

DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT*

Bee County Courthouse
105 West Corpus Christi, Beeville

Bee County was created in 1857 from parts of five neighboring counties. The first county seat was located seven miles east of this site, and the first commissioners court was held on the banks of Medio Creek in February 1858. The city's earliest courthouse consisted of a box frame structure. In 1912, local architect W. C. Stephenson designed this, the county's fourth courthouse. A native of Buffalo, New York, Stephenson aided in the design of the death mask of President William McKinley. He was the architect of several Beeville buildings, including the Rialto Theater, two churches and several houses, and later designed the Classical Revival McMullen County courthouse. W. C. Whitney, builder of three other Texas courthouses, contracted to build the Bee County courthouse for \$72,050. Whitney died during construction and W. C. Stephenson's partner, Fritz Heldenfels, completed the project. Stephenson drew upon the strong contemporary influence of the French Beaux Arts School with a level of grandeur previously nonexistent in Bee County. Some original Beaux Arts features such as the cast stone balustrade originally outlining the roof were later removed, and the 1943 addition partially obscured the symmetrical plan and façade of the edifice. The Bee County courthouse is a fine example of the Classical Revival style.



The Bee County Courthouse celebrated the restoration and rededication ceremony of the fourth courthouse on May 20, 2006. The restoration grants were awarded by the prestigious Texas Historical Commission Preservation Program. The courthouse has been honored to receive National Register, State Archeological Landmark and a

Recorded Texas Historical Landmark designations. It stands proudly in the center of Beeville's Historic District.

The Beeville Post Office
111 North St. Mary's Street, Beeville

The Beeville Post Office has been moved several times. The current building was completed in 1917; however, during construction, contractor Robert B. Brown shot and killed Drayman J.P. Hermes. Found guilty of homicide Hermes appealed and in 1921, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Homes ruled that Brown acted in self-defense, thus establishing the right to defend oneself on federal property. The Beeville Post Office has received National Register and Recorded Texas Historical Landmark designations from the Texas Historical Commission. The building stands on the east end of Beeville's Downtown Historic District.

Rialto Theater
114 North Washington Street, Beeville

The Rialto Theater was built in 1922 by architect W.C. Stephenson as the flagship for the 22 theater chain owned by Henry W. Hall, Sr. and family. After a fire in 1935 destroyed the interior, the theater was remodeled in an elaborate Art Moderne and Art Deco style by John Ebersson (designer of the Majestic Theater in San Antonio). The Rialto has National Register and Recorded Texas Historical Landmark designations. The building stands in the center of the Downtown Historic District.



Thompson Building
First Brick Building on the Square
108 West Corpus Christi, Beeville

Built in 1892 by grocer J.C. Thompson, the building is made of brick from the Calaveras kiln near Elmendorf. Harlingen founder Lon C. Hill opened his law office on the second floor. Other occupants include the

Beeville Light House Armory and three telephone companies. The building was restored by John Barnhart in 1957 and is currently facing the courthouse in the Downtown Historic District.

Praeger Building
Joe Barnhart Bee County Library
110 W. Corpus Christi, Beeville

Built in 1906, Albert Praeger built this as a second location for his hardware store. This Romanesque Revival structure stands in the center of the Downtown Historic District. In 2001, the Joe Barnhart Foundation restored the building into a new state-of-the-art Joe Barnhart Bee County Library. The building has received National Register and Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designations from the Texas Historical Commission.



Commercial National Bank of Beeville
Now Prosperity Bank
100 South Washington, Beeville

The Commercial National Bank of Beeville traces its history to January 1893 when the bank opened. Housed on the northwest corner of the courthouse square in a two-story brick edifice, the bank was successful from the beginning. The bank building was remodeled in the 1930's and was modernized and expanded in the 1950s. The bank is now owned and managed by Prosperity Bank and was remodeled in 2012. The bank continues to support and serve the community.

Markers on the Bee County Courthouse Lawn

Beeville on the Poesta

Long before Mexico granted land (1834) on Poesta Creek to the first settlers, Anne Burke and James Heffernan, savage Indians roamed this valley at will. Their colony, although successful at first, soon met

disaster. In 1836 James Heffernan, his brother John, and John Ryan, who had planned to join Texas patriots at Goliad, were planting a crop in a field at this site when they were massacred by Comanches. Also killed was James' family, in his picket house upcreek. Bee County was organized in 1858 and named for Col. Barnard E. Bee, a Republic of Texas statesman. Soon after, choice of a county seat came into hot dispute. A site seven miles east, on Medio Creek, was chosen for "Beeville". But ten months later, voters made the 150-acre donation of Anne Burke "O'Carroll permanent county seat, on the banks on the Poesta. The new town, first called "Maryville" for Mary Heffernan (relative of those killed in 1836) was soon renamed Beeville. In its first decade, it had two stores, one saloon, and a blacksmith shop. First courthouse was built for \$750 on west side of present square, 1860. First railroad came through, 1866, and a larger courthouse was soon built. After it burned, the present one was erected in 1912. The site received marker recognition from the Texas Historical Commission.

Barnard Elliott Bee, Sr.

