



# HISTORIC DOWNTOWN ROCKWALL WALKING TOUR

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Rockwall County Alliance for the Arts.*

*Sources:*

*Sanborn-Perris Insurance Maps,  
Issued: 1900, 1905, 1911, 1923, 1934*

*History of Rockwall County,  
1842-1968 by O.L. Steger, Sr.*

*Rockwall County History published by the  
Rockwall County Historical Foundation (1984)*

*Diary of Dr. Jarret T. Benbrook*

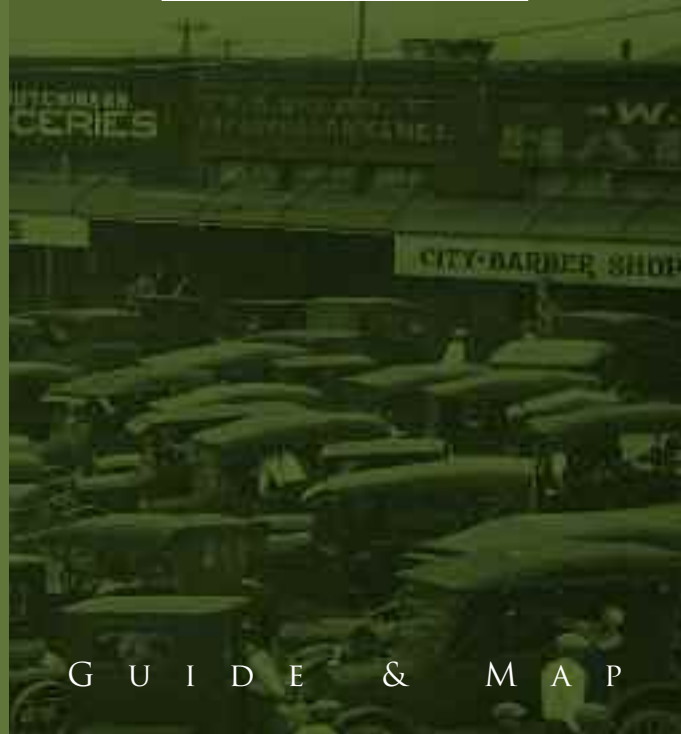
*Collection of the Rockwall County  
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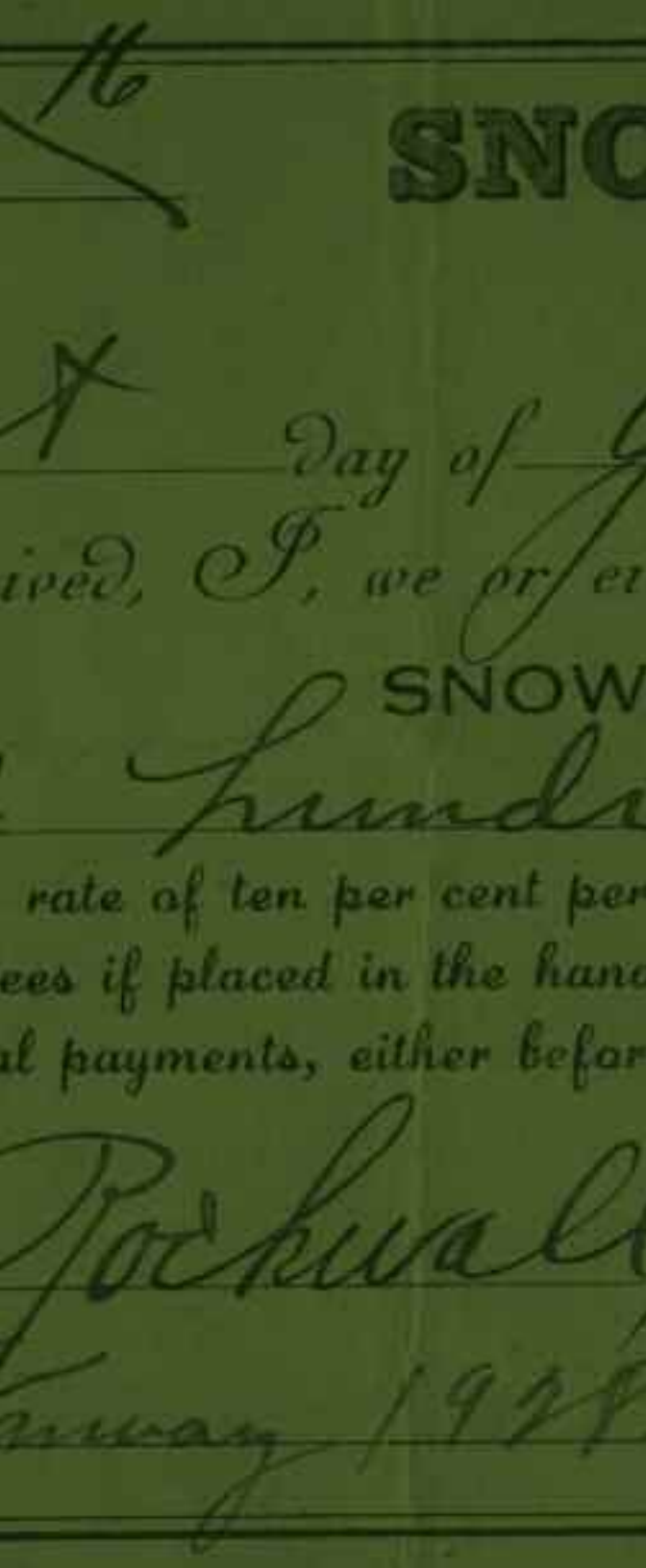
*Personal collections of Ray Holt and Sheri Fowler*

