



The History & Culture Of Winnsboro, Texas

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Winnsboro, Texas History & Culture

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The historical, old-fashioned town of Winnsboro is located in the beautifully forested area, known as the “Lakes Country” of the piney woods in the upper east corner of Texas. It’s crossroads centers at the intersection of two designated Texas Forest Trails, Texas State Highways 11 and SH 37.

The land where the Winnsboro is located was first surveyed in 1835, by Gray B. King and carved from the State of Coahuila and Texas, then a state under the Mexican government. The location is astride the boundary between the Louisiana Territory and Old Mexico and equidistant from Dallas, Shreveport, and Texarkana.

Logistically, Winnsboro is about 75 miles from the outer edge of DFW and 90 miles from downtown Big D, and halfway between Interstates

20 and 30. Most of the city canvases the upper section of Wood County, with portions of the city limit also in Franklin and Hopkins Counties.

Winnsboro is rich in varied historical and old-fashioned accounts from the days of the Caddo Indians to the French settlements and the wild logging era to the notorious visits of outlaws Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow.

The first settlers, John E. Winn and W.R. McMillan, came to area prior to 1854. They came through an area known as the "Crossroads", the original name of the town, and were attracted to the rich land on the edge of the pine woods region of East Texas. There, the men purchased 351 acres in the Gray B. King tract. They opened the first post office in 1855, along with their mercantile business. "Uncle Henry" Robinson built McMillan's house, the first in Winnsboro. It was located near the northeast corner of the crossroads.

The United States Post Office was established 6 March 1855, and W.R. McMillan

was the first postmaster, and the office ran until 7 February 1868, and later re-opened and re-established on 25 June 1874. During the time the town had no post office, citizens got their mail in either the communities of Webster or Cornersville, a short two-miles distance to the east. Some historians report that area was known to have rich deposits of clay for making pottery by the earlier Indians who inhabited the area.

In 1876, Mrs. Ophelia Cook conveyed 100 acres of land interest and 200 foot of right away near the Crossroads to the East Line and Red River Railroad Company. People in Webster and Cornersville began their move to Winnsborough with the coming of the railroad. In 1878, the name of the town was changed to Winnsboro. John R. Wright was appointed post master on 16 September 1893,

Another historical record also indicates the town was first named “Crossroads” and then later named in 1854 after the town’s founder, John E.

Winn. It is also told that the original spelling of the official town name, Winnsborough, was changed because the newspaper masthead did not have the space to print the long name.

The official town historian, Bill Jones, writes periodic columns in the town's historic newspaper, the Winnsboro News.

Today's Winnsboro has kept that small hometown feeling and is ever growing in warmth and charm. When you visit historic downtown Winnsboro, you will feel like you have stepped back in time with an edge of modern day culture and retail. Most of the buildings were built in the late 1800's to the early 1900's.

In 2003, Winnsboro was designated a Texas Historical Commission's Main Street City. Building owners continue each year with various restoration and improvements projects to the buildings, streets and sidewalks in order to preserve the historical significance, and to invigorate local and tourist commerce.

The renovated Union Pacific historic train depot is owned by the city, and currently houses the local Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, the city's Economic Development office, and a community room available for rent for meeting and small gatherings.

Directly across from the Old Depot is Market Street, also historically known as the Bowery. This one-block-long street runs parallel to Main Street (Hwy 37) and contains a vivid and colorful history! While Main Street was about business, Market Street was about entertainment and leisure during the saloon era of the late 1800s. Bowery Street was the entertainment destination of the workers from the 30-plus sawmills in the area at that time, plus the merchants who operated here, and travelers moving westward. Bowery Street housed saloons that had a reputation for gambling tables, loose women, baths, barbers and shoe shines. Horse drawn taxis would often line the streets, waiting to whisk the boys out of town to

the outlying girlie houses. With this teeming atmosphere and mix of rowdiness, Texas-style shoot-outs were often common back during those days.

