Welcome to Historic Granbury Square

A Walking Tour

**Visit Granbury – 201 E Pearl St.**

Granbury and Hood County are rich in frontier folklore and Texas history. The Nutt brothers, you will hear of them again, along with Thomas Lambert, donated a 40-acre site which became Granbury as well as the county seat of Hood County. With the Victorian architecture and charming country spirit, Granbury is a door into yesterday. Along the walking tour of the old Town Square, which in 1974, was the first to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, you will see why the Square has been described as “…one of the most complete examples of a late 19th century courthouse square in Texas.” The revitalization and restoration efforts of the Square provided the inspiration for the Texas Historic Preservation Main Street Program. Today these Victorian structures are home to an array of shops, art galleries, and restaurants.

**Granbury Plaza – 201 E. Pearl St.**

This is the site of the Granbury Methodist Episcopal Church South. The church was established in 1871, by Reverend John R Hill and seven charter members; however, this was not the first site of this church. Worship services were conducted in a local schoolhouse until 1883 when their first sanctuary was completed near this site. Additional buildings were constructed to meet the needs of the growing congregation. In 1968, the name was changed to the First United Methodist Church and the church was rebuilt on another site. The Sanctuary was left and is now used for several venues such as weddings, receptions, and city events.

**Square Cafe & St. Helen’s on Granbury Square – 137 & 135 E Pearl St.**

Native limestone was a common building material for structures. This building with circular window arches, may have been built as early as 1874 by dry goods and grocery merchant W.E. Perkins. During the 1880s a prominent Granbury merchant A.P. Gordon ran a saloon in these buildings along with selling dry goods and groceries. A well-known legend surrounds the Gordon’s saloon and its bartender John St. Helen. It is believed to this day by many history buffs St. Helen was John Wilkes Booth the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln. Although Booth was supposedly killed shortly after Lincoln’s death, it is believed Booth made his way to the Granbury area and changed his name to John St. Helen. When St. Helen became deathly ill, he made what he believed to be a deathbed confession to a Dallas Catholic priest and to A.P. Gordon’s brother F.J. Gordon that he was indeed John Wilkes Booth. He also revealed to F.J. where to find the pistol used to shoot Lincoln. Upon recovering, St. Helen disappeared from Granbury. Later a man claiming to be both St. Helen and Booth died in Enid, Oklahoma. These buildings now house the Square Cafe and St. Helen’s Gifts and Décor.

**Granbury Opera House – 133 E Pearl St.**

The most elaborate building on the Historic Square is the Granbury Opera House. This two-story Italianate theater was built is 1886. As you look up, see the pressed tin cornice and pediment which crowns the Opera House and the ornate hood molds over the upper windows. Known for many years as Kerr’s Opera House, the second-floor featured traveling vaudeville acts, singers, and melodramas while the lower floor was used by many different businesses over the years, including a saloon and a saddle and harness shop. The Opera House and the businesses below shut down in 1911 and remained so until a community wide effort in the early 1970s, restored the building. The Opera House was reopened in 1975 by the Granbury Opera Association. The theatre at that time used the entire first and second floors and provided entertaining musicals and original productions until 2010. The Opera House then went dark. In 2011 renovation started again and in December 2013 the Opera House turned on its lights and continues to provide entertainment for local and visiting audiences.

**Paradise Bistro -129 E Pearl St.**

These rock walls were erected in1899 for I.W. Walley. A cast iron store front was added with a brick façade. The first building was built for a furniture store and to the right was a funeral home. The two business were associated because as the furniture manufacturers they also made caskets and casket parts.

**Texas Central Title & Fisherman’s Corner – 105 & 101 E Pearl St.**

Now Texas Central Title this building was once site of the Granbury Post Office which was later sold to Thomas T. Ewell, a newspaperman who published an early history of Hood County. The corner building was built during this time frame and was used as a boarding house known as The Granbury House. Martha Washington Garrison Stringfellow was a widow with three children who opened the boarding house to provide for her family.

