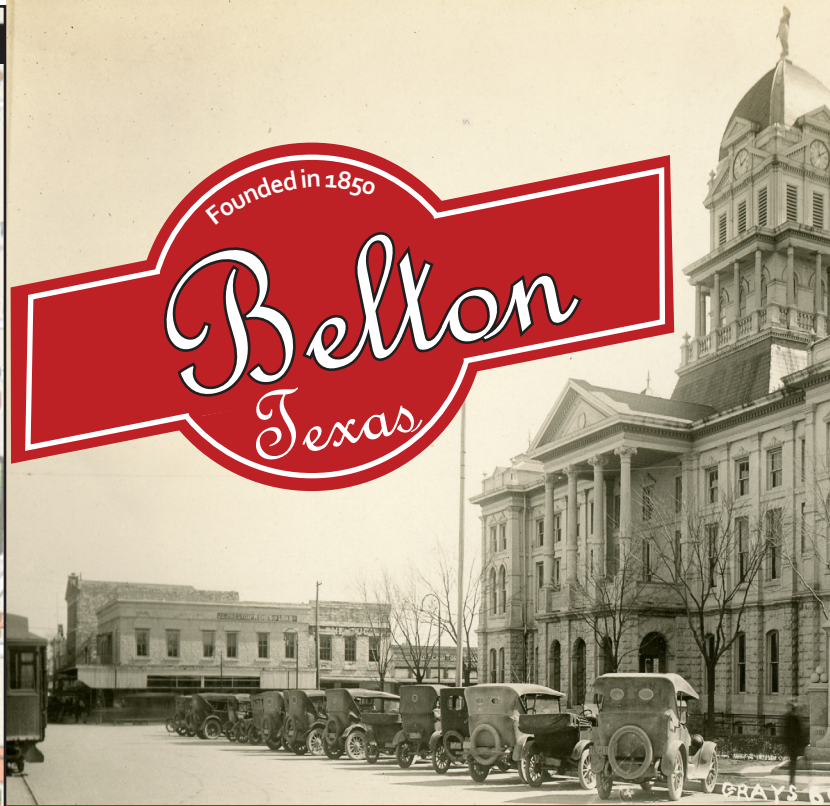
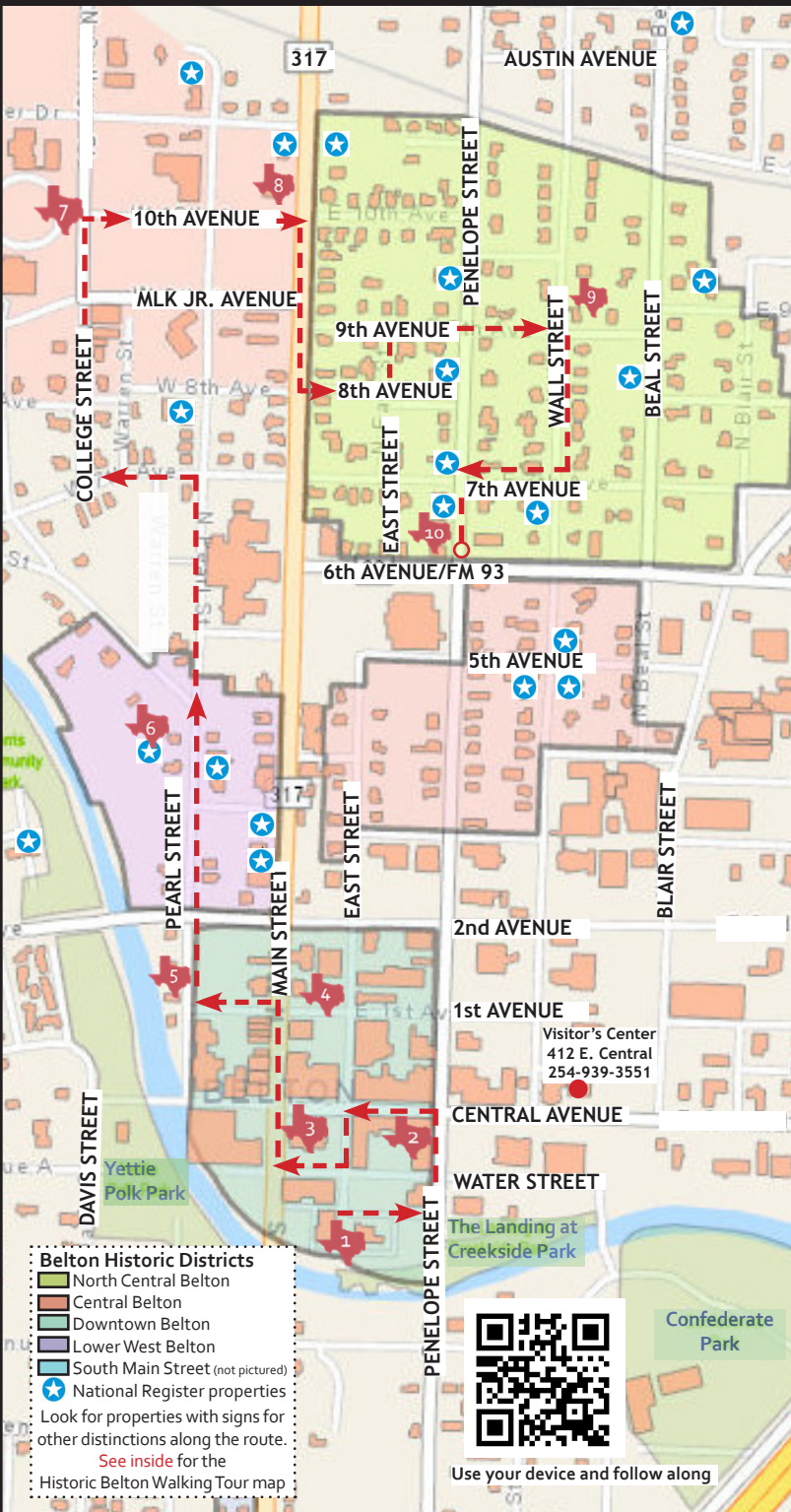


