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The great outdoors means entertaining. Read about the importance of outdoor spaces.

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Debbie Hodde didn't set out to become an apparel designer. Blame it on a horse.

### $20 \cdot \text{Clayton Mayer} \cdot \text{The Baker}$

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Changes are coming to Round Top-area businesses in the coming months.

#### 50 · 150 Years of Round Top

Start planning for the 150th Birthday Party for Round Top on Aug. 1.

### ABOUT THE COVER

We have been "saving" this photo for a couple of years. Brenham-based photographer Natalie Lacy Lange captured this styled-by- Cathy Robinson Hutton tablescape in New Ulm. A stand-alone screened in porch makes outside dining available year-round. While the bois d' arc "apples" or osage oranges aren't edible, they sure add whimsy and color to this shot.









As I write this, businesses are slowly opening up across the state. What a weird couple of months – I hope you have stayed safe and healthy. I'm well aware the future isn't clear for those with small businesses – or those who are in industries that are getting hammered. Energy. Hospitality. Restaurants and bars. Weddings and parties. The list goes on ... But one of my trusted advisors told me – "get a new issue out – people want and need something to read." So here we are.

I love the information shared in the Porches, Patios and 'Pits article...as well as those who really understand how to build a garden in the Roundtopolis<sup>™</sup>. And you'll be introduced to some entrepreneurs – from clothing and jewelry to woodwork to baking. I hope you will be excited to get to know these people who are building businesses in our area.

Just a reminder that the Town of Round Top will celebrate its sesquicentennial on Aug. 1. See page 50 for more details on how to help this tiny community with a big reach have a great party.

Thanks for following along,

10

Katie Stavinoha, Publisher





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article by KATIE STAVINOHA photos by BUFF STRICKLAND & courtesy of FLOPHOUZE & WASHINGTON COUNTY LANDSCAPES



#### PORCH: THE FORGOTTEN ROOM

Cathy Robinson Hutton, a Houston-based designer with a home in the Roundtopolis<sup>TM</sup> says she sometimes thinks the front porch is the "forgotten" room and merely seen as the means to enter the home.

"I like to treat the front porch as the 'first' room of the house," she says. "It sets the tone for the interior. Marrying colors from the inside, choosing similar style lighting and furniture brings it all together."

The porch on the previous page previously had dark red-stained concrete floors, giving it a "harsh feel." The home had wood siding, so Hutton felt it needed a different texture.

"The brick pavers are designed for use on a patio or pool surround," Hutton says. "I thought they were perfect to create some interest, texture and charm for the porch floor. Being slipresistant and durable was a bonus."

To complete the classic farmhouse feel, she added white wooden rockers and an oversized swing. A banister provided depth and definition.

"We painted the porch ceiling a very soft blue," Hutton says. "The blue softens the look of the ceiling. It also gives a nod to the old belief painting the porch ceiling would ward off bad spirits or "haints".

Inside the home, green was an accent color – so painting the new front doors a bright shade was whimsical and set the stage

for the renovation that was also done inside.

Hutton says, "A lot can happen on your front porch. You welcome and send off guests. You relax, clear your head. Enjoy the outdoor scenery. Watch the world go by. I think Atticus, Jim and Scout used theirs to the fullest."

#### **OUTDOOR SPACE THOUGHTS**

Lucas Stroech of Washington County Landscapes says his outdoor projects typically fall into two categories: an addition or extension of an existing structure or patio or a new build or working in the addition of a pool.

"My customers are typically looking for another space to enjoy or entertain," he said.

Stroech and his wife Chris Ann have operated Washington County Landscapes since 2010 – after a stent with a high end company in Houston. He is a licensed landscape architect and is a registered licensed irrigator. He is a native of Brenham and loves raising his family back home.

#### THE FIRST STEP

Stroech meets with customers and determines what they are looking for and their budget.

"We work with all projects and at all price points," he said. "Some customers want an outdoor kitchen, with a grill, sink, kegerator – a true outdoor room.



"Nearly everyone – no matter the size of the project – wants a fireplace or a firepit."

