

BELLVILLE

HISTORIC HOMES & STRUCTURES



1 THE JAIL MUSEUM - 36 S. Bell

This building is the 4th Jail built on this block of land. Built in 1896 and used as the County Jail until 1982, the Romanesque Revival style of design suggests, to many people, a sort of Texas castle. The jailhouse is divided into two sections. On the left (south) were quarters for the Sheriff & his family. On the right is the jail proper. There are three stories of jail cells plus a small fourth floor that served as a gallows, which was used but once, in 1901. *Tours of the jail are available.* 🏰★



2 THE HARIGEL HOUSE - 104 S. Bell.

This charming Victorian cottage was built in 1881 by Emil H. Harigel Sr., the son of a Prussian immigrant. He was the owner of a hardware, tinware and stove emporium. The first water well (still existing at the back of the house) was once the water supply for the entire town. Of note are the

Mansard roof, the original front door & sidelights that feature the Harigel name. The current resident is the great, great grandson of Emil. 🏰

3 BELLVILLE CITY HALL - Brothers Thomas & James Bell came to this area from Florida in 1822 with Stephen F. Austin's colony and acquired about 2,000 acres of land in 1837. Thomas offered a portion of his land at this site for a new townsite for a new county seat...accepted by voters in 1846, it was platted in 1848 and soon called Bellville by popular vote. 🏰

4 THE MAX BADER HOME - 110 S. Masonic Alfred Finn, a famous Houston Architect (the San Jacinto Battleground Monument, the Gulf Building, among many other Houston landmarks), designed this home built in 1925. It was the residence of Max Bader, a community leader of Bellville and founder of the Austin County State Bank.



5 JOHN BELL LEWIS HOME - 206 S. Masonic

John Bell Lewis, banker & businessman built this home in 1875. His grandmother, Betty Washington Lewis was George Washington's sister. He served in the Confederate Army, was Sheriff during the difficult Reconstruction days and helped found the Bellville First National Bank and Austin County State Bank. He was also instrumental in getting the Santa Fe Railroad to come through Bellville. Architect J.J. Stoppel designed this home which displays a transitional style between the Greek Revival and the more ornate Victorian. The parlor is still original, including the fine French wallpaper. To the left, the carriage house has been converted into offices. 🏰



6 HISTORY OF BELLVILLE METHODIST CHURCH - 234 Masonic

When Stephen F. Austin founded his original colony of the Old Three Hundred, he signed a decree of the Mexican government that the Roman Catholic Church would be the official religion. Nevertheless, when the Bell brothers settled here in 1822, it wasn't long before Thomas Bell donated land between Piney & Caney Creeks for a church & camp meetings. In 1835 William Barrett Travis, of Alamo fame, attended, promising to help bring Methodist ministers here. The campground continued as the seat of Methodism in this area until the 1880's, when the land was sold and funds used to build a church in Bellville in 1882. It was used by German & English speaking congregations on alternate Sundays. A new sanctuary was built on this site in 1886 and served until 1973 when the present structure was erected. 🏰

🏰 Texas Historical Marker

★ National Register of Historic Places

🏰 Bellville Historical Plaque

7 SHELBURNE-REINECKER HOUSE - 402 S. Masonic

James Henry Shelburne was the eldest son of 14 children born to 1836 immigrants from Virginia & Tennessee. In 1882, for \$700, he purchased one acre of land & constructed this house. The outside is pine clapboard, still in excellent condition. The drive on the side leads to the original drive-through carriage house & woodshed. The cypress picket fence surrounding the garden is restored from the original. Mr. Shelburne was a prominent lawyer and had a varied public career. Serving as a member of the police court, justice of the peace, and tax assessor, in



1886 he was elected to the 20th legislature by a unanimous vote. He died in 1904. William & Bertha Reinecker bought the home in 1912 and added a second story and a wraparound veranda, transforming the farm house into a prairie school sign-influenced bungalow with two entrances, both with massive ornate doors & beveled glass. 🏰

8 GRODY HOME - 531 S. Holland

This bungalow-style home was constructed in 1918-1919 by the Grody family. Mr. Grody was a lumberman in Bellville & owned this entire block of land, from Holland to Bell. So why is the house facing sideways? The front & back doors are facing the lawn. You are looking at it's left side. It's thought Mr. Grody assumed a street would be built through his property. The house has been remodeled, but without destroying the ambiance of the old home.



