

HISTORICAL
MUSEUMS
of Bastrop County
Texas

AND OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST



ExploreBastropCounty.com

Enjoy Our Friendly Nature!



Historical Commissions & Societies

BASTROP COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

512-629-7400

bastropcountyhistoricalcommission@gmail.com

www.bastropcountyhistoricalcommission.com

BASTROP COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

512-303-0057

www.bastropcountyhistoricalsociety.com

ELGIN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

512-285-2000

elgindepot@gmail.com

McDADE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

512-273-2566

Established in 1963, the McDade Historical Society and Museum is dedicated and passionate about preserving McDade's colorful and significant history. The Society meets at 7 pm every fourth Monday.

PAIGE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

paigetexasmuseum@gmail.com

ROCKNE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

<https://sites.rootsweb.com/~txrha/>

Facebook: rharockne

SAYERSVILLE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

512.964.1602

A local non-profit organization of members who actively research the history of Bastrop County, focusing on rural life in all periods of county history and the communities of Sayersville and Oak Hill in particular.

The SHA meets the first Sunday of the month.

SMITHVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY

830.839.4080 or 214.673.2223

SHS meets on Tuesday mornings.



MUSEUM & VISITOR CENTER OF THE BASTROP COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

904 MAIN STREET, BASTROP, TEXAS

Museum: 512.303.0057 VC : 512.303.0904

OPEN DAILY: MON-SAT: 10am - 5pm SUN: 1 - 4pm.

BastropCountyHistoricalSociety.com

Admission \$5

In the heart of Downtown Bastrop, visit the remarkable Bastrop County Museum that includes more than a dozen exhibits about a community that was founded before the Texas Revolution and almost became the state Capital.

Stop by the front desk of the Visitor Center where helpful volunteers are armed with handy, easy-to-use brochures and area maps. You can find information about shopping, dining and recreation and see Bastrop's first motorized fire truck!

Museum exhibits include a historical timeline and fascinating histories on El Camino Real de los Tejas, the Colorado River, Lost Pines, the Baron de Bastrop, Settlement, Independence, Runaway Scrape, Cotton, World War II, Camp Swift, Governor Sayers, Coal Mines, and Cowboys, Cows and Cattlemen. Artifacts span from prehistoric times to the 21st century, and documents date back to the 1832 Minutes of the Incorporation of Bastrop.

Also, BCHS offers quarterly speaker meetings, walking tours of downtown, docent guided step-on-bus tours of the historic district and docent-led tours of the Museum. Call to schedule a tour.



ELGIN DEPOT MUSEUM

14 DEPOT SQUARE, ELGIN, TEXAS

512.285.2000 After hours: 512.285.4515

WED-FRI: 10am- 2pm SAT, Tours by appt.

EXPANDED HOURS COMING JANUARY 2020

elgintx.com/200/Elgin-Depot-Museum

The Elgin Depot Museum, located in the historic 1903 Union Depot, harkens to the frontier days when the Railroad connected markets and Cotton was King. If one loves to explore, what better way than imagining Bastrop County when the streets were filled with oxen, mules, wagons, and horses rather than automobiles, pickup trucks, motorcycles, and the occasional bicycle.

The City of Elgin was founded in 1872 and named for Robert Morriss Elgin, the Houston and Texas Central railroad's land commissioner and a Scottish immigrant.

Established in 1988, the Elgin Historical Association (EHA) with support of the city and citizens from the surrounding area restored the building and opened the Elgin Depot Museum in 2002.

The museum offers three exhibit rooms, photo archives, and permanent and rotating exhibits. Explore the history of railroads, films, military, agriculture, and celebrate the rich Swedish, German, Irish, Mexican, Black founders whose multicultural heritage defines Texas today.

A walkable city, the Elgin Commercial Historic District includes 14 city blocks of commercial and industrial buildings. Most of these buildings are constructed of locally produced brick and were erected from 1872 to 1947. The Brick buildings and architecture of early businesses still define this frontier town, as do the remnants of one room school houses, historical churches like New Sweden Church and surrounding farms.

EHA depends on donations and volunteers to support and preserve significant artifacts and photos of the past.

Trains still run the rails and if you are lucky a train will blow its whistle as it passes by.



MCDADE HISTORICAL MUSEUM

MAIN STREET AND LOOP 223, MCDADE, TEXAS

512.273.2566

1st & 3rd Thursday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

McDadeHistoricalMuseum@hotmail.com

The McDade Historical Society was organized in 1962. Their first effort was to purchase and preserve the old rock building at the intersection of Main Street and Loop 223 of Highway 290 in McDade.