HISTORIC BELTON DRIVING TOUR — LOOK INSIDE FOR GUIDE



A WALKING AND DRIVING TOUR OF LOCAL HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE



HISTORIC BELTON DRIVING TOUR

MAP ON BACK PAGE



1 THE GIN & NOLAN CREEK – 219 SOUTH EAST STREET

The Belton Farmer's Co-op Gin Company was established in 1928. This Gin was built in 1932 to replace a mill that had previously burned down. The building became a feed store in the 1940s, then fell into disrepair in the 2000s. The Gin has now been converted into a restaurant that features Texas cuisine. The building backs up to Nolan Creek, a highlight of Belton. This creek was named after explorer Philip Nolan and provides the people of Belton a nice, cool reprieve during hot Texas summers.



Historic photos courtesy Bell County Museum



2 COCHRAN, BLAIR, & POTTS –

221 EAST CENTRAL AVENUE
CB&P is Texas' oldest department store. Since 1869, seven generations of the same family have owned and operated the store. The store originated in Centerville, TX, but moved to Belton in 1884, and has been at its present location ever since.



3 BELL COUNTY COURTHOUSE – 101 EAST CENTRAL AVE.

By the mid-1850s there were numerous merchants surrounding the Bell County Courthouse. The original log courthouse was sold at auction in 1855, and a two-story limestone building was constructed in its place. In 1879 a fire destroyed much of the town's central business district. The current Renaissance Revival style courthouse underwent renovations in 1999. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Buildings and the State Archeological Site Register.



historical and prehistoric cultural heritage of the region. It is home to the Miriam "Ma" Ferguson collection. Ma, a Bell County native, was the first woman to become Governor of Texas.



4 CARNEGIE LIBRARY & BELL COUNTY MUSEUM – 201 NORTH MAIN STREET

This library was finished in 1904 and was funded by a personal contribution from Andrew S. Carnegie. The grand building now houses the Bell County Museum, which collects, preserves and interprets



5 OLD BELL COUNTY JAIL – 210 NORTH PEARL STREET

The first Bell County Jail was built on this site in 1853, and was a two-story log structure. The building you see today was constructed in 1874 and is made of native limestone. In 1884, this building was leased and eventually sold after the third jail's construction was completed (#9 on the walking tour). It has been a private residence since the late 19th century.

PRESERVING HISTORIC BELTON

The City of Belton works with owners of historic properties to encourage maintenance, upkeep and retention of the historic character of buildings, structures, objects, sites and districts.

The City of Belton Historic Preservation Ordinance allows for the designation of areas or properties that are architecturally, culturally or historically significant to the City. Within the City government, primary responsibility for historic preservation rests within the Planning Department (Historic Preservation Officer) and the Historic Preservation Commission.

The Planning Department manages the City's historic preservation programs. Members of the Historic Preservation Commission are appointed by City Council. They are charged with preserving, protecting and promoting the City's historical resources. The HPC works with the Historic Preservation Officer to ensure compliance with the City Ordinances that involve historic preservation.

