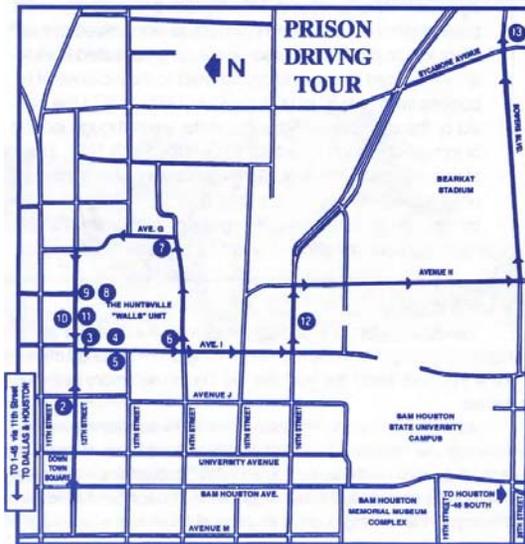
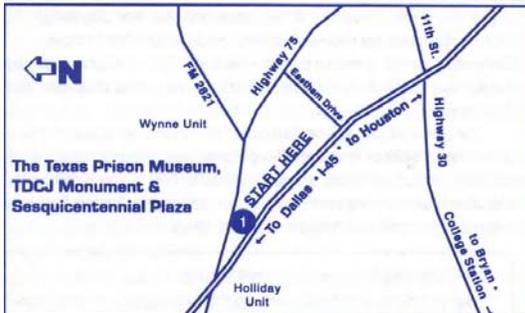




DRIVING TOUR

Huntsville is the home of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The administrative offices and seven prisons are located in Walker County. Over 13,690 inmates are housed here in Walker County and 8,362 are included in the city's population census.

TDCJ has over 6,789 employees in Walker County. This step by step driving tour features the Texas Prison Museum, area prisons and the prison cemetery. Maps are provided to assist you.



A publication of the Huntsville Convention and Visitors Bureau Huntsville/Walker County Chamber of Commerce (936) 295-8113



1. THE TEXAS PRISON MUSEUM, TDCJ MONUMENT SESQUICENTENNIAL PLAZA (Hwy. 75 North at I-45, Exit 118)

The Prison Museum is the only one of its kind in Texas and opened in 1989 in downtown Huntsville. The museum, now located at 491 Hwy. 75 North, portrays life in prison and the "culture within a culture that developed behind the bars."

On display are many exhibits including, "Old Sparky", the Texas electric chair, confiscated inmate weapons, relics of escape attempts and fascinating facts about the characters of the past who served on both sides of the bars.

The TDCJ Monument Sesquicentennial Plaza pays tribute to the Texans who have made the state's sprawling prison system one of the world's best in 150 years of fascinating history.

The Texas prison system began its work in 1848 with a prisoner population of three men. Today, it houses more than 143,500 offenders.

The monument to the generations of prison system employees and officials rests in the center of a circular platform 76 feet in diameter.

Rising 28 feet from its base, the monument features a five-sided column studded with native river rocks. A Texas star cut from white limestone crowns the column. An elevated pool fed by fountains and ripples flowing over the river rocks holds five more Texas stars.

Memorial bricks, carved with names, historic dates, and inscriptions, lead to and surround the monument to honor the past, present, and future professionals of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Purchased by families, prison employee groups, corporate sponsors, and even past inmates, the memorial bricks sometimes bear cryptic inscriptions authored by the purchasers.

The Plaza was financed entirely by private support. More than 600 memorial bricks represent an important part of the financing, and can still be placed at the monument by purchasers.

2. DEPARTURE AREA

Approximately one hundred inmates are released per day and make their last stop here in Huntsville as they begin their road to a new life. Greyhound bus line serves as the main carrier of released inmates from area prisons with 14 buses leaving daily. Their first taste of freedom is experienced at retail outlets which cater to the releasees needs. Each released inmate receives \$50 and a set of prison made clothes. (Another \$50 when they report to their parole officer). Few venture any further into the Huntsville community beyond this short walking distance from "The Walls."