Stroech says when it comes to fireplaces – which can cost \$15,000 – they can make a statement for the overall design. Firepits can be built at a lower price point – and there are even portable firepits that can add to the overall effect, but can be moved around.

Water features are also popular – whether it's a lazy river into a pool or a fountain.

#### THE LANDSCAPE

Once an outdoor kitchen or pool is planned, landscaping is a key factor in an outdoor space renewal or plan, he says.

"My key question is always 'how much time do you want to devote to the landscape?' We want to make sure the plant choices we suggest fits the homeowners needs. If they are weekenders, then our plan is different than one with someone able to water and tend to it every day."

Stroech's company offers design, construction and maintenance

YOU RELAX, CLEAR YOUR HEAD. ENJOY THE OUTDOOR SCENERY. WATCH THE WORLD GO BY. services – generally within an hour from Brenham.

#### **DIVE IN**

Pools are a big draw for people building homes in the Roundtopolis<sup>™</sup>, says Lucas Stroech of Washington County Landscapes.

The options run the gamut, from above ground to in-ground – to a new concept offered by Recycling the Past and Matt White.

White developed Flophouze, the first container hotel anywhere, expanding from three original "container" cabins to six... and he wanted to supplement the big skies, views of rolling pastures and fresh air for his guests.

In 2018, he added the first "container" pool to Flophouze's footprint for his guests.

In conjunction with ModPools, Flophouze recycles shipping containers as well – into swimming pools. The above-ground pool surrounded by a sun deck also features a window in one end – a great photo opportunity.





Cottage #1



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by LORIE A. WOODWARD photos by JULIA ERVIN & DANIELLE LONG

### E B B I E H O D D E

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PHOTO BY JULIA ERVIN

### DEBBIE HODDE BRINGS HER EXPERIENCE AS A CHAMPION EQUESTRIAN AND HER EYE FOR STATEMENT-MAKING STYLE TO WINNING COUTURE, A CUSTOM-TAILORED COMPETITION CLOTHING BRAND BASED IN BRENHAM.

"I know the sport. I know the lifestyle," said Hodde, who got her first horse as an 11-year-old living in Houston. "I understand what my customers want—and need—in competition clothing."

It was the love of the showring, not a sewing machine, however, that led her to create the company.

"My grandmother, mother and sister all sewed," said Hodde, who breeds, trains and shows horses in traditional English events. "I was outside riding horses as much as possible."

It was a mare named Blue Couture that gave Hodde the confidence to introduce bright, rich, jewel tones into the whiteshirted, black- and blue-coated world of high-level English equestrian competitions. Hodde bred, raised, trained and showed the mare, nicknamed Sky, that qualified for the American Quarter Horse Association's World Show as a four-year-old.

"She was something special, so I wanted something special to wear at the World Show," Hodde said. "We were ready to stand out." Hodde debuted the two shirts at the 2010 AQHA World Show, turning heads and prompting whispered conversations. When she wore them exclusively at the 2011 Scottsdale Sun Circuit a few months later, the full-blown buzz translated into inquiries for orders.

"Everyone—trainers, owners, competitors, even judges—began asking me, 'Can you make me one?'" Hodde said. "By the time I finished the two-day drive back to Brenham, I had a plan for launching a sideline business with Susie, even though I didn't know a thing about pattern making, sourcing fabrics or sewing."

She tackled the launch of the business, aptly named Winning Couture in homage to the horse that prompted it, and the associated learning curve at "900 mph," building the business on her existing skill set.

"I am relentless about quality and customer service; I do everything to 'make' things right," Hodde said. "And it helps that I can talk to anybody."

When she chose two brightly colored pieces of paisley and floral quilting fabric from her local JoAnn Fabric Store, roughly sketched out a design, and commissioned Susie Bronikowski, a colleague's aunt, to sew the shirts, Hodde never imagined it would serve as the foundation of a new business.

"Winning Couture wasn't a dream of mine," Hodde said. "It happened organically and grew into something I never anticipated."