Today, Market Street is home to a variety of retail stores, restaurant, coffee shop, the local radio station KWNS and the Winnsboro Center for the Arts (WCA). The WCA is a non-profit organization devoted to promoting, exhibiting, and professionally teaching the arts to all ages including drama, dance, writing, painting, and music. WCA has produced numerous plays, many concerts of varied musical taste, and art exhibits. The building where the WCA calls home completed extensive renovations in early 2014, and is featured as part of nationally recognized Winnsboro's Main Street Program.

The Andrews Building, built in 1901, has been completely renovated and houses a local restaurant and pub. Many of the older buildings in downtown Winnsboro still contain the walk in

safes from the late 1800s and early 1900s. The downtown area has antique and consignments shops, flower and gift shops, Christian book store, jewelry stores, a day spa, art gallery. An old movie theatre, converted to a one-time restaurant on Main Street was purchased in 2014, and renovation is expected in the near future.

In the 1930's, legendary bank robbers and southern terrorists Bonnie and Clyde would be known to visit Winnsboro frequently and eat at a local café on Main Street (now a CPA's office). It is recorded that at this café, the two renegades ate their last breakfast before heading into the history books. The Texas Rangers near Marshall and a Louisiana police posse, caught up with them two days later near Sailes, Louisiana in an ambush that killed the two outlaws in a historic gunfight.

Surrounded by beautiful lakes and forests, the natural scenery is there for us year-round. Lake Winnsboro, Lake Cypress Springs, Lake Bob Sandlin and State Park, Lake Monticello, Lake

Quitman, and world- famous Lake Fork are at Winnsboro’s back doorstep as an outdoor paradise venues for playing, recreation and sporting. For bird watching, photography, golf, fishing, nature walks, hiking, biking, horseback, hunting, or tour bus...the network of the excellent paved farm roads take us in any direction to wonderful clean-air vistas that are picture perfect.

For many small communities, Spring often signals an active calendar for area citizens. Through out the year, festivals and annual activities include the following features.

- Autumn Trails events all month long in October
- Winnsboro Center for the Arts with live performances, concerts and plays and static exhibits
- WCA’s “Starry Starry Night” art dinner
- Animal Shelter Spring Garage Sale

- American Legion Memorial Day honors, VFW Post
- Civic clubs, including Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis and the Pilot Club
- Independence Day, fireworks
- The Fine Arts Market
- Art Classes & Clubs
- Book Reading Clubs
- Photography Club
- Rodeo
- Fishing Tournaments
- Christmas parade
- Agriculture, including Winnsboro Rodeo, FHA, Hay Show, Fishing Club, Guided Hunts and tours

Winnsboro's famous Autumn Trails has been going strong now for over 56 years celebrating each October with a month of activities. The Pageant and Coronation of Queen

Autumn Trails is always a favorite. There's also an Antique Tractor Show, horse and wagon Trail Ride, Trade Days and Swap Meet, and one of the largest Antique/Classic Car Rally's in Texas included.

In addition to the breathtaking beauty of the changing of the fall foliage, there are thousands of horsemen, campouts, cookouts and rodeos to keep citizens in touch with their rural heritage. Visitors come from miles around to enjoy the magnificent scenery as well as the fun and festivities. October offers something for everyone.

Winnsboro celebrates the Holiday Season during the entire month of December beginning with a Christmas parade. Floats and Santa put visions of sugarplums in the minds of all the little ones. Part of Winnsboro growth can be attributed to local industry, which includes the largest butter-making plant in the United States, Keller's Creamery, Inc., an international freight forwarding company, Team Worldwide, Inc., a leading wiring

bundle manufacturer, USA Harness, Inc., a minimum security substance abuse TDCJ facility, The Clyde Johnston Unit, the citizen-friendly Ozarka Water Bottling Plant (only a short 20 minute drive), and The Trinity Mother Francis / CHRISTUS Hospital of Winnsboro, a 50 –bed modern medical facility serving many counties and operated by Texas Health Resources. Larger employers include the Winnsboro Independent School District, Team Worldwide, Elder care (including Whispering Pines, Trinity Mission and Autumn Wind), USA Harness, HarborFab, Winnsboro Hardware, Foxworth Galbraith, the City, local and area Utility companies, banking (4 banks), and medical-related entities (clinics, doctors, home health and hospice) and churches. For trade schools, there is a good student population at the local beauty school.

