

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form**

RECEIVED  
NOV 14 1990

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historic and Architectural Resources of Belton, Texas

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Community Development in Belton, Texas, 1850-1945

**C. Geographical Data**

1985 City Limits of Belton, Texas

☐ See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

*Lauretta J. Tunnell*  
Signature of certifying official

*29 Oct. 1990*  
Date

Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*Antoniella Glee*  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

*12/26/90*  
Date



## E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

See text which begins with Continuation Sheet E-1.

NATIONAL  
REGISTER



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 1

---

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN BELTON, TEXAS, 1850-1945

GEOGRAPHY

Belton is an incorporated town near the center of Bell County in central Texas. As county seat, the town has served historically both as the local governmental center of the county and as a marketplace and shipping point for area farmers and ranchers. The center of the town lies just northwest of Interstate 35, the major north-south route in central Texas. Belton lies approximately halfway between Austin (45 miles to the south) and Waco (55 miles to the north). The city is also between the two largest population centers in the county, Temple (seven miles northeast) and the Killeen/Harker Heights area which serves neighboring Fort Hood (15 miles west).

Belton currently has a population of 13,276 (1990-91 Texas Almanac). Spreading over gently rolling hills at an average altitude of 511 feet, the town is situated at the edge of the Balcones escarpment, which divides both the county and the state into two zones. To the east of the town is the Blackland Prairie, which consists of comparatively level prairie land, mainly undulating to gently rolling. Soils in the eastern part of the county are mostly dark loamy to clayey "blackland" soils. The area to the west of the town belongs to the Grand Prairie region of Texas, and includes undulating to rolling uplands, deeply cut with stream valleys, which, in places, have stony slopes and steep bluffs. The soil in most of this region is thin with limy subsoils. While the Blackland region for most of the county's history has served predominately as farmland, the Grand Prairie region to the west has always been a ranching area. (Atkinson 1970: 1-11; Limmer 1988: 5; Clements 1984: 70-71). Vegetation within the town itself is characterized by oak, mesquite, juniper and other hardwood trees as well as abundant native and imported shrubs and flowers. Nolan Creek, a tributary of the Leon River flows through the center of the town in a roughly southeasterly direction, and empties into the Leon River approximately two miles southeast of the city limits.

Two railroads serve the city: the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe that runs across the its northern edge, and the Belton Railroad (formerly the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad right of way) that terminates between First and Second avenues near the courthouse square. In addition to Interstate 35, which runs diagonally southwest to northeast through the southeastern section of the city, Belton is crisscrossed by several other important routes: U.S. highways 190 and 61, State Highway 317, and farm roads 436 and 93.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 2

EARLY HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT TO 1860

The region currently comprising Bell County has been the site of human habitation since at least 6000 B.C. Evidence of inhabitants from the Archaic Period (ca. 7000 B.C.-500 A.D.) and possibly the Paleo-Indian Period (pre-7000 B.C.) have been discovered at archeological sites in Stillhouse Reservoir (approximately three miles southwest of the Belton city limits) and near the town of Youngsport in the southwestern corner of the county (Connor and Odintz: 3; see also Russell 1936 and Sorrow 1967). The earliest known historical occupants of the area were the Tonkawas, a flint-working, hunter-gatherer people who followed the buffalo herds. Lipan Apaches, Wacos, Anaderkoes, Kiowas, and Comanches also inhabited the area at various times. By the 1840s, the Tonkawas, Lipan Apaches and other tribes that had camped in the region had been decimated by diseases brought by European settlers and the survivors had been driven away. Small bands of Comanches continued to make raids into the county until the 1870s.

The first Europeans to explore the area were the Spanish in the 18th century. The northern limits of Spanish settlement, however, were confined to the San Gabriel River in neighboring Williamson County and no evidence of Spanish habitation in the Bell County area has survived. The earliest English-speaking settlers arrived in the mid-1830s when the county was part of Robertson's Colony, and later, Milam County. They settled along the Little River in the southeastern corner of the county. These settlements were deserted during the Mexican invasion in early 1836, reoccupied, and then abandoned again after an Indian attack on Fort Parker in June 1836. Settlers began to return to the region after peace treaties were signed in 1843-44 and Indian attacks subsided.

By 1850, the area which later comprised Bell County had a population of approximately 600 whites and 60 black slaves. Bell County was created on January 22, 1850. A meeting of area residents was held in April of the same year to organize the county. The small settlement of Nolan Springs (named for adventurer Philip Nolan) was chosen as county seat and the name changed to Nolandville (Nolanville, Nolandsville, Nolandville are alternative spellings). The settlement was on the northern edge of the Matilda F. Connell League. Connell and her third husband Thomas J. Allen ceded 120 acres as well as the settlement of Nolan Springs on the proviso that it become the permanent county seat. The new county commissioners accepted the offer and immediately began the task of laying out the town. Col. Henry B. Elliot, a teacher, surveyed the area, and another teacher, E. Lawrence Stickney, made a plat of the town (A Memorial and Biographical History 1893: 259; Atkinson 1970 42-44; Limmer 1988: 34).

The town layout was based on the Shelbyville plan, with a grid pattern running approximately north-south and east-west, and the main streets radiating out from a large central courthouse square. The layout included blocks, lots, streets and alleys as well as land designated for public use. The plat extended



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 3

---

both north and south of Nolan Creek, though most of the early development appears to have been on the creek's northern bank.

Town lots were advertised for sale in the Galveston Weekly News and prime corner lots are said to have been priced as high as \$50 (Limmer 1988: 34). The earliest structures--mostly tents and temporary log and brush shanties--were located in the immediate vicinity of the courthouse square one block north of the creek. The first permanent structure is said have been a small clapboard house on the west side of the square built in 1850. A small log courthouse was erected in 1852. The courthouse square and the surrounding area were originally covered by a live oak grove, but most of the trees were felled as the town developed (Limmer 1988: 34).

The settlement grew rapidly in the early 1850s. Because of its status as county seat, the town attracted settlers from many surrounding communities. Several smaller settlements, including nearby Childers Mill, were completely abandoned when their residents moved to Nolandville en masse. Officials applied for a post office soon after the town was founded and on October 4, 1850, the Post Office Department approved the application. In December of the following year the town's name was changed to Belton, a contraction of Bell Town. Regular mail service was established by early 1851. Weekly stage coach service began in 1852 and the town became a important stop on the mail route from Little Rock, Arkansas, to San Antonio (Limmer 1988: 34). By the mid-1850s the earliest crude log buildings began to be replaced by frame and stone structures. Issac Miller built a 1-story frame hotel on the southwest corner of the square in 1851. The first stone buildings were built by pharmacist W.D. Eastland and merchant Issac Jalonick in the center of the block north of the square, which was graded to allow for the construction of larger, more permanent buildings. The south side of the square--dubbed "Smoky Row" because of the large number of saloons there--remained exclusively wooden clapboard structures during the antebellum period. In the mid-1850s several buildings were also constructed on Water Street (now Avenue A) along the banks of Nolan Creek, including a blacksmith and general merchandise store. The original log courthouse was sold at auction in 1855 and replaced in 1859 by a two-story structure built of limestone quarried in western Bell County (A Memorial and Biographical History 1893: 260; Atkinson 1970: 54-55).

**BELTON DURING THE CATTLE BOOM YEARS, 1860-1880**

Between 1860 and 1880, the economy of Bell County gradually moved away from subsistence farming toward large scale cattle ranching. During the late 1860s and early 1870s Belton was one of the regional centers of the great Cattle Boom



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 4

---

which swept central and northern Texas and the town became an important stopping point on the Chisholm Cattle Trail.

In 1860, Bell County had a population of 3,794 whites and 1,000 blacks. The 1860 census reveals that the majority of settlers had come from the older settled counties of coastal and eastern Texas, or from the southern United States. The county's economy was based largely on cattle and sheep ranching. Statistics on slave-holding recorded in the 1860 census suggest that there were few large plantations in the antebellum period. Two-thirds of the 175 slave-holders in the county in 1860 each owned seven slaves or less, and only four county residents owned more than 20 slaves (U.S. Census Report, 1860; Atkinson 1970: 58-59; Connor and Odintz: 6). A series of droughts during the mid-1850s hindered the development of a farming economy and Bell County farmers still operated in frontier conditions on the eve of the Civil War. The principal crops in 1860 were corn and wheat; cotton was introduced along the Little River in the southeastern corner of the county, but only 514 bales were harvested in 1860 (U.S. Census Report, 1860; Connor and Odintz: 6). Belton, with a population of approximately 300 in 1860, was the largest town in the county, followed by Salado and Aiken, both of which were also on the main north-south mail route (A Memorial and Biographical History 1893: 260; Atkinson 1970: 56).