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*This brochure was researched by Ray Holt,  
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*For more information about the Rockwall County  
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tour for your group, please call 972-722-1507.*





On April 17, 1854, Elijah Elgin platted the original town-site for the city of Rockwall. In 1855, the first store – Heath & Jones General Merchandise – was established two blocks south of the current square. In that same year, the first Masonic Hall was built in the downtown area. Over the next few years, a corn-grinding mill was built and a number of stores cropped up in the city.

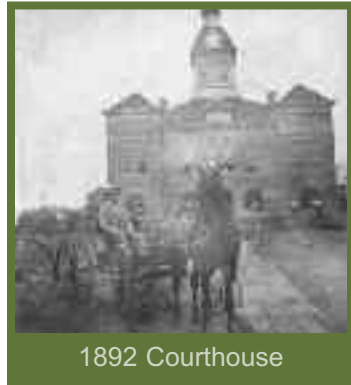
In 1873 the state legislature established Rockwall County, and the city of Rockwall became the county seat. In 1886 the Missouri, Kansas and Texas line reached Rockwall and the city became a central shipping point for local crops like cotton, wheat and corn. It was at this time that the downtown area as we know it today began to take shape. Clapboard buildings were replaced with brick structures, and the more seedy establishments such as saloons and gambling halls were replaced with respectable businesses. Many people from surrounding communities moved to the booming city, and by 1890 the population of Rockwall was approximately 1,000.

From those origins, the downtown area has had periods of prosperity and decline. Today's downtown Rockwall is experiencing a period of revitalization as more specialty shops and boutiques move into the storefronts. As you experience the past through this historic walking tour, we hope that you will see the vision for a thriving future for Rockwall's historic square.

*The tour begins at the historic Rockwall County Courthouse located in the center of the square.*

## 1 | Rockwall County Courthouse

The historic courthouse on the downtown square is the fourth permanent structure to serve the county.



1892 Courthouse

Fire destroyed the first and second courthouse buildings in the late 1800s. A third courthouse was constructed of native sandstone, but by the mid-thirties, the mortar was crumbling and the building was condemned. With the effects of the Depression still

evident, construction funds were scarce so County Judge Mike Reinhardt traveled to Washington, D.C., to obtain a Works Project grant for courthouse construction. On January 19, 1940, on behalf of Rockwall County, Judge Reinhardt was awarded a \$52,000 grant that would go towards the complete construction cost of \$92,000. During the night Judge Reinhardt came down with acute pneumonia and died in the early morning hours of January 20 at a Washington hospital. His brother-in-law Carl Miller filled out Judge Reinhardt's unexpired term and continued overseeing the construction of the new courthouse. The old sandstone courthouse was razed in March of 1941 and by December of that same year the finishing touches were being put on the new Art Deco building.