Between word-of-mouth and a portable studio fashioned from a 1970 Airstream Hodde pulled on the show circuit, the business took off like a show jumper clearing a five-foot fence. Along the way, she began sourcing fine fabrics such as exclusive Italian stretch cotton, all-season wools, and rich silks from around the globe, mixing and matching complementary tones and patterns for one-of-akind custom-tailored dress and hunt shirts. A New York City-based

IF I CAN DRAW IT, THEY CAN MAKE IT. MY TAILORS TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN THEIR WORK, SO THE QUALITY IS IMPECCABLE. THEY ARE LITERALLY THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS.

fabric company representative now delivers samples to Hodde's Brenham studio, so she can hand-pick from the best.

"Some clients like to choose their own combinations, but others say, I trust your eye,' just make it for me," Hodde said. "In some cases, we incorporate heirloom designer scarves—think Hermes and Gucci—from a customer's collection to create a garment that is not only customized but also personalized."

In 2011, she included hunt coats and jackets after acquiring a company specializing in those items. In addition to the new market segment, the purchase gave her access to superlative tailors. She now works with four individuals as well as a tailoring company.

"If I can draw it, they can make it," she said. "My tailors take great pride in their work, so the quality is impeccable. They are literally the best in the business."

"While I'm proud of every piece we make, I know we can always do better—and I continue to push forward," said Hodde, noting she has also added vests and trench coats to her line.

Hodde, who is married to Randy Hodde, owner of Hodde Real Estate, mother to two active teenagers, and an entrepreneurial equestrian, is letting the company grow at a measured pace. It doesn't keep her from looking into the future. One day she'd like to have her timeless, elegantly tailored clothes expand beyond the horse world.

"I don't have to be the next Ralph Lauren, but I would love for the clothes to crossover," Hodde said. "This business has opened so many doors for me and allowed me to meet so many people that it has already become more than I ever imagined.

"It's not a multi-million dollar company, but it's enough. I am humbled by it all."

For more information about Winning Couture, see www.winningcouture.com or "Winning Couture" on Facebook and Instagram.



























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# THE BAKER

by LORIE A. WOODWARD

photos by JULIA ERVIN & courtesy of CLAYTON MAYER



### BECAUSE OF HIS SWEET TOOTH, CLAYTON MAYER DEVELOPED A SWEET TALENT.

"I think cheesecakes are wonderful, but I hate paying for them, so I learned to bake," said Clayton, a Round Top native who is a heavy equipment operator for Fayette County Precinct 2.

Becca, his wife of 35 years, added with a laugh, "That's the truth. He didn't like paying \$40 for a cheesecake at Central Market."

As the youngest of five children, Clayton is no stranger to the kitchen.

"I remember standing on a chair to cook pancakes for the family," said the 1978 graduate of Round Top-Carmine High School. "Through the years, I barbecued and grilled. I just never baked."

That changed about 15 years ago, when he and Becca, fans of Reata Restaurant in Fort Worth, acquired Grady Spears' cookbook, A Cowboy in the Kitchen. His first endeavor? A jalapeno cheesecake.

"Becca didn't like it because she doesn't like jalapenos, but other people did," Clayton said.

Then, Becca bought him A Cheesecake Bible. Along with mastering cheesecakes, Clayton began developing his own style in the kitchen.

"I paid attention and learned the little tricks that make a difference like not overmixing the batter or slowly cooling the cheesecake in the oven with the door open," said Clayton, noting that both of these techniques help prevent cracking.

And he began tweaking recipes.

"If you look at recipes for the same dish in different cookbooks, you'll see that they're almost the same with one or two little things different," Clayton said. "Doing things in a different order next level. For instance, he discovered that the gold-level bakeware from a national kitchenware company was worth the investment because the cakes don't over-brown. Experience showed him that a spritz of baker's cooking spray, the kind with flour, is the best insurance against sticking.

He found out that Greek yogurt makes good cakes even better and that a hint of almond extract is often a nice touch in recipes that include nuts. He now divides the batter into four layers because the cakes bake more evenly.

