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## Art of the State: Texas

*Michael Ennis*

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# TEXAS



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#3950415 in Books Harry N. Abrams 1999-11-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 6.25 x .50 x 5.50l, #File Name: 081095564496 pages | File size: 59.Mb

**Michael Ennis : Art of the State: Texas** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Art of the State: Texas:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A big state squeezed into a delightful little book By Pandora Years ago, when preparing for my 50-state road trip I'd purchased a load of travel guides to help plan what to see in each state. The guides satisfied me until I stumbled upon the first ART OF STATE book in Iowa and quickly purchased all the other states available. This curious book series made all other travel books pale by comparison. Deceptively small, slim, lightweight and light read, these books pack a punch of meaningful, inspirational information. Beautifully designed and written, they are thoroughly engaging and a joy to read--like finding an ancestor's scrapbook or diary in the attic and reading a fascinating family heritage while peering over images of a buried past. Each author must be a native or a deliberate transplant, for they tell each state's story lovingly, with a deep appreciation of the state--and not just its good features, but the blemishes, too, described evenhandedly. Photographs of architecture, landscapes paintings, crafts and memorabilia complement the words. Each book presents the state's history, climate, landscape, traditions, symbols, recipes, must-see destinations and a statewide calendar of events. I've purchased all the books in the series (20 of the 50 states as of 2007). If your budget won't allow you to buy all 20, at least buy two: one of your

home state and one of your adopted state. You'll be amazed at what you discover. I apologize for raving so much about THE ART OF STATE series, but it was such a find, like discovering a diamond in a sea of glass. I can't help but gush. Now, about the Texas edition. Each book in the series has a wallpaper design inside cover treatment: a background color, unique to the state, dotted with a state motif. I always try to guess what the wallpaper will be before opening the book. Sometimes I guess correctly, but not often. Texas was easy: the gold Lone Star motif against a tanned leather brown. I was at first disappointed that Corpus Christie was barely mentioned and the rich cultural landscape of Austin and San Antonio briefly covered, but soon realized that Texas, once a nation unto itself, is simply too large--in land, history, economy and ecology--to satisfy all curiosities. The Alamo gets a full two-page spread as does the founding of the Republic of Texas, that 9 year period ( 1836-1845) when Texas was a nation unto itself. There's a nice sampling of Texas politicians--the "good ol' boys" and "good ol' gals," from the nation's first- elected president, Sam Houston to LBJ, to Governor Ann Richards, and the woman unfortunately named Ima Hogg, daughter of a former governor who "hadn't thought it through" when he named her after a heroine in a Civil War poem. There's a clever distinction between the two different Texas cultures: the cotton versus the cattle culture--before oil was discovered. The oil boom and its towering skyscraper legacy also gets good coverage as do the chips: Frito-Lay's corn chips and Texas Instrument's computer chips . The influx of German immigrants and their influence, rarely mentioned in today's image of Texas, are described with vigor. A nice surprise was the mention of Lady Bird Johnson's National Wildlife Research Center--the woman was a bulldog on protecting wildflowers. Oh, I forgot to mention the Native Texans, the Caddo Indians, "Arguably the most civilized Texans ever," and the Comanche Empire. Lastly, the book claims Texas height and girth at 1,000 x 1,000 miles, which is a bit of a stretch (by most accounts, it's 800 miles at best), but I like the example the author uses to emphasize the point. "Texarkana in East Texas is 200 miles closer to Atlanta [GA] than it is to El Paso [TX]. Stratford [TX] in the Panhandle is as distant to Brownsville [TX] on the Mexican border as Manhattan [NY] is from Daytona Beach [FL]." That's a lot of ground to cover in just 96 pages, and the author does a remarkable job of presenting the salient points, including the Texas bluebonnets, music and cuisine where Texas barbecue is "a religion. . . a subject of intense debate." A delightful book, like all the ART OF STATE books--a national treasure.

Book by Ennis, Michael

From the Publisher "Texas isn't a state, it's a state of mind," say Texans. This illustrated tribute takes us deep inside the heart of Texas--the only state once recognized by the U.S. government as an independent country--and captures the many things that make the Lone Star State special: its huge size, its history of rebellion, its booming economy, and its diverse culture. From cowboys and oil barons to wildcatters, barbecue aficionados, and Tejano music fans, no one who remembers the Alamo will be able resist this book. 134 illustrations, 115 in full color