

Powder coating plays role in small Texas town's folklore

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Eastland, Tex., is a small town of 4,000 people about 45 miles east of Abilene. Between October 2004 and August 2005, I worked on a couple of special liquid and powder coatings application projects for EBAA Iron in this town.

The author James A. Michener once described major historical events of the US in his novel *Centennial* by telling stories from a fictional town in Colorado. I wish a lot of people who hate America for political, religious, or some other inexplicable reasons would discover places like Eastland. Regular people, the real backbone of this country, live and work here. These are the kind of people who leave a lasting legacy in any country in the world. These are the generations of ordinary people who make great and small history. Their actions, foibles, and mistakes are always the basis of any good story. So, let me tell you the story of a community project in Eastland that resulted in the creation of the city's Old Rip Park.

The park derives its name from Old Rip, a horned toad that made history. People like the Mexican General Santa Anna, Sam Houston, and the defenders at the Alamo, or events like Texas Longhorn cattle drives, the oil boom of the earlier part of the twentieth century, and the assassination of a president all made history in Texas. But this story shows that a humble creature like a horned

toad can leave an imprint in a small town in Texas.

Restoring a city symbol

In the late 1990's, the town commissioned a welded steel sculpture of Old Rip, the horned toad, from Joe Barrington, a Texas artist who specializes in metal artwork. The sculpture of Old Rip was delivered to Eastland shortly thereafter in its uncoated, unprotected state ready to corrode and weather with the elements, a characteristic of Barrington's work [www.redstarstudios.com].

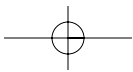
A couple of years ago, however, city leaders and residents started a pro-

gram to rejuvenate Eastland's downtown area. Old Rip's weathered surface didn't lend itself to the new setting where people would brush up against the sculpture and, as it turns out, place children on it for pictures.

In May 2005, EBAA Iron started a new powder coating line designed to handle heavy steel parts weighing up to 10,000 pounds. That's how the company became involved in the restoration of Old Rip as well as the Townsend Bell, another part of Eastland's history (see sidebar). With the approval of the artist, the sculpture was powder-coated to better suit its new purpose.



The Old Rip Memorial Plaque tells the tale of the indestructible horned toad of Eastland, Tex.



Powder coating Old Rip

It quickly became evident when the sculpture was delivered to EBAA Iron that its dimensions prevented it from being placed on hangers on the new application line. A special steel rack on wheels had to be constructed, which allowed the best possible access to the sculpture for grit blasting and powder coating. The rack with Old Rip on it could be wheeled first into a large grit blast chamber for cleaning and then through large side doors into an oven for preheat and postcure.

The sculpture was preheated to about 210°F metal temperature, then wheeled outside the oven for powder application. A coater with a portable electrostatic spray gun flocked triglycidyl isocyanurate (TGIC) polyester powder onto the preheated sculpture where it quickly melted. Preheating the part and using low application

voltage were necessary to reach the many recessed Faraday cage areas of the toad for complete coverage.

Old Rip the horned toad gets a strong, durable coat of powder as testament not only to his own history of survival but to the townsfolk of Eastland's as well.

The powder-coated sculpture was then wheeled back into the oven set at about 420°F where it remained for about 50 minutes to reach a metal temperature of 400°F. After the part had cooled, 50 double rubs with methyl ethyl ketone (MEK) were done underneath Old Rip to confirm full cure of the powder. The photos show the various stages of the coating project.

Final thoughts

This concludes the story of a community project in the small town of Eastland in the big state of Texas. Of course, hundreds of other stories float around in this small Texas town. I have been to, or lived in, some of the greatest cities in Europe, Asia, or North America, and I have seen their bright and dark sides. Eastland cannot compare itself with Rome, Florence, London, Berlin, Hong Kong, Seoul, Toronto, Montreal, New York, or even some Texas cities like the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and Houston. There is a saying: "Bright lights cast dark shadows." Eastland will never be a bright light like some of the cities I mentioned, but the shadows in Eastland will never be that dark, either! **PC**

Author's acknowledgements

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Weathered Old Rip on a steel rack made specially for him.



Old Rip had a lot of Faraday cage areas to coat.



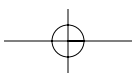
A TGIC-based polyester powder coating will protect Old Rip in the Texas heat.



Old Rip gets inspected before final cure.



Old Rip reigns as the Eastland city symbol in the park bearing his name.



Inc. [www.ebaa.com], for providing several photos and information for this article. The author also thanks Nick Liberto, president of Powder Coating Consultants for providing additional information for the article.

System design and installation: **Powder Coating Consultants, Bridgeport, Conn. 203/366-7244. www.powder cc.com**

Powder coating system: **George Koch Sons, Evansville, Ind. 812/465-9665. www.kochllc.com**

Powder application and booth equipment: **Iontech Powder Coating Systems, Cincinnati. 513/641-3100. www.ion-tech.com**

Editor's note

For further reading on powder coating, see *Powder Coating* magazine's Web site at [www.pcoating.com]. Click on Article Index and search by subject category. Have a question? Click on Problem solving to submit one. To receive the magazine's weekly Q&A column via e-mail, scroll to the bottom of the home page and send us your e-mail address.

Bruno Fawer is the president of RESOTEX Associates LLC, a growth and performance firm that specializes in growing profitable revenue for organizations through people development, and an associate consultant for Powder Coating Consultants, a division of Ninan. He has about 40 years of operation, formulation, application, technical sales and marketing, and customer service experience in the field of polymer chemistry, especially liquid and powder coatings, epoxy and polyester resin technology and application, as well as organic pigments and additives production and application. He has held various management positions, primarily in the powder coatings industry, before becoming a consultant. He holds a B.Sc. degree in chemical engineering and organic chemistry from the College of Technology, Zurich-Winterthur, Switzerland, and an MBA in marketing and operations management from Case Western Reserve University (Weatherhead School of Management), Cleveland. Over the past 12 years, he has presented and published a number of papers on various powder coating formulating, manufacturing, and application issues. He is also a member of several trade organizations and a member of the editorial advisory board of Powder Coating magazine.

The restored Townsend Bell rings in Old Rip Park



Powder coating preserves the 156-year-old Townsend Bell for posterity.

The Townsend Bell (hanging frame only) was powder-coated and restored at the same time as Old Rip the horned toad in June 2005. This monument is also in Old Rip Park.

Cast in 1850 by the L.M. Rumsey Co. of St. Louis, Mo., the bell weighs 640 pounds and is 36 inches in diameter. In 1869, John T. Townsend brought the bell along with his family possessions in a covered wagon from Bowling Green, Ky., to Eastland County where it was a fixture on the Townsend Ranch until 1900. The family donated the bell to the First Baptist Church of Eastland, which then donated the bell to the First Church of God 23 years later. In 1977, that church and Cisco Congregations joined

to form the Inspiration Church of God, which moved the bell to its camp. The congregation then sold the camp to the Eastland Economic Development Corp. and donated the bell for display in the park. **PC**