Barnard E. Bee, Sr. statesman, soldier, and ambassador and was instrumental in helping Texas in its years as a Republic. A native of South Carolina, Barnard E. Bee immigrated to Texas in 1836 shortly after the Battle of San Jacinto. From 1836 to 1846, Bee played an active and useful part in the United States recognition of the Republic of Texas. During those same years, he served the young Republic in a number of offices: Secretary of the Treasury in 1836, Secretary of War from 1837-1838 and Secretary of State from 1839. In 1840-1841, the Texas government appointed him as minister (ambassador) to the United States. In that post, he negotiated with Daniel Webster and settled the formal treaty by which the United States recognized Texas.

On December 8, 1857, his son General Hamilton P. Bee, a planter from Goliad and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives asked that a new adjoining county be named in memory of his father, Colonel Barnard Elliott Bee, Sr. .The request was granted. Later, the county seat of Beeville was also named in honor of Colonel Bee.

Railroad in Bee County

Railroad in Bee County
West Bowie and North Madison, Beeville.

The marker for the Railroad in Bee County is on the site of the old depot. On June 14, 1886, the first San Antonio and Aransas Pass train arrived in Beeville to a cheering crowd. After the takeover of S.A.A.P. by Southern Pacific in 1925, the depot became an S.P. station. In 1958, the depot was razed, and the last train left Bee County in 1994. Three blocks of rails are preserved here.

Texas Historic Cemeteries in Bee County*

Campo Santo (Corrigan)
Private Property on Hwy. 202
Beeville

Situated on headright of an 1829 settler, Jeremiah O'Toole, from New York. The isolated oak log home of O'Toole stood on San Patricio-La Bahia road; his family fled repeatedly from Indians or invading armies. In time other pioneers built homes nearby in Corrigan settlement (named for O'Toole's son-in-law). Community is now extinct. Ten acres were donated in 1871 by Ellen O'Toole Corrigan and brother, Martin, as site for Sacred Heart of Jesus Church (now razed) and grounds. This cemetery is a reminder of the courageous pioneer settlers. It was named as a Texas Historic Cemetery. It is not accessible to the public. Today, Colony Cemetery designated a Historic Texas Cemetery in 2002, is a link to the original Scandinavian families and their contributions to the community's rich history. (200

Evergreen Cemetery
700 Block of East Bowie

Block 1, Beeville original town site, donated 1859 by Anne Burke. First owned by G.W. McClanahan, land was bought 1862 by county for

"Public Burying Ground". In 1872, H.W. Wilson donated northeast strip, land was added on the northwest, and Commissioner's Court gave consent for a fence.

Glenwood Cemetery
1400 East Hefferman Street, Beeville

In 1901 local undertaker, Christopher Rotzien purchased 5 ½ acres of land from T. H. Nott of Goliad for a new cemetery. The original cemetery, Evergreen, which had been in use for about thirty-five years was almost completely filled. On 05 July 1902 the newly formed Beeville Cemetery Association purchased the 5 ½ acres of land from Harriet Rotzien for the sum of \$500.00 since that time the cemetery has continued to expand. The Beeville Cemetery Association has begun a revival with many improvements.

St. Joseph Cemetery
1400 East Hefferman Street, Beeville

Part of the original Hefferman grant, this five acre tract was first owned by Captain A.C. Jones, then by H.W. Wilson and finally by T.H. Nott of Goliad. On December 28, Nott sold the land to Bishop Peter Verdagner of the Brownsville Diocese for \$750. This cemetery has served the Catholic population of Beeville since the late 19th century, when the town experienced impressive growth. Noted bishop Peter Verdagner of the Brownsville Diocese purchased land here from T.H. Nott in 1891, and the first burial occurred in 1893. The St. Joseph Cemetery Association organized in 1920 to maintain the grounds. Beeville residents buried here include philanthropists, ranchers, cattlemen, veterans, and civic and business leaders. Men and women who emigrated here from a number of countries are also among those interred. Today, the Diocese of Corpus Christi and volunteers provide care for the grounds.

St. Rose Cemetery
1402 East Hefferman Street, Beeville

Adjacent and east of St. Joseph's Cemetery, St. Rose lies on a 2.5 acre tract. In 1901, Nancy Williams was the first person buried in the new cemetery. Mose Lott and Allen Canada, builders of the first school for African Americans, are also buried here. The cemetery was designated as a Texas Historical Cemetery by the Texas Historical Commission.

Colony Cemetery
Colony Community, Hwy. 181

Colony Cemetery was established by Norwegian colonists in 1897. The cemetery was located on the property of Hans Thompson, by the graves of Thompson's son Carl, Barney Olson and Telda Travland. Descendants of the Selgelids, Kningsteds, Nelsons, Becks, Berkelands, Mickelsens, Torgersons, Lovells and Sivleys were buried there. Markers for veterans of the Civil and Spanish American wars and both world wars can be found among the graves of these early settlers.

Historic Churches

First Presbyterian Church
908 North Washington, Beeville.

Presbyterians began meeting together informally as early as 1885. In 1890 or 1891, Rev. Henry Rufner Laird (1842-1925) was sent to officially organize the congregation. The church was founded with 26 charter members and has a designated historical marker from the Texas Historical Commission.



First United Methodist Church
106 East Cleveland, Beeville

In 1861, three years after Bee County was organized, the Rev. Berry Merchant of Corpus Christi assisted Beeville Methodists in establishing the Methodist-Episcopal Church. Circuit-riding preachers served the congregation and held services in the courthouse until the early 1870s, when they built their first church on the corner of Bowie and Monroe. Relocated to this site in 1904, and blessed with a new sanctuary

1955, the church continues its role in the religious life of the community.

Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church
108 N. Burke, Beeville.

Organized in 1884, Bethlehem Baptist is the oldest African-American congregation in Beeville. Served originally by a circuit pastor, the congregation held Sunday services in a schoolhouse donated by Capt. A.C. Jones. The church purchased land from Jones and built its first sanctuary in 1893. In 1926, the original white-frame structure and its two towers was replaced by a larger but similar structure. The church has been replaced several times since then, including its most recent construction in the 1980s.

Jones Chapel Methodist Church
115 N. Leverman, Beeville

Jones Chapel Methodists met in an old school house until they built a sanctuary in 1889, on land donated by Captain A. C. Jones to three former slaves, who served as trustees of the new church. Many of the early members were former slaves. In 1926, the present frame church was built on the original site, where the congregation fervently serves the African American community of Beeville.

St. Phillip's Episcopal Church
311 East Corpus Christi, Beeville

St. Phillip's sanctuary and transept were consecrated in 1893. In 1954, the parish established the first Protestant parochial school. The Gothic design of the church was retained in the 1964 renovation when the frame structure was covered with brick.



St. Joseph Catholic Church
609 East Gramman, Beeville.

The founding of this church was nurtured by the itinerant priests who held Catholic services held in the homes of predominantly Irish settlers in the late 1840s. In 1992, a new church building was erected to serve a growing congregation.



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First Baptist Church
600 North St. Mary's, Beeville.

Organized in 1869 as Beeville Baptist, the congregation built their first sanctuary near Poesta Creek in 1871. They changed the name to First Baptist in 1887. Under the leadership of J.M. Sallee and his family, the church began a tradition of foreign missionary work, especially in China. The fourth sanctuary was built here in 1957.



Blanconia (Old N2) Church
Off State Highway 202, southeast of Beeville.

The first Baptist church in Refugio County was organized on April 22, 1855, and met in the Doughty Schoolhouse near Refugio. In 1865, the first sanctuary was erected (5 mi. W) and named for the cattle brand of member and benefactor N. R. McDaniel. The Blanco Baptist

Association was organized at the "N2" Church in 1873. In 1888 the fellowship moved to Blanconia where the first sanctuary on this site was built in 1891 (Bee County). This is one of the oldest Baptist churches in South Texas.

Cadiz Baptist Church
FM 799, Cadiz

Originally known as the Lapara Baptist Church, the congregation was organized in 1877 by 32 charter members. In 1920, the church was moved to its present location and renamed. The congregation won the Rural Church of the Year award in 1960.

Historic Homes

McClanahan House
206 East Corpus Christi, Beeville



The McClanahan House was built in 1867 and is the oldest business structure standing in Beeville.

The owner, G.W. McClanahan served as a teacher, postmaster, county clerk, innkeeper and church school superintendent. It is two

blocks east of the Bee County Courthouse.

Cook/Dugat Home
Cook Road, east of Cook and South Tyler, Beeville.

Born in 1846, in a Texas-bound wagon train, cattleman John Cook fought in the Civil War at 17 and married Frances Miller in 1866. The Cooks lived in a rock house nearby until their turreted Victorian mansion was wired for electricity and completed in 1897.

Built by John Cook, who was born 1846 in Texas-bound wagon train. In 1918, the U. S. Cavalry established a camp here. The home was later purchased by the Dugat family.



**Rountree Rock House
Clareville Community.**

The Rountree Rock House is located on the Rountree Ranch and is not accessible to the public. Joseph Gustav Rountree (1838-1880), who bought the land in 1875, planned the house. It was built from local limestone or caliche after his death in 1881, by his young widow Elizabeth Cornelia and her father John Stillwell.



house is raised cottage architecture and has elegantly detailed interior and exterior woodwork. Many social and cultural functions were held here at turn of century.



The present owner is Josephine Welder Miller, a Wood descendant.

**Captain A.C. Jones Home
611 East Jones, Beeville.**

Philanthropist and supporter of local schools, Mrs. Jane Field Jones (1842-1918) built the house on this site after her husband Captain Jones' death in 1906. Governors and other Texas leaders were welcomed here. Located on the hill



where the college stands today, the first and much grander A. C. Jones home was sold to the John Flournoys and moved into town by mule and wagon. It stood facing Flournoy Park until it was razed in 1946.

**William E. Madderra Home
401 North Adams, Beeville.**

As superintendent of the Beeville school system for 34 years, William Eldridge Madderra (1870-1936) was responsible for much of the development of the town's early educational programs. Madderra and his wife, Donna (Irwin) purchased this home in 1907, three years after its construction. The house features late Victorian detailing and a three sided-bay to the right of the porch.

Historic Banks

**First National Bank of Beeville
1400 East Houston, Beeville.**

The county seat did not have a secure bank until 1890, when the First National Bank of Beeville opened on the courthouse square. Relocated on the corner of Bowie and North



**Jim Little Homestead
4.5 miles west of Beeville, on Cadiz Road.**

The Jim Little Homestead is located on the F9 Ranch. The land was granted to Little in 1873. Until the arrival of the railroad in 1886, the home (1870) served as a stage stop on the San Antonio-



Brownsville Road.

