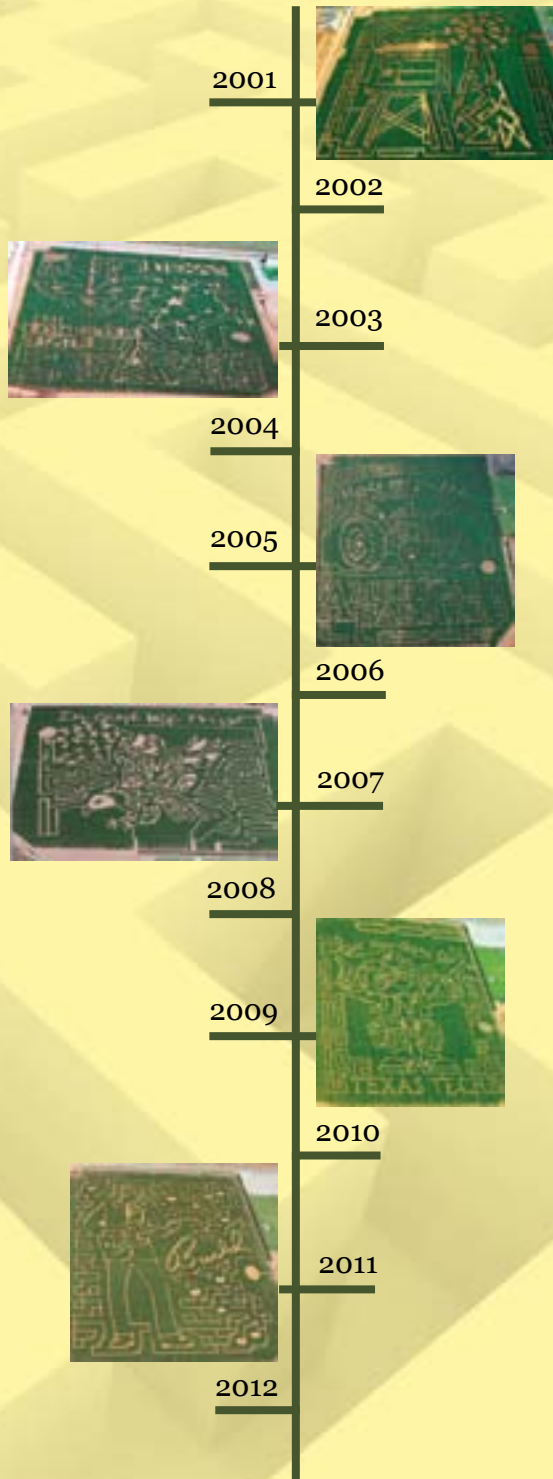


Twelve A MAZE ing Years



Lubbock, Texas, has many attractions where locals, as well as visitors, can go to find entertainment. However, this college town has something special to offer, something that can only be found in 12 cities in Texas.

Located on a small county road between Shallowater, Texas, and Lubbock is the At'l Do Farms Corn Maize. James and Patti Simpson, owners of the Maize, started out as conventional farmers trying to make ends meet when a magazine article changed the course of their future.

James said he read an article in Progressive Farmer magazine about a graduate student in Utah who started up corn mazes and also had a consulting firm for people who wanted to be in the agritourism business.

"I contacted him and one thing led to another," James said. "We had our first maze in 2001."

The first year the Maize was open, the site was made up of a 12-acre corn field, a dry lot for parking, and a small building for concessions. After the first few years, the Simpsons said they realized there was a future in this business.

"We saw that it was more than a fad," James said. "It was something that we could invest in and continue to make more user-friendly."

It has been a gradual process for the Simpsons as they add to the farm. James explained they made changes as the attendance grew in order to accommodate the visitors.

Today the farm has expanded to 60 acres made up of corn, wheat and pumpkins, and a two and a half acre commons area, catering to approximately 45,000 visitors each season. There is an animal barnyard, a pond with a gazebo and windmill, a concession stand, a pumpkin patch, restroom facilities, a corn cannon, a pumpkin hollow hayride, and, most recently added, an enclosed barn. The new barn is part of a plan to expand the usage of the farm beyond the fall season.

"The expansion is moving in a direction that is not depending completely on the fall corn maze season, making it a year-round agritourism facility," said Samuel Hawkins, a Texas Tech University alumnus and employee of At'l Do Farms.

Hawkins said it was nice to hear the comments from people who visit each year and see their reactions when they notice a change or new addition to the farm. With this business, practically anything is a possibility when it comes to expansion.

"The limitations of the future are only bound by the imagination," Hawkins said.

Kendra Holloway

Bowie, Texas

