

Celebrating Family, Land and Stewardship with Hillingdon Ranch: Four Seasons, Six Generations

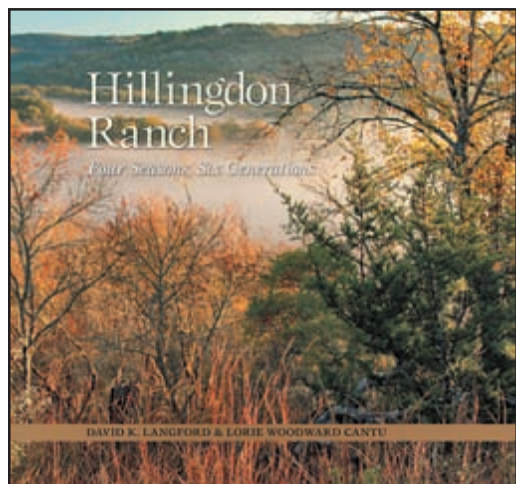
On Friday, September 12, 2014, writer Lorie Woodward Cantu, originally from Lexington, and noted western photographer David K. Langford of Comfort, will participate in the 9th Annual Texas Word Wrangler Festival at the Giddings Public Library and Cultural Center. The duo is showcasing their book, "Hillingdon Ranch: Four Seasons, Six Generations."

"We created the book to tell the story of one Texas family, who just happens to be David's and who for six generations has stewarded a ruggedly beautiful piece of the Texas Hill Country, making a living and making a home. Let there be no confusion. This is not a land stewardship textbook or a 'how-to' ranch management book, it is a chronicle of how one family has worked together to keep their ranch together. In the process of sharing the family's successes and challenges, we hope to instill respect for the job they do and inspire an appreciation of what their efforts mean to the rest of us," said Woodward Cantu, daughter of Jamie and Annette Woodward of Lexington.

Langford, who lives on the Hillingdon, spent a calendar year photographing life on the ranch and Woodward Cantu's text was dictated by the seasons, just as life on the ranch is.

The ranch got its start in 1885, when noted San Antonio architect Alfred Giles began buying the land that would become Hillingdon Ranch. He eventually accumulated 13,000 acres near the town of Comfort in Kendall County, Texas. As the property passed to succeeding generations, the holdings got smaller, and more family members shared a stake in the ranch. Today, dozens of Giles descendants own pieces of it, ranging in size from ten to several hundred acres.

Hillingdon Ranch remains a working ranch, with day-to-day operations managed by Robin Giles, grandson of Alfred Giles; his wife, Carol; their son, Grant; and Grant's wife, Misty. The cattle, sheep, and goat business they built has become a model of stewardship and sustainability. While managing family relationships can often be as complicated as managing livestock and forage, the ranch would not exist without the commitment of the large extended family, now in its sixth generation on the ranch.



The book, published by Texas A&M Press was a featured selection at the 2013 Texas Book Festival and the 2014 San Antonio Book Festival. It has been endorsed by Laura W. Bush, George Strait and Nolan Ryan. It was excerpted in the March 2014 *Texas Highways* with an accompanying photo spread.

Lonn Taylor, retired curator and historian at the Smithsonian Institute of American History and weekly columnist for the Big Bend Sentinel, wrote in his February 6 column: "Hillingdon Ranch is organized around life on the ranch during the four seasons, with each section illustrated with Langford's photographs. Most Texas photographic books are just that, books of pretty photographs, but I learned something I didn't know in each section from both Langford's photographs and Cantu's prose.... If I were going to give someone a book to explain how a modern ranch is run, this is the book I would give them."

For more information about the book or to preview the photographs, see www.hillingdonranch.com.

9th Annual Texas Word Wrangler Book Festival

September 12, 2014 9am-5pm

Giddings Public Library and Cultural Center

Giddings Public Library & Cultural Center and the Giddings Area Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce the 9th Annual Texas Word Wranglers Festival on Friday, September 12, 2014. Word Wranglers use words to convey ideas, stories, portray people and places. We want to honor our Word Wranglers for their hard work and dedication to their craft. We also want to give our community an opportunity to meet these authors and learn about the writing craft.

The authors we invite to participate in our Festival have written books on children's stories, the art of quilting, archaeology, poetry, Texas cookbooks, bird watching, fiction, history, historical fiction, mystery, romance, music, Texas Gardening, and anything related to Texas. We have a day-long festival at the Giddings Public Library & Cultural Center where authors sell their books and take questions. Some authors read or talk to groups of students that come in to the library.

On Thursday, September 11th, during the day, the authors are invited to visit the Giddings Public Schools to talk to students about the writing process, ideas for stories, how a book is taken from the idea to the written page and much more.

Thursday evening a fundraising gala event is held to introduce the authors to the community. On Friday, authors will have their same tables for the day to visit with the public and sell their books.

Contact: Deidre' Harry - Committee Chair, 512-350-5662

Library Contact: Pam Hutchison - Head Librarian, 979-542-2716

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