**Camp Ezell House
1313 West Flournoy, Beeville.**

The lumber (Florida long-leaf pine) was salvaged by Robert A. Ezell from a house in Old Saint Mary's. The settler's box home has a board-and-batten construction. His wife Sara Jane, daughter of influential legislator L.B. Camp, was born at Mission San Jose, San Antonio. Six Ezell sons formed a popular orchestra, 1895 to 1904. Ezell (1845-1936), a stonemason, built at this creek site in 1892. It was the house of historian and Beeville Bee-Picayune Editor Camp Ezell.

**George Home
801 North Adams, Beeville**

Built in 1890 by Will H. and Julia George of materials from an early house on land inherited from her father, Maj. J.H. Wood who came from New York to join Texas War for Independence in 1836. Remodeled in 1900 presumably by Jules Leffland of Victoria. The

Washington in 1894, the bank remained there for 66 years, when it moved to 111 East Corpus Christi in 1960. In business for over a century and on its present site since 1984, it is one of the few independent and locally owned banks in Texas.

Commercial/Prosperity Bank of Beeville
100 South Washington, Beeville.

The bank traces its history to January 1893, when several prominent citizens met to organize a financial institution and begin the construction of their first bank building. Under President Dewey Pieratt, the present bank was built immediately south of the old two-story bank on the corner in 1965. In 1999, the bank was sold to Prosperity Bank.

Historic Schools

Lott-Canada School
902 West Corpus Christi, Beeville.

The original school for African Americans was founded in 1886. After fire destroyed the building in circa 1924, the Lott-Canada School (a Rosenwald school) was built in 1925 and named for the builders of the original school, Lott-Canada. In the fall of 1954, high school students were transferred to A. C. Jones, where their integration was peacefully concluded. In 1960, the school was closed. It is now the site of the Lott Canada Museum as well as partial space for the Continuing Education Dept. of Coastal Bend College. The school has been named with National Register and Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designations.

West Side School for Mexican Americans
309 Jackson, Beeville.

The West Side School for Mexican Americans, also known as Jackson School, was built in the early 1900s. A two-room frame building served students until 1932, when it was replaced with the brick schoolhouse that stands today. In the 1940s, the American GI Forum and League of United Latin American Citizens fought against inequality in schools. Their cases in Texas courts and the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Brown*

v. Board of Education ended the legal segregation of schoolchildren. However, by 1938, high school students from the West Side School had already been integrated with A. C. Jones. Integration of all Mexican American students was peacefully completed in the mid-1950s.

The building serves as a reminder of the teachers and students who worked to improve the lives of the Mexican-American population.

Historic Markers in Tuleta/Normanna/ Mineral/Pettus North Bee County

Park Hotel
U.S. 181 in Tuleta.

One of many Midwesterners lured to the area by land developers, Reinhart C. M. Nelson moved his family here from Minnesota in 1905. He built this hotel in 1910. It is the only hotel in Bee County of that era still standing and also the only hotel in the county with a Texas Historical Commission marker.

Town of Pettus
Roadside park, U.S. 181, north of Pettus.

Pettus was settled in the 1850s, when John Freeman Pettus (1808-1878) established his ranch headquarters four miles south of town. A well-known cattle and horse breeder, Pettus was the son of one of the first 300 in the Stephen F. Austin colony. After the railroad's arrival in 1886, the stock yards were full. President Taft's train stopped here for water in 1909. In 1929, the "No.1 Maggie Ray McKinney" well made Pettus the petroleum capital of the county.

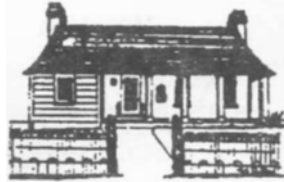
Tuleta
Near old Tuleta schoolhouse on U.S. 181.

The Rev. Peter Unzicker led a group of Illinois settlers here in 1906. With the purchase of 53.4 acres from the Chittim-Miller Ranch (on the original Uranga Grant), the Menonite clergyman founded Tuleta and named it for the daughter of J.M. Chittim.

Community of Normanna

U.S. 181, south of Normanna, north of Medio Creek.

The settlement dates from about 1850. The first town, two miles west, was called San Domingo for its location near the junction of San Domingo and Dry Medio Creeks. Moved to the rail line in 1886, the flagstop was called Walton in honor of Sheriff D.A.T. Walton. After the arrival of the Norwegian settlers in the 1890's, the town was renamed Normanna, which was interpreted as "home of the Norsemen."



Medio Creek Bridge

West of Normanna, County Road 241.

Named by the Spaniards for its midway position between the San Antonio and Nueces rivers, Medio Creek crosses U.S. Highway 59 in Beeville. The text of the marker summarizes the history of the county from the days of the tall grass prairie and the early towns of Medio Hill (1857) and Candlish (1909) to the discovery of the Buckner Mastodon in 1939. Built in 1897 by the New Jersey Iron and Steel Company, this bridge served as a major crossing between Beeville and San Antonio. It remained in service until 1987.

Bee County

U.S. 181, 2 miles north of Pettus.