During the secession crisis of the late 1850s, there was strong pro-Union sentiment in Belton and in the county as a whole. A Whig newspaper, The Independent, was published in Belton, and in the election of 1859 Bell County residents voted overwhelmingly for Sam Houston. Nonetheless, the county voted 495 to 198 for secession in 1861. A large number of men from Belton served in the Confederate forces, and local residents established several small industries to support the war effort, including a complex of stock pens and slaughterhouses to process dried beef for the Confederate army. Unionist sentiment, however, did not completely die out and a small group of Union sympathizers and Confederate deserters established a settlement in the north part of the county which locals called "Camp Safety" (Atkinson 1970: 65-73; Connor and Odintz: 7).

After the war, Bell County experienced a protracted period of violence and lawlessness. Federal troops were stationed in Belton in 1865-1866 to protect Federal judge Hiram Christian, but were unable to stop a series of political murders and lynchings. Several pro-Union sympathizers being held prisoner for political murders were lynched by a Belton mob in 1866, and by the late 1860s a number of Ku Klux Klan-like organizations had grown up. Because of the relatively small black population in the county, the Radical Republicans were unable to maintain control after the end of military rule, and by the early 1870s conservative Democrats were once again firmly in control. The pattern of violence, however, continued during the early 1870s. In 1874 vigilantes broke into the Belton jail and killed eight men accused of horse-thievery and one man accused of murder (Atkinson 1970: 76-77; Connor and Odintz: 8-9).



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 5

---

The war also had a profound impact on the area economy. Economic growth in Bell County--as in much of Texas--stagnated during the war, and during the Reconstruction period the county experienced a brief depression. In 1870 the value of farms in the county was only half of what it had been in 1860 (U.S. Census Reports, 1860-1870). The post Civil War period also saw a shift away from a frontier economy and toward increasing reliance on cattle and sheep ranching. One of the main feeder routes of the Chisholm cattle trail ran through the center of the county passing along the eastern edge of Belton and heading north toward Waco. The livestock ranching industry was concentrated in the blackland prairie region in the eastern half of the county, while the western half of the county remained largely undeveloped until the turn of the century (Tyler 1936: 167-69). Numerous cattle drives originated in, or passed through, the area during the 1870s and 1880s, and the profits from cattle drives played an important part in the development of Belton's economy. Several ranchers made considerable fortunes during the boom years of the cattle industry, among them Silas Baggett and his son Ele, who both later settled in Belton, and in the late 1880s and early 1890s built two nearly identical large Queen Anne/Eastlake houses on North Main Street (1018 and 1019 N. Main).

The post-Civil War period also saw an important shift in the demographic makeup of the region. Drawn by the prospect of economic opportunities, particularly in farming, large numbers of new settlers began to move into Bell County. The county's population doubled between 1860 and 1870, and more than doubled again by 1880. Many of the new settlers came from the older counties of Texas, or from other southern states, particularly Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee. After 1870, significant numbers of immigrants from Central Europe--especially Germans, Austrians, and Czechs--also moved into the county. Relations between these groups and the Anglo population were largely peaceful, but there was some anti-German and anti-Czech agitation after the turn of the century.

While the white population of the county increased rapidly after 1865, the number of blacks grew more slowly. Indeed, the number of blacks as a percentage of the total county population dropped from approximately 21 percent before the Civil War to 11 percent by 1870. Allowed to live only in segregated communities and barred from many jobs, African-Americans faced tremendous hardships in the post Civil War period. Although there was less racial violence in Bell County than in some other areas of the state, there were at least two lynchings, in 1910 and 1915, and in the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan became an important political and social force in the county (Connor and Odintz: 8-9).

By the early 1870s the economy of the county began to recover, in large measure due to the growth of the cattle and sheep industries. The combined effects of the war and the depression had brought construction in Belton to a virtual halt during the mid-1860s. By the end of the decade, however, building



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 6

activity once again resumed. Many of the early log and clapboard shanties erected around the courthouse square before the war were torn down and replaced by more substantial 1- and 2-story structures built of locally quarried limestone. The late 60s and early 70s also saw the construction of a number of fine stone and wood houses on large lots north and west of the courthouse. Built in simplified versions of the Greek Revival and Italianate styles, these houses reflect the town's transition from a frontier outpost to a thriving commercial center. Among the best surviving examples of these immediate postwar residences are the Harris House, ca. 1870 (1001 W. 10th), 703 N. Beal St., ca. 1870, the Jarnagin House, ca. 1875 (402 N. East), and the McWhirter House, ca. 1865-1870 (400 N. Pearl). During the postwar period, the area south of Nolan Creek also began to develop. In 1875, E. Burnet of Austin built an ice factory on the Leon River where the Riverside Swimming Pool now stands, and in the mid- and late 1870s a number of small frame houses were built on the southern bank of Nolan Creek (Limmer 1988: 93).

Belton during this period also began to emerge as a regional banking center. In the late 1860s several merchants, among them Miller, Chamberlin, and Company, and H. C. Denny began small-scale private banking businesses to serve area cattle ranchers and farmers. In 1867, Miller, Chamberlin, and Company organized the town's first bank. The bank was formally chartered in 1882, and a few years later acquired the First National Bank Building on the north side of the courthouse square (200 E. Central). Josephus Zacharias Miller, one of the partners in the bank, served as president of the Texas National Bankers' Association between 1895 and 1900. The large brick Eastlake and Italianate house he built around 1895 (804 N. Penelope) is a surviving example of the flourishing commerce in Belton before the turn of the century.

Belton's growing prominence as the region's commercial and civic center was further reinforced by the founding of the Belton Telegraph Company in 1877 and the construction of a telegraph link with the Western Union lines in Round Rock in 1878, thus establishing a direct tie with the outside world. By the following year the company also completed lines to Lampasas and Gatesville to the west and north.

The late 1860s and early 1870s also saw the beginnings of an unique religious and social experiment called the Women's Commonwealth. Founded by Martha White McWhirter and several other women who had broken away from the town's established Protestant denominations, the group believed in direct communion with God, the doctrine of sanctification (thus their common name, the Sanctificationists), celibacy, and common ownership of property. The Sanctificationists began to openly question the submissive role of women in society. This led to a number of well publicized marital conflicts in the town, a situation exacerbated by the Sanctificationist's belief that a sanctified woman should not live with an unsanctified man.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 7

---

Originally conceived as a prayer group, by the end of 1879 the Women's Commonwealth gradually evolved into a living and economic cooperative. Members of the movement sold butter, eggs or other products and contributed their profits to a common fund; others worked as domestics to earn money for the group. In 1882, with the funds they had collected, the women opened a laundry business, and built several houses for their members. In 1886, they began operating one of the houses as a hotel, and the following year they built a 3-story Central Hotel, for many years the town's largest and most modern hotel. By 1891 the women also owned and operated three farms near Belton, and a steam laundry. The Santificationists initially met with a great deal of resistance from the community. Members of the group were verbally and physically attacked and one woman was committed to an Austin insane asylum. They gradually gained acceptance, however, and around the turn of the century McWirther was granted a place on the Belton Board of Trade, an honor never before accorded to a woman. The Santificationists also created Belton's first public library in a room in the hotel. The library was so successful that it was moved to larger quarters, and in 1903 a new building was constructed on Main Street with a Carnegie Foundation grant (201 N. Main). In 1902, the Santificationists sold their various enterprises and most of the members moved to Washington, D.C. After McWhirter's death the group disbanded. The Central Hotel, the Sanctificationist's most visible legacy later burned down, but McWirther's house, for many years a center for the group's activities, has survived (400 N. Pearl). (Johnson 1974; Limmer 1988: 93-94).

Belton in its early years, like many Texas towns of the time, experienced several disastrous fires. In 1879, a large fire destroyed much of the central business area directly north of the courthouse square. Most of the stores were quickly rebuilt, but the combined effects of fire, several floods and the flurry of post-war building activity destroyed most of the structures built before 1865. As a result, almost all of the town's earliest surviving buildings date from the cattle boom years immediately after the Civil War.