A Texas State Historical Marker greatly adds to its appearance.

McDade is named for James W. McDade, a railroad lawyer with the Houston & Texas Central Railroad. Located in the A. Martinez Survey, Bastrop County, McDade received the first train in 1871. Not everyone favored the Iron Horse. A local preacher often met the train and preached the "evils of the train" to gathered crowds.

The name "Tie City" came about because for a time, this was the end of the line and railroad ties were stacked here. Mail came and went by train.

McDade's early history includes notorious gangs, outlaws, murderers, dances, saloons, vigilantes, robberies and hangings.

The Society also encourages historical research into the early history of the town and works to preserve the findings thereof. In the beginning, the Society put on numerous fund raisers to provide funding for restoration of the building.



PAIGE DEPOT MUSEUM

117 MAIN STREET, US 290, PAIGE, TEXAS
512.253.1111

A museum in the old depot adjoins the community center on the south side of Hwy 290. The museum is open by appointment – or “any time you see cars parked in front of the museum.”

Next door is the memorial to Doris Laake who was the longtime unofficial community historian and the reporter for area newspapers with Paige news.

The town began with the arrival of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad in 1872. The name chosen was to honor the railroad’s civil engineer, Norman Paige. The depot was first located three miles west of the present location, but moved in 1876. Paige was granted a post office in 1874. In 1877, a German immigrant by the name of Fedor Soder arrived and built a cotton gin and store. He bought undeveloped land and broke it into small farms for the more recently arrived German settlers.

In addition to cotton, the town shipped cordwood, produce, cattle and swine. For local consumption and use, Paige manufactured brooms and had both a creamery and a pickle factory. The population declined to 400 by 1914 but the remaining citizens could call one another on the recently installed telephone system.

By 1952 Paige had an estimated population of 220. In the early 1980s Paige established both a community center and a volunteer fire department. The 1990 census reported 275 people and the same for the 2000 count.



ROCKNE MUSEUM & HILBIG PARK

4065 FM 535, HILBIG PARK, ROCKNE, TEXAS

512.303.3092 or 512.925-1892

SAT: Noon-4pm Summer: TUE-SAT, Noon-4pm

Free Admission - Donations appreciated!

The legend of Small Town Texas still exists and can be found in Rockne, located off Highway 20 between Bastrop and Lockhart. Named after the fabled football coach, the town's actual history goes back to early 1846 when German settlers established a small Catholic farming community. Today the area is inhabited by many of those early immigrants' descendants. In the heart of the town you'll find Rockne Museum, built as a testament to life in rural Texas, with exhibits showcasing items of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including sacrifices made for the United States' historic war efforts.

Step back in time as you explore two different historic homes filled with artifacts used by the cabins' original owners. Connect with a thriving faith community as you discover a collection of items from the 19th century Catholic Church, including an ornate altar, beautiful stained glass and baptismal font. Other historic structures include a corn-crib, smokehouse and out-house.



JAMES H. LONG RAILROAD MUSEUM & VISITOR CENTER

100 MAIN STREET, SMITHVILLE, TEXAS

512.237.2313

Weekdays: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Fortunately, most railroad artifacts were saved by brave local volunteer firemen when the museum was burned down in early 2019, though many items do need specialized restoration. The Smithville Area Chamber of Commerce has created a temporary museum in their Visitor Center until the building can be rebuilt. They are also accepting items for the museum, especially from the Katy railroad line, which was a major employer in the late 1800s, swelling Smithville's population.

The white gazebo across the street (formerly the decorative top of Smithville's City Hall) beckons you to the Railroad Park and its special events areal which includes the historic depot, shown above. Children will enjoy the playground, nestled between two railroad cabooses as well as the 26-foot Guinness world record gingerbread man. Linger for a picnic and imagine the hustle and bustle of the area during the busy passenger train era.

The railroad line through Smithville connected mid-west business to Texas and to Houston and Galveston for export. The biggest boost came in 1894 when the Missouri, Kansas and Texas (MKT) established its central shops and terminal in Smithville. The city incorporated in 1895 and downtown Smithville became a hub of activity. Smithville remained the largest city in Bastrop County until the 1940's.



SMITHVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY MUSEUM

602 MAIN STREET, SMITHVILLE, TEXAS

830-839-4080 or 214-673-2223

The lovely 100-year plus old house-museum, built in 1908 in downtown Smithville, is open only by appointment. However, volunteers are usually working in the metal archives building behind the home on Tuesday mornings between 10 a.m. and Noon and visitors are welcome in the archives. Call one of the above phone numbers and leave a message to schedule a tour of the home or to get help with research on early Smithville and its inhabitants.

The community of Smithville was established by Dr. Thomas Jefferson Gazley, who in 1827 received a land grant from the Mexican government. He settled in the site now called Independence Park and opened a medical practice and store. The Smith family soon followed, opening a trading post, and the "Old Smithville Village" grew along the Colorado River for the next 60 years. After the establishment of the M-K-T railroad in 1886, their population grew to the point that until the beginning of World War II, Smithville was the largest town in Bastrop County.

There are exhibits in the house. Old newspapers, photographs, documents, maps, Smithville cemetery information, and other donated artifacts are kept in the metal archives in the back building.

Other points of interest as you explore Bastrop County



BASTROP COUNTY COURTHOUSE & JAIL

804 PECAN STREET, BASTROP

The first courthouse, 1835, was a two-story building owned by early settler S.V.R. Eggleston. The second, built 1839, was a house located between Walnut and Austin Streets. The third, built 1853, was at the site of its current location and burned in 1883. A new brick courthouse was built in 1883 for \$33,000. In 1991 the courthouse was fully restored and is still in use today. The jailhouse was built in 1892.

FAIRVIEW CEMETERY

1307 TX-95, BASTROP

Fairview Cemetery is located on Highway 95 in Bastrop. You'll find graves of war veterans from the War of 1812 to the Persian Gulf War. A War Babies Guardian Angel statue stands over the area where a number of infants, whose families had no means to bury their children, were interred free during World War II. The gravesite of Texas Governor Joseph Draper Sayers, numerous legislators and 13 Texas Rangers can also be found at Fairview.

CAMP SWIFT

1705 HIGHWAY 95 N, BASTROP

About eight miles south of Elgin on Highway 95 is Camp Swift, named for Major General Eben Swift. It served as a major military training facility for 300,000 troops during World War II. The camp was active from May 1942 until July 1946, and covered nearly 56,000 acres. Today Camp Swift is a training center for the Army National Guard.

ROCK FRONT SALOON - MCDADE

MAIN STREET AND LOOP 223, MCDADE

A gunfight happened at 1870 Rock Front Saloon in 1883 when a deputy sheriff was killed. Vigilantes hung four

suspects, but the violence continued with the infamous McDade Christmas hangings on Christmas Eve 1883, when three additional outlaws were executed. This event led to a yet another gunfight in front of a saloon on Christmas Day that left three dead.

THE LOST PINES REGION and the CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

BASTROP AND BUESCHER STATE PARKS

Adapted over thousands of years to local dry climate and soils, Bastrop's Lost Pines are the westernmost stand of Loblolly Pines in the south. The Bastrop County Complex Wildfire of 2011 was the most destructive fire in Texas history, but replanting and regrowth is well underway, restoring the beauty of Bastrop County.

The parks' buildings, bridges and trails are also shining examples of the Civilian Conservation Corps, a program created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to provide jobs for young men during the Great Depression.

SMITHVILLE TEXAS VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK AND SPLASHPAD

311 NW 2ND ST, SMITHVILLE, TX

With the list of every county veteran and their conflict, standing in front of these memorials is impactful and reflects the patriotism of the rural communities.

The large Angel statue stands over the memorial while the cherub in back wrote down the names of young active military members from Smithville who lost their lives within a short period of time.



THREE HISTORIC DOWNTOWNS

MAIN STREETS IN BASTROP, ELGIN AND SMITHVILLE

Historic buildings still make up the bulk of the historic downtowns around Main Streets in all three of our incorporated cities. Walk the sidewalks and think of how times used to be with long dresses, dusty roadways, horse and buggy, and railroads as distance form of transportation.

As a bonus, each town has historic homes so check out the historic districts!



HISTORICAL MUSEUMS

of Bastrop County Texas

Museum & Visitor Center of the Bastrop County
Historical Society (Bastrop)

Elgin Depot Museum

McDade Historical Museum

Paige Depot Museum

Rockne Museum & Hilbig Park

James H. Long Railroad Museum & Visitors
Center (Smithville)

Smithville Heritage Society Museum



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