



I like maps. Paper maps that unfold into flimsy 4" X 8" segments with small print. For decades, women traveling with men used these maps as weapons of irritation. "How far to Dry Gulch," he'd ask. "Oh, about an inch and a half," she'd say. "Can't you fold that back up right," he'd ask. "I'm trying," she'd say, hiding a grin while mashing the once sleek creased map into a bulky mess, the new map smell eradicated completely. Not that I was ever personally guilty of such evil. I wonder if there is an app for annoyance. I guess there is but it probably isn't as much fun.

Don't get me wrong. Talking gadgets that bring you in out of the cold and herd you homeward when you're lost are great. Ask "directions to Dry Gulch??" and up pops the route, mileage and a dozen fast food franchise locations in case you need them. We're far from spirally bound Triple AAA triptiks that flip page by page, route highlighted in yellow. (If under 45, ignore prior sentence).

But I still like paper maps. I regret that in a fit of worry over becoming a hoarder surrounded by piles of newspapers, books, old LPs, and general debris that I threw away a 30 year old bound book of Texas county maps. That was stupid, I know. It was falling apart but now I realize I could have laminated the pages for placemats. (OK, I may have read that on Pinterest).

I wish I could compare those old county maps to ones I've picked up in Visitor Centers, especially those with a particular focus like Texas Wine Trails or Gillespie County Country Schools Driving Trail. They provide a schematic of back roads that might otherwise be missed. I've seen some wonderful scenery by not using technology. Reading a paper map spread out on your knees somehow seems more adventurous. You might notice a place you wouldn't have thought to ask about.

You can get stuck in a rut using only technology. That's because asking a particular

question yields only a particular answer. The purpose of search engines is to narrow your search. Printed material provides information at a glance about things you might not have considered. People are also a great information source.

I drove with friends through the LBJ Ranch in May but we didn't google Johnson City, having planned our afternoon elsewhere via computer. Serendipity intervened, we took a side street and spotted the Lady Bird Café. Next door was an architectural treat, the Hill Country Science Mill center for learning and creative thinking, which is a whole other story. We would never have thought to google "science" in planning our trip.

We had a good time talking to employees at the Lady Bird Café. After learning that I wanted a Hill Country wine for my critter sitter, a young man made several suggestions. Turns out his family owns Taste Wine & Art, a few blocks away and near Texcetera, a new art gallery whose motto is "Good Texas Goods." We spent the afternoon on one Johnson City block not visible from highway 290. We never thought about our abandoned plans. Fascinated with a gorgeous horse head sculpture created from old tools and gun parts, I wondered what the artist would do with old paper maps. I should have saved them.