Named for Col. Barnard E. Bee (1787-1853), who served the Republic of Texas as Secretary of War, Secretary of State and Minister to the United States, the county was created by legislative act on December 8, 1857. It was organized January 25, 1858, from portions of Goliad, Karnes, Live Oak, Refugio and San Patricio counties. The county seat was on Medio Creek until 1860, when it was relocated to Beeville. A cattle region since Spanish times, Bee County was an important beef producer by 1865. In 1886, the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad provided modern transportation to markets across the Nation. Oil was discovered here in 1929.

Medio Creek

East of creek, on north side of U.S. 59.

Named by the Spaniards for its midway position between the San Antonio and Nueces rivers, Medio Creek crosses U.S. 59 east of Beeville. The text of the marker summarizes the history of the county from the days of the tall grass prairie and the early towns of Medio Hill (1857) and Candlish (1909), to the discovery of the Buckner Mastodon in 1939.

Gentry Dugat Marker Mineral Cemetery, Mineral

Gentry Dugat (1895-1966) was a colorful historian, orator and journalist. In 1958, he organized and chartered the Bee County Historical Commission. Colorful historian, orator, and journalist. In 1958 organized and chaired Bee County Historical Commission. Born on nearby ranch, son of Alex and Martha (Page) Dugat. Earned law degree. Worked on seven Texas newspapers; edited "Cotton Ginners Journal". Wrote biography of post-Civil War editor-orator Henry W. Grady. World War I veteran, Methodist, Mason; member, Sons of American Revolution, Lions. Collected rare books, newspapers, artifacts.

Captain A.C. Jones

Roadside park, U.S. 181, 3.6 miles north of Beeville.

A veteran of the last battle of the Civil War, Captain Jones was born in Nacogdoches County to early Texas settlers and served as sheriff in Goliad County from 1858 to 1860. Acknowledged by all as the father of Beeville, Jones brought the railroad to Bee County in 1886. He also served as mayor, county treasurer, banker and general manager of the Beeville Oil Mill.

Early Trails in Bee County

Roadside park, U.S. 181, 3.6 miles north of Beeville.

Beeville was built on the intersection of the San Patricio-Helena Road and the Goliad-Laredo Road. Pack trails and wagon roads marked the

area. At least 300 years of early travel have developed into modern roads like U.S. Highway 181.

**First Christian Church of Pettus
Walton and Commerce Streets, Pettus.**

The First Christian Church is located at the corner of Walton and Commerce in Pettus. Built in 1905, it was the first Protestant church in Pettus. Mrs. S. B. Hodges donated the land and chose the name. On August 29, 1906, the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was organized with 25 members. For many years Baptists, Methodists, and Disciples conducted a union Sunday School and worshipped here. Its tall white spire became the town landmark



**Historical Marker in Skidmore/Papalote
South Bee County**

Aransas Creek Settlers
Skidmore Historical Society museum, corner of Sullivan St. and US 181,
Skidmore.

Earliest known residents were Karankawa Indians who named creek. On this stream was one of the most famous ranches in early Texas, occupied in 1805 by Don Martin de Leon, who in 1824 founded Victoria. In 1830's Irish colonists came by way of Copano Bay, settling down creek. Anglo-Americans from older settlements, came by road and trail, stopping mainly up creek. Stock raising, trucking and freighting provided livelihoods in the rich, new prairie land. John Wilson, an 1850's up creek settler, brought first Durham cattle to country; built one of first wooden fences, enclosing 600 acres of home

site with rough heart pine plank. On creek's north bank stood ranch of Frank O. Skidmore, founder of Skidmore, who gained fame for building first barbed wire fence and windmill in county. He promoted breeding of registered Herefords and in 1886 gave much of right-of-way to the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad.

**Papalote Creek
Roadside park, U.S. 181, south of Papalote.**

Papalote Creek runs through the hunting grounds of the Karankawas, who named the creek after its kite-shaped pebbles. Power and Hewetson colonists claimed their Mexican land grants along the creek in the 1830s. By 1857, the town of Papalote was a center and after the railroad in 1886, it boomed. Bypassed by U.S. 181, Papalote began to fade.
Bee County

**Historic Military Property
N.A.S. Chase Field
State Hwy 202, Beeville**

N.A.S. Chase Field was commissioned as a Naval Air Auxiliary Station on June 1, 1943, for the training of naval aviators during World War II. As an adjunct to the great naval air station at Corpus Christi, NAS Chase contributed thousands of trained aviators for combat in World War II. Closed after the war, the base was reactivated in 1954, during the Cold War. Families of the military and civilian personnel took leading roles in the county's schools, churches and civic organizations, and many remained here after retirement. On Feb. 1, 1993, Chase Field was officially disestablished, bringing an end to 50 years of service in naval training. (Various buildings are listed on the National Register. NAS Chase Field Building 1009, NAS Chase Field Building 1015, NAS Chase Field Building 1040, NAS Chase Field Building 1042, NAS Chase Field Quarters R. and NAS Chase Field Quarters S. are also on the National Register.

For more information, see the Texas Historical Commission website at www.thc.state.tx.us and look for Atlas on the left side. Then go to Bee County and the listings of historical properties is found.

Also, see www.beecountyhistoricalcommission.com.

Chronological Timeline and Events for Bee County

Prehistoric Era - Mastodons and saber tooth tigers roamed in future Bee County as early human inhabitants arrive and camped along creek valleys.

