

## **ANDERSON, TEXAS**

Anderson is on State Highway 90 and Farm roads 149 and 1774 ten miles northeast of Navasota in central Grimes County.

Bidai, Coushatta, and Kickapoo Indians roamed this area before the arrival of Stephen F. Austin's first settlers.

The historic little town of Anderson built upon seven hills, just as the Eternal City of Rome, has been referred to as the "Rome of Texas." The old Courthouse, being in the middle of the street and having two outside sets of board steps with matching white hand rails, has been described in print as reminiscent of New England town halls. Too many others, however, the sight of the church spires and the irregularly spaced houses on the slopes brought back memories of their European backgrounds.

In 1821, one of Stephen F. Austin's group, Andrew Millican, became the first settler in the Anderson vicinity. The settlement was about four miles west of what is now Anderson and near what is now known as Holland's Creek. The next year, after selling his tract of land to the Francis Holland group of relatives from Louisiana, he moved to Brazos County. Nine years later, John S. Black settled about two miles north of what is now Anderson. In 1833, three years later, Francis Holland sold the east quarter of his land to Henry Fanthorp, an Englishman, who was to become the founder of the town.

First known as Fanthorp, the town became known as Alta Mira (High View) when town lots were sold. In 1845 Henry Fanthorp requested the name be changed to Anderson in memory of Kenneth L. Anderson who died while staying at Fanthorp Inn. The last vice-president of the Republic of Texas, Kenneth L. Anderson, was buried in the Fanthorp family cemetery.

Around 1851, a small group of German immigrants settled in the vicinity of the present Zion Lutheran Church. They named their settlement Rodolph. The new name "Anderson" included Fanthorp, Alta Mira and Rodolph.

Anderson played a major role in early military and political developments of the state. A marker on the courthouse lawn lists names of many involved in the following military skirmishes: War of 1812, Battle of the Alamo, Battle of San Jacinto and the Mexican War of 1846. Also listed were delegates to the first Convention of Texas in 1832, delegates to the second Convention of Texas in 1833, delegates to the Consultation in 1835 and signers of the Declaration of Independence in 1836.

Educational development was a prime importance and private schools were established as soon as Fanthorp began to develop. In 1846, the Masonic Collegiate Institute, known as Patrick Academy, was established. St. Paul's Episcopal College, designed primarily for ministerial training, opened in 1852.

No great monument honors Dr. David C. Dickson. Not to be forgotten, this pioneer of many talents will be remembered as first doctor of medicine in Alta Mira, Representative in four legislatures, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Financial Officer at the State Prison in Huntsville during the yellow fever epidemic of 1867.

With the necessary continued progress, there is the hope that the historical charm and culture of the past will forever be evident in the future.

### **Anderson**

1850 – 1982

Local oral history has it that at one time Anderson was the fourth largest town in the state. The 1850's and 1860's was the time of its heyday. Since then the tide of

events has altered population patterns of the county and of the state, subtracting some from Anderson's position. In this century Anderson had a long hard struggle to keep alive during the Depression and Anderson's own particular disasters, but the people had the spirit and the courage to keep building.

From the very early days the town continued to progress as more families moved into the area. The first settlers brought their religion with them and of great importance was education for their children. It is believed the first house was built in 1828. At that time people helped each other build homes and it was always a festive occasion when the families would come to help build either a house or a barn. One of the most interesting houses built in this area was the Henry Lange home because it had a well right in the middle of the house.

The first merchants in Anderson were John LaPrelle and John B. Harris. They were already established in Alta Mira during the days of the Republic, and continued when the name changed to Anderson.

The first post office was approved December 12, 1835 and was located at Fanthorp Inn May 22, 1846. Soon thereafter the name of the town of Alta Mira was changed to Anderson, and the post office name was changed accordingly in April of 1849.

The first courthouse was built of cedar logs and was destroyed by fire in 1838; the second by wind in 1850; the third by fire in 1890; and the next structure built in December, 1891 was destroyed by fire in 1893. The present courthouse was built of stone in 1894 and still stands today. It is an impressive structure and contains many important papers. It was written up in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" as it is the only known courthouse built in the middle of a street.

The educational institutions, newspapers, and hotels existing here in the 1850's and 1860's attested to the fact that it was indeed a busy and thriving population center. Educational development has been noted in the introductory sketch about Anderson. During one period Anderson had at least six newspapers. One was "The Central Texian" and was published every Saturday from 1854 to 1860. Another of note was "The Texas Baptist" which was the first Baptist newspaper in the state and was published from 1855 to 1862 by the Rev. George W. Baines with J. B. Stiteler as the Assistant Editor.

There have been seven hotels in Anderson. The first was Fanthorp Inn and it still stands today. A hotel was erected by Anderson Buffington and another by John LaPrelle. Other hotels were Sloan House, Reed's Hotel, J. T. Smith Hotel (now known as the Anderson Hotel), and the Preston House (today the home of Grace and Emory Bay).

The first jail in Anderson was built in 1852 and served until 1853. It was a wooden structure. The second jail was built in 1879 and used until 1897 when a large two story brick building was built and served the County until the present-day jail was erected in 1956.

The first telegraph line was built through Anderson in 1863. The telephone came sometime after 1890. All were impressed with picking up a telephone and hearing the lady say, "Central." It was through here that news was spread in town.

Most of the people who came to settle in Anderson were farmers and brought their stock with them. Corn was the chief grain crop and cotton was grown for export. German and Polish farmers came in about 1870-1882.

The Heil Brothers were among the first butchers in town. Meat not sold the day it was butchered was put in a well for refrigeration. Other butchers were Fritz Miller, Sr., Bill Steinhagen, and Joe Moody.

Coffins in the early days were brought to the dead as there were no funeral homes. The McIntyre brothers sold coffins as did George Siddall. Mr. Siddall had a hearse drawn by two beautiful horses and this used to take the deceased to the cemetery.

The railroad was built in 1903 and was known as the Madisonville Branch of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. It ran from Navasota to Madisonville. The entire town declared a holiday when the first train declared a holiday when the first train came puffing into town, and all the folks turned out to see it, as others along the line did as the train ran through the various farms. The train really was a benefit to the communities it served, but since the line had become unprofitable, it was discontinued sometime around 1936, and in 1944 the tracks were taken up.

The automobile came to Anderson in the early 1900's and Dr. Oscar Davis was believed to have the first one in town.

Because of several serious fires in 1928, 1936 and 1950, the town bought a fire truck and to this day, Anderson has a very capable Volunteer Fire Department.

The Grimes County Fair was organized about 1922 or 1923. The first one was held on the streets of Anderson where agricultural exhibits, livestock, poultry and textiles were displayed. The Grimes County Fair Association was organized and a Charter was granted in January, 1925.

Anderson has been well advertised as one of the truly historical towns in the state. It was pictured in Life Magazine, showing Main Street and the courthouse. It has been shown several times on the Eyes of Texas. Each year, Anderson has the Texas Trek, at which time visitors have the opportunity to go into the old houses around the town. The bluebonnets are usually profuse and beautiful and makes the trip delightful.

The county courthouse still proudly sits in the middle of the street and the light shining from the cupola leads home-towners back and leads others through town to enjoy real nostalgia.