echo** is a sound or series of sounds caused by the reflection of sound waves from a surface back to the listener
- The community of **Echo**, located about ten miles northeast of Coleman on the Burkett highway, is on this ranch. First developed around a store that was built in the 1870's. In the early 1880's, Capt. William Dibrell purchased land from the Miles and Golson ranches and renamed it Echo Ranch for the echo that resounded off a cliff on nearby Jim Ned Creek. The last of the Indian raids in Coleman County occurred in 1877. During a dance on the creek, a band of Comanches made a foray into what was later known as Ranch Creek Pasture of the Dibrell Ranch, killing several members of a settler's family and making off with the stock after burning the cabin. Hay Creek, a tributary of the Jim Ned which drains the community of Echo, got its name from the fact that soldiers stationed at Camp Colorado would come those six miles to cut native grass for hay for their horses.
- Spiritual Commentary from others:
  - "That's all I'm ever asking you to be—My **echo**—to tell others of what I have already said in My Word."
  - May we ever be His **echoes**, simply telling again and again the lasting, binding, authoritative words which our God has spoken.
  - Truth is stated when it **echoes** what God has already said or declared.
  - An **echo** is a reflection (of sound). I'm convinced God desires us to see ourselves the way He already sees us in Christ. And we find in the scriptures that Jesus is the mirror image of who we are as children of God. A mirror reflects an image just as an **echo** reflects sound. Our voice has to **echo** God's Word if we're ever going to see the correct image of ourselves.