When Clayton is personalizing recipes, he approaches it like a scientist. When he's recreating treasured favorites, he's more like a detective. For instance, as a child, he always looked forward to birthday parties at the Sternadels' house.

"Clayton called Mrs. Loraine [Sternadel], the Queen of the Red Velvet Cake," Becca said.

When she died, Clayton acquired the beloved recipe from her children. Like many old family recipes, it was long on experience and short on details, saying things such as "stir a little bit, but not too much." Clayton made the recipe over and over and over, changing it along the way, until her children pronounced it, "as good as Momma's."

"One of the keys was sifting the flour three times to get the texture just right," said Clayton, who worked just as hard to perfect a coconut cake made famous by Becca's grandmother.

He keeps a little black book of modified recipes and his notes. Don't bother asking for the secrets.

"He doesn't give anybody—not even family—the tweaked

or adding something special can make a big difference."

He also turned his attention to cakes.

"I like cheesecakes and cakes best," said Clayton, adding that he makes a good pecan pie, too.

He continued experimenting with different techniques and ingredients and collecting his own secrets that elevated his cakes to the



recipes," said Becca, laughing. According to Clayton, a great cake

is separated from an average cake by three things.

"A great cake has a great flavor that comes from premium ingredients, a good texture and it is moist," Clayton said.

Like so many things, practice makes perfect. For a long time, he and Becca, who claims to be chief



WHATEVER IT IS, I THINK YOU HAVE TO LIKE WHAT YOU'RE DOING. WHEN I'M WORKING ON BIG EQUIPMENT, I DON'T SEE IT, I JUST FEEL IT. WHEN IT COMES TO BAKING, I JUST DO IT UNTIL IT TURNS OUT RIGHT, AND MAKES ME—AND OTHER PEOPLE— HAPPY.

taste taster and dishwasher, baked most of the cakes and cheesecakes for JW's Restaurant in Carmine.

"Jeff [Wunderlich, the owner] is our nephew and we helped out when they were getting started," Clayton said. "We don't do it anymore because the nights of baking got to be too long with full-time day jobs."

Word spread about Clayton's cakes after Becca encouraged him to donate one to a fundraising auction.

"It sold for \$500 and prompted other non-profits to ask him to donate," said Becca, noting they support local fire departments, their church, the education foundation, the library and a host of other good causes. "Now, there are several people who regularly pay \$1,000 for one of his donated cakes."

For people who can't wait for the next fundraising auction, the Mayers take orders. With three days notice, he will freshmake cheesecakes (Savory Mexican, key lime, margarita, Meyer lemon, pumpkin and Super New York), cakes (Celestial Chocolate, butter, German chocolate, double coconut, carrot, banana and Italian cream) or a fruit tartlet. Most of the cakes are frosted with a cream cheese icing; they are not decorated.

"I get a lot of satisfaction when people take a bite, smile big and tell me it's good," Clayton said.

Although the Mayers built a separate kitchen with all of the components necessary to pass inspection for commercial baking, Clayton's passion will remain "a hobby with a fan base" for the foreseeable future.

"Whatever it is, I think you have to like what you're doing," Clayton said. "When I'm working on big equipment, I don't see it, I just feel it. When it comes to baking, I just do it until it turns out right, and makes me—and other people— happy."

To place an order for one of Clayton Mayer's sweet treats, call Becca Mayer at (979) 249-6167.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAYTON MAYER





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### MALLORY NICHOLSON

## JEWELRY MAKING FOUND MALLORY NICHOLSON, A DESIGNER, SERIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND SELF-PROCLAIMED FRANCOPHILE, WHO OWNS MALLORY ET CIE.

"I wasn't really into jewelry when jewelry making found me," said Nicholson, who owned and operated an interior design firm as well as Urban Refurban, a retail shop specializing in refurbished vintage metal furniture in her native California before founding Mallory et Cie in 2010.

Mallory et Cie translates from French into "Mallory and Company," but according to Nicholson, company in this context isn't about business, but relationships.