**Hood County Courthouse – 100 E Pearl St.**

The beautiful Hood County Courthouse which stands in the center of a lovely, landscaped lot, was built 1890-1891 in the French Second Empire-style of rusticated and detailed native limestone. This is the third stone courthouse to stand on this spot. The first Courthouse was a small one-room log cabin. A larger rock courthouse, built to replace the small log cabin, burned in 1875. Arson was suspected and all the county’s land records and deeds were destroyed. The present building was designed by W.C. Dodson of Waco and was built for $40,000. The Seth Thomas town clock adorns the clock tower and was purchased and installed later in 1891. This clock, one of only a few that remain working, must be hand wound daily to keep the time. For more of the history of the Hood County Courthouse, it is open for tours Monday through Friday 8:00 until 4:30.

**Red on the Square – 101 W Pearl St.**

Isn’t this an impressive red brick building? It was constructed in 1905 by John E. Brown for the Hood County State Bank. The wide round arched entryway and windows and its pyramidal turret is a distinguished example of the Victorian Richardsonian Romanesque architectural style. The bank operated for only eight years, after which various offices and businesses occupied the building. Currently Red on the Square is on the entire bottom floor while Granbury on West Pearl Bed and Breakfast is on the top floor. The renovation of the top floor was featured on the CNBC HGTV show Cash Pad. The hosts, JoJo Fletcher and Jordan Rogers, were in Granbury during the weeklong renovation and the show, which was shot in April 2019, can be seen on YouTube.

**Pug on a Pontoon – 100 N Houston St.**

Another building constructed of sandstone is this one on the corner of Pearl and Houston Streets. In a map from 1898 it shows the building was a bank. Sandstone, which was plentiful in the area, was a sturdy economical material for construction. The back of the building, which is constructed of wood, was added later. In early days, the building on this site was made of wood and was The Blackhawk Saloon. This was another place where John St. Helen, aka John Wilkes Booth, served libations.

**Southern Star Market – 104 N Houston St.**

Named the Crites Building, this construction is between 1905 and 1910, and was built for C.L. (Lum) Crites, Jr. a dry goods merchant from Tolar, Texas. Lum Crites advertised his business in 1910 in the Granbury News and touted the services of an experienced dress maker and designer. When some old plaster was removed during renovation of the connecting building, it uncovered an old advertising mural which was on the outside wall of the dry good store advertising “Old Virginia Cheroots, 3 for 5 cents.” This sign is visible in the Bull Lion Wine Shop and Italian Market.

The building which is now Bull Lion Ranch Wine Shop and Italian Market, Your Private Collection and the building that houses Christina’s American Table were vacant lots until between 1905 and 1910. The architecture style of these buildings may reflect the Neo-Classical revival rather than the Victorian which was phasing out.

**Hope Boutique – 108 N Houston St.**

Hope Boutique resides in a building constructed in or before 1890. The store was a dry goods store, a barber shop, a grocery store, and a drug store. There were several dry goods stores in Granbury. This was a thriving town and the purchasing place of wares for many farmers and settlers. Because of the date of construction, this architecture would fall in the Victorian period.

**Madeline Woods Boutique -120 N Houston St.**

Madeline Woods Boutique occupies a building which was constructed in 1891. It has been associated through history with prominent businesses such as a dry goods store of F.C. Bush, Granbury’s city tax collector and secretary in 1892. Morgan Drug Store was later located there owned by Eugene H. Morgan who became a prominent physician. For many years it remained a drugstore including the one of William H. Cherry, who served as mayor of Granbury and as director of the First National Bank. Next door, now the Silver Saddle Saloon, is a two-story stone building probably built by J.D. Baker for a grocery store; however, it was later purchased in 1896 by J.D. Brown for his dry goods store. In 1908 he lost the building for back taxes and the site was later the location of the first silent movie theatre in Granbury.