**BELTON DURING THE COTTON BOOM PERIOD, 1880-1930**

While cattle and sheep ranching were the main industries in Bell County immediately after the Civil War, the period also saw a dramatic increase in cotton farming in the eastern Blackland region of the county. By the end of the 1870s cotton became the county's principal cash crop. The dramatic rise of cotton farming is told in the production figures cited in the U.S. agriculture census at the end of the 19th century: in 1880 county farmers produced 9,217 bales of cotton; by 1890 the figure grew to 37,473 bales (U.S. Census Reports 1880-1890). The number of acres devoted to cotton production also increased, and



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 8

by 1910 more than half of all of the land farmed in the county was planted with cotton (U.S. Census Reports 1880-1910).

During the late 1870s and 1880s Belton grew rapidly and the town emerged as the chief processing and shipping center for the region's cotton crop. The first cotton seed oil mill in Central Texas was built in the town in 1879 (804 E. 4th); a cotton compress began operating in 1883; and a second, larger oil mill was constructed in 1890 (A Memorial and Biographical History 1893: 262; Limmer 1988: 94-95). A number of cotton gins also began operating during these years. Most of these gins have been destroyed or considerably altered, but the Farmer's Coop Gin near the courthouse square built in 1927 at the end of the cotton boom has survived largely intact (219 S. East).

The rapid growth of Belton as a regional commercial center also led to an expansion of local government. By the late 1870s the county government had outgrown the second courthouse built in 1858 and officials decided to construct a new courthouse. The citizens of newly-founded Temple pushed to have the county seat moved there, but in an election held to decide the matter Belton won by an overwhelming majority. The new courthouse (1876, N.R. 1976), built of locally quarried limestone at a cost of \$80,000, was designed by architect J. N. Preston. The 3-story Renaissance Revival style building is still standing, but the large central dome and clock tower have been removed.

By the mid-1880s, Belton had a population of approximately 4,000, daily mail and stagecoach service, three newspapers, an opera house, five schools, steam grist and flour mills, two hotels, 13 grocery stores, and three banks (Texas State Gazetteer 1884-1885). Maggie Abercrombie, in an article in American Sketchbook published in 1880, extolled Belton's newfound prosperity: "Every branch of business is successfully carried on in Belton and it is today the nucleus around which cotton trade in Bell, and part of Coryell, Falls, and McLennan counties must revolve. Mills, manufacturing industries, cotton presses, hotels, restaurants, banks, saloons, and all other enterprises are flourishing in this place. Some of the larger cities of Central Texas have already begun to feel the effect of this growing town and when the railroads in contemplation are completed, they must inevitably suffer from the want of trade Belton will draw from them" (quoted in Limmer 1988: 95).

Despite Abercrombie's optimism, however, the railroads almost bypassed the town. In the early 1880s the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe railroad line was laid as far as the town of Rodgers near the eastern edge of Bell County. Railroad officials, however, announced that they would be unable to build the railroad through Belton unless the city would donate land for a right-of-way and a depot and contribute \$75,000 toward the costs of construction. Belton residents raised the money and secured the necessary right-of-way from various county landholders. But when the railroad construction began, Santa Fe officials decided to build the



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 9

---

railroad just to the north of the town, instead of through the center as they had first promised. The site they chose for a depot was more than a mile north of the courthouse, outside the city limits (A Memorial and Biographical History 1893: 260-61; Atkinson 1970: 86-88; Limmer 1988: 95; see also Reed and Zlatkovich).

At about the same time, the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad (MKT) announced that it was building a line from Denison southward to Taylor, and offered to build a spur from Echo to Belton. Belton citizens, concerned that the MKT might also bypass the town, raised a \$30,000 fee to ensure that the line would run to the town's center. The MKT branch (which became the Belton Railroad in 1960), was completed in 1882. It entered Belton from the east and terminated three blocks northeast of the courthouse. A new depot (201 E. 1st) was built one block north of the courthouse square in 1899. Around the same time the company also built a new steel truss bridge over the Leon River replacing an earlier structure (Taylor's Valley Road and Leon River) (Atkinson 1970: 87-89; Limmer 1988: 95; see also Reed and Zlatkovich).

Construction of the two railroad lines helped initially to spur development in Belton. The placement of the Santa Fe terminal north of the central business district served to stimulate northward expansion of the town along the principal north-south streets, especially Main, East and Pearl streets (A Memorial and Biographical History 1893: 260-61). The majority of the town's better residences built in the 1880s and 1890s were also located on the north side of the town (e.g., the Eastlake-influenced Elliot House, ca. 1881 (716 N. College), the Cornelison House, ca. 1875 (1106 N. Pearl) and the Italianate Austin House, ca. 1885 (702 N. Penelope). Baylor Female College, which moved to Belton in 1886 (see below), was located on the north side of the town in close proximity to the Santa Fe depot.

Similarly, the construction of the MKT lines on the east side of the town prompted eastward development. First Avenue running east from the courthouse square quickly became the town's most important shopping street. In addition, the new Belton Cotton Mills and several other cotton warehouses and processing businesses were located in the area along the railroad corridor or on a short north-south line connecting the two railroads. The effect on the appearance of Belton by the 1890s was dramatic, as virtually all of the town's growth was to the north and east, while the west and south sides, especially south of Nolan Creek, were still largely undeveloped.

Completion of the two railroad lines also played an important role in making Belton the region's cotton processing and shipping center during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Most of the region's cotton crop was first shipped to Belton before being transported out to other parts of the country. Shipments of raw cotton and cotton yarn and cloth increased every year between the mid-1880s



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 10

---

and the mid-90s, and shipments of other products such as grain and cattle also grew.

But the fact that Belton was served only by two feeder lines, and not by a major trunk line, ensured the town's relative decline after 1890. In 1881, Santa Fe railroad officials established the town of Temple eight miles northeast of Belton on the railroad's main line and made the town its regional headquarters. The railroad aggressively promoted Temple and the town grew quickly, surpassing Belton as the largest town in the county by 1890. Because of its status as a railroad center, Temple became the new commercial and transportation center of the region. Belton continued to grow after the 1890s, but development was much less rapid than during the 1870s and 80s. Some Belton businesses and residents relocated to Temple to be closer to the main rail line, but Belton's position as county seat and the fact that it was already well-established ensured the town's survival. Belton's proximity to Temple was also contributed to its continuing prosperity. After 1900, Belton businesses continued to profit from regional trade. During the first decades of the century, Belton was the site of the First Monday fair, which attracted farmers and ranchers from all over the county on the first Monday of each month. An electric interurban line between Belton and Temple was constructed in 1905 linking the two cities together and a large volume of commerce between the two towns developed. Perhaps most important, however, was the fact that much of the area's cotton crop continued to be processed there through the 1930s.

The 1880s and 1890s saw significant improvements in city services. A public school system was organized in 1881; a public water system built in the mid-1880s; and a fire department was organized in 1884. By 1889, the town was electrified, and by the early 1890s 600 homes and businesses had electric power. Other improvements included a natatorium, constructed by the city water works, one of the earliest indoor public swimming pools in the state. (A Memorial and Biographical History 1893: 261).

In 1886, Baylor Female College (now the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor) moved to Belton. The institution was originally part of Baylor College, founded in Independence, Texas, in 1845. When Independence began to decline after the 1870s, college officials decided to move the school. The men's and women's divisions were split, and the men's college (now Baylor University) was moved to Waco. Belton won the competition for the women's college after a group of leading Belton citizens made an offer to provide a large plot of land for a campus on the town's northwest side and raised \$31,000 to build the first building, later called Luther Hall. The school grew quickly and by 1900, it had an enrollment of approximately 100. In addition to Luther Hall, which held all of the administrative offices, classrooms, and laboratories, the college at the turn of the century consisted of an electric power house, a steam laundry, a business manager's cottage, a dining hall, and a number of small houses for



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 11

boarders (Belton Illustrated 1900: n.p.). Luther Hall burned down in 1929, but a section of the structure's stone arches has been preserved as a memorial (Site No. 543). In 1920, the college hired Chattanooga architect Rubin M. Hunt to prepare a master plan for the campus. Hunt's design, which called for a large rectangular green surrounded by 2- and 3-story Georgian Revival buildings, has been followed with few minor exceptions until the present (see the description of the Baylor Female College Historic District).