El Camino Real de los Tejas – Early trail from Mexico to Louisiana used by Native Americans and later followed by all settlers in area.

1700's – At the arrival of first Europeans, Karankawas, Lipan Apaches, Borrados and Skidi Pawnees roamed across future Bee County.

The Camino Real from San Patricio-Lipantitlan to Nacogdoches and Louisiana crossed the headwaters of the Papalote, the Arroyo de Las Ratas, and the Aransas River in future Bee County, and Beeville was built on the intersection of the San Patricio-Helena Road and the Goliad-Laredo Road. Another segment of the trail is thought to be in northern Bee County which leads to Goliad. Outposts and parts of the trail still under investigation.

1789 – Carlos Martinez's Spanish land grant extended southward from Karnes County and extended into future Bee County. Martinez was the first Spaniard to reside on his grant. The entire family was wiped out when Mexico revolted from Spain.

1805 – Martin De Leon established a ranch on land east of the Aransas River.

1829 – Irish and U.S. settlers from the Power and Hewetson colony settle at Papalote Creek (named by the Indians for its kite-shaped pebbles). Irish settlers establish the community of Corrigan on the Aransas River.

1830's – The Castillo, Santos and Moya families received Mexican land grants in future Bee County.

1834-35 - Irish, Mexican, and U.S. settler's deeds were recorded for their Mexican land grants along Papalote, Aransas, and Poesta Creek.

The James Hefferman family, Anna Burke and son, Patrick (who was born one hour after his mother's arrived on shore from Ireland in 1824), settle along the Poesta Creek on land from a Mexican Land Grant.

Jose Maria Uranga received the largest single Mexican Land Grant in the area of present Normanna.

1835 – The first shots of the Texas Revolution were fired at Gonzales.

Five Bee County settlers signed the first Texas Declaration of Independence at Goliad: Timothy Hart, William Quinn, James O'Connor, James St. John, and William St. John.

1836 – Many area residents joined other Texans in the Runaway Scrape.

The fall of the Alamo March 6, Goliad Massacre March 27, and victory at San Jacinto April 21.

Indians killed John Hefferman, John Ryan, and James Hefferman, along with his family, as the men planted crops. (They planned on joining Fannin at Goliad.)

Five Bee County colonists known to lose their lives at Goliad were: Thomas Quirk, Edward Ryan, and John Fadden. William Quinn and John Kelly were killed in battle at Coleto Creek before the capture of Fannin's men.

Following Santa Anna's capture at San Jacinto, Colonel Barnard E. Bee was assigned to accompany Santa Anna to Washington DC where, before President Andrew Jackson, Santa Anna renewed the promises he made to the Republic of Texas.

1840's – St. Joseph's Catholic Church founded by itinerant priest who held services in the home of predominantly Irish settlers.

1841-1842 – Five Bee County colonists were taken prisoners while on the Mier Expedition into Mexico. John Ryan, Jr. was killed in battle, James Burke died in Perote Prison, and John Corrigan drew a white bean and lived to be released in 1844.

1845 – Texas was annexed as the twenty-eighth state in the United States.

Bee County settlers built the first houses of lumber with materials brought by wagons pulled by oxen from the port at Saint Marys.

1846 – Barnard E. Bee returned to South Carolina.

1846-1848 – Men from Beeville fought in the Mexican War.

1847 – The Dunlap-Walton rock home was built in the bend of the Aransas Creek.

1856 – Camels were brought to Texas as beasts of burdens and roamed across Bee County.

1857 – The Texas Legislative formed Bee County and named it after Barnard E. Bee, Sr., who served the Republic of Texas under Presidents Sam Houston and Mirabeau B. Lamar as Secretary of War, Secretary of State and Minister to the U.S.

Papalote was the center of activity for the new county.

A Post office at Medio Hill opened.

1858 – Bee County was organized with the first county seat, and courthouse, on the banks of the Medio Creek near Medio Hill.

Commissioners Court met for the first time on February 10th.

1859 – The first schoolhouse in Bee County, San Domingo schoolhouse near Normanna, was built.

The county bought land for Evergreen Cemetery, the first cemetery in Beeville.

1860 – The county seat moved to Maryville on the banks of the Poesta and was renamed Beeville.

The second county courthouse was built on Washington St.

Beeville Lodge No. 261, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, was organized.

1861 – The First Methodist Church was organized in Beeville.

1861 – 1865 – The Civil War. Texas seceded from the United States and joined the Confederacy. Home Guard Units organized across Bee County while citizens of Bee County suffered the hardships of war and drought. The "Cotton Road", the lifeline of the Confederacy, passed through Bee County.

1862 - The county bought land for Evergreen Cemetery, the first cemetery in Beeville.

The first recorded burial was a four old girl killed by a rattlesnake bite.

1867 – The McClanahan House, the oldest business structure in Beeville, was erected on the east side of the courthouse.

1869 – Beeville Baptist Church was organized and their first sanctuary was built near Poesta Creek in 1871.

1870 – The first settlers settled in Cadiz.

Settlers established homes in and around Mineral.

The Jim Little Home was built using cypress and heart pine that arrived by steamer from Florida, then by ox-cart to site. The home served as a stage stop on the San Antonio-Brownville Road until the railroad arrived.

1870-1880's – Cattle from Bee County were driven up the Chisholm Trail to Kansas.