The architectural style of the historic Rockwall Courthouse can trace its origins all the way back to Paris in the year 1925. That was when the International Exposition of Decorative Arts introduced a style that was modern, artistic, and functional – a style we refer to today as Art Deco. This new style crossed the ocean and became a major influence on American architecture beginning in the late 1920s. Although Art Deco influences could already be seen

around North Texas, it wasn't until Dallas was chosen as the site of the 1936 Texas Centennial Exposition that this region became a showplace for Art Deco style. Architect George Dahl transformed Fair Park into a masterpiece of modern concept and regional flavor, and today the park is regarded as one of the world's most significant sites for Art Deco architecture.



1941 Courthouse

So, in 1940, when Rockwall was planning their new courthouse, it was entirely fitting that a county that sat in the shadow of Dallas should adopt an architectural style that almost mirrors Dahl's style of Art Deco. From the angular exterior to the judge's bench in the courtroom, the Rockwall courthouse incorporates the straight, clean, geometric lines and flourishes that define Art Deco.

In 2002, the historic courthouse underwent a multi-million dollar renovation, and today it stands as one of only seven Art Deco courthouses in Texas.

Take a moment to walk throughout the courthouse, being sure to visit the second floor courtroom. Historic Rockwall photos are on display throughout the building.

*The tour continues on the south side of the square at the southeast intersection of Goliad and Rusk.*

In Rockwall's earliest days, this block was one of the most infamous, housing saloons and gambling houses. By the late 1800s, brick buildings were replacing the clapboard structures and a variety of stores took up occupancy. On January 21, 1904, at 11:30 p.m., fire broke out over the Spafford store and much of this block and part of the block to the east were consumed by fire. The owners re-built, but several of the buildings that had previously been two-story were re-built with just one floor. Sometime in the forties another fire did partial damage to several stores along this block.

*As you follow the tour, it's important to remember that dozens of businesses have occupied each of these storefronts during the years. The ones mentioned below are just a sampling of the longest-tenured or the ones that have been recorded in photographs or narratives.*

## **2 | 102 East Rusk**

In the early 1900s, the building on the corner of this block was occupied by Fair Dry Goods. The store was operated by T.L. Townsend, and their simple slogan was, "It pays to trade with the Fair Dry Goods Company." Payne's Furniture and Appliance opened for business in the same spot in the late 1940s. Payne's was a fixture on the square for more than thirty years.



Fair Dry Goods



Payne's Furniture

## **3 | 104-114 East Rusk**

Prior to the current brick buildings, the Palace Saloon occupied a wooden structure in the middle of this block (at approximately 112 Goliad). At this time, women and children were not brought to the square on Saturday afternoons because of the abundance of cursing and fighting. The sheriff was called almost nightly to break up fights. By the turn of the century, respectability had taken over and



Holt Grocery

stores such as J.R. Dumas ("Hardware & Stoves, Furniture and Undertaker"), the Scott Bailey Drugstore, Underwood Brothers Groceries, and the W.B. Womack Banking Company had taken up

residence. By mid-century, Spafford's Grocery Market and Locker Plant and the Holt Grocery Store were long-tenured residents of this block.

## **4 | 116-118 East Rusk**

In 1887, a man named Rose built the first brick building on the block. One of the earliest inhabitants of this building was Walker Brothers Dry Goods offering both "Staple & Fancy" groceries. The Walker



South Side of Square

brothers were well known for giving credit to farmers even when times were bad, and their business was one of the most frequented at that time. In later years, the

building housed the Frank Clark Drug Store, the J.A. Wilkerson Variety Store, Mitchell Hardware, the Cain Variety Store, and the Rogeau Variety Store. In addition to a variety of occupants, this building has had a succession of owners. For many years it was called the Lovejoy Building, and then the Ellis Building after owner Richard Ellis financed an extensive renovation to restore its original façade.

*Cross San Jacinto to the next block of Rusk.*

As you cross the street, take a moment to look to your right. The storefronts along this passageway have always housed smaller businesses including, in 1911, an ice cream factory and a pool hall.

*Now, continue down Rusk Street toward Fannin.*

Around the turn of the century, this entire block consisted of frame buildings with a sidewalk in the front made entirely of plank boards. Termed "rat row," the buildings' occupants consisted mainly of chili joints, soft drink stands, a meat market and a barber shop.