By 1900, Belton had a population of 3,700, down slightly from the estimated population of 4,000 in 1890. The population of Temple, meanwhile, had grown to 7,065, nearly double that of Belton (Limmer 1988: 97). But despite Temple's rapid rise, Belton continued to flourish. One symbol of the town's continuing prosperity was the opening of the new Grand Opera house in 1895. Built of native limestone, the imposing 3-story structure rivaled those in many of Texas' larger cities and attracted some of the best touring shows of the period until it burned down in 1904. The period spanning from roughly 1880 to 1920--the peak years of cotton production in Bell County--also saw the construction of a number of large homes by local cotton magnates, merchants, and others who profited from the cotton trade. Perhaps the best example of these homes built by King Cotton is the Queen Anne Miller-Curtis House (1004 N. Main; N.R. 1974), designed by Galveston architect C.W. Bulgar for cotton broker William Roy Miller in 1902. Other examples of houses built during this period include the unusual Second Empire Beamer House, 1897 (1202 S. Beal), the Lee House, 1904 (804 N. College, Hudson House, ca. 1890 (324 N. Main), the Morey House, ca. 1895 (328 N. Main), and the Clark House, ca. 1890 (520 S. Main).

After 1900, thanks to cotton and Belton's cotton processing industries, the population of Belton once again began to grow and new industries moved to the town. A group of local businessmen opened a cotton yarn mill on Birdwell street in 1901, and a foundry and machine shop began operating at about the same time. Cotton production continued to increase, reaching a peak production of 58,050 bales in 1910 (U. S. Census Report, 1910).

In December 1913, Belton was hit by a major flood when Nolan Creek overflowed its banks. The town had experienced a series of small floods since its founding, but most did comparatively little damage. In the 1913 flood, however, the entire downtown area was inundated and all three bridges connecting the south side of town with the main business district were swept away. After the disaster, a series of flood control projects was initiated, but the measures failed to prevent another flood in 1921, which damaged the jail bridge and a number of downtown buildings. Belton still experiences occasional small floods, and in recent years the Bell County office building's ground floor and basement has been flooded several times (Limmer 1988: 99).



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 12

---

The 1913 flood did not halt Belton's growth. In 1914, the Texas State Gazetteer reported that the town had an estimated population of 5,000, paved streets, electricity, and water works, three banks, four cotton gins, an ice plant, a foundry and machine shop, a daily and two weekly newspapers. By 1916, four theaters showed movies and occasional vaudeville acts. The town's saloons were closed after county residents voted to prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages in 1915, but numerous other businesses including a photography studio and several garages and gas stations opened. The town's outlying areas also continued to grow. The southern section of the city below Main Avenue began to develop as did the southeast and southwest areas, both of which became residential neighborhoods.

Growth also affected the area immediately to the west of the downtown business district on the west side of Nolan Creek where much of the town's black community lived. Although the Anglo-American population continued to dominate the social, economic and political life of the town, Belton's black residents began to emerge as a significant community before the turn of the century. One of the foci of this community was the Gothic Revival Mt. Zion United Methodist Church (218 Alexander Street) built in 1893 along the banks of Nolan Creek.

During World War I, Bell County residents enthusiastically supported the war effort. The county supplied more than twice its draft quota on one occasion, and local citizen's formed a number of organizations to support the war effort (Connor and Odintz: 13-14). After the war, Belton, like most of the country, enjoyed a period of marked prosperity. Many residents were able to buy automobiles, refrigerators, and other durable goods, and a number of new houses were constructed, including the Kinchion House, 1929 (702 S. Pearl) and the Potts House, 1929 (445 N. Wall). During the 20s, the Ku Klux Klan also became active again in Belton politics. Klan meetings at the old county fairgrounds midway between Belton and Temple drew large numbers, and Klan members rode openly, robed and hooded, in Belton's annual Fourth of July parades (Limmer 1988: 101).

**BELTON SINCE 1930**

Cotton remained the county's most important crop in the late teens and 20s, and the amount of cropland devoted to cotton continued to increase during the period. But by the mid-1920s the cotton industry was beginning to decline due to the combined effects of soil depletion, overproduction, and the influx of the boll weevil (Connor and Odintz: 12). The situation of the county's cotton farmers was further worsened by the onset of the Great Depression. An unusually large percentage of the county's farms--fully 68%--was worked by tenants, and the decline of cotton and the overall poor economic prospects of the early 30s drove



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 13

---

many tenant farmers off the land. The population of the county as a whole dropped from 50,030 in 1930 to 44,863 in 1940 as many farmers and other residents sought work elsewhere (U.S. Census 1930-1940, Connor and Odintz: 13). Of the farmers who remained on the land, many stopped growing cotton and turned to livestock and poultry. Between 1930 and 1940 the amount of land cultivated in cotton dropped by more than half, and cotton production declined from 57,574 bales to 30,435.

Belton itself was also profoundly affected by the economic changes of the 30s. Most of the town's industries and merchants were directly or indirectly dependent on the region's cotton farmers for much of their trade, and the decline of the cotton industry coupled with the effects of the Depression forced many businesses to close or scale back their operations. Many residents, unable to find work, moved out of the city. The population of the town, which in 1928 had reached an all time high of approximately 6,500, dropped to 3,779 in 1931; and by 1941 the population stood at 3,572, only slightly more than half of what it had been only 13 years before (Texas Almanacs, 1928-1940).

Construction of new houses and businesses in Belton came to a virtual standstill at the height of the Depression in the early 30s. A few small buildings were built or renovated during the mid-1930s, but the construction industry as a whole did not recover until after World War II. Nonetheless, the town has several good surviving examples of the Art Deco and Streamlined Moderne styles popular during the Depression years. These include an Art Deco movie theater at 219 E. Central, and a small Streamlined commercial building at 206 N. Main.

Belton's economy began to slowly recover in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The number of businesses in the town dropped from 135 in 1931 to 120 in 1933. But by 1941, the number of business had grown to 155 (Texas Almanacs, 1931-1941). The steady transition of the county's agricultural economy from a cotton monoculture to a polyculture based on corn, sorghum, livestock, and poultry helped to fuel the recovery.

More important for Belton economy, however, was the establishment of the Camp Hood military base in 1942. Built as a training center for tank destroyer units, the new base encompassed much of the western half of the county. The base population expanded rapidly and by 1943 was home to more than 95,000 military personnel, civilian employees and dependents (Handbook of Texas). The nearby town of Killeen mushroomed, and within a few years had surpassed both Belton and Temple to become the largest town in the county. The construction of Camp Hood also spurred new growth in Belton. The rapid expansion of the base led to a severe housing shortage in the county during the mid-1940s. Many of the civilian construction workers and military families who had moved into the area, as well as those displaced by the establishment of the base, sought housing in Belton.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number E Page 14

---

A number of the town's large old houses were subdivided into apartments, and after the war many houses and rental properties were built, particularly in the area west and north of the town's center. The population of Belton grew from 3,572 in 1941 to an estimated 5,000 in 1945 (Texas Almanacs, 1941-1945), largely as a result of the establishment of Camp Hood, designated a permanent base as Fort Hood after the War.

After the war the rapid pace of growth continued. In 1952 Belton had reached a population of 6,244 and 210 businesses, and by 1962, the population had increased to 8,163. The construction of Interstate 35 just east of the town in the early 1960s prompted further growth, this time to the east and south. In recent years numerous fast food restaurants, gas stations and convenience stores have sprung up along South Main Street leading to the interstate, and along both sides of the access roads paralleling the freeway. Within the past decade North Main Street north of the downtown area where Highway 317 leads out of the city has also experienced some development, as has the southern section of the city along U.S. Highway 190 leading to Killeen.

The postwar prosperity, unfortunately, led to the destruction of a number of older downtown buildings, which were razed to make way for retail establishments and new city and county buildings. In addition, many of the older commercial structures have undergone renovations which have obscured or destroyed their original architectural features. Since the early 1980s, the process has been reversed and several downtown buildings have been restored.

By 1989, Belton had a ethnically diverse population of 11,904. Approximately 67% of the population was white, 17% black, and 12% Hispanic (Texas Almanac, 1989). The largest employers included the City of Belton, Bell County and the University of Mary Hardin Baylor.



---

**F. Associated Property Types**

---

I. Name of Property Type See text which begins with Continuation Sheet F-1.

II. Description

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

☒ See continuation sheet

---

☒ See continuation sheet for additional property types



---

### G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

---

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See text which begins with Continuation Sheet G-1.

☒ See continuation sheet

---

### H. Major Bibliographical References

---

See text which begins with Continuation Sheet H-1.

