



**TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE**  
COMMISSIONER DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

# **Commissioner Buckingham Announces the Winners and Finalists of the 2023 Save Texas History Essay Contest**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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AUSTIN — Today, Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham, M.D. is pleased to announce the winners and finalists of the 2023 Save Texas History Essay Contest, sponsored by the Texas General Land Office's Save Texas History Program. Fourth and seventh-grade students from across the state answered the important question, "What history in your community is worth saving?"

"It has been an honor to read about young Texans' passion for our state's rich history. These students truly produced many incredible essays for this one-of-a-kind competition," said Commissioner Buckingham. "Both of our grand prize winners, Katy and Coltier wrote about unique parts of their communities that bring people and families together in tradition and good fun. Congratulations to this year's winners, the finalists, and all who contributed their creativity and invaluable perspectives to the ongoing story of Texas' history!"

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The fourth-grade grand prize winner is Katy Bowman, daughter of Melony and James Bowman. Katy is in Yeraldinne John's class at Doral Academy Texas in Buda. Her essay, *My Courthouse*, shares her love of Caldwell County's courthouse and square. She particularly loves the many festivals and events it hosts, such as farmers' markets, Courthouse Nights, Run for the Bulls, Día de los Muertos, and the annual Christmas parade. As Katy notes, "*People from the community come and listen to music, talk, dance, and laugh together.*"

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The seventh-grade grand prize winner is Coltier Dodd, son of Lauren and Shawn Dodd. Coltier is in Darcey Ham's class at Northside ISD in Vernon. His essay, *The Santa Rosa Rodeo Grounds - Keeping Traditions Alive*, showcases the only wooden rodeo arena still in use in Texas. Coltier's connection is also personal, with his grandfather and mother having a long history with the local riding club - hopefully, that will continue "*for many more generations to come.*"

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The grand prize winners will receive a \$500 gift card courtesy of Chris Cantu of Kingsview Partners. The ten finalists, five from each grade, will each receive a \$100 gift card courtesy of the Moses Austin Chapter of the Sons of the Republic of Texas and Buck Cole.

All winners and finalists will receive Save Texas History backpacks, a letter of appreciation signed by Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham, M.D., and other items from the Texas General Land Office and Texas State Historical Association. Teachers of winning students will receive complimentary items, as well.

### **Fourth Grade Finalists:**

#### **Thiago Braga**

Dearing Elementary School

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Andrea Fernandes and Augusto Braga, Pflugerville, TX

Teacher: Jamie Cowan

Essay Topic: Texas Capitol Building

#### **William Miller**

Brentwood Christian School

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Lindsay and Michael Miller, Austin, TX

Teacher: Brittney Rackley

Essay Topic: Walnut Creek

#### **Olen Nnabuihe**

Windermere Elementary School

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Miriam and Obi Nnabuihe, Pflugerville, TX

Teacher: Tim Lee

Essay Topic: Lake Pflugerville

#### **Arielle Solomon**

Ohr Zahava School/Great Hearts Online Texas

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Leah and Avraham Solomon, Houston, TX

Teachers: Sara Masarsky and Megan Salaiz

Essay Topic: Honeybees and the local environment

#### **Kinsey Paige Weinheimer**

Industrial Elementary West

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Joleen and Klint Weinheimer, Inez, TX

Teacher: Kori Bordovsky

Essay Topic: Industrial Little League Ballpark

## **Seventh Grade Finalists:**

### **Ganessa Kluger**

Ohr Zahava School/Great Hearts Online Texas  
Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Megan and Jacob Kluger, Houston, TX  
Teachers: Sara Masarsky and Jessica Guinn  
Essay Topic: Gerald D. Hines Waterwall Park

### **Malayshia Livingston**

Odyssey Academy  
Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Meoucha Davis and Aretha Davis (Grandmother), Galveston, TX  
Teacher: Kella Dohring  
Essay Topic: 1900 Great Storm Statue

### **Yukta Sri Mididoddi**

Bill Hays Middle School  
Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Swarna Latha and Gopi Krishna Mididoddi, Frisco, TX  
Teacher: Jessica McDowell  
Essay Topic: The St. Louis San Francisco Railway

### **Benjamin Rottinghaus**

Memorial Middle School  
Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Tracy Leroy and Brandon Rottinghaus, Houston, TX  
Teacher: Caroline Maddox  
Essay Topic: Texas expressions and language

### **Pranati S. Tumuluri**

Bill Hays Middle School  
Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Madhavi and Srinivas Tumuluri, Frisco, TX  
Teacher: Jessica McDowell  
Essay Topic: Cattle Trails on Preston Road

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All public, private, and home-schooled students of appropriate age for the fourth grade or seventh grade were eligible to participate. Essays for the annual contest were judged on the originality of the idea, cohesiveness of thought, and organization. Proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation were also taken into account.

The Texas General Land Office Save Texas History™ program is a statewide initiative to rally public support and private funding for the preservation and promotion of more than 35 million historic maps and documents. With the twin goals of preservation and education, the Save Texas History program seeks to conserve these documents for future generations and educate Texans about the rich heritage found in these vital records.

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