Satanta's death sentence was reduced to life in prison and he was sent to the Huntsville Unit. Prison confinement was unbearable for the Indian chief and in 1878 he died in a desperate bid for winged freedom as he jumped head first from a second story window onto a brick wall below. He chose to die in the same manner that he had lived—boldly and fearlessly.

After his death, the Kiowa tribe began its attempts to have Satanta's body returned to Oklahoma. Finally, after eighty-five years, their effort paid off, when the fifty-eighth Texas State Legislature passed a bill which authorized the action.

In late June of 1963, the tribe performed the traditional ceremony of "smoking the grave" as handfuls of cedar shavings and Oklahoma dust were sprinkled over a small fire at the foot of his grave, thus assuring the safe return of Chief Satanta to his homeland through the spirit of smoke.

After the ceremony, inmates exhumed a number of bones and a tooth from Satanta's grave under a lone pine tree. The tribe then took the remains to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for reburial and a festive ceremony where two thousand Kiowas honored their lost leader.

The late Captain Joe Byrd, a veteran prison employee, was responsible for clearing and beautifying the old Peckerwood Hill Cemetery with inmate labor. The cemetery was renamed in his honor and is still being maintained by inmate labor. The bodies of the unloved—the unwanted—are still being buried here.

PRISON TRIVIA

- The largest number of executions in one year took place in 2000 with 40.
- Of all the inmates executed by the state, only two have been women. Although several women have received the death sentence, the state has executed only two as of February 2003.
- First woman inmate convicted in 1854. Sentenced to one year for infanticide.
- Youngest inmate was a nine year old boy sentenced in 1884 for robbery.
- Youngest girl inmate was eleven years of age and sentenced in 1884 for administering poison.
- Most unusual occupation listed by an inmate was "Gentleman Loafer."
- Most unusual offense was "worthlessness."
- The shortest sentence on record was for one hour for a Dallas man on November 15, 1870.

AREA PRISONS

There are seven prison units in Huntsville and the surrounding area. These units range from minimum to maximum security prisons and represent a diversity of prison architecture and correctional programs within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

1. HUNTSVILLE "THE WALLS" UNIT (Established 1849)

Location - 815 12th Street
 Capacity - 1,400 inmates/ Size - 140 acres
 Custody level - first and repeat offenders
 Industrial Operations - textile mill and mechanical department.

2. GOREE UNIT (Established 1900)

Location - 4 miles south of Huntsville's Downtown Square on Highway 75 South (Sam Houston Avenue)
 Capacity - 1,000 inmates/ Size - 889 acres
 Custody Level - minimum security inmates
 Agricultural Operations - horse breeding and dairy calf operation.
Original location of women's prison now located at the Gatesville Unit.

3. WYNNE UNIT (Established 1883)

Location - FM 2821 at Highway 75 North
 Capacity - 2,600 inmates/ Size - 1,433 acres
 Custody Level - first and repeat offenders
 Industrial Operations - license plate plant, mattress factory, box factory, sign shop, prison store and transportation department.
 Agricultural Operations - field crops, livestock and dairy heifer breeding.
 Special Operations - Windham School system's administrative offices (inmate education - high school and college program).

4. BYRD UNIT (Established 1964)

Location - 1 mile north of Huntsville on FM 247 at FM 2821
 Capacity - 900 inmates/ Size - 50 acres
 Custody Level - primary reception center and minimum security inmates
 Special Operations - all male inmates are tested and classified at this unit before being transferred to their permanent unit.

5. ELLIS UNIT (Established 1917)

Formerly called Smither Farm - named for O.B. Ellis in 1962
 Location - 12 miles north of Huntsville on FM 980
 Capacity - 2,400 inmates/ Size - 11,672 acres
 Custody Level - maximum security inmates and repeat offenders
 Industrial Operations - garment factory and woodworking shop.
 Agricultural Operations - field crops and livestock.
Original location for male death row inmates who are now housed at the Polunsky Unit in Polk County.

6. ESTELLE UNIT (Established 1983)

Location - 10 miles north of Huntsville on FM 980
 Capacity - 3,200 inmates/ Size - 7,007 acres
 Custody Level - first and repeat offenders, medical and mental health patients
 Industrial Operations - textile mill
 Agricultural Operations - forestry program and sawmill.