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- ☒ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency

- ☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Specify repository: Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas

---

### I. Form Prepared By

---

name/title Chris Long, Historian (with Tory Laughlin Taylor, Architectural Historian, THC)  
organization Texas Historical Commission date August 1990  
street & number P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station telephone 512/463-6094  
city or town Austin state TX zip code 78711



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 1

Outline of Property Types in Belton

1. COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
    - A. Italianate Derivation
    - B. Early 20th Century Commercial
    - C. Moderne and Art Deco Influenced
  2. INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS
  3. INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS
    - A. Vernacular Forms
    - B. Stylistic Designs
  4. RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS
    - A. Vernacular House Forms
    - B. Popular House Forms
    - C. Stylistic Designs
  5. INFRASTRUCTURE
- 
1. COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

**Description:**

Commercial buildings in Belton are downtown in the blocks surrounding the town's courthouse square. Most are 2 stories in height, but there are 1-story and 3-story buildings as well. The downtown lots are long and narrow in shape so commercial buildings almost invariably are rectangular in plan with party walls and a narrow facade fronting onto a major street. The buildings vary in depth and may occupy two or three lots with separate storefronts incorporated within one facade. Commercial buildings in Belton are usually load-bearing masonry construction; of limestone, brick, or stucco over masonry. Roofs are slightly pitched and concealed behind a parapet on the main facade. Typical detailing includes arched window openings, pilasters, fancy brickwork or pressed metal cornices, and cast iron storefront elements. Most of the buildings have a flat awning supported just beneath the transom windows of the storefront. A large percentage of the pre-1915 buildings have undergone storefront alterations since their construction, with large plate-glass windows and glass or tile cladding replacing the original wood, stone and/or iron storefronts.

Three sub-types of commercial buildings in Belton roughly correspond with different periods of construction. The **Italianate Derivation** commercial buildings were constructed during the Victorian era and include the earliest surviving commercial buildings in Belton from the 1870s, as well as some structures built as late as the 1910s. This sub-type is not easily defined stylistically, but the properties borrow details commonly associated with



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 2

---

Italianate or Renaissance Revival styles, applied to the established form of the 2-part commercial block. The Belton County Courthouse of 1876 (while classified as an **Institutional Building**) was built in the Northern Italian Renaissance Revival style and clearly influenced the details of the commercial structures built around it in the late 19th century. Buildings of Italianate Derivation have a very strong vertical orientation and tend to be taller than later 2-story structures around them. The verticality is reinforced by tall narrow windows, usually with round-head or segmental arched tops, and extended parapets, sometimes with ornate pressed-metal cornices. Other facade embellishments can include masonry pilasters, quoins and cast iron columns or pilasters. In Belton commercial buildings of this sub-type are often constructed of native limestone in ashlar or rubble stone with a stucco finish. Many later examples, however, are built of brick.

The **Early 20th Century Commercial** buildings are characterized by simpler facade finishes and a more boxy, less vertical form than the Italianate Derivation structures. Most commonly buildings of this sub-type are of brick, and 1-story versions are equally as common as 2-story. While some continue to use round-head or segmental arches, increasingly windows, doors and transom windows are set in flat-head openings. Often a decorative cornice is created with ornamental brickwork or a simple stepped parapet tops the facade. This sub-type also includes buildings of the 1910s and 1920s which begin to show the influence of Spanish Mission or Spanish Colonial revivals with simple facades and shaped parapets.

A few examples of **Art Deco or Moderne** commercial buildings exist in downtown Belton. Properties within this sub-type may be 1 or 2 stories but, like the Early 20th Century Commercial sub-type, have a more horizontal than vertical emphasis. They may be built of varying materials but are characterized by a smooth finish, most often achieved with stucco, and have very little depth to the facade. Windows are of varying shapes and mullion patterns and generally are set in the facade without moldings around them. Decoration on Art Deco or Moderne buildings is geometric: zigzag, chevron or diamond motifs are common. Original storefronts on this sub-type commonly have large plate-glass windows, aluminum sash and fixtures, and a smooth finish such as Carrerra Glass or tile.

**Significance:**

In Belton all commercial buildings nominated are in the Belton Commercial Historic District and share a common function and form which has survived through the town's history, therefore they "represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction" and are nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. As a group of buildings and the commercial, governmental and social center of the community, it can be assumed that the district is associated with events central to Belton's history and therefore meets Criterion A in the area of Commerce and Politics/Government.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 3

Individual commercial buildings may be nominated outside of the district if they embody the distinctive characteristics of a type or period of construction (Criterion C), they are associated with a particular event which influenced local history (Criterion A), or they are the building most closely associated with the productive life of an individual who influenced local history (Criterion B).

## Registration Requirements:

All of the commercial buildings currently being nominated fall within the Belton Commercial Historic District and, therefore, are evaluated for their contribution to the significance of the district as a distinguishable entity. In Belton, as in many evolutionary downtowns, commercial buildings have been subject to alterations during periods of growth or prosperity, in an attempt to emulate the standard of modernity of that period. Many of these alterations should now be considered "historic" in their own right for embodying a type of construction characteristic of a particular period. Other alterations than have not yet reached 50 years of age may be accepted as an inevitable byproduct of the town's evolution, so long as they do not obliterate the design characteristics of the historic building.

In Belton many non-historic alterations have been made and, therefore, the standard set for defining Contributing buildings within the district was not stringent. Contributing buildings must have been constructed prior to 1940 and have visibly retained the majority of their historic fabric and significant design elements. Historic buildings which may be intact but are concealed behind a modern facade or "slipcover" were defined as Noncontributing. "Significant design elements" were considered to include the cornice treatment, the upper-level and transom windows, the original facade finish, and any notable decorative elements. These were considered in balance against each other, such that if a building had lost its pressed-metal cornice, but other character-giving features remained intact, the building was defined as Contributing; however, if a building had lost its cornice and window configuration (through the bricking in of windows), it was defined as Noncontributing. Storefronts were excluded as a basis of judgement due to the very common practice of covering or replacing historic fronts with "modern" aluminum and glass display fronts. Many historic storefronts do survive in Belton, but the majority of Contributing buildings still show some degree of alteration at the ground level.

## 2. INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

### Description:

Historic industrial buildings in Belton are most commonly found on the eastern outskirts of the central business district or along Nolan Creek on the southern edge of downtown. Industrial buildings pre-dating World War I are often



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 4

---

on or near railroad lines and spurs, while those built since about 1920 are commonly located on or near major highway routes. Due to the utilitarian nature of industrial buildings, they do not share necessarily specific design characteristics. The plain 2-story rectangular plan building typical of a warehouse may be the most common form, but industrial buildings also can consist of a cluster of forms seemingly of arbitrary arrangement that respond to specific industrial functions. The industrial buildings currently nominated are of stone and brick construction, but frame construction with sheet metal cladding was also common, particularly in the 20th century. Elements which distinguish industrial buildings include oversized portals, raised loading docks, large chutes, elevators or conveyor belts for loading materials, and flat roofs. Stylistic features are rare but may subtly appear in the shape of portals, the design of eaves, or the form of parapets. Most of the historic industrial buildings in Belton (and both of this type currently nominated) were associated with the cotton processing industry.

**Significance:**

Industrial buildings are by their nature distinct entities with specific functions so they would not normally be nominated as part of a district. The buildings currently nominated under this property type are both associated with the cotton processing industry which was a significant sector of Belton's economy from the 1870s to the 1930s; therefore, the buildings are eligible under Criterion A in the area of Agriculture for their association with important industries in the town's history. Industrial buildings can also be eligible under Criterion C in the area of Industry or Engineering as examples of a type of construction responding to specific historical needs. They also may be eligible under Criterion B if associated with the productive life of a historically significant individual, or under Criterion D if they are an example of a construction type or include machinery that may yield historical information about the industry.

**Registration Requirements:**

To be eligible for National Register listing industrial buildings should maintain integrity from their period of significance to a substantial degree. The period of significance in this case would be defined as the period during which the facility remained in operation in its historic function, up to 1940. Characteristically an industrial building would have undergone alterations during its operating history in response to new technology and changing need, and such alterations that occur within the period of significance should be considered integral parts of the historic property. Alterations that have occurred since 1940 but within the working life of the building should be assessed based on the degree to which they obscure the historic design and function of the property. For instance, if all loading docks and industry-specific equipment are removed



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 5

from a manufacturing plant for its conversion to a commercial building then it would no longer be eligible for listing under Criterion C. However, if a part of a cotton gin is reclad with metal siding replacing similar historic siding and a small office addition is made following the pattern of earlier additions, this would not jeopardize the building's eligibility.