## 5 | 202 East Rusk

In 1888, this corner of Rusk and San Jacinto was home to a wooden building that housed a restaurant. Meals were twenty-five cents. A restaurant operated out of this building off and on for fifteen years. In 1903 a brick building was erected on this corner.

There were several short-term occupants before Scott Bailey moved his drug store from its previous location into this corner building. The Bailey Drugstore operated here for more than fifteen



Cunningham's Drugstore

years. In the early 1920s, Rochell and Canup purchased the stock and continued to operate a drug store until around 1940. They sold the business to a Mr. DeVaney who, around 1945, subsequently sold to Jack Cunningham. Many Rockwall residents had their first milkshake at the soda fountain in Cunningham's Drugstore. In the early fifties, Cunningham's burned. The building was rebuilt and soon Ellison and Earl Slaughter rented the property and began operating the Rockwall Drug. The Rockwall Drug stayed in business at this location for more than forty years.

## 6 | 210 East Rusk

Built in the early days of the Twentieth Century, the property at 210 E. Rusk has continually housed a barbershop since its inception. By 1910 it was called The Elite Barber Shop, and in addition to a haircut, customers could get a bath, a shave and a shoeshine.



Elite Barbershop

In the early days, the shop had four baths in the back with a pot-bellied wood burning stove that was used to heat the water. Remnants from the original well are still located behind the

building. At that time, the shop would often stay open until midnight on Saturday nights in order to accommodate the drifters and field hands who would come to town for a shave and a bath.

*As you continue to walk to the end of this block, it's interesting to note that many of the buildings along this way were once occupied by businesses that offered some type of food. The Mecca Caf , a popular local eatery, was located in this block.*

## 7 | 218 East Rusk

A bakery was a long-tenured occupant of this corner storefront, followed by Harvey Sanders Corner Sandwich Shop. Sanders, an avid local football fan and part-time coach, kept a ledger at the counter, and he let customers – many of them local high school youth – order on credit. The customers wrote down what they ordered and what they owed, and Sanders never went to great lengths to collect on those accounts. Rockwall's Wilkerson-Sanders football stadium is a tribute to Sanders' dedication and generosity.

*When you reach the end of the block, take a moment to look across Fannin at the next building on our tour.*

## 8 | 101 South Fannin

In the early teens, Dr. Paul Snow established Rockwall's first Ford dealership on this corner. In 1917, he built this



