

In 1871 the Houston and Texas Central Railroad, a forerunner of the Southern Pacific Railroad, purchased 647 acres of land in Ellis County at a price of \$5.00 per acre, establishing the line's northern terminus.

On June 8, 1872, this site was established as the City of Ennis. The namesake of the town was Cornelius Ennis, an early official of the Houston and Texas Central Railroad.

In 1891, the Texas & New Orleans Railroad, a part of the Southern Pacific system, established a division point in Ennis, leading to the construction of shops and a roundhouse. The citizens of Ennis contributed \$25,000, 90 acres of land, and a 43 acre lake toward the project. A contract was drawn up stating that the railroad could not move its shops out of town as long as the City of Ennis was able to provide water for the railroad's use.

The railroad was the key to the development of Ennis as an agricultural, commercial, and later, an industrial center. According to early resident Joseph Baldrige, "If Ennis had not obtained the shops and the superintendent's offices, it would have remained only a small agricultural center." Ennis was able to successfully combine the natural resources of its rich farm land with the transportation advantages offered by the railroad. By the 1930's, Ennis had become known as the place "Where Railroads and Cotton Fields Meet."

From its founding, various cultures have shaped the development of the City. In its earlier days, Ennis was a settlement town with a "wild west" reputation. At one time, the City contained 13 saloons and 6 beer halls. The town also served as a stopping place for outlaw gangs including those of Cole Younger and Sam Bass.

By the 1880's, Ennis had become the banking and agricultural center of east Ellis County. Ennis National

Bank, with capital of \$100,000, held the title of the largest bank in the county in 1883.

Many of the early settlers of this area were people from the East and the South who were attracted by the rich Blackland Prairie soil, the railroad, and other business opportunities.

In 1873, Jacob Shebasta, an immigrant from Czechoslovakia, was the first of many Eastern Europeans to make this area his home. Ennis retains a strong Czechoslovakian influence, and today is home to four Czech social halls as well as the annual National Polka Festival each May.

Other cultures have also contributed to the history of Ennis. For example, Robert Martinez drove 3,200 head of cattle from Ennis to Montana along the Chisolm Trail in the late 1800's. Also, during the 1920's, Ennis resident Dr. Armour Rogers became one of the first practicing African-American doctors in Ellis County.

About the Museum Building

The Ennis Railroad and Cultural Heritage Museum is housed in a former Van Noy restaurant building which was built in 1915. The restaurant served customers from as many as 10 passenger trains a day that once stopped in Ennis.

The yellow wood-frame building to the north of the museum served as the ticket office and baggage building after the original two-story depot was destroyed by fire in the late 1930's. Located to the south of the museum is the former Wells Fargo freight office, which serves as the Ennis Visitor Center.

The City of Ennis acquired the museum building from the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1991.



Cornelius Ennis

The early residents of Ennis chose as their town's namesake Cornelius Ennis, a man who served as Mayor of Houston (1856-1857), was an incorporator and director of the Great Northern Railroad, and also served as a director of the Houston & Texas Central Railroad.

Mr. Ennis was also involved in the management of the *Galveston News*. Mr. Ennis' eldest daughter, Nettie, also became interested in the *News*, as she married the newspaper's publisher, Col. Alfred H. Belo. Belo later moved to Dallas where he established the *Dallas Morning News* in 1885.

Ennis Facts



- The City of Ennis was established in 1872.
- In 1920 a total of 152,601 bales of cotton were ginned in Ellis County, the most of any county in America.
- Ennis is known as the Bluebonnet City because of the springtime beauty and abundance of the State flower in and around the City.
- Ennis was a stopping place for the outlaw gangs of Cole Younger and Sam Bass.
- US Marine Corps 1st Lt. Jack Lummus, born in Ennis, posthumously received the Congressional Medal of Honor

for bravery in World War II. Lummus, a former Baylor University and New York Giants football star, was one of only two National Football League players to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.



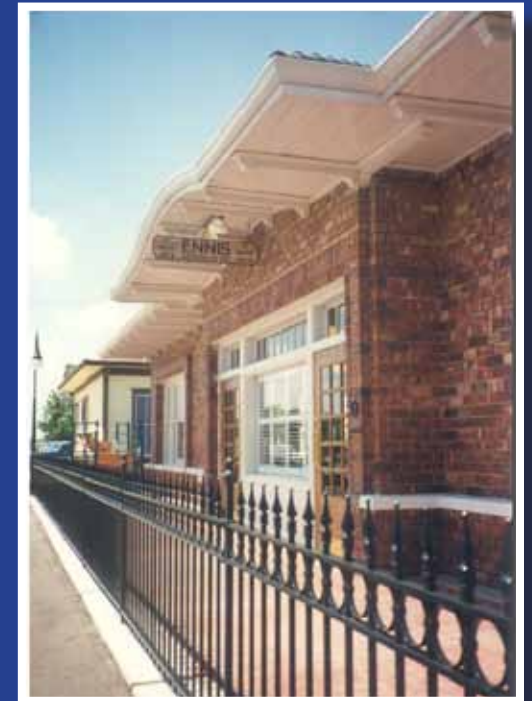
DISCOVER OUR HISTORY



For more information about the Ennis Railroad and Cultural Heritage Museum, please contact the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau at 972-878-4748 or the museum at 972-875-1901. Visit the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau's website at www.visitennis.org or the City of Ennis website at www.ennis-texas.com.

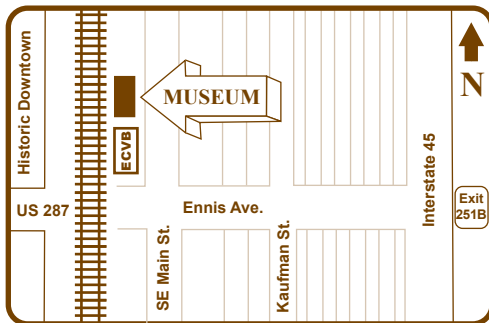
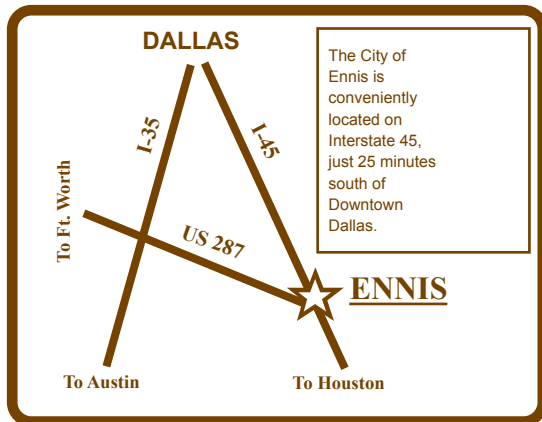


Ennis, Texas Railroad and Cultural Heritage Museum



Where The Cotton Fields
Met The Railroad

105 NE Main St.



Join The Crowd!