3. INSTITUTIONAL BUILDINGS

**Description:**

Institutional buildings are generally scattered throughout the neighborhoods of the city but may be built in concentrations, such as in a campus setting or clustered around a prominent downtown intersection. The majority of institutional buildings in Belton are public buildings within the Belton Commercial Historic District or educational buildings comprising the Baylor Female College Historic District. This property type includes churches, government buildings, libraries, and school buildings. Given the variety of facilities that fall within this classification there are few generalizations that define the type, but commonly institutional buildings are quite large in comparison to surrounding commercial buildings or residences, free-standing on a prominent lot, and formal in plan. Ashlar limestone or brick was usually used in Belton institutional buildings, evoking a sense of permanence, but wood frame construction was sometimes used in churches or community buildings.

Two sub-types of institutional buildings in Belton are classified based on the provenance of their architectural design. The majority of the buildings are of **Stylistic Designs**, usually designed by an architect and clearly incorporating elements of recognizable architectural styles. Classical forms are the strongest common design motif for public buildings; most surviving public buildings date from the early 20th century when the Classical Revival style was widely embraced, and traditionally classical design has symbolized high moral ideals. Classical forms appear also in derivative architectural styles such as Renaissance Revival, Georgian Revival, and Beaux Arts buildings, while abstracted classical forms are heavily used in modernistic architecture. All of the Belton buildings currently being nominated under this property sub-type are of classical derivation in design. They are 2 or 3 stories in height with formal massing and symmetrical fenestration patterns. All of the buildings use columns or pilasters around entries and several have pedimented porticoes as the focus of the facade. Round- and segmental-arch window and door openings are often used, particularly in the Renaissance and Georgian Revival styles. Almost all institutional buildings of stylistic designs are built in stone or brick.

The second sub-type within this category is defined as **Vernacular Forms** and is not commonly found, except in churches and small community buildings; only one



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 6

Belton property currently nominated falls in this sub-type. These forms are distinguished from institutional buildings of stylistic designs by their simpler elements, adorned (if at all) by naive stylistic detailing. The buildings generally adopt locally established building forms and materials, and are likely to be of less expensive construction: wood frame, stucco or brick rather than ashlar stone.

**Significance:**

Institutional buildings are most likely to be eligible for listing under both Criteria A and C. Due to their inherent public roles as governmental, educational or community foci they are often associated with events significant in local history. Their very construction may indeed have been an important event within the economic and social history of the community. Furthermore, institutional buildings are usually among the architectural landmarks in a community. A town's resources and pride were concentrated on such buildings, an architect (sometimes quite prominent) was involved, and the result was often a structure of unusual architectural sophistication for its setting. Although possible, it is not likely that an institutional building would be nominated for listing under Criteria B or D. While many institutional buildings would certainly qualify for individual listing, they commonly occur in concentrations, such as in a prominent downtown location or on a campus; therefore, they are often listed within a historic district. Churches nominated under this property type must meet Criteria Consideration A and be significant primarily for their design or historic associations.

**Registration Requirements:**

Institutional buildings are more likely to retain their original function than other property types, due to the endurance of public institutions, therefore they are somewhat more likely to retain their architectural integrity as well. As noted above, institutional buildings are frequently the most sophisticated architectural designs in a community and therefore can be severely compromised by any alteration. Consequently, the registration requirements for this property type are fairly stringent. All significant architectural features should be intact and the building should be substantially in the condition it was during the period of significance. It can be anticipated that some alteration of doors and windows will occur, but such change should not noticeably alter the overall image of the building for the property to remain eligible for listing. Additions to institutional buildings should meet the same standard; if an unsympathetic addition significantly alters the visual message of the building, particularly from the main facade, then the building shall not be eligible for listing.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 7

---

4. RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

**Description:**

Historic residential buildings are clustered in neighborhoods mostly north and northwest of downtown Belton, and all of the currently nominated properties in this category are single-family houses. The scale of Belton houses is modest; they are rarely more than 2 stories in height, but large lots with outbuildings give a spaciousness to the neighborhoods. Due to the evolutionary development of Belton's historic neighborhoods, no consistent pattern of lot sizes and buildings setbacks is evident. The majority of residential buildings are of wood construction. Limestone was also commonly used for 19th century houses and brick was a frequent building material from the late 19th century on. The form of residences varies considerably depending on their period and style of construction, although familiar house plans and roof forms recur frequently in Belton.

The residential building property type is divided into three sub-types based on the probable provenance of the building's design: **Vernacular Forms** based on culturally established or traditional building forms; **Popular Forms** based on broadly marketed designs and materials; and **Stylistic Designs** reflecting a sophisticated interpretation of an established architectural style. **Vernacular Forms** can take on a variety of decorative influences, but usually are based on one of a few established house forms which tended to be replicated during the settlement period of a town or region. Vernacular houses in Belton date from the 1870s through 1900, generally preceding the influence of mass-produced materials and popular house plans which came into vogue after the railroads and increased settlement brought the town into closer contact with the nation. Vernacular houses tend to be small and utilitarian in plan. All the nominated vernacular houses in Belton take either a center passage or L-plan form, reflecting the most common 19th-century Texas house types.

The center passage house is defined by a floor plan of equally-sized main rooms flanking a central hall. This form is most broadly recognized as the Greek Revival style for the common porch treatment of columns supporting a simple entablature. Center passage houses may be 1 or 2 stories with a side-gabled roof, and these houses often evolved with additional rooms added beneath a shed-roofed extension to the rear. The earliest surviving Belton houses fall in this category. They often were built of native limestone, though wood frame construction is equally common. The porches were sometimes changed in later years to reflect evolving tastes.

The L-plan house is an asymmetric descendant of the center passage house which was broadly built during the Victorian era. One of the main rooms (usually



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 8

---

to the left of the entrance) is brought forward creating an L-shaped plan, and additional rooms are fit in behind. The porch fills the area within the elbow of the wings. L-plan houses are predominately of frame construction with an intersecting gabled roof and are 1 story in height, though a 2-story version is currently nominated in Belton. Due to their late-19th century popularity, L-plan houses are frequently decorated with jigsawn and turned wood trim which was readily available from lumber yards. Therefore, it is often difficult to distinguish between vernacular and popular house types during this period when mass-marketed materials were beginning to be applied to traditional house forms.

The **Popular Form** houses in Belton date from after 1890 when the combination of the railroad's transportation and communication link, the availability of non-local materials, and the increasing sophistication of the townspeople encouraged the building of houses which reflected a national standard of domestic taste. Included among this definition of popular house forms are variations on vernacular buildings that rely heavily on premanufactured materials (particularly Eastlake-style milled trim) or show a variation in plan or roof form that suggests the influence of a pattern book in their design. After 1900 middle-class houses were increasingly built on the models of patternbooks and widely available house plans promoted by contractors or marketed through lumberyards, along with the construction materials to build them. While the popular house forms of the late 19th century were generally embellished versions of the L-plan or other vernacular forms, in the 20th century the houses took new forms emulating architectural developments popularized across the country.

The two dominant popular house forms of the early 20th century were the **foursquare** and the **bungalow**, both of which were a response to changing tastes and domestic conditions. These house types were distinguished by their plans that responded to modern ideas of efficiency and comfort. Halls were minimized; rooms flowed one into the next with entry made off of a generous porch directly into the living room. The protective porch in essence replaced the function of the central hall as anteroom, providing the transition between outdoors and the family spaces within. The foursquare, as its name implies, maintained a somewhat formal plan of four rooms of roughly equal proportions, while the bungalow deserted symmetry for a more pragmatic arrangement of spaces.

The foursquare and bungalow forms were adapted to a variety of stylistic influences, therefore it is the plan and basic form that distinguish them. The foursquare house is usually 2 stories, blocky in form, with a hipped roof broken by a central dormer and a 1-story porch dominating the main facade. It most often took its details from Colonial Revival styles, Prairie School or Arts & Crafts influences. Foursquares were built in a variety of materials but wood frame construction remained the most common. Interestingly, only one foursquare house currently nominated takes the traditional 2-story form. In Belton a 1-



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 9

---

story version, closely related to the bungalow, was more common and most of the nominated houses of this type take the latter form.

The bungalow is a 1- to 1 1/2-story house most often with an intersecting gable roof and an asymmetrical porch contained beneath an end gable. Distinguishing features included stocky porch piers and columns, open eaves with decorative brackets or rafter ends, and battered skirting around the foundation. Bungalows were built of wood, brick or stone, but wood frame construction was most common, often combined with brick or stone in the chimney, foundation and porch. The strongest design influence was of the Arts & Crafts style, but the basic bungalow form was also adapted with popular revival style details, particularly after World War I. Currently nominated bungalows in Belton generally follow a subdued Arts & Crafts influence.