7. HOLLIDAY UNIT (Established 1994)

Location - 1 mile north of Huntsville on I-45
 Capacity - 1,700 inmates/ Size - 50 acres
 Custody Level - Transient and Temporary

Jessie Evans, a partner in crime with Billy the Kid, served only one year of his thirty year sentence for murder and robbery before he escaped in 1882 and was never recaptured. It is interesting to note that during the 1800's, horse theft was considered a much worse offense than murder in so far as sentences were concerned.

9. DEATH HOUSE

The "Texas Thunderbolt" or "Old Sparky" as it was called, was housed in the death row cellblock located at the corner of the northeast wall. In 1924, the electric chair was first used and has since executed 361 men. Death row inmates spent their last days, months and sometimes years only a short walking distance from the execution chamber.

Before 1924, criminals were returned to the county of their sentencing and executed by hanging. The electric chair was last used in 1964 and is on display at the Texas Prison Museum.

It's interesting to note that "Old Sparky" was built by an inmate who once faced the death penalty in 1914 for murder. His sentence was commuted to a prison term and he was eventually released.

Lethal injection is the current method of execution used in the Death House and was first administered in 1982. Death row inmates are now transferred to the Huntsville Unit on the day of their execution.

Two members of Bonnie and Clyde's gang, Joe Palmer and Raymond Hamilton, were executed here in 1935.

10. CIVIL WAR POW'S AND MANUFACTURING

Not all prisoners confined to the Walls Unit were criminals. During the Civil War, the Confederacy imprisoned several Union soldiers here. Sam Houston, whose son was imprisoned at a Union POW camp, would often stride through the big prison gate, booming encouragement to the captured soldiers. Also court-martialed Confederate soldiers were confined here.

A cotton mill and warehouse were built in the mid 1850's and were a tremendous asset to the Confederacy as the Union Blockade tightened its grip on needed supplies. Here king cotton and wool became millions of yards of cloth and yarn for Confederate soldier uniforms and clothing for needy widows and orphans.

During the Reconstruction Period after the war, the United States Army returned to Huntsville and controlled the prison for several years.

(A Historical Marker is located on 12th Street across from the main prison entrance.)



11. MAIN BUILDING

This main entrance to the prison was re-built in 1942 and displays two clocks that were originally located in the Gothic clock tower above the grand 1895 administration building which was originally located at this site.

The current three story building faces north and south with similar facades. The clocks are an interesting symbol of "time," and are a constant reminder to those on the "inside."

12. CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER

Sam Houston State University

This is the largest criminal justice learning facility in the nation and is located on the north east corner of the SHSU campus. The Institute of Contemporary Corrections and Behavioral Sciences was established here in 1965 by mandate of the Texas Legislature.

Inmate laborers completed the construction in 1976 at a cost of twenty million dollars with additional millions saved due to prison labor. This two hundred thousand square foot complex includes a five hundred seat auditorium, crime laboratory, classrooms, a 98 room hotel, and a court room where many trials actually take place.

Students from thirty-eight states and eleven nations make up the current enrollment of fifteen hundred, with thousands of professionals attending the continuing education programs annually.

Located along this drive are additional SHSU buildings, including: University Theatre, Library, Teacher Education Center, Coliseum, and Bearkat Stadium.

13. PECKERWOOD HILL CEMETERY

The Captain Joe Byrd Memorial Cemetery

This twenty-two acre prison cemetery is the final resting place for over 1,700 prisoners who were unclaimed or unwanted at the time of their death.

Long before local businessmen deeded the land to the state in 1885, prisoners were brought here in a pine box for burial. A grave was hacked out of the tangled underbrush which would soon be reclaimed by the wild thicket. Therefore, no one is sure how many graves exist.



The earliest decipherable grave marker has the date 1870 chiseled on the prison quarried grave stone. Earlier graves were marked by wooden crosses which have long since rotted, leaving no sign of their existence.

Of the known 1,700 inmates buried here, more than two hundred died by the hand of the executioner. A few were slain by guards while attempting to escape, some were killed by fellow inmates and others died of natural causes.

Scores died during a World War I era flu epidemic which swept the prison system. All flu victims, including four women inmates, were hastily brought here and buried in an attempt to control the epidemic. Some were identified only by their prison number while others were left unmarked.