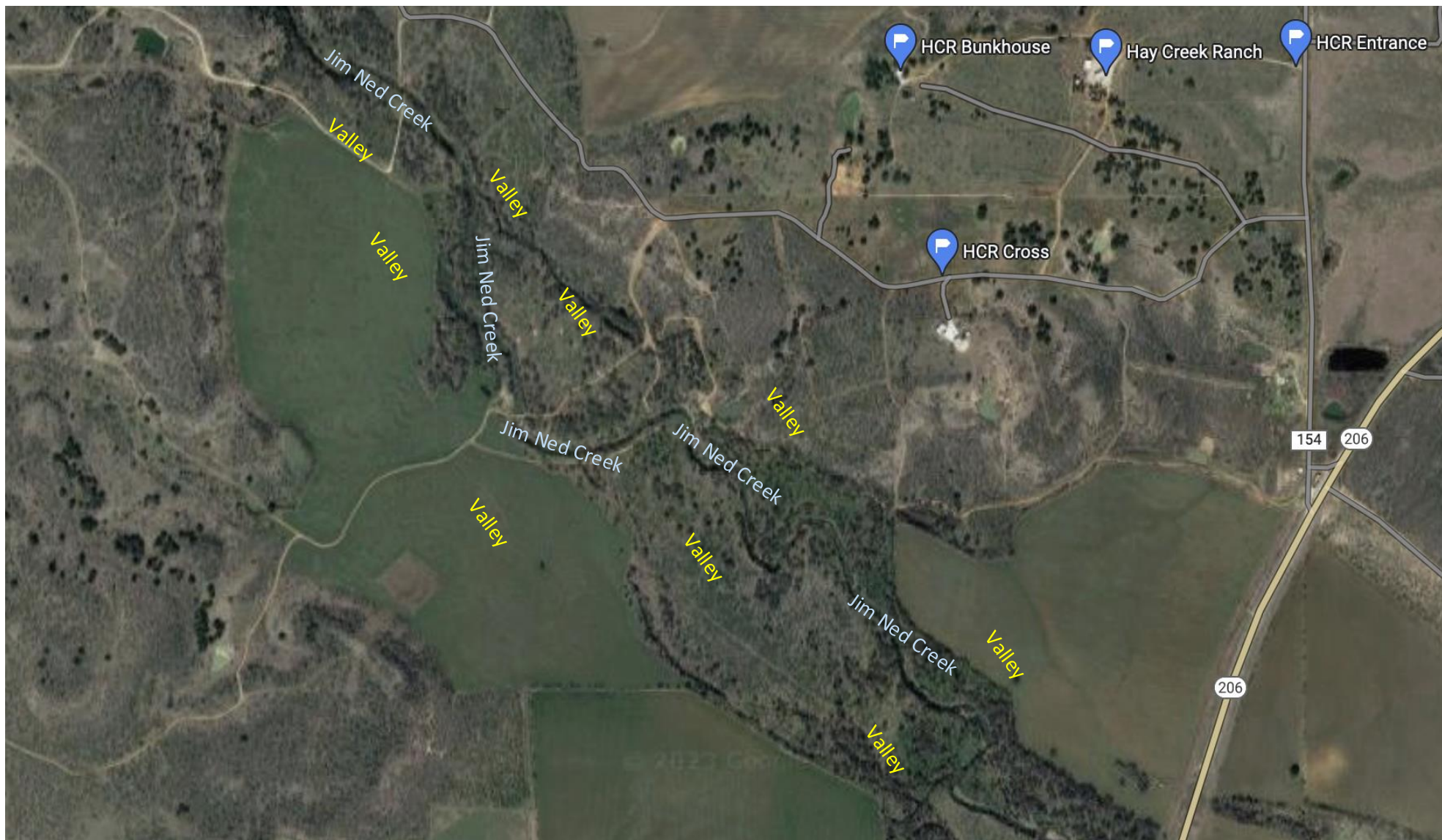
*Coleman County 1920s Map*





# Valley

- Definition of a **valley** is a low area of land between hills, typically with a river or stream flowing through it.
- The ranch has a **valley** between two hills and Jim Ned Creek running through it
- Spiritual Commentary:
  - Life is good on the mountaintops of celebration. But no matter how much we'd like to spend our lives up there, we need to walk through the **valleys** of challenges, too. Life is tough in the **valleys**. Still, there are valuable lessons we can learn in the **valleys** that we could never learn if we stayed on the mountaintops.
  - Psalm 23 is a comforting psalm, reminding us that we don't walk through the **valleys** of life on our own.
  - Psalm 23 reminds us that it is God who leads us through the **valleys**. No **valley** we face is unexpected. They are placed before us by a sovereign God— for our good and His glory.





# Retreat

- One definition of **retreat** is a place of privacy or safety and a period of group withdrawal for prayer, meditation, study, or instruction under a leader
- A group **retreat** is an opportunity for team members to come together, away from the office and their typical responsibilities. It might include learning experiences, team-building activities, downtime for informal socializing, or collaborative work.
- Many have neglected their relationship with God's creation by opting for an entirely urban lifestyle, but there's no such thing as the wrong moment to rekindle that love. Research has shown that spending time in nature, away from the many kinds of urban pollution (traffic, smoke, noise and light), has incredibly positive effects on our short-term wellbeing and our long-term mental health.
- Spiritual Commentary:
  - Psalm 46:10 - "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"
  - Matthew 11:28 – "Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."
  - Mark 6:31 - And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.
  - Psalm 23:1-3 - A Psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.





# Christ Centered Living

The cross in the center of the logo represents Christ Centered Living and our understanding of what Jesus says in **Matthew 6:33** “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you as well.”



Three Results of Christ Centered Living, [Pastor Chris Williams](#)

## 1. Christ Centered Living changes my attitude toward my circumstances.

When you live with Christ at the center, you have a Biblical, or gospel centered worldview. You see your circumstances in light of eternity, and His work in you and in the world. This sort of outlook allows you to go from the human centered worldview that cries out, “God, why me?” to “God, how would you choose me to glorify you in this manner?”

## 2. Christ Centered Living delivers me from the opinions of others.

The more Christ means to you, the less others’ opinions mean. You should be bothered less and less about pleasing others, not because you care less for them, but because you care more for Jesus. His priorities, His passions, His pursuits, and His plan for me.

If I make Christ the center, He delivers me from the opinions of others. Right now, choose to care more about the mind of Christ than the opinions of others.

## 3. Christ Centered Living gives me peace about the future.

One of the greatest fears of humanity is the fear of death. Everyone will die. Death has it out for all of us. It may not be for years, or it may be soon. You don’t know and you can’t.

The last thing you should do is worry about when you’ll die. Instead focus on how you will live. If Christ is the center; it doesn’t matter whether you live long or short lives, whether you die sooner or later. What matters is that you love Him, serve Him, and enjoy the joy of your salvation today. Christ will care for your tomorrows. Choose today to think more about focusing on Christ, His death, and His resurrection than about worrying over life and death. Isn’t it amazing that when the person of Christ is in full focus, centrally located in our hearts and minds, everything starts to make sense? Order emerges out of chaos. Clarity out of confusion. Life from death.



# Echo Valley

## The Foot of the Cross



In 2017, while Mike Barker was clearing some mesquite brush, God inspired me to leave a section untouched in the shape of a cross. Years later, a friend staying at the ranch, Rick Drew, shared how he prayed at the Foot of the Cross. This inspired me to create a dedicated area called 'The Foot of the Cross,' a sanctuary for reflection and a deeper connection with Jesus, offering meaningful messages to encourage prayer and spiritual growth.