9 TESCH HOME - 240 S. Holland

This Greek Revival home belonged to Fred Tesch, a Bellville pharmacist, as noted previously. One of it's most distinctive features is the unique fence made entirely of concrete.



10 WOLF HOME - 238 S. Holland

A fine Victorian home, built in 1896 by A. Wolf, became the home of Charles Tesch, the first Mayor of Bellville, in 1903. The Tesch brothers were owners of a thriving pharmacy on the Square. The Mayor's brother Fred lived in the home just to the south.

11 STECK HOME - 238 S. Bell This home was built in 1906 by Dr. Otto Steck. The wraparound porch & gingerbread trim are representative of the era. Dr. Steck had moved here in 1902 & married a daughter of the Hellmuth family (see #14). He was a successful, well-liked doctor. Chances are, any of the older people you meet around town were delivered by Dr. Steck. Years ago there was a carriage house in back, with quarters for the driver. It is said that when Dr. Steck



would go on a house call, he would stand on the porch and ring a loud bell, which would summon his carriage. The house stayed in the Steck family until 1968.

12 STRAUSS HOME - 205 E. Austin

Charles Strauss, a tax collector and politician, and his wife Lottie completed this home 1910. Mr. Strauss was also in the lumber business and used ornate framework and other examples of fine woodwork. Many original features, including the beveled glass entry & side porch doors are still in use.



13 GRANAU HOME - 303 E. Austin

Migrating from Germany in 1848, Granau ran a wagon yard & weighed cotton in the block where the E.O. Finn building is now. In 1894, his son Henry Granau, rancher and president of the First National Bank, built this home with blending Victorian & Italianate detailing in its design. After his death, Mrs. Granau lived in the house until 1971. The exterior remains as originally constructed except for the addition of the walled courtyard.



14 HELLMUTH HOME - 214 S. Live Oak

C.F. Hellmuth was a successful merchant in Bellville as early as 1877. He built several of the two-story buildings still standing on the square. This lovely house, built in the late 1800's, was home to the Hellmuth family, with 11 children. Representative of the popular Victorian style, it's a bit subdued in its detailing. It's original splendor, with cypress exterior, has been restored and recently used as a bed & breakfast.



15 MACHEMEHL HOME - 621 E. O'Bryant

L.A. Machemehl, successful land & cattle broker, was a native of Austin County. He was vice-president of Austin County State Bank, horseman of note, and owner of the 3rd automobile in Bellville. He commissioned famed Houston architect Alfred Finn to design this unique house in



1920. The 1-1/2 story house is sometimes called "airplane-bungalow" style, the upstairs portion set behind the large wrap-around porch where festivities took place, including dances by

youths to a Victrola. Mahogany doors & crown molding, a fireplace with inlaid decorative tile, brass wall sconces & chandeliers, and a door into the kitchen for ice deliveries set this house apart. It remained in the Machemehl family until 1953. The architect's original watercolor rendition & detailed floor plans are in the archives of the Houston Public Library. 🏠

16 CONCORDIA HALL - 1000 S. Tesch St.

The home of a German singing society organized as far back as 1860, the original Concordia Hall was built in 1877 in an area called The Pines, about 3-1/2 miles east of this site. It was leveled in the 1900 hurricane. Undaunted, members gathered timbers from the old structure and erected this building. Boasting a stage, it was popular for recitals & dramatic presentations and remained in the hands of the Concordia Society until being purchased in 1997 by the Lions Club of Bellville. 🏠



17 THE CUMINGS FAMILY VAULT Hacienda at Tesch

Rebecca Cumings and her three brothers, James, John and William came here from Virginia in 1821. As members of Stephen Austin's "Old 300" colony, they received 20,000 acres in return for the construction and operation of a mill on a nearby creek (Mill Creek). Legend has it that Rebecca was the sweetheart of William Barrett Travis, who died at the Alamo. Fifteen members of the Cumings family are buried in this vault. 🏠