Clareville established and named for Clare family.

Late 1870's the last Indian fight in the county was fought five miles west of Pettus after a group of Karankawas stole some horses.

1871 – The Papalote community was the most flourishing village in the county.

Judge W.R. Hayes carried county funds in his saddle pockets and used a wagon and mesquite post to mark the distance between each village and the county seat at Beeville.

Campo Santo burial ground land donated for courageous pioneer settlers in Corrigan Community.

W.B. Hatch, Sr. opened a general store in Papalote, which continued in operation by the Long family until 1951.

1874 – Captain A.C. Jones settled in Beeville and was later given the title of the “Father of Beeville”.

The first schoolhouse for Beeville was purchased. (Up to this time classes were conducted in a variety of buildings and homes)

The first Bee County Jail was erected. The wooden structure is now preserved near the Sheriff's Department.

1876 – A school for Black American children was held in the Stephen Canada store.

Beasley and Beasley Law Firm, oldest continuous business in the county, was established.

1877 – Frank O. Skidmore built the first barbed wire fence in the county.

The “Mineral Well” was dug and Mineral became a thriving health resort.

Lapara Baptist Church in Cadiz was organized.

1878 – The third courthouse was built on the site of the present courthouse.

The Ellis Hotel opened in Beeville. (It was destroyed by fire in 1908)

1881 – Joseph G. Roundtree's young widow and her father build a rock house of local limestone, or caliche, on the Roundtree Ranch in Clareville.

1883 – The first store and gin operated in Monteola, named for the salesman, Monty, and his wife, Ola.

Mexico War veteran, Thomas Collins, who suffered a saber wound at the Battle of Chapultepec resulting in the eventual loss of his leg, was buried on his ranch near Pettus.

1885 – The First Christian Church of Beeville was organized.

The first telegraph office in Beeville opened.

1886 – The first passenger train, the San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad, arrived in Beeville, and Beeville began to grow.

Land for the new town site of Pettus was donated.

Frank O. Skidmore founded the town of Skidmore.

The Beeville Bee weekly newspaper started publication.

A new three-room schoolhouse was built on six acres donated by A.C. Jones.

1887 – Bethlehem Baptist Church, the oldest African-American congregation in Beeville, was organized

1888 – The Texas Mexican Railway built a line from Skidmore to Alice.

El Grito Del Pueblo, Beeville’s second newspaper, was founded.

The Blanconia (Old N2), one of the oldest Baptist churches in South Texas (1855), moved its fellowship from Refugio to Blanconia.

Settlers in Los Olmos built a Catholic Church and in 1893 added a school.

1889 – Jones Chapel Methodist Church was built on land donated by A.C. Jones to three former slaves.

Captain A.C. Jones brought a second rail line from Victoria to Beeville.

1890 – First National Bank of Beeville opened as the first bank in Beeville.

The settlement of Caesar, made up farmers and ranchers, was started.

The Picayune, a weekly newspaper, was started.

The earliest settlers of Pawnee, named for Pawnee arrowheads found in Sulphur Creek, arrived.

Beeville incorporated as a town.

Well J. and Julia George home built the George home with lumber from cattle baron Major J.H. Wood’s home.

1891 – The first telephone system in Beeville was established.

The village of Quincy was started.

First Presbyterian Church of Beeville was organized.

St. Joseph Cemetery established by Catholic Church.

A “hook and ladder” fire company organized in Beeville.

1892 – The first brick building in Beeville, the Thompson Building at 108 West Corpus Christi S., was built by grocer, J.C. Thompson.

Robert A. Ezell built the Ezell home using Florida longleaf pine from a house torn down in Old Saint Marys.

The Queens Hotel was built in Beeville.

1893 – Commercial Bank of Beeville was organized, and the construction of their building was started.

The community of Walton Station was renamed Normanna for its Norwegian settlers.

Saint Philips Episcopal Church of Beeville was built.

1894 – Substation No. 1, the oldest state-operated experiment station in the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station system, was established outside of Beeville.

A two-story brick schoolhouse was built in Beeville.

1896 – Electric light went on in Beeville, but the company was short-lived because too many preferred oil lamps.

Saint Mary’s Academy, the first parochial school in Beeville opened. A fire destroyed it in 1930, and St. Joseph’s School was located on the site.

1897 – The Colony Cemetery was established by Norwegian colonist.

Civil War veteran and cattleman, John Cook’s home was built from select long-leaf pine and placed to catch gulf breezes.

Medio Creek Bridge, a major crossing between Beeville and San Antonio, was built.

1898 – Commerce increased in Beeville as several businesses open.

Men from Bee County fought in the Spanish-American War.

1900 – Bee County had a population of 7720 with an “estimated count” of 2311 in Beeville.

A fire destroyed businesses in Skidmore.

1901 – St. Rose Cemetery’s first burial took place; other burials include Moses Lott and Allen Canada.

1903 – Beeville Water & Light Company offered both water and electric lights to residents of Beeville.

1904 – The village Cadiz was named, settlers had been in the area since the 1874.

1905 – The Beeville Fire Department was organized.

The First Christian Church of Pettus was built.

1906 – Settlers begin to arrive in Orangedale in hopes of producing citrus fruits, particularly oranges.

A Mennonite clergyman founded Tuleta.