# Echo Valley

## The Foot of the Cross, the Best Place in the World!

No matter how sweet and wonderful your favorite place is, it can't compare to the best place in the world: the foot of the cross. It is a place of healing, offering life upon life to anyone who is willing to receive it in the name of Jesus.

There is no other place in the world where we are always welcomed with wide open arms, regardless of what we've done or where we've been. This is why we can boldly come to the foot

of the cross just as we are, and through grace, be transformed from the inside out. Only the blood of Christ can wash away our sins and make us whole. This is why we need the cross, this is why we need Jesus. And this is why the foot of the cross is the greatest place in the world.

Standing at the foot of the cross is standing before a glorious display of God's love. And that love is for us. At the foot of the cross, we find everything we've ever been searching for.

When we surrender to Jesus and ask for the forgiveness of our sins, we receive grace upon grace. We are healed, restored, and uplifted.

Indeed, the foot of the cross is an amazing place. Yes, the cross atones for our sins, but that's not all. We need the cross daily because it's where we meet Jesus and get to know His heart. It's where we come weak and leave strengthened, where we come burdened and leave in peace. At the cross, we get to taste a bit of heaven on earth – priceless, special, and worthy of praise.

So, whenever you are in need, run to the cross, run to Jesus. At the foot of the cross, you will find refuge, shelter, safety, power, strength, hope, peace, love, grace, and joy – everything that brings fulfillment and wholeness to your life. So don't hesitate; come to the foot of the cross. Taste the goodness of God. Drink from the well of heaven. Eat the life-giving bread, daily.

**Be blessed as you meet Jesus daily at the foot of the cross – the best place in the world!**

*"He himself bore our sins" in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; "by His wounds you have been healed." 1 Peter 2:24*

*"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9*



### At the Foot of the Cross, by Phil Wickham

I come for life, I come for peace  
I come before you on my knees  
LORD hear my cry, you're all I need  
Oh God, I come to the cross

Here my debts have all been paid  
Here my sins are washed away  
Here my soul has found its place  
At the foot of the cross

And I once was lost but now I'm found  
All my chains fall to the ground  
Take this life I lay it down  
At the foot of the cross

You gave your life, you bore my shame  
My sins are buried in the grave  
Without your love, I would be lost  
Oh God, I come to the cross

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And I once was lost but now I'm found  
All my chains fall to the ground  
Take my life I lay it down  
At the foot of the cross

Hallelujah love has won  
Hallelujah love has won  
Hallelujah love has won  
Hallelujah, oh Hallelujah

For here my debts have all been paid  
Here my sins are washed away  
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At the foot of the cross

And I once was lost but now I'm found  
As all my chains fall to the ground  
Oh Jesus, take my life I lay it down  
At the foot of the cross  
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Take my life I lay it down  
At the foot of the cross



### To The Foot of the Cross

I'm ever thinking and no  
My negative inner critic  
Distraction is the best way  
Each thought gets lost in

"The LORD is my strength  
But my thoughts do not  
My mind can spout Scripture  
Yet my soul is dried up

There is a hunger for God  
I can only ignore it for so long  
My mind must yield to Him  
And stop to hear my dear

He calls me to come and  
To bring nothing but myself

### Questions for Reflection

1. When you picture yourself at the foot of the cross, what does this moment give you?
2. The cross led to a gift of peace and rest. Do you have peace and rest?
3. Are you surrendering to the strength of Christ through the cross?
4. Through Jesus' death, are you not merely improved but transformed?



- This sign is at the foot of the cross
- Our daughter Channing had 9 of her friends forming a cross at The Foot of the Cross on her 15<sup>th</sup> birthday



# The Foot of the Cross, the Best Place in the World!

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There is no other place in the world where we are always welcomed with wide open arms, regardless of what we've done or where we've been. This is why we can boldly come to the foot



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So, whenever you are in need, run to the cross, run to Jesus. At the foot of the cross, you will find refuge, shelter, safety, power, strength, hope, peace, love, grace, and joy – everything that brings fulfillment and wholeness to your life. So don't hesitate; come to the foot of the cross. Taste the goodness of God. Drink from the well of heaven. Eat the life-giving bread, daily.