18 MAGRUDER-CANNON-BRYAN HOUSE

Civil War veteran Dr. Fortunatus B. Magruder, a successful Austin county lawyer, had this double-galleried residence built at Sealy in 1882. It was sold to rancher Oliver Green Cannon in 1889 and in 1906 to Sealy merchant W.L. Gray. Later inherited by his sister Lula Gray and niece Fay Bryan, the wife of county judge W.D. Bryan. It was moved to this site in 1969. *This home is on private land and inaccessible to the public.* 🏠

19 LOUISVILLE MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH -

John Nichols League. John P. Osterhout sold about 4 acres to J.J. Haggerty. In 1892 Mr. Haggerty sold one acre to the church. A small church was built in memory of Louis Bonner Pastor Rev. Sam Gustos. By 1915 there were 38 parishioners. The church continued under different pastors until 1951. The original church was demolished and a new church was built using pews, cafeteria, stained glass windows & chandeliers. Rev. Smith served 48 years. 🏠



20 SITE OF THE FIRST BELLVILLE MASONIC LODGE - 15 N. Masonic

The Bellville Masonic Lodge was chartered in 1858. Zimri Hunt, one of the first lawyers in Bellville, served as its first Worshipful Master. For reasons unknown, the original structure was replaced in 1886 with the present building. The first floor has been used as a church, a community center & as one of the first schools in Bellville. Purchased & renovated in 1985 by The Bellville Historical Society, it continues to serve as meeting-place, offices and genealogy center. 🏠★

21 MATTHAEI HOME - 112 N. Holland

This Victorian house was built in 1908 by lawyer C. A. Matthaei. One of the rooms housed a library with an extensive collection of books that Mr. Matthaei graciously shared with people of the area. At the time, it was the only library. In later years, the house became a boarding house and tourist home.



22 NEELY HOME - 308 North Holland

The Neely house, designed by famed architect Alfred Finn, was constructed in 1918-19 by contractor Oscar Wolnitzek on a lot bought from the Springfield family, early pharmacists. Dr. Jubal Allen Neely was a prominent physician & co-builder of the first Bellville hospital in 1928, on a corner on the Square, within easy walking distance. The Neely's lived in the house until their deaths in the 1970's. 📍

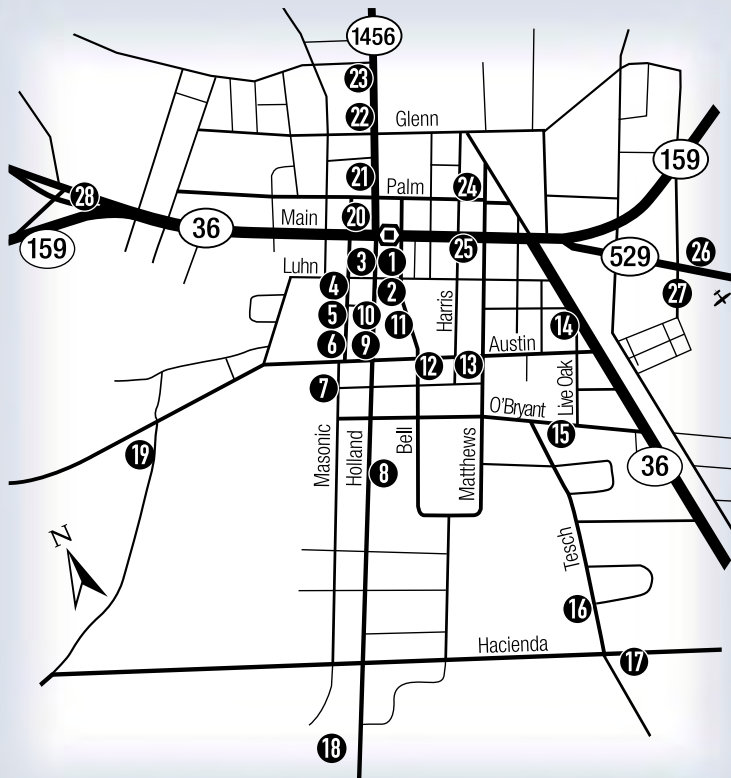


25 THE E.O. FINN BUILDING and The BLACKSMITH SHOP

301 E. Main. This vernacular Italianate building was built in 1896 by E. Oscar Finn and John Colleton. A German immigrant, E.O. Finn was a master mechanic, and smithy of buggies & wagons.