Local Property Tax Exemption Program

The City has created a historic preservation tax exemption program in which historically significant properties will be eligible to receive a tax abatement for up to five years of the pre-improvement value of the structure. Contact the Planning Department for more information at 254-933-5812.

Façade Improvement Grant Program

The Façade Improvement Grant Program is established to encourage quality exterior rehabilitation in Belton's historic business district. Any commercial property within Belton's Downtown Development District is eligible for grant funds. Façade grant funds focus on exterior work (visible to the traveling public) on storefronts, commercial buildings, and commercial residential buildings in the Downtown Development District.

Facade grants are available on a 50/50 matching basis with a cap of \$10,000 per façade adjacent to a public street or alley, with a maximum two façades eligible for a grant. A downtown building with two street facing façades is eligible for a maximum grant of \$20,000.

In addition to the special benefits available, residents often choose to live in a locally designated historic district because of the unique character, and the stability provided by a design review process that ensures the compatibility of new construction and alterations to historic structures. Such stability can protect quality of life and property values.



115 N. East Street

City of Belton,
Planning Department
333 Water Street
Phone: 254-933-5812
belton.texas.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Thank you to the Belton Area
Chamber of Commerce and the
Bell County Museum.

Bell County Museum
201 N. Main Street
Phone: 254-933-5243
Tues-Fri: noon-5 p.m.
Sat: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Free admission



SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR

14 points of interest • approximately 1 mile • 45 minutes

1. Cochran, Blair and Potts Department Store is the oldest family owned department store in Texas and boasts a Texas Historical Marker and a listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

2. This used to be the home to Hamburger King. Established around 1900, the hamburger station was a popular hangout. **This corner** held an underground saloon until Belton went “dry” in the 1950s. Notice the entrance through the sidewalk on Central that is now covered with a metal plate.

3. Belton was established in 1850 as the county seat of Bell County. The first **courthouse** was an 18-by-16-foot log structure built in 1852. It was replaced in 1859 by a larger, more expensive one (\$13,625) but voters objected so much so that they voted commissioners out of office. The third courthouse, built in 1884-85, is Renaissance Revival architecture. An extensive renovation in 1999 replaced the dome and statue, which provide a dramatic view at night.

4. The east side of the **courthouse square** along East Street was known as “Rat Row” because of the many saloons, and held the title of Belton’s Red Light District.

5. The **Belton Farmer’s Co-op Gin** was built in 1932 by the Belton Farmer’s Cooperative, an organization dedicated to assisting farmers in marketing their produce. The gin closed in the 1960s. It has since been remodeled and operates as a restaurant today.

6. Now the First Christian Church, **107 Water Street** contained the dressing rooms and office for Belton’s second opera house, and years before that, it was a Chinese laundry.