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And I once was lost but now I'm found  
All my chains fall to the ground  
Take this life I lay it down  
At the foot of the cross

You gave your life, you bore my shame  
My sins are buried in the grave  
Without your love, I would be lost  
Oh God, I come to the cross, yeah

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At the foot of the cross  
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Take my life I lay it down  
At the foot of the cross



## To The Foot of the Cross...I Must Go, by J.W. Harle

I'm ever thinking and not trusting,  
My negative inner critic is loud.  
Distraction is the best word to describe it,  
Each thought gets lost in a cloud.

"The LORD is my strength," yes, I know this truth,  
But my thoughts do not let it sink in.  
My mind can spout Scripture all the day long,  
Yet my soul is dried up deep within.

There is a hunger for God deep down,  
I can only ignore it for so long.  
My mind must yield to my soul at some point,  
And stop to hear my dear LORD's song.

He calls me to come and just be with Him,  
To bring nothing but my undivided whole.

He invites me to think on His great love for me,  
To be His child upon His lap is my role.

Remembering how His Son died for me,  
Then rose and put death itself in the grave.  
My Savior and Friend, that is who Jesus is,  
As for sin and death, I'm no longer their slave.

These truths are what my soul needs to hear,  
Daily I must stop so I can be filled.  
Yes, my greatest need is to stop doing,  
To be present with God and be healed.

Holy Spirit, you are inside of me,  
Please give me strength to say "No",  
To the distractions of all this doing,  
And "Yes" to the foot of the cross...I must go.

## Questions for Reflection

1. When you picture yourself standing at the foot of the cross, what thoughts or emotions arise? Does this moment give you a deeper understanding of the weight of your sins?
2. The cross led to a glorious resurrection, which led to freedom from sin. We now can experience true peace and rest. Do you trust His sacrifice in your daily life?
3. Are you surrendering your hurts, disappointments, and fears at the cross, trusting in the power and strength of Christ that now resides within you?
4. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are made completely new (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are not merely improved versions of our old selves but transformed creations, living in unity with Jesus. As His ambassadors on earth, how are you living out this calling?



# Echo Valley - Google Maps Link





# paytonmayes.com

paytonmayes.com provides more background on Payton’s journey, where he shares his stories, reflections, and experiences. His hope is to inspire, encourage, and remind each visitor that no matter the struggle, transformation and redemption are always possible through Jesus.



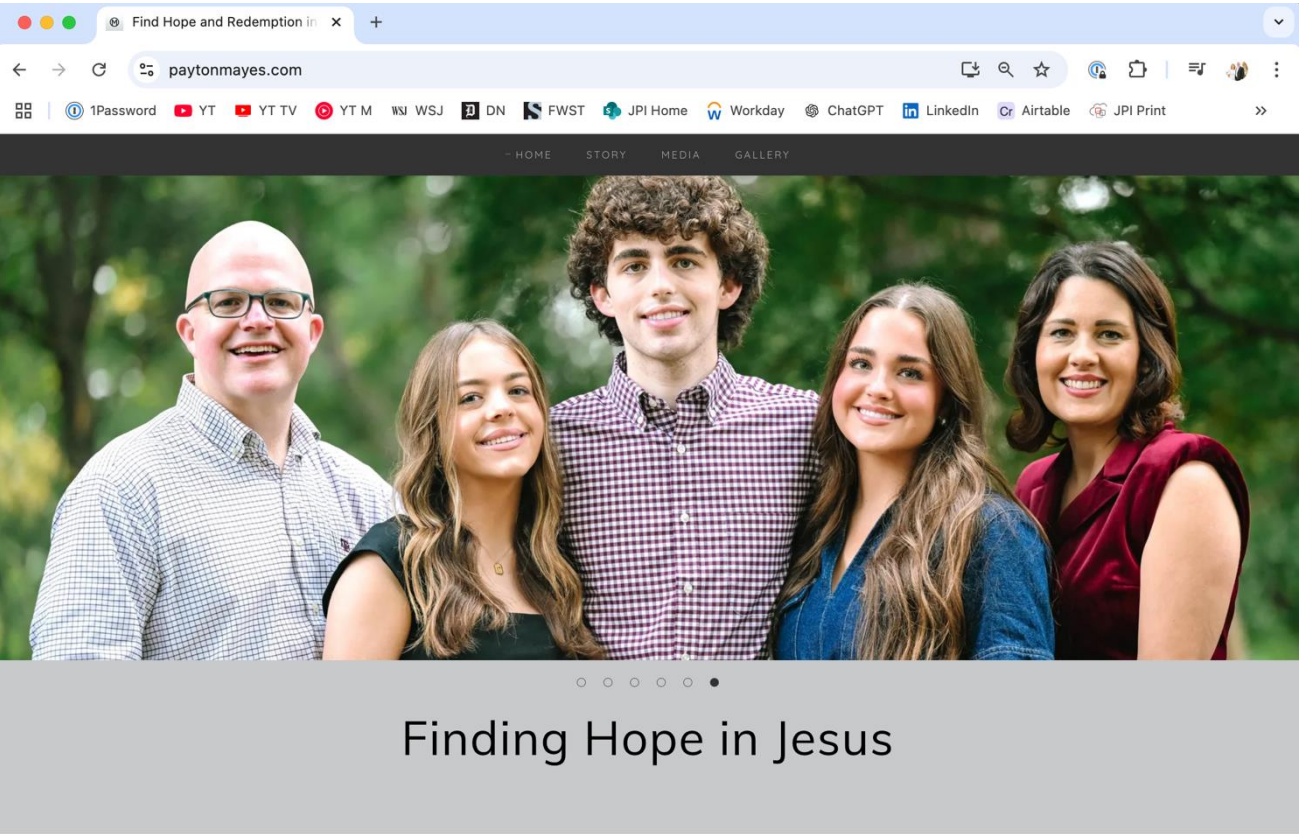
I grew up always believing in God but had no idea who Jesus was or what a personal relationship with Him even meant. My wife, Andrea, nudged me to find out on our first date on February 14, 2004, and the rest is history. I have found that when I truly put Him first, life is better and things that I used to worry and fret about aren’t important in His Kingdom. My prayer is that family, friends, colleagues, and complete strangers will start to be more vulnerable and open about the struggles they face – we are all imperfect but can be redeemed by the love of Jesus. This is why I put my hope in Him.

