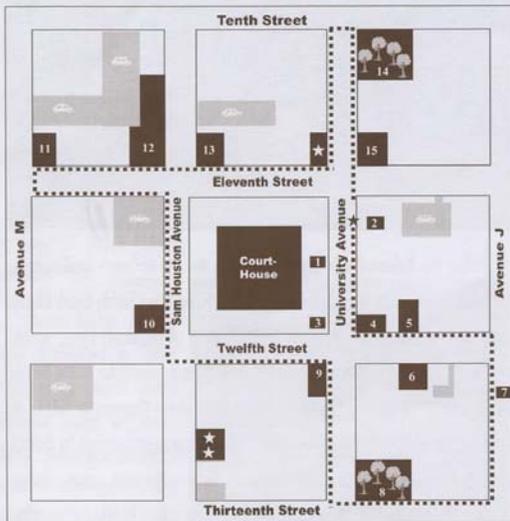


WALKING TOUR

Introduction...

Contemporary downtown Huntsville can be traced back to a small trading post in 1835: Founder Pleasant Gray established a trading post on granted land he received from the Mexican government. Settlers come to join the growing community, among them prominent leaders like General Sam Houston, Henderson Yoakum, and Anthony Martin Branch. Downtown Huntsville grew as the seat of Walker County and moreover as a dynamic commercial hub for the region. This Historic Walking Tour will allow you to discover modern downtown Huntsville, its rich historical heritage, cultural development and ongoing urban beautification.



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Huntsville/Walker County Chamber of Commerce
(936) 295-8113 & Huntsville Main Street.

Landmarks

The following landmarks are organized according to the tour path as shown on the map.

1. WALKER COUNTY COURTHOUSE & THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE
(Starting point of the route: East side of the Courthouse, at University Ave.)

The Courthouse square was originally called "Market Square" before Huntsville became the county seat of Walker County in 1846.

The first courthouse was erected in 1848 on land deeded by Huntsville founder Pleasant Gray for only one cent. The original penny is now located in the cornerstone of the courthouse. The first building (1847-1848) and a second structure were demolished due to defective foundations. A third



building burned in 1888. A handsome structure built later in 1888 burned on December 24, 1968; the fifth and present courthouse was completed October 1, 1970. All around the present Courthouse, antique stores, gift shops, restaurants and many other businesses cater to visitors' needs.

MURALS AND TROMPE L'OEIL (Trick the eye)

The downtown square is undergoing a revitalization plan which is a joint effort of the public and private sectors of the community. A major component of the plan is the rehabilitation of facades on the downtown buildings with architectural details using trompe l'oeil (trick the eye) paintings by renowned artist Richard Haas. The north side of the square was the first to be completed between 1988 and 1992, followed by seven other buildings in the district between 1994 and 1996 like the Courthouse, Old Town Theater, etc. The

9. HENRY OPERA HOUSE (1883)

Location: 1101-1103 12th St. at University Ave.

From 1883 to 1913, the Henry Opera House had a colorful stream of actors, musicians, lecturers, minstrels and magicians that brought merriment and culture to this isolated town thousands of miles from Broadway.

These road shows and home-talent concerts were performed here for nearly twenty years in the upstairs theater. The original "foot-lights" were oil lamps with tin reflectors until electricity became available in the late 1890's. The first motion pictures were shown here. (See historical subject marker)



10. EASTHAM BUILDING (1931)
Location: 1120 Sam Houston Ave.

The Easthams were one of the earliest families to operate a business on the courthouse square. W.A. Eastham acquired this property in 1916 from the estate of his mother Mrs. Delha Eastham, widow of Byrd Eastham. Mrs. Byrde E. Wooters acquired the building in 1931 and the building has remained in the family since. The building is an expression of commercial Art Deco design. It houses the oldest continually operated cafe in Texas, Cafe Texan.

11. GIBBS-POWELL HOME/COUNTY MUSEUM (1862)

Location: 1228 11th St. at Ave. M



Built by Thomas Gibbs, one of Huntsville's earliest businessmen, the home was often visited by Sam Houston. The house is of classical Greek Revival design and the grounds include original cedar trees. The home is a Texas recorded landmark and Texas Archeological landmark.

12. FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (1913)

Location: 1016 Sam Houston Ave.

The Methodist Church was established in 1842 with their first structure completed here in 1857.

The building burned in 1918 and was rebuilt in 1919. This towering Gothic revival structure is known for its pipe organ and stained glass windows. This is the third building at the site. (See historical subject marker)



13. GIBBS BROTHER'S STORE (1841)

Location: 11th St. at Sam Houston Avenue

This site houses Gibbs Brothers and Company, which is the oldest business in Texas in continuous operation by the same family at the same location. The business was first opened as a mercantile store in 1841 by Thomas and Sanford Gibbs. The store was frequented by Sam Houston. This brick structure was built in 1890 and housed the Gibbs National Bank (later First National Bank) in the downstairs and the Gibbs office upstairs where it has remained for more than one hundred years. (See historical subject marker on the Gibbs building)

14. FOUNDER'S PARK (1994)

Location: southeast corner of University Ave and 10th St.

The Founders Park project started in 1990 thanks to the City of Huntsville, Walker County and the Founders Park Commission. The Park was dedicated in 1994. A



small park of abundant native plants and historical markers is found at the site of the original town spring where Huntsville founders traded with the friendly Bedias Indians in the early 1800's. Sculptures representing a Native American family flank the re-created spring. These works of art are by Monica Taylor and Larry Zink.