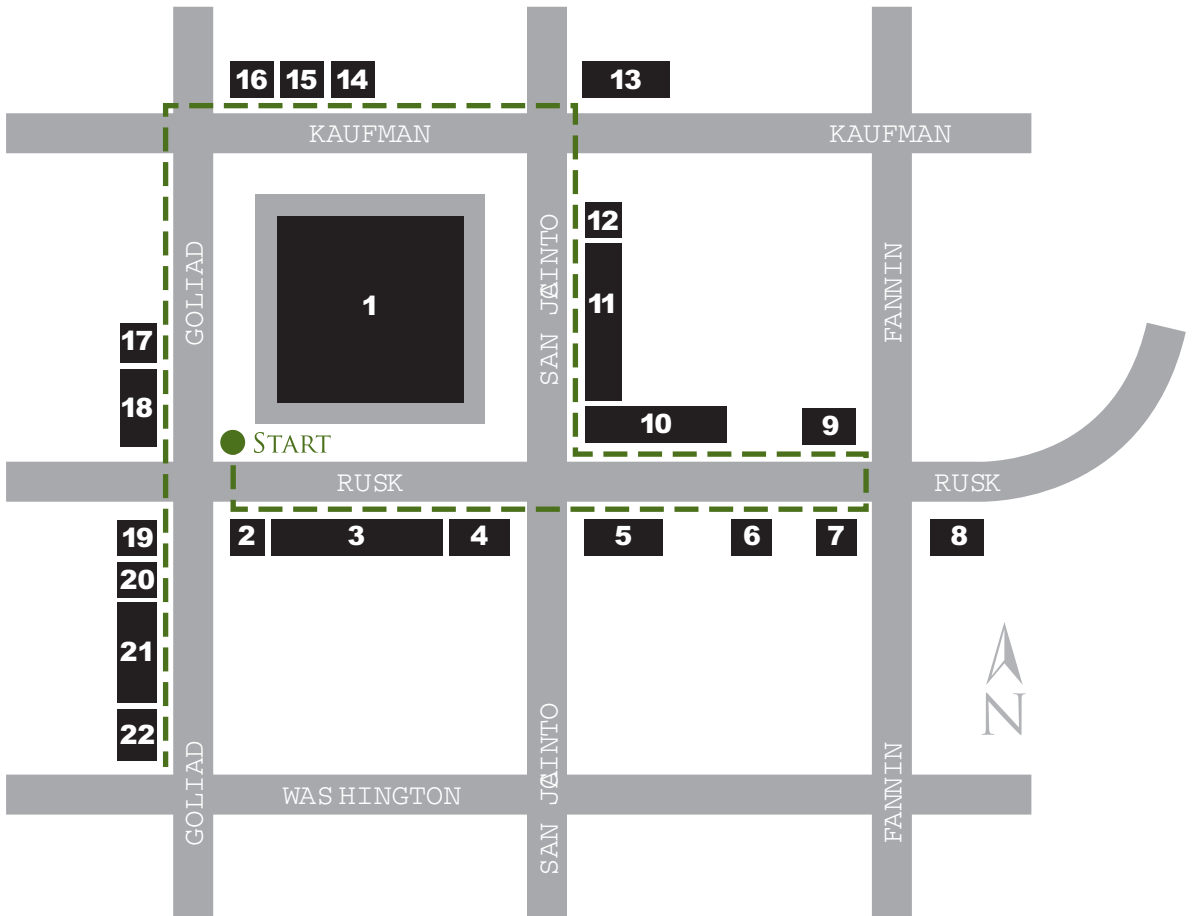
Paul Snow Ford Motor Co.

structure to house The Paul Snow Motor Company, and it was occupied by the Ford Agency until the sixties. This building is one of only a handful of downtown structures that still contain original architectural elements.

*Now, look across Rusk to the building on the curve at Fannin and Rusk.*



# ROCKWALL WALKING TOUR MAP



- 1** Rockwall County Courthouse
- 2** 102 East Rusk
- 3** 104-114 East Rusk
- 4** 116-118 East Rusk
- 5** 202 East Rusk
- 6** 210 East Rusk
- 7** 218 East Rusk
- 8** 101 South Fannin
- 9** 101 North Fannin
- 10** 102 North San Jacinto
- 11** 104-112 San Jacinto

- 12** 114 North San Jacinto
- 13** 201 East Kaufman
- 14** 105 East Kaufman
- 15** 103 East Kaufman
- 16** 101 East Kaufman
- 17** 105 North Goliad
- 18** 101-103 North Goliad
- 19** 102 South Goliad
- 20** 104 South Goliad
- 21** 106-110 South Goliad
- 22** 112-114 South Goliad

## 9 | 101 North Fannin

A prime location for a service station, the Magnolia Oil Company constructed this building after the Bankhead Highway (now SH 66) was built through Rockwall in the twenties. Magnolia leased the building to several operators including Marvin Young, and later, Ted Cain.

*Now, walk back up Rusk, taking a moment to notice the architectural style of the current Hall Building, which occupies much of the north side of this block. At the corner of Rusk and San Jacinto, cross over to the front of the Hall Building.*

## 10 | 102 North San Jacinto

Both the current building on the corner of Rusk and San Jacinto and its predecessor were integral parts of Rockwall's early banking industry.

In the early 1900s, Farmers National Bank was organized. The bank set up shop in a brick building located on this corner. In 1916, a new building was constructed to

house the bank and, although it changed names through consolidation, a bank operated out of this building for many decades. Legend has it that Bonnie and Clyde once came through Rockwall in order to case the bank. They stopped for a drink at the corner drugstore across the street. Apparently, they abandoned the idea because the bank was never

robbed. After the bank moved to a new location, Ted Cain and Ralph Hall purchased the building. Hall had his law offices first on the lower floor and then in the upstairs offices. In addition, the



Farmers National Bank



Rockwall Square circa 1911

upstairs and back offices of this building have housed numerous businesses and agencies including the U.S. Soil Conservation Office, O.L. Steger Abstract Plant, Love and Benbrook Cotton Buyers, the Rockwall telephone exchange and the law offices of county judges E.D. Foree and Carl Miller. In the 1970s, Lakeside National Bank began operations in the lower floor of this building until their new interstate location was constructed.

