

Big Bend National Park and Marathon, TX

Soldiers, ranchers, miners and tourists have carved the history of Marathon, Texas as deep as the Rio Grande, with tales as tall as the mountains of Big Bend. Originally settled by Solomon and Mayer Halff, the brothers shared 1 million acres between San Antonio and Ft. Stockton. They started the Circle Dot Ranch near Pena Colorado Springs, located a few miles south of present day Marathon. The brothers soon chose banking over ranching and leased their land to the federal government, and in 1879 the U.S. Army established Camp Pena Colorado. When the Southern Pacific Railroad passed through the area in March of 1882, Captain Albion E. Shepard purchased land a few miles north of the present town. Later that year Shepard applied for a post office, and on February 13th, 1883 he established the town of Marathon. It is rumored that the town was so named because it reminded Shepard of Marathon, Greece.

The railroad has been vital for shipping livestock, wool, and large game animals. Marathon is the preferred shipping hub in Brewster County because the flat terrain makes it easier for ranchers to drive cattle to the rail yards. The town has seen the rise and fall of rubber, wax, and honey factories, and the area was drilled for oil many times with little success. The town is still the center for ranching in the county, but it also functions as the main gateway to Big Bend National Park.

Although the park was founded in 1944, people have lived in the area for thousands of years. Archeologists have found remains of Native Americans that date as far back as 8000 BC. Take time to walk a few of the park trails and you may find your own treasures from the past, but please leave them where you find them so other visitors can have the same exciting experience. Many different groups of people have inhabited the area throughout the years, including Native

American tribes, Spanish Conquistadors, Mexican and American farmers, and tourists from around the world. Big Bend has quickly become one of the most recognizable national parks because the mountains, the desert and the Rio Grande River offer a wide variety of activities and experiences.

Source(s):

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