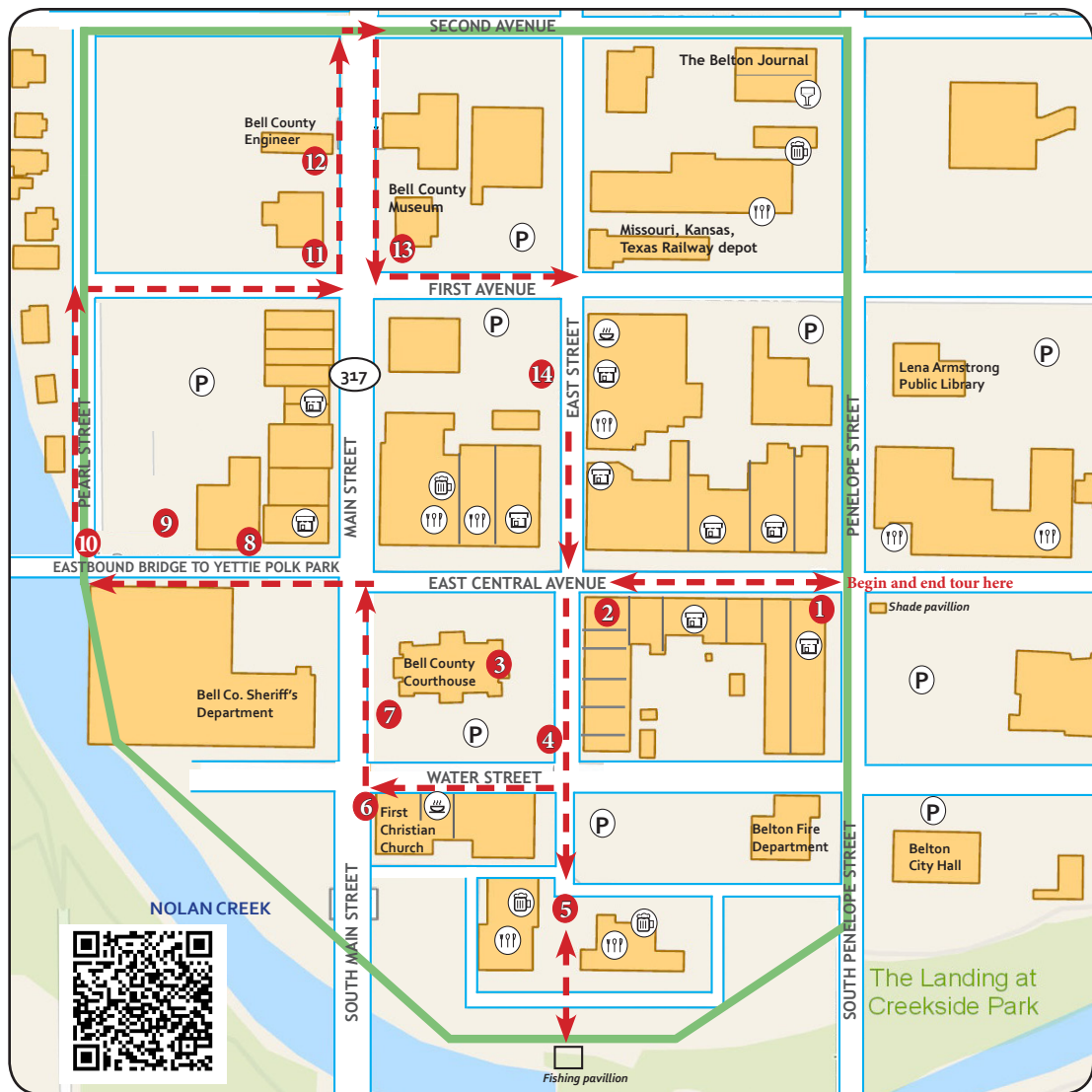
7. On the west side of the courthouse square is a **small live oak tree** planted during the county’s sesquicentennial celebration on April 22, 2000, honoring Bell County pioneers.

8. Going west on Central Avenue toward Nolan Creek, notice the **alley** on the right. The exterior limestone wall and some window and door frames are of original construction. West of the alley, the ornamental punched tin roof facade of the building is original, built in the 1890s; the pilasters are Mesker pressed metal.

9. This is the site of Bell County’s third **jail**, which was built in 1883 and demolished in 1956. Legal hangings took place in this jail yard as late as the 1920s. The first jail is still standing; take a detour about a block away to 210 North Pearl Street.

10. Beneath this bridge flows **Nolan Creek**, named for Phillip Nolan who is often credited as the first Anglo to map Texas (although no map has ever been found).

11. Belton’s second **post office** was built from 1916 to 1918 on property that once belonged to the Belton Woman’s Commonwealth. The building was restored in the 1980s by Bell County and is rented as office space.



Use your device and follow along

12. The **Bell County Engineer’s Office building** is a stunning example of the Art Moderne architectural style. It was built as a bus station and was home for many years to Crow’s Cafe.

13. The northern section of the **Bell County Museum** was originally a Chevrolet dealership. The **Carnegie Library building**, still labeled as such, was built in 1905. The Beaux-Arts style is one of 32 Carnegie buildings constructed in Texas and only 12 remain.

14. The **first opera house** in Belton is now a parking lot at First Avenue and East Street. The Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway depot across the street was built in 1889. Many of the buildings along East Street still have original tin ceiling work inside and housed early businesses such as the Fellrath Building at the southeast corner. It was built in 1881 as a livery stable. The building with the white ornamental facade was Froderman’s Bakery and a barber shop has been in the same location for 100 years (where Jackson’s Barber Shop is today).

Please use crosswalks and use caution when taking the walking and/or driving tour of Historic Belton.

EARLY HISTORY OF BELTON

In August 1850, the new pioneer town of Belton (first named Nolandville that was changed to Belton in 1851) was laid out in blocks, streets and lots with the courthouse public square at the center. It was designated County seat for the newly organized Bell County. Incorporated in 1852, it was the only town in the County and was the last place of civilization seen by the pioneers heading West by horseback or wagon train.