## 11 | 104-112 North San Jacinto

As you walk down San Jacinto to the next stop, it's interesting to note that the storefronts along this street have been home to mainly grocery and hardware stores. Through the years, Townsend and Tipton Dry Goods, M.H. McKoy Farm Implements, the R.A. Snead Dry Goods and Grocery, the T.E. Hutchinson Grocery, Andrew and Martin Hardware, M & R Grocery and Smith Dry Goods have all occupied these buildings. In the early twenties, the local post office was also moved to this block.



Rockwall Square circa 1920

## 12 | 114 North San Jacinto

In 1900 a small frame building sat on this lot, separate and solitary from the rest of the business

establishments on the block. For several years, Miss Eula Apperson ran a millinery business at this location. In the mid-teens, Dick Gaines, publisher of



Rockwall Success

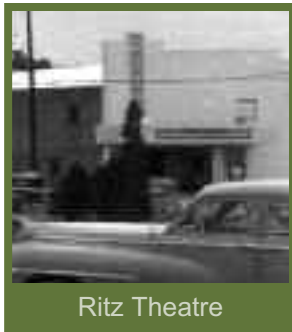
*The Rockwall Success*, had a brick building erected on this lot and moved his paper into its long-time

residence on San Jacinto. *The Success*, which was the first newspaper in Rockwall, was founded by Sid Crosbyton in 1883, with the assistance of Lynn Charleston. (The first *Success* building was located on Rusk Street.) The paper continued to print under local ownership (including Dick Gaines and, later, the P.J. Bounds family) until 1988 when it was sold to an outside interest. In the late nineties, the Belo Corporation bought *The Success* and soon ceased its publication as an independent entity.

*At the end of the block, cross the street to the northeast corner of Kaufman and San Jacinto.*

### 13 | 201 East Kaufman

The lots on the north side of Kaufman from San Jacinto to Fannin have been home to several businesses including a grist mill, a livery stable, a movie theatre and, most recently, a bank. In 1900, a furniture and hardware store occupied the northeast corner lot with a livery stable operating just to the east. By 1911, the furniture store had been replaced with a carpentry shop and the rest of the block was taken up by a gristmill and a sawmill lumber company. By 1923, a movie theatre was on the corner, and one continued to operate at this location for more than thirty-five years. The Ritz, as it was called for most of that tenure, played first-run movies and was the site of many first dates and family outings. In the time of segregation, the lower floor was reserved for white patrons only; black movie-goers were relegated to the balcony. In the twenties, the lots next door to the theatre were home to the Rockwall Lumber Company. By 1952, the lumberyard had changed hands and was then the Lyon-Gray Lumber Company. After several years and several other owners, the lumberyard was destroyed by fire. Eventually, the First State Bank purchased the lots and erected the present building.



*Cross San Jacinto and continue west on Kaufman Street.*

In the early years, this side of the square was incredibly important in Rockwall's development as it contained the first City Hall and many public buildings. In addition to the government and fraternal buildings in this block, it also contained private retail and services. In the early twenties, this block contained a carpenter's shop, a mattress factory, a machine shop, and a garage for auto repair. By the fifties, there was a tractor repair shop and a feed store. In the seventies, a grocery store (107 East Kaufman) was the main resident of this block.

### 14 | 105 East Kaufman

The first brick building constructed on this lot was a two-story structure whose second floor housed Rockwall's first telephone exchange when it was opened in 1902. The only fire alarm in town – a bell mounted on a wooden tower – stood beside the building. It was a convenient location because when someone called in a fire, the operator merely had to yell out the window for someone below to sound the alarm. The original structure was torn down in the sixties.



### 15 | 103 East Kaufman (east side of parking lot)

On April 17, 1874, the city of Rockwall incorporated and the first City Hall was located at this site. The first volunteer fire department kept their equipment at City Hall, so this is also the location of Rockwall's first fire station. Even after the City Hall re-located, the fire station continued to operate at this location for several years.

