

2019 FALL SYMPOSIUM

Central Texas Historical Association

A background image showing the silhouettes of a five-piece rock band performing on stage. From left to right: a guitarist, a drummer, a singer with a microphone, a bassist, and another guitarist. The silhouettes are light gray and set against a white background.

*Historical Notes:
A Century of Lone Star Music*

Sophienburg Museum of History

New Braunfels, Texas

November 16, 2019

Program Schedule

Saturday, November 16, 2019

Sophienburg Museum of History New Baunfels, Texas

(Doors Open - 8:15 AM)

WELCOME & SESSION I

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF SESSION I SPEAKERS (8:50—9:05 AM)

Charles D. Grear

President, Central Texas Historical Association

“BABEL OF CONFUSED NOISES: SEGUIN’S A.O. BABEL AND THE CREATION OF COWBOY MUSIC IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY” (9:05—9:50 AM)

Kevin Fontenot

Tulane University

“TEXAS MUSIC ROAD TRIP: HISTORIC SITES, SENSE OF PLACE, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR MUSIC HERITAGE TOURISM IN THE LONE STAR STATE ” (10:00—10:45 AM)

Jason Mellard

Texas State University

“KISSING COUSINS: THE BLUESMEN OF LEON COUNTY ” (10:55—11:40 AM)

Joe W. Specht

McMurry University

Lunch Break (11:40AM—1:00 PM)

*There are numerous restaurants in the downtown area.
The symposium will resume at 1:00 PM.*

SESSION II

INTRODUCTION OF SESSION II SPEAKERS (1:00—1:10 PM)

Ronald Goodwin

First Vice President, Central Texas Historical Association

“RANCHERAS Y BOLEROS TO RHYTHM ‘N’ BLUES: CONJUNTO MUSIC THAT CROSSED OVER ” (1:10—1:55 PM)

Jason Saldana

Conjunto Heritage Taller

“ROBERT EARL KEEN, JACK INGRAM, AND THE ORIGINS OF THE TEXAS COUNTRY SCENE ” (2:00—2:30 PM)

Rich Kelly

Austin Independent School District

“MANUEL ‘COWBOY’ DONLEY: ‘THE HOTTEST GUITAR IN TEXAS’ AND THE ORIGINATOR OF THE MODERN TEJANO MUSIC SCENE IN AUSTIN” (2:30—3:00 PM)

Evaliza Fuentes

Texas State University



SESSION I



Kevin Fontenot

**“BABEL OF CONFUSED NOISES: SEGUIN’S
A.O. BABEL AND THE CREATION OF COWBOY
MUSIC IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY”**

9:05—9:50 AM

Presentation Abstract:

"Babel of Confused Noises" examines the life and career of Amandus Oscar Babel, who in the late nineteenth century carved out a career for himself as a "Texas cowboy pianist." Born in Seguin, Texas, in 1856, Babel was the son of Prussian immigrants and spent his early years as a cowboy and army scout. While working as an army scout, Babel was severely injured when a horse fell on him. Babel experienced a "remarkable recovery" that resulted in his new-found ability to play piano compositions ranging from folk tunes to classical music. He claimed to have had no prior musical aptitude. Babel embarked on a tour of the Southwest and California, eventually moving to New York. Babel combined the showmanship and visual style of Buffalo Bill Cody with a touch of spiritualism and fiery classical performances to produce an image of a cowboy savant. His popularity flamed brightly until the people of Seguin came forth to reveal the truth about his background. This paper investigates how the cowboy image and questions of authenticity have been present since the nineteenth century in cowboy music and how the nation's fascination with the West was manipulated by an early Texas musician.

Brief Biography:

Kevin S. Fontenot, a native of Oberlin, Louisiana, is a historian with specialties in Louisiana history, US cultural history, and country music history. He is co-editor with Ryan Brasseaux of *Accordions, Fiddles, Two Step and Swing: A Cajun Music Reader* (Center for Louisiana Studies 2006) and has contributed numerous publications on a variety of topics associated with the history of music in books, professional journals, and encyclopedias. Fontenot was a featured commentator in several documentary films including *A Century of Sunshine: The Jimmie Davis Story*, *Making Waves*, and *Been Down that Muddy Road*. Fontenot taught history at Tulane University for twelve years and was awarded the John Dyer Award for Excellence in Teaching. He holds degrees from Louisiana College and Tulane University. His current research interests include a biography of Louisiana governor Jimmie Davis, the role played by Civil War veterans in creating country music, and cowboy musicians on the vaudeville and Wild West stages. Fontenot lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife Caroline Gnagy.

SESSION I



Jason Mellard

“TEXAS MUSIC ROAD TRIP: HISTORIC SITES, SENSE OF PLACE, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR MUSIC HERITAGE TOURISM IN THE LONE STAR STATE ”

10:00—10:45 AM

Presentation Abstract:

It is difficult to conceive of an American musical heritage without Texas in it, particularly when we reach the recorded era of country, blues, and conjunto. Texas music resounds through the state's history and cultural identity as a marker of who Texans are and how they have expressed themselves. While scholars have long documented this history, the intersection of the state's deep sense of place and its musical heritage have not been the focus of museum and heritage tourism work as they have in other Southern locales such as Memphis, Nashville, New Orleans, or the Mississippi Delta. This presentation explores the ongoing and successful attempts to mark the state's musical history while also thinking through next steps for engaged scholars hoping to preserve and interpret historic sites related to Texas Music.