**Stylistic Designs** is the third defined sub-type of residential buildings in Belton. Like the institutional buildings of stylistic designs discussed above, these houses were usually individually designed and clearly incorporate elements of recognizable architectural styles. These buildings tend to be larger than their vernacular or popular form counterparts, but still rarely exceed 2 stories. In plan they echo the accepted forms of their contemporary vernacular of popular house types. They are most likely to be built of ashlar stone or brick. In Belton the Second Empire and Italianate styles of the late 19th century are best represented.

**Significance:**

In Belton all residential buildings are nominated individually and are eligible for listing under Criterion C for embodying "the distinctive characteristics of a type, period of method of construction." These buildings represent the evolution of local patterns of construction from the 1870s through the 1920s. Many are products of boom periods in Belton's history and therefore relate contextually to local historical trends such as the economic stimulus of ranching and cotton processing. However, since they are not directly related to significant historical events, they are not nominated under Criterion A. Occasionally a house will be nominated under Criterion B for its association with an individual significant in local history if no other building survives to better represent that individual's productive life.

**Registration Requirements:**

Residential buildings are evaluated for listing based on their architectural integrity as a good local example of their type. Since all residential buildings are being nominated individually under Criterion C, a fairly rigorous standard of integrity is applied. It can be anticipated that



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 10

alterations may have been made to a house to reflect changes in architectural fashion and that such changes may convey significant historical information themselves; however, any such changes should date from the period of significance of the property. Any significant alterations that occur after the period of significance may be grounds for ineligibility. Houses should essentially retain their historical form and fabric, including original windows, doors and major exterior detailing. While houses will inevitably deteriorate somewhat over time, repairs and maintenance should be sympathetically accomplished; the replacement of any of the above elements with like components should not disqualify the building from listing so long as the architectural fabric of the building as a whole is substantially original. The application of incompatible screens or storm windows may distort the appearance of the historic windows beneath, but such screens should be considered temporary alterations and should not disqualify the house for listing as long as the original windows remain intact. Additions to houses must be considered for their visual impact on the historic structure, particularly as viewed from the street; if the character of the building is noticeably altered then the property should not be nominated.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE

**Description:**

This final property type includes the broadest variety of structures, having in common only that each serves a function related to the provision of services or transportation to the City of Belton. Although only three properties are currently nominated under this category, the property type can include any building, structure or object which was historically a part of the railway system, the roads and streets network, any public transportation system, or that played a part in providing public services such as water, power and fire protection to the people of Belton. Infrastructure properties are, by their nature, spread throughout the city wherever services are provided. Few generalizations can be made to describe such a disparate group of properties, except that these structures and buildings respond first to the engineering requirements of their function and second to the ideals of architectural design.

**Significance:**

Infrastructure properties are scattered throughout the city and, while they may be located in a district, do not generally relate directly to the significance of that district, therefore most are nominated individually. They are eligible for listing under Criterion A for their association with the establishment of the service which they represent and its importance in the history of Belton. They may also be eligible under Criterion C if they are distinctive examples of a particular type of construction or represent a notable engineering accomplishment. Conceivably infrastructure properties may also be



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number F Page 11

---

eligible under Criterion D if they are a surviving example of a type of construction about which we know little.

**Registration Requirements:**

Since there is no comparative basis for evaluating infrastructure properties, their integrity can only be judged based on the structure's historical integrity. While the continued practical functioning of these properties often results in alterations, it must be taken into consideration that their significance is based on their accurate representation of a historic system, therefore registration requirements should be fairly stringent. While secondary elements (such as the pedestrian railings on a truss bridge) may be changed without disqualifying the property for listing, the principal structure should maintain its historic appearance. To the average viewer the property should appear as it did during its period of significance.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   G   Page   1  

---

**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

In 1984 Victor & Victor Consultants, Inc., was awarded a contract to complete a comprehensive historic site survey and a National Register Multiple Resource Nomination for Belton, Texas, in cooperation with the Texas Historical Commission and the City of Belton.

The boundaries of the historic site survey were defined by the city limits of Belton. A windshield survey was conducted of the city during which 704 sites were identified that were believed to be approximately 50 years of age or older. The addresses of these sites were recorded on Texas Historical Commission survey cards and the properties were prioritized for further research. Additional historic sites that were missed in the windshield survey but identified through research were included in the survey. The location of each site was plotted on a City of Belton plat map. This survey work was conducted between January and April of 1985.

The contractor used information gathered through the survey as the basis for further research that identified the properties to be included in the National Register nomination. Oral interviews, secondary resource review and archival research were conducted in Belton and Austin between March and June of 1985. Based on this work the contractor drafted a National Register Multiple Resource nomination that identified two historic districts and 54 individual properties for listing. These properties were presented to the Texas State Board of Review at its meeting on July 12, 1986. A number of the individual properties were rejected or tabled, and ultimately were not recommended for nomination.

A final draft of the Multiple Resource nomination was never satisfactorily completed before the adoption of new National Register standards which introduced the Multiple Property nomination format. In the fall of 1989 Texas Historical Commission staff began revising the draft nomination for submittal as a Multiple Property nomination. Further research was conducted for the development of a historic context for the city of Belton and a site visit was made to update and confirm information on the nominated properties. One historic context was developed under the theme of Community Development to encompass the varied forces on Belton's history and the variety of properties being nominated. Major economic influences on the town's development were addressed under subheadings of the Context Statement. The completed document nominates two historic districts and 38 individual properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number H Page 1

H. Bibliography

A Memorial and Biographical History of McLennan, Falls, Bell, and Coryell Counties, Texas. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1893.

"Ancient Free and Accepted Masonry and Its Spread in Bell County, Texas." Texas Lodge of Research, (1962-64): 287-295.

Atkinson, Bertha. The History of Bell County, Texas. M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1929; publ. [Belton?, Texas]: Bell County Historical Society, 1970.

Austin American. July 11, 1973.

Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin.  
Newspaper clippings files.

Belton Journal. April 6, 1950 (Special Centennial Issue); October 5, 1989.

Belton Journal-Reporter. Belton Illustrated. [Belton?, Texas], 1900; rpt. Bell County Historical Commission, 1983.

"Belton, The Comeback City." Texas Parade 14 (November 1983): 17.

Blumenson, John, J. G. Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945. Nashville:  
American Association for State and Local History, 1977.

Clements, John. Flying the Colors. Dallas: Clements Research, Inc., 1984.

Connor, Seymour V. and Mark Odintz. "Bell County." unpubl. manuscript for the forthcoming revised edition of The Handbook of Texas. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, [n.d.]

Creswell, Gillian Embree. "The Belton Fire in 1879." Frontier Times 17, no. 9 (June 1940): 369-72.

Deaton, Charles. Texas Postal History Handbook. Houston, 1981.

James, Eleanor. From Her Portals: The First 100 Years in Belton: Mary Hardin Baylor. Belton, Texas: University of Mary Hardin Baylor Press, 1986.

Johnson, Melissa. "The Sanctified Sisters." Texas Historian 35, no. 2 (November 1974): 2ff.

Kelley, Dayton. "More Railroads for Bell County, 1885-1910." Texana 6, no. 4: 328ff.

Killeen Herald. April 23, 1989.

Lewis, Oscar. On the Edge of the Black Waxy: A Cultural Survey of Bell County, Texas. Saint Louis: Washington University Press, 1948.

Limmer, E. A. Jr., ed. Story of Bell County, Texas. 2 vols. Austin: Eakin Press/Bell County Historical Commission, 1988.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number H Page 2

One Hundred Years of Methodism in Belton, Texas. 1850-1950. [Belton?, Texas], 1950.

Ozment, Robert. "Bell County Farmer's Struggle with the Depression." East Texas Historical Journal 7 (October 1969): 11-123.

Reed, S. G. A History of the Texas Railroads. Houston: St. Clair Publishing, 1947.

Robinson, Willard B. The People's Architecture. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983.

Russell, F. B. "Archeology in Bell County." Central Texas Archeologist 2 (1936).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1885-1926.

Sorrow, William M. et al. Excavations at Stillhouse Hollow Reservoir, Texas. Texas Archeological Salvage Project, Miscellaneous Papers No. 11. Austin, 1967.

Temple Daily Telegram. April 17, 1936 (Special Centennial Edition); April 23, 1989; May 6, 1989.

Texas Almanac, 1904-1991.

Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation. Texas Travel Handbook. Austin, n.d.

Texas Historical Commission. Marker files.

Texas State Gazetteer and Business Directory. St. Louis: R. L. Polk & Co., 1884-1914.