"I think of company in terms of hospitality—friends, family, guests, customers...." Nicholson said. "For me to be happy and fulfilled, I have to be designing and actively using my creativity in a way that gives me a human connection."

She continued, "Customers make my business, and the best part of being a maker is making connections—my customers are my people."

Nicholson taught herself to make jewelry using books and materials her mother had collected over a 25-year period, but had never gotten around to using.

Nicholson turned to jewelry making when she took a sabbatical to help her mother recover and rehabilitate from an illness. Friends started buying pieces. Visits to retail shops in Los Angeles resulted in orders. Even up-and-coming celebrities began buying from her.

"I thought I might be on to something," Nicholson said.

estate for full-time jewelry making within a year of moving to Texas.

While her business sprouted organically, Nicholson shaped it around her twin passions: France and vintage goods. As a 21-year-old expat living and working in London, she fell in love with France during excursions to Paris and beyond. She traces her ardor for the unique to the vast, curated flea markets of Los Angeles where she spent every weekend for years "digging up, dusting off and repurposing treasures of the past."

"People tell me I'm lucky because I travel to Paris—and throughout France—searching for vintage treasures," she said. "It isn't luck. I wanted to create a business that would give me an opportunity to indulge my passions."

In addition to traveling to France herself, Nicholson maintains a network of French shoppers who scour the markets year-round for the antique brooches, religious medals, coins and other "really cool things that no one else has" that form the basis of her handmade jewelry.

"The style is comfortably time-worn, but refined and sophisticated," said Nicholson, who estimates she hand ties about 20,000 beads each year. "I don't design with a plan in mind, but am inspired by the colors, texture, history and worn imperfections of the found items."

Now based in Carmine, Mallory et Cie offers two jewelry lines,

Authentica and French Brocante Collections, that allow customers to build personalized necklaces.

"Everything is designed to be complementary, so people can start with one piece and then add others to layer and create their own looks," said Nicholson.

Authentica is a mix-and-match collection of chains, pendants and charms. Vintage and antique

Her hunch was confirmed when she relocated to Houston, along with the family's commercial real estate business, where Nicholson worked as a manager and interior designer. Within six days of arrival, she landed a jewelry trunk show at Memorial Antiques and Interiors followed quickly by a private trunk show in the Memorial neighborhood. Nicholson left real



THERE ARE CERTAIN LOOKS THAT CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY HAND, AND HIGH-QUALITY, STYLISH GOODS MADE BY HAND EVOKE FEELINGS IN THE PEOPLE WHO WEAR THEM.

French Brocante features reworks of French flea market finds.

"My job is to be ahead of the pack, so I'm constantly innovating and creating new designs," said Nicholson, who is now mastering vitreous enamel work while planning the launch of a second jewelry-based company.

Her drive to create the next new thing prompted Nicholson to design a line of hand-sewn ponchos made from vintage indigo cloth that is 40–70 years old.

"At the Round Top Antiques Show where I debuted my indigo ponchos, I was thrilled when they sold out," said Nicholson, noting her move to Carmine was due to her love of and success at the Round Top Antiques Show over the past eight years. "Now I sell both jewelry and apparel year-round at my pop-up tiny shop in Carmine, where I believe I carry the country's largest line of indigo ponchos."

This year, she will introduce a full line of European linen ponchos hand-sewn from fabric that is more than 100 years old. The ponchos are often styled with leather.

"I find inspiration in antique techniques as well as antique materials," Nicholson said. "There are certain looks that can only be achieved by hand, and high-quality, stylish goods made by hand evoke feelings in the people who wear them."

Evoking feelings and making connections between the past and present elevates Mallory et Cie beyond mere commerce for Nicholson.

"I love finding treasures that have already been owned, touched and loved," Nicholson said. "They carry their stories from the past into the present, so their new owners can add another chapter to their history."

To see and purchase jewelry and apparel, follow Mallory Nicholson on Instagram @malloryetcie or visit her website at www.malloryetcie.com.