**Home Sweet Home & Professional Building – 130 N Houston St.**

Here is a beautiful two-part building which is a great example of the High Victorian Italianate style. The building constructed of native limestone with a façade of arched windows, fanlights, a simple stone cornice, and a six-bay storefront was built by E.A. Hannaford and J.D. Baker in 1886 and was one of the first stone buildings. The cornice on Hannaford’s side advertised his drug and book business. Hannaford was instrumental in promoting higher education in the Granbury area. The second-floor tenants included the *Granbury Graphics,* an early newspaper owned and published by Ashley Crockett, a grandson of David Crockett. The iron stairway on the side led to the physician’s offices of Dr. S.T.R. Green who also practiced dentistry until 1933. Granbury native Albert Porter recalls, “That was the first dentist I ever visited. He didn’t deaden your teeth to pull them. He just pulled them.”

**Farina’s Winery and Café – 202 N Houston St.**

This large Romanesque Revival style red brick building was constructed in 1893 for Beverly Memphis Estes, a lawyer and county judge. The style features archways, corbel table, round arch windows and a distinctive cast iron exterior stairway. Estes’s law firm was upstairs, and the downstairs was Sam Ferrell’s Grocery Store. The storefront has been altered; however, the building is still a beautiful specimen of the era.

**First National Bank of Granbury – 101 E Bridge St.**

The Victorian commercial structure is an original building constructed in 1883 for a private bank and loan company owned by John Traylor and D.C. Cogdell. The venture was so successful the First National Bank of Granbury was chartered in 1887. The bank expanded to encompass the three adjoining buildings through time and added the elaborate pressed-tin bracketed cornice above most of the buildings on the north side of the square. Also, the old iron plate at the base of the original bank building still bears the inscription, “Traylor and Cogdell, 1883.”

Buildings continued to be built east of the bank from 1882-1893. A fire damaging buildings along the street in 1891 brought about extensive repairs to the interior and exteriors. Heavy iron clad timbers were used to support the brick veneer front of the upper stories with their Victorian styling. After renovation the buildings became a hardware and tin shop, grocery, and law office.

**Arts and Letters Book Store – 113 E Bridge**

Now Arts and Letters Book Store, this building originally built in 1883 as a saloon for Andy Aston and George W. Landers. On this building there are cast-iron pilasters and the patented iron threshold bearing the Aston-Landers name. The saloon was highly successful and when prohibition was finally enforced by the local government, a newspaper reported Aston and Landers sold every drop of liquor in their saloon, taking in over $100 on the last night before probation began. Aston and Landers closed the saloon and Aston started a harness and buggy business while Mr. Landers opened a pharmacy. One old timer said the Granbury residents suspected the same liquid which had previously been served across the bar in the saloon was being bottled and sold as prescriptions in the pharmacy.

**The Wagon Yard – 213 N Crockett St.**

The Wagon Yard is in a building in the area behind the Nutt House Hotel which was used for years as a wagon yard to stable horses while patrons went about their business on the Town Square. The native limestone building which is part of the Wagon Yard and parallel to Crockett Street is an original structure used as a stable and feed store. The yard was located here when the Nutt brothers built their first log cabin store in 1866.

**Nutt House Hotel – 119 E Bridge St.**

You are standing in front of the building built by the blind Nutt brothers, Jesse F. and Jacob, who along with family settled in Granbury in 1866. When their mercantile establishment outgrew the 16 x 12-foot log building, this hand-hewn stone structure was built in 1893 for the Nutt brothers by local contractor Jim Warren. In 1919 the family grocery store was remodeled, and the second floor became the Nutt Hotel. A claim to fame was the dining room which was patronized by residents and visitors. This was one of the first buildings to be restored in the 1970s by Mary Lou Nutt Watkins and Joe Nutt.