Tyler, George W. The History of Bell County. San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1936.

United States Bureau of the Census. Census Reports 1860-1980.

Whiffin, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1969.

"Women in Community: The Belton's Woman's Commonwealth." Texas Journal 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 10ff.

Work Projects Administration. Texas: A Guide to the Lone Star State. New York: Hastings House, 1940.

Webb, Walter Prescott and H. Bailey Carroll, eds. Handbook of Texas. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1952; Supplement, 1976.

Zlatkovich, Charles P. Texas Railroads: A Record of Construction and Abandonment. Austin: Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas at Austin and Texas State Historical Association, 1981.



11/14/90

10/20/10  
12/1/10



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

Belton MPS

Bell County, TEXAS

Date Listed

- |   |                           |                 |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 22. Harris, Capt. Andrew Jackson, House                           | <u>Substantive Review</u> | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 23. House at 402 N. East St.                                      |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 24. House at 730 N. Beal St.                                      | <u>Substantive Review</u> | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 25. Hudson, Dr. Taylor, House                                     |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 26. James House   |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 27. Kinchion, L. B., House  |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 28. Lee, Walter J., House   |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 29. McWhirter, George and Martha, House                           |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 30. Means, V. R., House   |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 31. Miller, J. I., House  |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 32. Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad Bridge at<br>the Leon River | <u>Substantive Review</u> | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 33. Morey House   |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 34. Mount Zion United Methodist Church                            |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 35. Naismith, Robert, House                                       |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 36. Potts, Arthur, House  |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 37. Venable, W. J., House   |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |
| 38. Ware, H. A. and Helena, House                                 |                           | <u>12/26/90</u> |



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Belton MPS

Bell County  
TEXASWorking No. 11-14-90

Fed. Reg. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Due: 12/29/90Action: ☒ ACCEPT 12/26/90☐ RETURN☐ REJECT

Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ resubmission  
☐ nomination by person or local government  
☐ owner objection  
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments: *This cover document is another fine example of the Texas SHPO's facility in organizing a town's history around the community development theme. The historic context traces Belton's development from a cattle town through the cotton period to its diversified economic base of the 1940s. The registration requirements for the various property types appear to be too restrictively drawn around integrity considerations rather than associative values, but are adequate for the purpose of National Register nominations.*

Recom./Criteria Accept / A+CReviewer Antonio G. LeeDiscipline HistoryDate 12/26/90

\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☐ technical corrections cited below  
☐ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- |                                    |                                       |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | Check one                          | Check one                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good      | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> original site    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    | <input type="checkbox"/> altered   | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ alterations/integrity  
☐ dates  
☐ boundary selection



---

## 8. Significance

Period      Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates      Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

---

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

---

### 11. Form Prepared By

---

### 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

---

### 13. Other

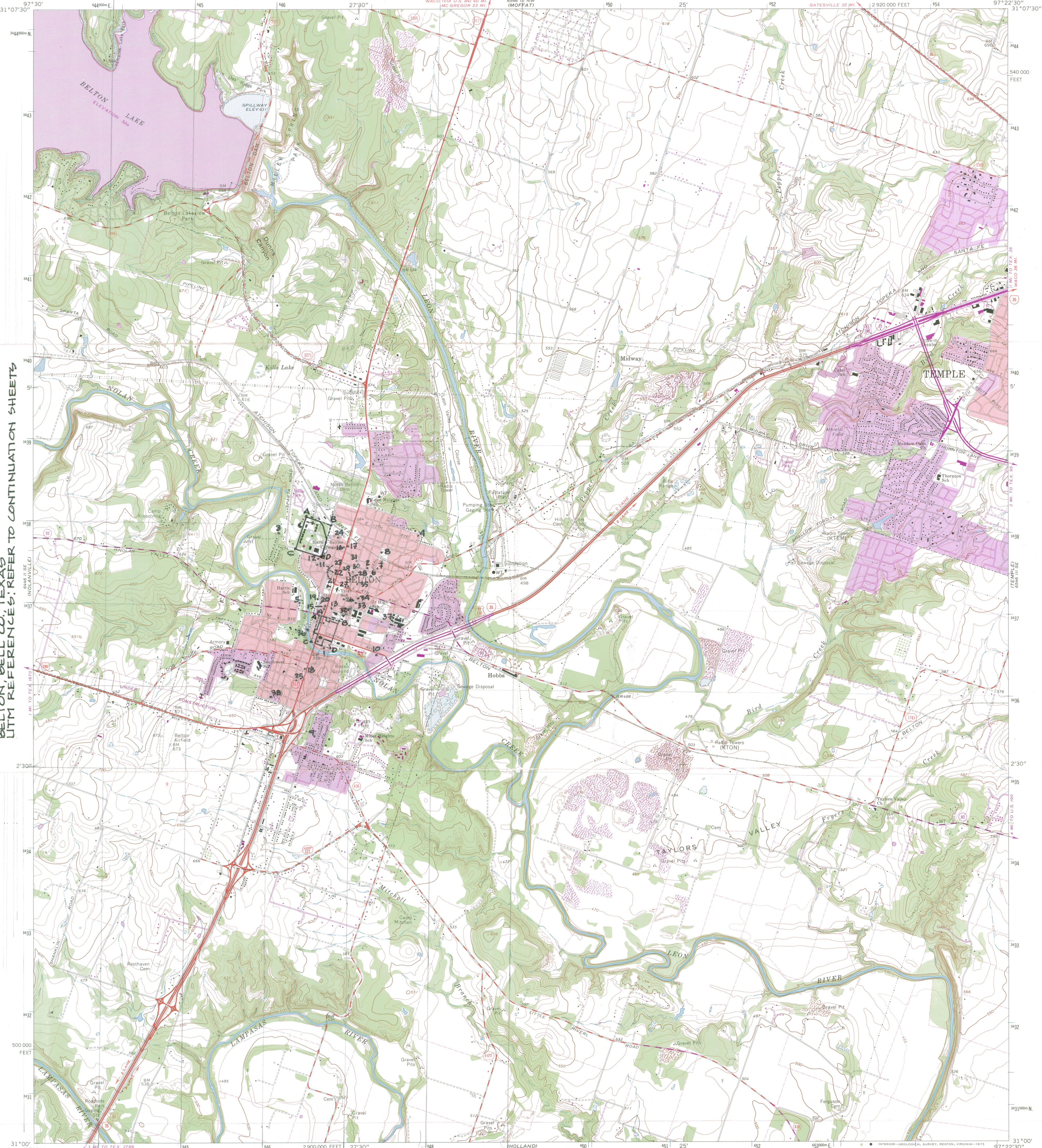
- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

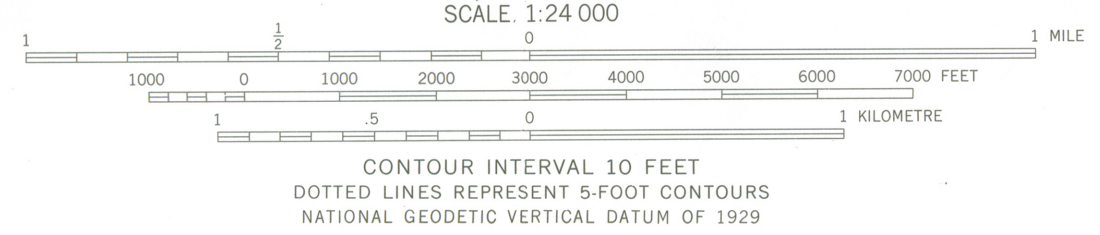
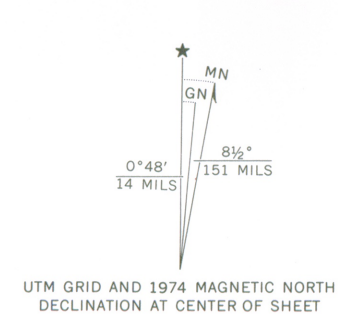
*Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet*





HISTORIC & ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES OF BELTON, TEXAS  
BELTON, BELL CO., TEXAS  
UTM REFERENCES: REFER TO CONTINUATION SHEETS

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and USCE  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1964. Field checked 1965  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system,  
central zone  
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 14, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines  
Areas covered by dashed light-blue pattern are subject to  
controlled inundation  
Revisions shown in purple compiled aerial photographs  
taken 1974. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

3197-122

BELTON, TEX.  
N3100—W9722.5/7.5

1965  
PHOTOREVISED 1974  
AMS 6546 III SW—SERIES V882