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article by
KATIE STAVINOHA

photos courtesy of GLASCO & CO. LANDSCAPING INC. & BLACK DOG CABINS

PLANNING A CUTTING GARDEN

ASK QUESTIONS. ASK THE LOCALS. THEY KNOW WHAT WORKS.

Henry adds that a cutting garden, with annuals, can be integrated with a perennial

The Flowers husband-wife design team at Glasco & Co. Landscaping Inc. love to work with clients who want cutting gardens.

"When we work with a client on their garden, a cutting garden or any kind of project, we have several important questions to ask and understand," says Melissa, designer and estimator.

"First, how much time do they want to devote to the garden. Second, what is the site like – sloped or level ... and how much sun does it get, is it accessible, how is it to be irrigated, and what are the long-term goals."

The Flowers say they then make recommendations based on the answers to those questions.

"Most cutting gardens have many annual flowers," Melissa says. "Some, like zinnias, are easy to start from seed. Others, like tall dianthus and snapdragons are best bought as plants. A variety of plants work well in the area." garden as well ... with many perennials like salvias, summer phlox, and rudbeckia also working in flower arrangements. He says vegetables and herbs can also be incorporated. A favorite of his is colorful Swiss chard, which is edible and a great ornamental. Melissa loves dill flower heads added to cut flowers.

### **RAISING UP**

Accessibility, says Melissa, is very important. Some people may not want to be on their hands and knees planting, weeding and switching out plants.

"We often do raised beds," Henry says. "Beds made from wood or stone and galvanized water troughs with holes cut in the bottom work really well."

Most cutting flowers, as well as herbs and vegetables, do well in raised beds, the team says.







### A WORD OF CAUTION

"Armadillos love freshly-worked beds and will plow up your garden overnight," Melissa says.

Henry adds that fencing may need to be added to keep armadillos and other varmints such as rabbits out...and that raised beds can often thwart these animals.

Deer can also wreak havoc on a newly installed or existing garden.

"There are plants that deer don't like," Henry says. "We just have to know the area in which the garden is sited."

Glasco & Co. was started almost 40 years ago by Troy and Tami Glasco. The company offers landscape, design and maintenance services for the Brenham area.

### BLACK DOG CABINS WELCOMES WITH DIY TEXAS-FRIENDLY GARDENS

Dawn Gervais admits she and her husband Richard had no training nor expertise when it came to planning the outdoor living spaces for their lodging business in Round Top.

"We lived in Houston," she says. "I'm in real estate and he's a dentist. We didn't know what to grow or what to choose."

That didn't stop them.

"We know those coming to Round Top want to be outside – sit on the porch, have a glass of wine," Dawn says. "The outdoor living spaces are really important to us – and our guests. We searched Pinterest, talked to everyone, and made friends with smart locals – like Dee at DSG and Stevie at The Garden Company.

"Shade and privacy were also important for us."

As a result, Knockout roses, crape myrtles and native plants and grasses known to thrive and survive hot Texas summers have formed the backbone of their horticultural plan.

A sprinkler system was an early investment in the property they bought in 2017, where they have two cabins and an in-the-renovation-process Airstream trailer to house guests.

"We've added a greenhouse that my husband Richard made with reclaimed windows," Dawn says. "We like it so much we may do another."

The Gervaises path to Round Top and a lodging business began with a short visit around Easter one year – and they fell in love with the country.

"We kept coming back to this one house and eventually bought it," Dawn says. "When the property next to us – with two cabins on it – came up for sale, we bought it. And we've built a new business, Black Dog Cabins."

Dawn's best advice: "Ask questions. Ask the locals. They know what works."

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# FURNITURE MAKER

by LORIE A. WOODWARD photos by JULIA ERVIN & Courtesy of ANDREW THOME



### ANDRE THOME

PHOTO BY JULIA ERVIN

### FEATURE

### DRAWING ON OLD WORLD TRADITIONS, ANDRE THOME CRAFTS CUSTOM FURNITURE DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS.