**Old Granbury Jail Museum – 208 N. Crockett St.**

This structure replaced the log cabin, which was used as the first jail in Hood County, circa 1873. Notice the tall tower, topped with a cupola, at the front of the jail. This tower was built to accommodate indoor gallows; however, the gallows were never built, and no hanging ever took place in the Jail. The Hood County Jail Museum is open on weekends and docents are available to give you many historical facts and tours.

**Yeats-Duke House – 214 N Crockett St.**

Inside this small clapboard house is an old log cabin built by Austin Yeats in the 1850s. The small cabin measures 16 by 16 feet and typifies the Scotch-Irish style of cabin building. Although the Yeats had six children, they opened the tiny cabin to the public as an inn because of the sleeping loft. The cabin was sold to a Granbury lawyer by the name of William Ed Duke, and he built the present house around the cabin in about 1900. The cabin still rests on its original foundation and much of the original clay chinking and lime whitewash can be seen on the inside walls.

**N On the Square and The Nest – 124 N Crockett St.**

In 1907 on the site of an old livery stable, the prominent Granbury citizen Jeff Rylee built this building. He leased it to the Gordon-Oxford Furniture Company and Undertakers. The firm’s licensed mortician was a woman, Edith Oxford Gordon. The Granbury Masonic Lodge chartered in 1874 later purchased the building and continued to use the second floor for meetings for many years. Notice the Rylee name printed on the building.

**Sports House – 120 N Crockett St.**

This building was built on what for many years was a vacant lot. It remained so until 1940 when Herman D. Thomason from Tolar built The Thomason Building because he did not like seeing an empty space on the Square. The first occupant was the Granbury Dress Manufacturing Co. established in 1943 and produced the “Marcy Lee” dress. These dresses were picked up by large trucks and taken to Dallas where they were distributed throughout the country. The company’s sewing machines were in the lower level of the Masonic Lodge Building until after the Thomason Building was completed. After that the Masonic Lodge Building was used for storage of dresses and equipment. If you Google Marcy Lee Dresses Dallas Texas, you will see examples of the styles produced here in Granbury and worn all over the country.

**Connie’s - 116 N Crockett St.**

Jess Baker and his partner Sam H. Smith in the late 1880’s or early 1890 built this building. It has elaborated pressed-in entablature topped by two triangular pediments. The original corrugated metal awning remains on the building.

**The Filling Station – 100 N Crockett St.**

A cut limestone structure, built in 1895, this building was the hardware operation of Baker and Rylee. When Baker’s brother joined the partnership, the store became the Baker Hardware Co. Baker and Rylee had a well dug inside the hardware store and installed a windmill and water tank on the roof. They had their own 1890s water works system.

Progress came to Granbury and the first automobiles in town appeared in 1907. In 1929 the Hardware Company building was converted to a gasoline service station by the Transcontinental Oil Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma. From 1930 up until World War II, this was the busiest corner in Granbury as a café was added to the gas station and both were open 24 hours a day.

Looking back around the square, imagine dusty streets with farmers and settlers moseying along. Some frequenting the saloons while others are having their wagons packed with supplies. Women are visiting or buying dry goods at the mercantile stores. From the first pioneers who began to settle in the region during the 1850’s to the present day, the Square is steeped in Victorian architecture and charming country spirit.

The information presented in this walk around the Square has been compiled from several documents some of which may be found at the Jailhouse Museum, Visit Granbury, and the Bridge Street History Center. The information is as factual as could be derived from the documents used.

**Granbury Depot Museum – 109 E Ewell St.**

Granbury Depot was built in 1914 to replace the original Depot. The old Depot was built to accommodate passengers of the Fort Worth and Rio Grande railroad when it came to town in 1887. This made a big difference in Granbury and in its lifestyle. Now people were able to travel into Fort Worth on the “fore day” train. It came into Granbury ‘fore daylight and returned after dark. The Depot Museum is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and by appointment. Visit Granbury has more information.