The surrounding area of Winnsboro is a state leader in agriculture featuring state-of-the-art dairy farms, beef cattle ranches, poultry-growing

facilities, timber production, plant nurseries, and a variety of cash crops nourished by the fertile sandy loam topsoil. Winnsboro is geographically located in three counties, mostly in Wood, but also in parts of Hopkins and Franklin counties, Texas.

CITIES, TOWNS, COMMUNITIES AND UNINCORPORATED AREAS

Quitman is the county seat. Located within the county are the incorporated cities of Alba, Hawkins, Mineola, Quitman, Winnsboro, and Yantis. The outlying areas of Wood County include major developments at Holly Lake Ranch in the eastern portion of the county and Lake Fork Reservoir which is home to over 42,000 Wood County residents in 723 square miles.

Actual Pop.	COUNTY Census Census 2010 Divisions		TRADE AREA (CCD) Population Radius	
Alba:	504	4,448	3,270	4 miles
Hawkins	1,278	8,406	8,417	7 miles
Mineola	4,515	9,939	15,025	8 miles
Quitman	1,809	11,100	9,074	7 miles
Winnsboro	3,434	8,071	19,614	12 miles
Yantis	388	tbd	2,143	4 miles

Holly Lake Ranch 2,774 tbd tbd
unincorporated

Trade Area Radius/Trade Area Population based on 2010 Census Data and 2010 ScanUS estimates.

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

WOOD COUNTY SETTLEMENT, HISTORY AND HERITAGE

In 1850, Wood County was created from Van Zandt County by an act of the Texas Legislature. The county was named for George T. Wood, a native of Georgia, who became Texas' second Governor in 1847. Some early settlements in the county were Mineola, Webster, Perryville, and Redland.

Geographic Location and Topography

Wood County is in the central part of northeastern Texas. The total area of the county is 445,402 acres, or about 696 square miles. Of this total, 25,863 acres is areas of water more than 40 acres in size.

Elevations range from about 285 feet above mean sea level on the Sabine River flood plain in the southeastern part of the county to about 640 feet in the east-central part. Wood County is

in the East Texas Timberlands, which is a part of the Western Coastal Plain Major Land Resource Area.

The topography of the county is nearly level to steep. The drainage pattern is well defined, and many streams dissect the county. Nearly all the streams flow in a southeasterly direction to the Sabine River. Most all (97%) of Wood County is in the Sabine River watershed except for a small area in the extreme northeastern part.

Lake Fork Creek and Big Sandy Creek are major drainage-ways through Wood County. The Sabine River forms the southern boundary. Wood County is joined on the west by Rains County, on the southwest by Van Zandt County, on the east by Camp and Upshur Counties, and on the north by Hopkins and Franklin Counties.

The soils of the county formed mostly under forest vegetation. Those on uplands are light colored and sandy or loamy, and in unprotected sloping areas, they are subject to water erosion. The soils on flood plains are loamy or clayey.

LAND

Soil is the most important natural resource in Wood County. The livelihood of many people in the county depends on the ability of the soil to produce timber, forage for livestock, and cultivated crops. Oil and gas also are valuable natural resources

in the county. The numerous oil and gas wells are sources of income for many landowners. Exploring for oil and gas, drilling, and servicing provide many jobs in the survey area. Sand and gravel are mined in the county. Sand is mined from thick beds, mainly north of Hawkins in the southeastern part of the county. Gravel is obtained from the surface mining of gravelly soils throughout the county. The sand and gravel are used mainly in construction.

Water, fish, and wildlife are important natural resources in Wood County. Lake Fork Reservoir, Lake Winnsboro, Lake Quitman, Lake Hawkins, Lake Holbrook, and many smaller private lakes and ponds provide abundant water for recreational activities and for domestic, industrial, and agricultural uses.