

Texarkana: Twice as Nice

The name Texarkana has a familiar ring. Maybe that is because the name is a combination of Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas. The exact naming of Texarkana is up for debate, but it was believed to be named by Colonel Gus Knobel in the late 1800s who thought he was at the cross points of the three states. In reality, he was only at the border of Texas and Arkansas; Louisiana was about 30 miles to the south. The city sits in the northeast corner of Texas and the southwest corner of Arkansas. One of the unique things about Texarkana is that, depending on where you live in the city, you can have either a Texas or Arkansas address. State Line Avenue delineates the two states. The Texas side of the city has historically held the larger population, but the Arkansas side is not far behind. The city was founded in 1873 at the junction of two railroad lines. In those days, the railroads were the major employers and business attraction of the area. However, today the city is an important industrial and lumber center.

The city's motto, "twice as nice", comes from the city's duplicate nature of almost everything. From the mayor, to the city government, to the fire and police departments, and many other businesses, Texarkana has one on each side of State Line Avenue. Despite the city's "split down the middle", the thriving and diversified economy has formed an outstanding, single community.

The name Texarkana is not the only familiar name that is associated with this multi state community. Ragtime music, much like what you're listening to right now, was composed by a famous son from Texarkana, Scott Joplin, who is considered the "King of Ragtime Composers." Another name that found its home in this city was the inventor of almost every boy's "must have" accessory, Jim Bowie, inventor of the Bowie Knife. If you have seen the motion picture, *The Town that Dreaded Sundown*, then you have watched a film based on actual events that occurred here in Texarkana. In the spring of 1946, an unidentified assailant killed five people and severely wounded three others. The local newspaper, the *Texarkana Gazette*, labeled the murderer as the "Phantom Killer" because the strikes always occurred at night and the killer seemed to vanish. The name and events sparked national attention and to this day the identity of the Phantom Killer remains unknown; it is considered a cold case.

Over the years, Texarkana has worked hard to ensure that the community's name and reputation continues to develop and prosper. The city hosts a variety of parades, fairs, and festivals throughout the year; popular events include the Annual African American Parade Celebration and the Four States Fair, which primarily draws visitors from the four surrounding states. Another main attraction is the vintage buildings and historical landmarks located throughout the city. Many of these are registered as national and Texas historic buildings. You can take a tour of ten unique attractions in less than ten blocks with the Trail of Two Cities tour company.

There is no doubt that the name Texarkana fits this "divided community" quite well. Although it may seem a bit strange to have so many duplicate services in one community, the people here say it makes the place twice as nice!

Source(s):

Hendricks, N. (2010). *Texarkana Moonlight Murders*. The Central Arkansas Library System. Retrieved January 25, 2011 from <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4478>

Texarkana Chamber of Commerce. (2009). Texarkana USA. Retrieved January 25, 2011 from http://www.texarkana.org/Texarkana_USA/

Texas Escapes. (2008). Texarkana USA. Retrieved January 25, 2011 from <http://www.texasescapes.com/EastTexasTowns/Texarkana-Texas-Arkansas.htm#history>

Texarkana Texas Attractions. (n.d.). Discover Our Town. Retrieved January 26, 2011 from <http://www.discoverourtown.com/TX/Texarkana/Attractions-339.html>

Texarkana U.S.A. (2011). Retrieved January 25, 2011 from <http://www.texarkanausa.com/>

Author(s):

Written by Maggie Pottkotter (Intern) in the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences at Texas A&M University, as part of a National Park Service Trails and Rails project funded by Amtrak, 2011.