

Historic Downtown Abilene

Founded in 1881 by the T&P Railway, Abilene has since become the heart of West Texas. Oil strikes and lucrative crops lead to Abilene's success in the 1920s—a time when the buildings of Downtown District were being constructed.

The Abilene Commercial Historic District, created in 1991, preserves the exceptional architecture and cultural landscape of what is now known as Historic Downtown Abilene. David S. Castle, known as the “Architect of Abilene,” founded a firm that dominated all construction in Abilene during the 1920's. Castle was born in Constantine, Michigan, in 1884. In 1914, Castle moved to Abilene and started his own business, David S. Castle & Company. Castle & Company supervised the construction on many of the historical landmarks of Downtown Abilene, such as: the Wooten Hotel, the Windsor Hotel, the Mims Building, the Federal Building and the Paramount Theatre. Castle's company also designed buildings at all three Abilene universities, as well as, buildings in surrounding towns.

One of Castle's landmarks is now a Historic Downtown Abilene attraction. The Historic Paramount Theatre, located at 352 Cypress St., originally opened on May 19, 1930 as part of a development plan with the Wooten Hotel. The Paramount Theatre is a fully restored art deco movie theatre best known for its ceiling with slow drifting clouds and twinkling stars on a blue sky, featuring numerous archways and a bell tower with twin domed turrets. The theatre shows classic films on weekends and hosts art films, plays and concerts throughout the year.

Historic Downtown Abilene will surprise you with its sophisticated western flare. Its civic progressiveness has given it a number of cultural and entertainment attractions in excess of what would be expected for a city of 116,000. The downtown area has many shopping, dining and attractions.

Abilene has not lost its frontier soul. Thanks to modern technology, it is possible to relive early frontier days. Frontier Texas!, located at 625 N. 1st St., allows you to step back in time to meet the men and women who lived and died on the Texas frontier. Find adventure as you walk through tepees, live through a Buffalo Stampede and explore our history from 1780-1880. Unlike a traditional museum, Frontier Texas! uses first-person narratives rather than collections of artifacts to tell the story of the western Texas frontier, along with lights, cameras, action and big-screen special effects.

The Grace Museum, located at 102 Cypress St., is a beautifully restored



1909 hotel that now houses three museums. The Abilene Historical Museum

consists of displays showing the founding and growth of Abilene; the active

Children's Museum is great for children of all ages and the Art Museum proudly



of

the

rotates world class exhibits. *Grace Notes*, an interactive sculpture created by artist and musician Edward Weiss, is a life-size artwork of colors, shapes and sounds designed for noise, fun and plenty of hands-on play. The *Mallouf Boot Shop* is a permanent exhibit that highlights the unique craft of custom cowboy boots. This shop features original equipment, handmade tools, many types of

leather, the shop's original cash register and Mallouf boots.

The National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, located at N. 1st and Cedar St., is housed in the restored Rhodes Auto Building. This first and one of kind museum, features exhibitions by famed children's authors and illustrators.

See working artists in action at the Center for Contemporary Arts, located at 220 Cypress St. The Center has four galleries with rotating exhibits and 10 studios that provide artists the unique opportunity to share their work and vision. The Center for Contemporary Arts coordinates monthly programs, such as ArtWalk, to celebrate visual and performing arts within the community.

The military influence began with Fort Phantom Hill, an 1851 Army post and continues today with Dyess Air Force Base, home to the B-1B Bomber. The 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum, located 1289 N. 2nd St. in Historic Downtown Abilene, allows you to learn about the men that risked their lives for the future of yours. The museum houses the Division's historical collection, serves as a teaching museum and provides educational programs.

New to Historic Downtown Abilene, is Downtown Dayz, held the second Saturday of each month. Downtown Dayz is sponsored by the Abilene Downtown Association and features a wide range of events including: more than 30 locally owned shops, restaurants, street vendors, live entertainment and attractions in Downtown Abilene.

For additional information on the Historic Downtown Abilene attractions and events, log on to www.abilenevisitors.com.