*CHIEF SATANTA

The most infamous prisoner ever to be buried here was Satanta, a Kiowa Indian chieftain who was convicted of killing seven white settlers during the 1871 Salt Creek Massacre. A large grave stone is located in the center of this cemetery in his memory.



3. THE HUNTSVILLE UNIT - "THE WALLS"

Soon after Texas became a state, the legislature chose Huntsville as the site of the first permanent Texas penitentiary.

Located at this site, the original buildings were brick and were designed by Abner H. Cook. The master brick mason was Capt. James Gillaspie and the master carpenter was Col. William M. Barrett. The original exterior wall was 15' high.

Construction began in 1848, and the unit received its first prisoners in 1849. The Huntsville unit is the oldest Texas prison and currently has the capacity to house 1,700 inmates.

4. BRICK SECURITY WALLS

The brick wall which surrounds the prison has given the unit its colorful nickname "The Walls." The original wall, was made of sandbrick. The presented brick facade was completed in 1942 and made of bricks manufactured at the old Harlem Unit. (Jester Unit - Fort Bend County) The wall ranges in thickness from 2 to 3 feet and soars to the height of 32 feet in many sections. The majority of Texas Prison units are surrounded by tall chain link fences with miles of razor wire on top for security.



The "parameter picket" is one of eight guard posts located atop the walls. As late as 1981, 30 caliber machine guns were mounted at these pickets. Security weapons currently used are the 357 revolver, 12 gauge shot gun and the AR-15 automatic rifle (similar to the military M-16).

5. FORMER DIRECTOR'S RESIDENCE

Since 1885, this has been the site of the home of the prison's superintendents, general managers and directors. This current residence was built in 1951 by inmate labor. Its original wrought iron fence still stands today. The director vacated the residence in 1996. It is currently being used as a conference center.

6. INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES

Prison industry began in 1854 with the construction of the textile mill. Inmates manufacture the majority of their needs. The Huntsville Unit was the industrial center for many years and housed factories which produced wagons, mattresses, cloth and shoes. The hides of cattle and cotton grown on state prison farms were often used for materials.

In 1935, the automobile license plate plant began operations here but has since been moved to the Wynne Unit in north Huntsville.

7. TEXAS PRISON RODEO

"The Wildest Show Behind Bars" (1931-1986)

From its inception in October 1931, the Texas Prison Rodeo entertained thousands of curious spectators and generated funding for inmate education and welfare programs through its revenues.

Just outside the east wall, the prison ball park was converted into an arena and this facility grew to become an enormous brick stadium.

Many stars made guest appearances, from 1951-1986, including Eddie Arnold, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson and old time movie stars Tom Mix and John Wayne.

The annual show was performed on every October Sunday for fifty-five years and was discontinued in 1986, primarily due to the deterioration of the old rodeo arena. The show was pre-empted in 1943 during World War II, but it returned the following year and was designated the "Victory Rodeo" and earned eight thousand dollars for the war effort.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice is the second largest prison system in the nation. Many forms of prison management have existed; in 1871 the State leased the entire prison system out to private contractors who utilized convict labor to turn profits. The prison lease system resulted in widespread inmate abuse and contributed to the increase of escapees from only 50 in 1871 to 382 in 1876. In 1883 the control of the prison returned to the state, even though leasing of inmates to the private sector continued until 1912. Much of early Huntsville's construction was accomplished by leased prisoners. Practically all carpentry and bricklaying was done by inmates, thus retarding the growth of the town by preventing the immigration of skilled laborers.

8. SOUTH BUILDING

The oldest cellblock is located just beyond the northeast wall in the Prison's East Wing. Built in the mid 1890's during a time of the last attempts to tame the "Wild West," the Huntsville Unit has housed many notorious gun fighters.

John Wesley Hardin, who claimed to have slain forty-four men, was known as the "meanest man that ever lived" and once allegedly shot a man for snoring. Hardin was captured in 1877 and sentenced to spend the next quarter of a century in Huntsville. While in prison he studied law and theology. After serving only fifteen years of his sentence he was given a pardon by the governor; he later opened a law office in El Paso.