A town site for Tynan was established.

1907- Educator William E. Madderra and his wife, Donna, purchased their home, built in 1904.

A fire in Beeville destroyed buildings on North Washington and west Bowie Streets.

1908 – The first automobile bought by a Beeville citizen arrives.

Beeville incorporated as a city.

Saint Joseph’s Catholic Church, later named Our Lady of Victory, was built.

The Grand Opera House opened in Beeville.

1909 – The village of Candlish was laid out; it was made up of the communities of Medio Hill, Robinson, and Cummingsville.

President Taft’s train stopped in Beeville after visiting the Taft Ranch.

The Fortuna Broom Factory (1902) moved from Normanna to Beeville.

1910-1918 – Four passenger trains a day pass through Beeville.

1910 – The Park Hotel, with its unique wrap around porch, was built in Tuleta

1911 – The third county courthouse burned.

The first airplane, a Curtiss flying machine, arrived in the county.

The first A.C. Jones High School was built on Hays St.

1912 – The fourth, and present, courthouse was built.

The first business was erected in Tynan.

1913 – J. Frank Dobie of Beeville was awarded a \$150 scholarship for making the top grade in English at Columbia University, as reported by the Beeville Picayune.

1914 – Beeville Hospital, the first hospital in Beeville, was established.

1916 – A hurricane blew down windmills in Beeville.

Residents of Papalote hid in the brick schoolhouse after a false rumor of a raid by Pancho Villa’s men spread throughout the community.

1917-1918 – Men and women from Bee County served in WWI and fourteen lost their lives.

1918 – The present Post Office opened in its new neoclassical building.

U.S. Calvary camped at the Cook Ranch and the Army Air Corp camped on Nutt Land.

1918-1933 – The downtown streets of Beeville were paved.

1919 - A third fire devastated Skidmore.

A hurricane damaged buildings in the county and blew the windows out of the new courthouse.

The Beeville Opera House was destroyed by fire.

1922 – The Rialto Theater was built in Beeville as the flagship for the 22-theater chain by H.W. Hall Family.

1925 – The Kohler Hotel was opened.

1926-1927 – Beeville’s first winter with natural gas.

1928 – The Beeville Publishing Company was formed by consolidating the Beeville Bee and the Picayune; the paper was renamed the Beeville Bee-Picayune.

1929 – The first oil well in Bee County was brought in, and the “No.1 Maggie Ray McKinney” made Pettus the petroleum capital of the county.

1931 – The Lott-Canada School opened for Black American children in Beeville.

1932 – The Hotel Kohler was built.

1936 – Following a 1935 fire, the Rialto Theater was rebuilt and designed by John Ebersson.

1938 – Desegregation of Jackson (West Side) School in 9th, 10th, and 11th grades.

1939 – Completion of a paved road to Pawnee.

1942 – 1945 – Men and women from Bee County served in WWII and eighty-two lost their lives.

1943 – Chase Field was commissioned as a Naval Auxiliary Air Station for the training of naval aviators during World War II.

1948 – Lyndon Baines Johnson visited Beeville.

Desegregation of Jackson (West Side) School in the elementary grades (except for first grade).

1950 – The last passenger train through Beeville arrived from San Antonio.

1950-1953 – Men and women from Bee County served in the Korean Conflict and fourteen lost their lives.

1954 – Desegregation of the Lott-Canada School.

1950-1957 – Seven year draught caused the exodus of many farmers.

1957 – County Public Library opened in the new Dougherty Memorial Building.

**1958 – Bee County held a countywide Centennial celebration.
The first naval jet was placed on the courthouse square.**

1959 – Fadden, McKeown-Chambliss Elementary School was opened.

1960 – Pettus flooded.

1965 – Several downtown businesses were destroyed by a fire.

Robert’s General Store in Pettus closed after 74 years.

1966 – The jet on the courthouse lawn was replaced with a VT-26 jet.

Municipal airport was constructed.

1967 – Bee County College (now Coastal Bend College) opened.
Hurricane Beulah flooded the county with 28+ inches precipitation.

1972 – The Rialto Theater celebrated its 50th year.

1978 – The Boys Club opened.

1980 – Abandonment of rail line from NE, Fannin to Beeville.

1984 – Abandonment of rail lines from Skidmore to Mathis, Alice-Falfurrias.

1985 – Beeville started receiving its water from Lake Corpus Christi.

1986 – Rialto Theater closed.

1987 – Rail service from the north ended with a derailment at the Normanna Bridge.

1992 – TDCJ Mc Connell Prison opened.

1993 – NAS Chase Field closed.

1994 – Garza East and West, prisons at old Chase Field opened.

Rail service from the south (Sinton) ended.

1999 – Amish families arrived in Bee County.

2001 – Joe Barnhart Bee County Library opened.

2008 – Bee County celebrates its Sesquicentennial (150 years).

2011-Bee County Courthouse honors Barnard E. Bee, Sr. with THC marker

Descendant Daniel Bee gives keynote address

2011 Beeville Post Office receives Texas Historical Marker

2012 – Bee County Courthouse (1912-2012) celebrates Centennial

Resources:

Bee County Centennial Book by Grace Bauer, 1958.

Handbook of Texas online

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The Biography of a Particular Place Vol. I&II by Margaret Moser, 2002.