Within a month after lots were sold, a post office was established and mail was arriving by horseback. In 1852, a stagecoach route beginning in Tennessee and ending in Brownsville was stopping weekly in Belton to deliver mail, new arrivals and freight. By this time, the first courthouse was in use, a log cabin placed on high blocks as safeguards from devastating floods which occurred all too frequently by Nolan Creek running very near the public square. In 1853, a two-story log jail was built, followed by a school, hotel, church, saloons and stores. Most were log buildings or pole shacks, but with a new surge of people, more permanent buildings were built. A number of these stores have survived and are still in use. The A.D. Potts building, built in the late 1860s, not only is still in use but is still owned by the Potts family.

– *Written by Lena Armstrong, former longtime City of Belton librarian*

OTHER NOTABLE POINTS OF INTEREST

Yettie Polk Park, Nolan Creek Hike & Bike Trail, Chisholm Trail: 101 S. Davis Street

Yettie Polk and four of her five children perished in the Great Flood of 1913. In 1922, her husband leased the land to the city to establish “Yettie Polk Park,” on the condition the tree where his family celebrated the Fourth of July would never be cut down. Today, a bandstand sits on the site and Independence Day is celebrated there every year. The Nolan Creek Hike and Bike Trail runs through this park and historic downtown to the edge of UMHB. Plans to extend the trail are underway. Just north of the park is the historic Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, established in 1884, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the oldest black Methodist church in Texas.



Jeff Hamilton's Grave: FM 93 & Leon River

Jeff Hamilton began his life as a slave, was purchased by Sam Houston, and went on to become Houston's right-hand man and close family friend. Following Houston's death, Hamilton moved to Belton and lived here for more than 60 years. He died in 1941 at 100 years old and is buried in East Belton Cemetery. Jeff Hamilton Park was established in his honor and is located near South Belton Middle School.



Patriot Brick Walkway: 412 E. Central Avenue

This walkway lined with engraved bricks was created to recognize the service of family members and friends. It is located along Central Avenue, near the Chamber of Commerce/Visitors Center and extends to Patriot Plaza at Central Avenue and I-35.

Belton Standpipe: West Avenue J & Hughes Street

This standpipe was built in 1914 as a water tower for the City of Belton. While it is no longer in use, it was constructed during a period of rapid growth in Belton, and its leaders were attempting to modernize the town's utilities. The City is currently in the process of preserving this historical landmark located at West Avenue J and Hughes Street.

South Belton Cemetery: 603 S. Penelope Street

This cemetery was established in 1851 and is the final resting place for veterans of the War of 1812, Indian Wars, San Jacinto, Mexican War and the Civil War. This cemetery is located at 603 South Penelope Street.



McWHIRTER HOUSE –

400 NORTH PEARL STREET

Martha McWhirter

created the Belton Woman's Commonwealth, the only all women's commune in Texas, based on the doctrines of religious perfectionism and celibacy. They promoted personal, religious and financial autonomy. The Sanctified

Sisters, as they were called, grew to become an influential business force within the Bell County area. This is the home of Martha and her husband, George, and was the site of the first headquarters of the Belton Woman's Commonwealth.



UNIVERSITY OF MARY HARDIN-BAYLOR – 900 COLLEGE ST.

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor traces its history to the days when Texas had yet to gain statehood and when Baptist missionary work was just beginning in the frontier Republic. On February 1, 1845, the long-awaited Baptist university became a reality. Today, UMHB has a student enrollment of 3,900 students and employs more than 400 full-time faculty and staff committed to Christian higher education.



CURTIS MANSION – 1004 NORTH MAIN STREET

W.R. and Ida (Rogers) Miller,

rich from booming cotton years at the turn of the century, built this late Victorian house in 1902. Queen Anne features are mingled with Shingle style, then popular in the eastern U.S. The design included fireplaces in every room. Fine materials and detailing inside and out preserved its

elegance. The later owners, particularly the A. Lon Curtis Family (1917-1973), have enhanced the house. Trivia! Mirror-image houses call Main Street home nearby (one facing East, the other West). Can you spot them?



WEDEMEYER HOUSE – 9TH AVENUE & WALL STREET

Site of the Belton Academy, an intermediate school dedicated to the preparation of young men for the rigors of classes at a prestigious college. The Academy was established in 1886 and was headed by Professor Charles Wedemeyer, a Baylor graduate.



JAMES & MIRIAM FERGUSON "HONEYMOON HOUSE" – 604 NORTH PENELOPE STREET

James Ferguson was Texas' only impeached governor and Miriam was the first female governor. The couple's "honeymoon house" is located near downtown. After her husband was impeached, she ran on his behalf, promising "two governors for the price of one."

Use your device, go to <http://bit.ly/historicbeltontx>