"In this shop, we concentrate on quality not speed," said Thome, who is the primary craftsman and owner of Farm to Market Woodworks LLC in Ledbetter. "Our furniture reflects the traditions of the Old World—we use time-tested joinery, focus on the details from design to finish, and never lose sight of overall quality to create solid wood pieces that families can pass proudly through the generations."

Thome, a third-generation woodworker, was born in Germany and came to the United States in 1966. He was reared in Chicago and later Houston, which he made his permanent home.

"I've always loved woodworking," Thome said. "I learned the skillset first-hand working alongside my father."

After a 36-year career in the hospitality industry and developing restaurants around the globe, Thome founded Farm to Market Woodworks in 2016.

"I decided it was time to take a leap of faith and do something different," Thome said. "Through the years, I'd never quit woodworking, so I wanted to try and make something of it."

The entrepreneurial leap to custom furniture wasn't as big as it appears.

"It seems like a big departure, but everything I learned in corporate America about business management and customer service, helps me do what I do now," Thome said.

And the leap to Ledbetter wasn't big either. Thome bought

the Whiskey Sky Ranch as a family getaway about 20 years ago with hopes to one day make it their primary home. As he explored options for renting production space in Houston or building a workshop in Ledbetter, the numbers pointed him to Washington County.

"My overhead is low here at the ranch, which allows us to turn out a high-quality product for a very competitive price," said Thome, noting the central location also allows them to easily reach customers across the state—and the nation.

The rural location also inspired the name.

"Farm to Market Woodworks is a play on the farm-to-market roads that allowed farmers to bring their goods to town," Thome said. "We bring our furniture from the ranch to the market—a client's home or business."

Country life then delivered a collaborator. Former Houstonite Tom Almstedt, also a lifelong woodworker and ex-pat from global commerce, purchased the property next door.

"I've always wanted a saw mill, so I bought one for my birthday," Almstedt said.

The saw mill is a mobile unit that gives the duo the ability to custom harvest and custom mill wood from clients' properties and their own.

"We have the ability to harvest both live and dead trees," Almstedt said.

As a result, the wood shop can offer this one-of-a-kind material as well as reclaimed wood and a wide variety of newly purchased hardwoods. Woods purchased from distributors are always finishmilled in the shop.

"Every wood species has its own story, given its geography, climate, and characteristics," Thome said. "Each type of wood

look is different and performs uniquely in different settings, so we help clients consider this as they are envisioning their project."

The design process is collaborative. Through it, the team not only educates clients so they can create the most beautiful piece for their space, but outlines various options allowing them to hit different price points.



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"We're open and honest and we want our clients to get exactly what they are looking for including pieces perfectly suited for their space," Thome said. "Every piece is critiqued in great detail and will not leave the shop until expectations are met. At times, we've reworked a piece to ensure high quality."

The design team, led by Thome's daughter Karina, embraces a range of styles. While these include rustic, reclaimed and farmhouse, the majority of the commissioned pieces are contemporary.

"If it's wood, we can do something beautiful with it," said Almstedt, noting they have trusted artisans who work in metal if a design requires it. "We approach each project as if we're building it for our own homes."

The team can build all types of indoor and outdoor furniture, but tables and countertops are favorites because their surface area allows the wood to make a statement. From beginning to end, each project is a labor of love.

"I sweat all of the little things, but when I set up a piece in a customer's home and see the expressions on their faces, it's all worth it," said Thome, who counts annual thank you notes after installing a client's table three years ago as a high mark.

And while customers' reactions continue to inspire him, Thome never loses sight of what drew him to woodworking.

"I've always loved trees—and I never forget that the wood we use was once a living thing," Thome said. "When you're surrounded by nature and using materials provided by nature to build something beautiful that will last for many lifetimes, it provides a sort of euphoria that can't be adequately explained."

For more information, contact Andre Thome by phone at 281.414.2670, email at farm2marketwoodworks@gmail.com or through the website, farm2marketwoodworks.com.













