



City of Winnsboro

Winnsboro Economic Development Corporation

City's Economic Development: 100 East Broadway, Suite D, Winnsboro, Texas 75494

Cell 903-850-1661 | Office 903-342-6175

City Hall (Mailing Address): 501 South Main Street, Winnsboro, Texas 75494 | 903-364-3654

Winnsboro, Texas History & Culture

The historical, old-fashioned town of Winnsboro is located about 90 miles east of Dallas in the northeastern corner of the state. This beautifully forested area in the "Lakes Country" centers at the intersection of two designated Texas Forest Trails, Texas State Highway 11 and SH 37.

The land where the town 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.

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 "Crossroads", the original name of the town, and were attracted to the rich land on the edge of the piney woods region of East Texas. There, they 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. 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. [CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

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 2104, and is featured as part of 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 is available for purchase and renovation (2014).

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.

- Classic Car "Cruise In"
- Winnsboro Center for the Arts "Starry Starry Night" art dinner
- Animal Shelter Spring Garage Sale
- American Legion Memorial Day honors
- Independence Day, fireworks
- The Fine Arts Market
- Christmas parade
- Art Classes & Clubs
- Book Reading Clubs
- Poetry Readings
- Photography Club
- Rodeo
- Fishing Tournaments

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Winnsboro's famous Autumn Trails has been going strong now for over 54 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 are 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 Hospital of Winnsboro, a 50 –bed modern medical facility serving many counties and operated by Texas Health Resources.

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.