Brief Biography:

Jason Mellard is the Director of the Center for Texas Music History and Assistant Professor of history at Texas State University in San Marcos. He is the author of *Progressive Country: How the 1970s Transformed the Texan in Popular Culture* (University of Texas Press, 2013), co-editor of *The Journal of Texas Music History*, and a board member of the Texas Music Museum in Austin and Texas Dance Hall Preservation.

SESSION I



Joe W. Specht

**“KISSING COUSINS: THE BLUESMEN
OF LEON COUNTY ”**

10:55—11:40 AM

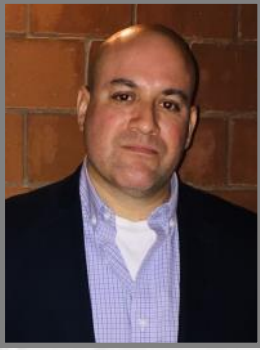
Presentation Abstract:

The focus of this paper will be seven African American musicians, who were born and raised in Leon County: Alger “Texas” Alexander, the Hopkins brothers (John Henry, Joel, and Sam), Billy Bizor, Albert Collins, and Clyde Langford. In addition to offering an overview of their interconnected careers, the presentation will include brief musical excerpts of their recordings.

Brief Biography:

Joe W. Specht is the collection manager of the McWhiney Collection and director of Jay-Rollins Library emeritus at McMurry University. He is the author of *The Women There Don't Treat You Mean: Abilene in Song* (State House Press, 2006; rev. expanded ed., Texas Star Trading Company, 2017) and *As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls...in song* (Prairie Dog Blues Publishing, 2013), as well as co-editor of *The Roots of Texas Music* (Texas A&M University Press, 2003) and *Abilene Stories: From Then to Now* (Abilene Christian University Press, 2013). Specht has published articles and book reviews in various journals, including *The Journal of Texas Music History*, *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, *Beat Scene*, *Southwestern American Literature*, and contributed entries to *The Encyclopedia of Country Music* and *The Handbook of Texas Music*.

SESSION II



Jason Saldana

“RANCHERAS Y BOLEROS TO RHYTHM ‘N’ BLUES: CONJUNTO MUSIC THAT CROSSED OVER”

1:10—1:55 PM

Presentation Abstract:

How did San Antonio Conjunto Alegre become Sammy Jay & The Tiffaniers or Conjunto Mexico become Mando & The Latineers? This presentation will showcase artists that pioneered Conjunto music in San Antonio by exploring genres outside of their traditional style. “Rancheras y Boleros to Rhythm ‘n’ Blues” will also highlight some of the first independent record labels in San Antonio that solely produced Mexican American music.

Brief Biography:

Born and raised in San Antonio, Jason Saldana earned his B.B.A in Economics from U.T.S.A. He is an active board member of the Conjunto Heritage Taller, a community-based, non-profit organization, dedicated to preserve and perpetuate traditional Conjunto music. This organization teaches accordion and bajo sexto, to all ages from children to seniors. He has served on the board at the South Texas Museum of Popular Culture, a non-profit organization, dedicated to preserving South Texas music and music-related art and history. He has organized events that showcased Texas Music History, with themes ranging from recording labels to music sub-genres. In 2015 and 2018 he was part of the “Black and Brown Sounds in Tejas,” an event hosted by U.T.S.A’s Mexican-American Studies Program. His broad knowledge of San Antonio music has earned him guest spots on Texas Public Radio and other radio broadcasts.

SESSION II

Rich Kelly

**“ROBERT EARL KEEN, JACK INGRAM,
AND THE ORIGINS OF THE TEXAS
COUNTRY SCENE ”**

2:00—2:30 PM

Presentation Abstract:

Rich Kelly's research begins the process of contextualizing the Texas Country music scene that emerged in the mid-1990s and continues to the present. Through interviews and research, Kelly focuses on Robert Earl Keen and Jack Ingram and their roles in creating the scene and inspiring those who came after them.

Brief Biography:

Rich Kelly earned his M.A. in History from Texas State University in 2017. He is beginning his 18th year as a public school teacher in his hometown of Austin, Texas. During the late 1990s and early 2000s he was one of the first radio deejays to play what came to be known as Texas Country as a musical format. His academic work is concerned with the development of music scenes that lack significant record label or radio support such as the Texas Country scene in which he worked.

SESSION II



Evaliza Fuentes

“MANUEL ‘COWBOY’ DONLEY: ‘THE HOTTEST GUITAR IN TEXAS’ AND THE ORIGINATOR OF THE MODERN TEJANO MUSIC SCENE IN AUSTIN”

2:30—3:00 PM

Presentation Abstract:

The first Musica Tejana ensembles to “go electric” originated a new music scene powered by electric guitar, electric bass and drum set. By focusing on the sonic changes from acoustic to electric, an alternative interpretation of “modern” Musica Tejana emerges which will bring attention to the fifties originators of the current Tejano music sound.

Brief Biography:

Evaliza Fuentes recently completed a M.A. in History at Texas State University-San Marcos. As a graduate student, Fuentes focused her studies on public history. Her academic and career goal is the preservation and conservation of Musica Tejana. She is originally from Brownsville, Texas.

SOPHIENBURG MUSEUM OF HISTORY NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS



ABOUT THE SOPHIENBURG MUSEUM

TELLING THE REAL STORIES OF GERMAN IMMIGRATION

Immerse yourself in the life of a German colonist, the hardships suffered and the freedoms gained, arriving with Prince Carl to establish what would grow to be the fourth largest city in Texas just five years later. The museum's emphasis is on the founding German immigrants and their contributions (i.e., language, science, education, industrialization), but also includes the contributions and traditions of other cultures present in the New Braunfels area. The museum preserves the stories of the people, events and traditions that are a vital part of the history of New Braunfels & Comal County.