Payton & Andrea shared more about their story for 121 Community Church’s Easter Service in 2024.

THE REST OF THE STORY



I had the incredible honor of being a guest on “Common Sense with Dr. Ben Carson.” Dr. Carson’s wisdom, humility, and transparency about his faith in leadership have long inspired me. Sharing my journey, the values that have shaped my life, and what God has taught me was a humbling privilege.



02/12/77

10/05/82

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12/28/99

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11/09/06

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03/06/08

09/15/08

The Mayes Story

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:33

08/07/09

03/05/10

12/28/10

12/02/11

02/24/12

12/17/13

01/04/14

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10/23/17

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02/06/23

09/29/23



# Waiver

Please scan this  
to review and  
sign a waiver  
and release of  
liability before  
participating in  
any activities.



## UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND WAIVER AGREEMENT

Hay Creek Ranch / Echo Valley, Coleman County, Texas

THIS RELEASE OF LIABILITY AND WAIVER AGREEMENT (hereinafter "Agreement") is made and entered into as of the date below, by and between Participant below, hereinafter referred to as "Participant," and Hay Creek Ranch, LLC, (together with its owners the "Releasee") who owns Hay Creek Ranch / Echo Valley Ranch, located in Coleman County, Texas, hereinafter referred to as "Ranch" or "Premises."

WHEREAS, Participant desires to engage in various activities at the Ranch, which may include but are not limited to riding utility terrain vehicles (UTVs), hunting, fishing, and shooting (collectively referred to as "Activities");

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of being permitted to participate in the Activities at the Ranch, Participant hereby agrees as follows:

**Acknowledgment of Risks:** Participant acknowledges that the Activities involve inherent risks and dangers that no amount of care, caution, instruction, or expertise can eliminate. Participant expressly and voluntarily assumes all risk of death, personal injury, or property damage associated with participation in the Activities, whether or not caused by the negligence of the Ranch.

**Release and Waiver of Claims:** Participant hereby releases, waives, discharges, and covenants not to sue Hay Creek Ranch / Echo Valley, its owners, officers, employees, agents, and assigns (collectively referred to as "Releasees") from any and all liability, claims, demands, actions, and causes of action whatsoever arising out of or related to any loss, damage, injury, or death that may be sustained by Participant or any property belonging to Participant while participating in the Activities, or while on the premises where the Activities are being conducted, even if such harm is caused by the negligence of the Releasees.

**Indemnification:** Participant agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Releasees from any and all claims, actions, suits, procedures, costs, expenses, damages, and liabilities, including attorney's fees, arising from or related to Participant's involvement in the Activities or use of Ranch facilities, and to reimburse them for any such expenses incurred.

**Fitness and Health:** Participant asserts that they are physically fit and have no medical condition