## 16 | 101 East Kaufman (west side of parking lot)

Rumored to be the site of one of Goliad's several saloons, the lot at the northeast corner of Goliad and Kaufman shifted to respectable enterprise fairly quickly. By 1905, the Woodmen of the World had their lodge at this location in a two story white-frame building. And, in the mid-twenties, the Presbyterian Church bought the lot and constructed a red brick church building that served the congregation until April of 1980.



Presbyterian Church

*Continue west across Goliad. Cross Kaufman to reach the southwest corner of this intersection.*

When examining photos, maps, and written accounts of the downtown square, it's obvious that through the years, many businesses, for one reason or another, moved from one location on the square to another. For example, the fire station was located on the Kaufman side of the square in the early 1900s. By 1923, it was at 109 North Goliad. G. H. Vaught & Sons Manufacturing, an internationally recognized harness and saddle company, was also located in this area. It was one of two downtown locations for the Vaught business (the other was on East Rusk). Businesses along this block have included a garage for repair to Model T automobiles (a building located at 107 North Goliad that was later purchased by the Chamber of Commerce and used as a community building), A & P Grocery and D.R. Florence Electrical Contracting.

## 17 | 105 North Goliad

In 1900, a photography studio occupied this building, but by 1905 the Oriental Hotel was up and running. Although the Oriental survived a fire in September of 1906, it was not a lasting venture, and by 1911 a photographer had once again taken up residence in this building.

## 18 | 101-103 North Goliad

One of the oldest buildings in town, this structure was built prior to 1900. Actually two buildings under one roof, the structure was first occupied by Lowe & Allen Dry Goods. The brick to build the building was obtained from the Lowe brickyard located just west of town. In 1911 a millinery operated out of the building, and from about 1913-1930, Guaranty State Bank was the primary occupant. Other businesses that were located in one of the sides through the years include the Texas Power and Light Company, a ladies clothing store called Hermoines, Martin Brothers Funeral Home, Cameron Insurance and Stephenson-Davis Insurance.

*Cross Rusk and continue walking down South Goliad.*

## 19 | 102 South Goliad

Still maintaining its original character, the building on the southwest corner of Goliad and Rusk was built circa 1890 and was home to the First National Bank. By 1900, Townsend Dry Goods was in operation on this corner followed by Rimassa Dry Goods and then Bender Dry Goods. From the turn of the century until the mid-1960s, the Masonic Lodge occupied the upper story.



Back view of 102 S. Goliad

## 20 | 104 South Goliad

The property on this lot is extremely significant in downtown's history as it housed the A.L. Atkins Dry Goods store for almost forty years. Atkins had clerked in dry goods stores for J. H. Townsend, but around 1908, he opened his own store in this location and operated it until the late forties. Soon, the Masonic Lodge bought the building which they still own today.

## 21 | 106-110 South Goliad

These storefronts along Goliad have been home to the McCoulskey-Bourn Hardware Store, the B.F. Klutts Motor Company and Rotary Hall. In the 1940s, the Rockwall Rotary Club bought the building at 110 South Goliad for \$300. They held their weekly meetings in this location for approximately forty years.

## 22 | 112-114 South Goliad

**(parking lot at the corner  
of Washington & Goliad)**

This empty lot was once home to two of Rockwall's most prominent hotels and boarding houses. The Bailey Hotel occupied the site from 1887 until it burned in 1903. At the Bailey, visitors could have a room for just two dollars a day. In 1908, the Stephenson Hotel was built and it remained in operation until 1966.



Bailey Hotel



Stephenson Hotel



We hope you enjoyed your glimpse into Rockwall's history, and we hope you will never look at the square in quite the same way. If you enjoyed this tour and are in favor of preserving Rockwall's remaining historic structures, please contact Rockwall County at **972-882-2880**

or **[fmorris@rockwallcountytexas.com](mailto:fmorris@rockwallcountytexas.com)**  
and the City of Rockwall  
at **972-771-7700**

or **[bbrooks@rockwall.com](mailto:bbrooks@rockwall.com)**

and let them know you support preserving Rockwall's history, not demolishing it.  
(If you send an e-mail, please indicate "Downtown Walking Tour" as the subject.)