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# COMING SOON 20:29

WHAT'S NEW? THERE ARE A FEW NEW BUSINESS THINGS HAPPENING IN THE ROUND TOP AREA. HERE'S A RUNDOWN:

Bybee Square will soon become Hotel Lulu, a boutique hotel with 13 rooms that will go in renovated, former retail and office spaces on that block. Armando and Cinda (Lulu, thus the name) Palacios are acquiring the property and will start renovations in June – with a goal of being open by Fall 2020. Lulu's will become dinner only while construction is going on. Then, lunch and weekend brunch will return – and the bar will expand into the space previously occupied by Sandy Reed & Co.

Progress is being made on the Round Top Brewing Co.'s building on what is now being called Minden Square. Paul and Brooke Michie will have an onsite brewery. Brooke also has a new salon, Lyric, in Rummel Square. Mark Massey plans the addition of two more buildings on the Minden square – with tentative plans for a sweet shop, boutique and commercial office space.

Other changes in Rummel Square are the addition of the The Haus, an antiques and gift boutique, and Southern Beasts and The Dirty Bohemian sharing space on the corner near Round Top Coffee Shop, formerly known as Espressions.

The building formerly housing Old Glory in Block 17 has been acquired by Suzanne Maida, who also owns the Round Top Inn and Winn Mill Barn. Plans for that building include retail and refreshments.

North of the blinking red light, a rehab of the Merry Christmas Store, as it has fondly been known for decades, is being spiffed up. Kevin and Brandi Harper plan multiple retail options as well as a bar and restaurant.

The end is in sight for construction at the Round Top Village, which currently features Richard Schmidt Jewelry and Second Market. Courtney Barton's new Round Top presence will grace one of the new buildings, while Box Road will occupy another. A couple of other spaces are yet to be filled.

Richard and Janet Schmidt, of Schmidt's Jewelry in La Grange and Round Top, will add a clothing boutique called Simple Rags in La Grange. The store, at 152 No. Washington, is set to open in August.

### FUTURE ANTIQUES SHOW DATES

SEPT. 17 - OCT. 4, 2020 Fall Round Top Antiques Show

JAN. 21-24, 2021 Winter Round Top Antiques Show MARCH 18 - APRIL 4, 2021 Spring Round Top Antiques Show

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## CELEBRATING A BIG BIRTHDAY

### HISTORY WILL BE THE FOCUS OF ROUND TOP'S SESQUICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION SET FOR AUG. 1.

History will be the focus of Round Top's Sesquicentennial celebration set for Aug. 1.

"We are celebrating this community's 150th birthday with history, music, the cannon firing, and food," says Amy Bone, chairman of the planning committee.

The day-long event features activities for all ages – and highlights the essence of the community's traditions.

"We want to invite everyone to the celebration," says Mark Massey, co-chairman of the planning committee. "We hope to see those that grew up in Round Top, but might have moved away, as well as the area's newer residents and frequent visitors eager to learn more about the community's history."

Round Top businesses will generally be open for the packed daylong events schedule.

Kicking off the celebratory weekend is the Lion's Club Movie Night at Henkel Square on July 31. The Black Cat Choir plays the Stone Cellar that evening as well.

Festivities get underway at 10 a.m. on Aug. 1, at the courthouse, with prayers, speeches and the cannon firing, followed by the Round Top Brass Band.

The Round Top Historical Society will host an historic homes and buildings tour. Tours of Festival Hill and the Winedale Center are also available that day.

A nod to Round Top's culinary roots has barbecue contests with teams from Fayette and Washington counties set to compete. Graband-go food is also available throughout the day – and Round Top restaurants will have their usual hours.

At 1:30 p.m., 1,000 cupcakes will go to the first 1,000 to arrive back at the courthouse. And at 3 p.m., and in honor of expected August heat, a firetruck hosedown is schedule at Henkel Square.

Festival Hill is hosting a free concert onsite, with James Dick, Josh Tiemann and Julie Bouchard performing.

Black Cat Choir is playing the main stage from 3 to 5 p.m. The Stone Cellar hosts a concert and dance beginning at 7:30 p.m.

*For more information, please see www.exploreroundtop.com/150th.* 



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