15. THE WILLIAM MOORE STATE BUILDING (1931-1932)

Location: 1036 11th St. at University Ave.

It was originally built as the US Post Office Building. This Mediterranean revival-styled structure is one of many identical buildings constructed throughout Texas.

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3. THE GAZEBO (1996)

Location: corner of University Ave. and 12th St.



The structure was dedicated for the Walker County 150th Birthday in April, 1996. The gazebo was built by Huntsville community volunteers, led by Dan Phillips, near the site of the original Courthouse Bandstand (1908-1948). The project was funded entirely through donations.

4. THE SAM HOUSTON WHITTLING SITES

Location: 1117 University Ave. and 1118 11th St.

These sites are known for being the places where General Sam Houston told stories to listeners and whittled all types of miniature creations. These mementos and whittling

tools are displayed at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum, as well as the Texas State History Museum and Governor's Mansion in Austin, Texas. (See historical subject markers)



5. MASONIC LODGE (1909)

Location: 1030 12th St.

Forest Lodge No 19 was established in 1844 and is the eighth oldest Masonic Lodge in Texas. Early members included Sam Houston and Henderson Yoakum. The



first three buildings were built in different locations around the square. The current building was completed in 1909. (See historical subject markers)

6. TOWN THEATRE

Location: 1023 12th St.

Town Theatre opened in 1947 as a movie house. Throughout the years, the building served a number of other purposes including a manufacturing site, night club and local

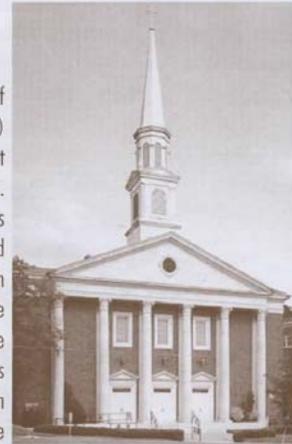
pigeon roost. Today, after a million dollar renovation by the Friends of the Old Town Theatre, the facility is used frequently for plays, musicals, concerts and other community events. The building's facade and permanent movie posters incorporate the work of artist Richard Haas.



7. FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Location: 1207 Ave. J

Sam Houston was a member of this church (established in 1844) which was one of the earliest Baptist congregations in Texas. The first building at this site was completed in 1851. The third church structure was built in 1924 under the guidance of the Rev. C.F. Andrews, who was the father of actors Dana Andrews and Steve Forrest. After a fire in 1954, the church was rebuilt the following year. (See historical subject marker)



8. RATHER PARK

Location: Northeast corner of 13th St. and University Ave.

The park, named after long time Huntsville residents Mr. and Mrs. R.S. Rather, is currently leased to the City of Huntsville. It is often used as a lunch spot and shady resting place for shoppers and downtown employees. A memorial bench and flagpole were dedicated to the victims of September 11, on September 11, 2002.



project took place in collaboration with preservation architect Kim Williams of Austin, and Linda Pease at the City of Huntsville. Works were also done in association with American Illusions Co. and Thomas Street Studio which employed local artists. Illusions were generally based on historical photographs. Here are three examples of Richard Haas creations.

➡ SMITHER BUILDING MURAL ☆

Location: corner of University Ave. and 11th St.



The mural covers the entire surface of the building's east side. It represents several episodes in General Sam Houston's career including "Houston as Colloneh the Cherokee," his staying in the Woodland Home in Huntsville with his family and his role as the victor of San Jacinto in 1836.

➡ LEAD BELLY BUILDING MURAL ☆

Location: 1221 Sam Houston Ave.



The blues composer Huddie William Ledbetter was born in 1888 and died in 1949. In 1916 Huddie was in jail in Texas on assault charges when he escaped. Later, he killed a man in a fight, was convicted of murder and

sentenced to 30 years of hard labor in prison. After 7 years he was released after begging pardon from the governor with a song. In 1934, he became famous thanks to his standards repertoire ("Midnight Special," "Rock Island Line"). Richard Haas' decision to portray Lead Belly was controversial locally at the time the mural was painted, but paid appropriate tribute to one of America's most legendary blues performers.

➡ OLD AVON THEATER ☆

The illusion work recreates the Old Avon Theater sign. Richard Haas and the building owners agreed upon the design using artist-drawn models and historic photographs.

2. SITE OF FIRST TRADING POST/ROBERTS-FARRIS LOG CABIN

Location: 1105 University Ave.

Pleasant Gray first explored this area in 1830-31 and returned here in 1835 to begin the town of Huntsville on land he acquired from the Mexican government. He built an Indian trading post and his home at this site just a few hundred yards south of a fresh spring, which he had discovered on his earlier expedition. The home was later converted into an Inn for early travellers. Pleasant Gray left his business with his wife Hanna and started off for the California gold rush in 1848. He died along the way and is buried in Nebraska.



Today, the Roberts-Farris Log Cabin sits on the site of Gray's Trading Post. The cabin was built by Allen Roberts around 1840 on West Sandy Creek fifteen miles west of Huntsville. It served as the home of Hezekiah Farris, a San Jacinto veteran and captor of Santa Anna. The cabin remained in the family until it was donated to the City of Huntsville Main Street Program in 2001. At the time, the Cabin was relocated and rebuilt at its present location by history students from Sam Houston State University and inmate work crews. Today, Cabin on the Square is a visitor center and gift shop selling locally made crafts.