

# Vanishing Postcards



# ABOUT THE SHOW

*Vanishing Postcards* is a podcast that invites listeners to ride shotgun on a road trip exploring the traditions, hidden dives, and offbeat attractions that can be found by exiting the interstate. Few of these places and activities are listed in guidebooks, glossy magazines or travel brochures. Some are on city corners, others are tucked away off hard to find backroads, and many are threatened with disappearing. However, all are unique, have weathered change, and are representative of broader histories with memories etched in their grime. Guided by Texas native Evan Stern, audiences will hear stories, recorded in the field, from the owners, workers, and regulars who give these spaces heart and soul. The result is a touching, humorous, and enriching experience that is part travelogue, oral history, and valentine to American culture.

# TARGET AUDIENCE



*Vanishing Postcards* is for lovers of cultural history and day trippers who seek to go beyond “Instagram tourism” and hear stories from the people guarding the frequently overlooked institutions that inform our American landscape. With all episodes coming in under 25 minutes, they provide a welcome breather from the noise of the 24-hour news cycle, and can be easily consumed while sipping morning coffee, navigating a rush hour commute, or kicking back after a long day with a glass of wine. An intimate and immersive listening experience, *Vanishing Postcards* promises appeal to consumers of such shows as the following:

[The Kitchen Sisters](#)

[Over the Road](#)

[Boomtown](#)

[This American Life](#)

[Out of the Blocks](#)



## ABOUT EVAN

Born during the driving rainstorm that inspired Stevie Ray Vaughan to record the classic “Texas Flood,” Evan Stern is one of a proud few who can claim Austin as his legitimate hometown. Having caught the performing bug early on, he first gained attention at age 11 with a second-place finish in Austin’s famed O. Henry Pun Off, and has since graced the stages of New York’s Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. A graduate of Sarah Lawrence College and the British American Drama Academy, whether acting Shakespeare, or charming audiences with the turn of a Cole Porter phrase, Evan is first and foremost a storyteller, with a sincere love and appreciation for history, travel and the art of raconteurship. He is now honored to return to Texas for the first season of Vanishing Postcards, an ambitious project that represents a synthesis of these passions through the form of audio essay.

[www.evanstern.com](http://www.evanstern.com)





# NOTES FROM EVAN

Few have inspired me more than CBS's Charles Kuralt who invited viewers to follow him "On the Road" as he traversed the American Heartland for nearly three decades. Reflecting on his explorations, he once said, "You can find your way across this country using burger joints the way a navigator uses stars."

Indeed, a good greasy spoon or bar can tell you a lot about a place. More than food and cold beer, they provide spaces for community, familiarity, and honest connection that are not only important, but I'd argue, needed given our current age of digital saturation.

In a fast paced, rapidly homogenizing world, however, places like these are getting harder to find, and when they close, we lose a piece of our often irreplaceable history.

I felt moved to create *Vanishing Postcards* in order to shine a light on a few of the spaces and traditions I know that have endured, learn about the scrappy folks behind their survival, and explore the cultures they represent. The stories documented in this series are, at least on the surface, not of great current or historic consequence. Nevertheless, they are about people, and possessing of honest grace.

In addition to knowledge, anecdotes, and maybe a few laughs, it is my hope that these segments will provide audiences an opportunity to pause and ultimately reflect on the common good that unites us. — Evan Stern

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## EPISODE GUIDE





## POSTCARD FROM WEST AUSTIN

A beer at The Dry Creek will only cost you \$3. What's more, their current bartender, Angel, is only the third to work here since 1953. We'll swap stories with her over a cold one, learn about the cedar choppers who once drank here from author Ken Roberts, and hear Bobby Earl Smith perform the murderous love ballad this salty joint inspired. We'll also talk about the infamous Sarah, who was named in her obituary "the meanest bartender in Austin," and explore the nearly seven decades of history this hidden dive, now surrounded by mansions, has borne witness to.



## POSTCARD FROM EAST AUSTIN

In a fast-changing city, no neighborhood has undergone a greater transformation than Austin's East Side. Historically African-American, and once neglected, today espresso bars have replaced convenience stores, and boutique hotels stand over former vacant lots. But what is left of what had been, and what do those who grew up around here feel about all of this? In this episode, we'll take a trip to the other side of I-35, to ask questions like these. Along the way, we'll hear some raw, unfiltered answers, learn about our past at The Carver Museum, and revisit a few memories of Ben's Long Branch. We'll also see what's cooking at Sam's Barbecue, and chat with owner Brian Mays who, acting on principle, said no to a five-million-dollar buyout in order to keep his pit running.