John Colleton was a brick maker...and indeed most of the buildings around the Square including the Jail Museum are constructed from Colleton bricks. Stucco was applied over the brick, and patterned to simulate stones. Over the front is a marble plaque reading "E.O. Finn 1896". Double doors on the side allowed entry for carriages & buggies to the first floor showroom.

The second floor was the living quarters for the Finn family. A wooden balcony is suspended by iron hangers around all four walls. Many unique features include a dumbwaiter inside that runs from the basement to the 2nd floor. A well, inside the building, provided drinking water. An inside cistern piped rainwater to the bathtub, sink and commode, quite modern for it's day. Of note are paired Italianate windows and cast iron columns & balustrade. Next door is the Blacksmith Shop, built in the mid-1800's. With original flooring (part brick, part wood) and original rings for pulleys, it's still in use today. 📍



26 THE BELLVILLE TURNVEREIN PAVILION - City Park, Hwy 529

Built in 1897, this is the first of three pavilions built in Austin County by German immigrant Joaquim Hintz. Constructed with a center

pole as its interior support, the building has 12 sides that give it an almost round appearance. The Bellville Turnverein society, founded in 1885, used it for their gymnastics & social gatherings, thus the name "Gut Heil", or Good Health.



It has continued to serve as a dance & exhibition hall and community gathering place for well over 100 years. 📍

23 ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

N. Holland Although a small Lutheran congregation had been organized several years earlier, meeting at the Methodist Church, the first Lutheran Church structure was built in 1898. The small frame building was blown off its foundation by the hurricane of 1900. It was repaired & continued to serve a small, inactive membership under a string of ministers until 1911 when a dynamic minister renewed their zeal,

and the present building was erected in 1925, at a cost of \$25,000. The congregation celebrated their Centennial year in 1996. 📍



24 HAAK HOUSE - 310 E. Palm August Haak, prominent merchant, and his wife Emila began construction of this elegant Victorian home in 1886 for his retirement residence. The house remained in the family until 1967. The slight leaning of the bay window area is reputed to have been the result of the 1900 Galveston hurricane.



27 MICHAEL ROBERT PILLEY - Oak Knoll Cemetery, Hwy 529

This gravestone Marks the Final resting Place of Michael Robert Pilley, a member of the ill-fated Mier Expedition into Mexico in 1842, which ended in the capture of about 170 men. Each captive picked one from a jar of beans...those who drew a black bean, 17 men, were executed. The others were imprisoned in Mexico City. Pilley was born in Grantham, England in 1820 and died in Texas in 1865. 📍

28 AUSTIN COUNTY HISTORICAL MARKER

This is one of the original 1936 Texas Historical Society markers, recording the history of Austin County as being a part of the Stephen F. Austin Colony, designated as a municipality in 1821 and as part of the Republic of Texas. 📍

ALFRED C. FINN

Architect

Born in Bellville on July 2, 1883, Alfred C. Finn became a famous architect and is called by many “The Builder of Houston”. As the protege of Jesse Jones, one of the most important developers of Houston, Finn designed many of Houston’s landmarks. Although today the skyline of Houston towers above the buildings that bear his architectural style, his presence is still very much there. The Gulf Building, the Houston Chronicle annex, the Coliseum & Music Hall, Jefferson Davis Hospital, the Rice Hotel, Hermann Hospital, and the San Jacinto Battleground monument...to mention just a few.



Photo courtesy of the Austin County Historical Commission

Finn’s grandfather came from Germany in 1869 from a town near the Black Forest. Alfred’s father bought 160 acres of land near Bellville and built a blacksmith shop (still standing). He gave the shop and the nearby carriage store to his brother Oscar before moving his family to Hempstead. Young Alfred left when he was 12 for a job heating rivets for the construction of the Brazos River Bridge near there. In 1900, at the age of 17, he went to Houston and got a job building boxcars for the Southern Pacific Railroad. It was then that he took a correspondence course in architecture. The rest is history.

Three of the houses on this tour bear his signature as architect. Several more of his designs are located in Brenham, Columbus, and Sealy. It’s clear that although Finn became the most prominent architect in the boom years of Houston, he never forgot Bellville.



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