# POSTCARD FROM SEATON

Seaton, TX hasn't had a post office since 1907, and as of last count, its population hovered somewhere around 40. Situated on a lonely stretch of highway, about ten miles east of Temple, it's not on most maps and is easy to miss. Yet, on Sundays, this town comes alive when couples gather, as they have for nearly 100 years, to dance at Tom Sefcik Hall. We'll spend an evening getting to know the family that's kept this place running for generations, share both laughs and tears with a few regulars, and learn about how spaces like these shaped Texas culture as we know it. We'll also get a little lesson in Czech!



# POSTCARD FROM BANDERA

In Germany they have biergartens, and in Mexico they have cantinas, but in Texas, we have honky-tonks. What is a honky-tonk, you might ask? In simple terms, most say it's just a dive with live music and a little sawdust on the floor. However, in talking with the bartenders, musicians, and locals at Arkey Blue's Silver Dollar, it's clear this place, now the oldest continuously operating honky-tonk in Texas, means a great deal more. We'll hear some music, a few tall tales, and discover along the way that while Bandera may have been built around a courthouse square, this basement venue is its true heart and soul.





## POSTCARD FROM HICO ... AND A FEW OTHERS

Museums are important. They're places where we can explore our heritage, and learn about cultures, history and ideas in ways that foster conversations. Texas has no shortage of great ones. Houston, for instance, has an entire museum district, and boasts the world class Menil Collection and Rothko Chapel... Today, though, we'll criss-cross the state to Hico, Austin and Houston, and visit a few you've probably never heard of...

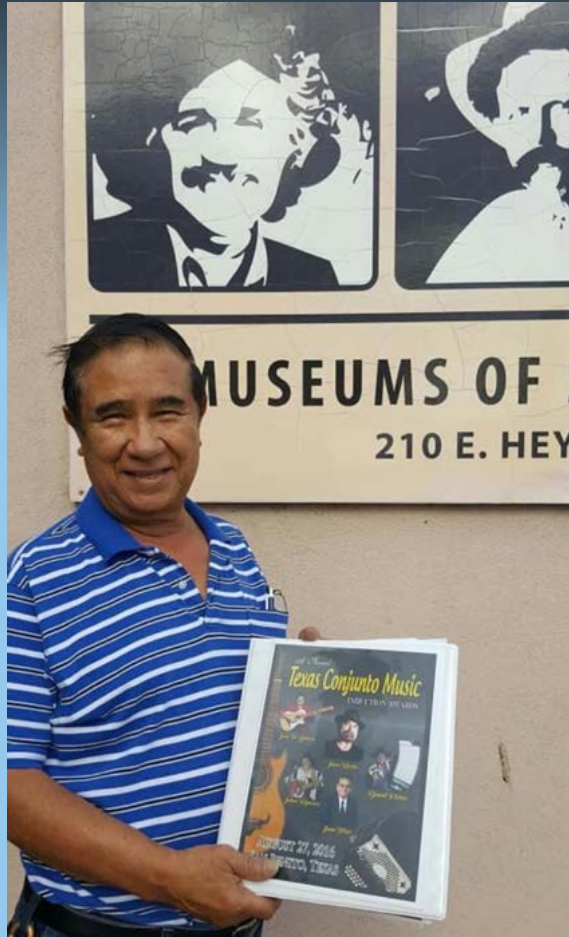




## POSTCARD FROM HOUSTON

Houston is challenging to define. There's no zoning, it's massively sprawling, and lacks the natural beauty of Austin, or historic centers of San Antonio or nearby Galveston. Yet, on a corner in the central neighborhood of Montrose sits an open-air beer joint called The West Alabama Ice House that has stuck it out for nearly a century, and flies in the face of the impersonal, over air conditioned shopping malls this gulf coast metropolis has become known for. We'll sit down with owner Pete Markantonis to learn about ice-house history, and how his Greek family came to operate this quintessentially Texan watering hole for three generations. We'll also hear from architect David Richmond who sees in this rusty bar a prototype for the communal gathering places of Houston's future.





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VALLEY**

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FROM  
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GHOSTS**



**POSTCARDS  
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