



# HISTORIC TEXAS HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

Part of the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) History Programs Division, the Historic Texas Highways Program identifies, interprets, and markets historic roads and highways in Texas.

## What We Do

The Historic Texas Highways program identifies, interprets, and markets historic roads and highways in Texas. Projects include surveying historic highways such as the Bankhead and Meridian highways, identifying extant road-related buildings and sites along these highways, supplying road-related research materials, and providing maps and information that can be utilized by heritage tourists and armchair historians to recreate the experience of driving along these historic highways, potentially increasing visitation to our Texas communities with a positive effect on local economies.

- Research and write highway-related reports
- Document and map road-related resources and make the information available via the THC website
- Provide access to informative publications about highways and road-related resources
- Present snippets about unusual resources relating to highways and roadways
- Offer historic contexts for Texas historic highways
- Write articles and blogposts
- Supply updates to the THC Online Atlas database



Roadside park with teepee shelters along IH-10 frontage road (former Bankhead Highway) in the vicinity of Sierra Blanca, Hudspeth County.

## Special Projects

Today, the Lone Star State is crisscrossed with a jumbled tangle of high-speed highways and byways. It was not always this way. In the late 1800s and into early 1900s, the traveler had only dirt, gravel, and occasionally paved roadways from which to choose. As automobiles became more popular, the demand for better and safer roads increased, leading to the Good Roads movements. This in turn led to the improvement and expansion of the roadway network across Texas and across the nation. The development of communities was closely linked to transportation, whether waterways, roadways or railways. As auto travel increased in the 1920s and '30s, towns connected by roads prospered due to the ability to sell and trade goods, and by providing places for travelers to stop for food, lodging and vehicle care.

A rich architectural legacy from this early time period still remains along these early roadways, including gas stations, motels and hotels, diners and cafes, auto dealerships and repair shops, parks, signage, bridges, and tourist attractions. To learn and see more about these resources, please explore our various highway links on the THC website, including the Bankhead Highway and the Meridian Highway.

### Bankhead Highway Project

The first project under the Historic Roads and Highways Program focused on the historic Bankhead Highway, a coast-to-coast roadway established in 1916, running from Texarkana to El Paso. The Texas Legislature designated the Texas portion of the Bankhead as a Texas Historic Highway in 2009. Using Federal Transportation Enhancement funds, the THC and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) coordinated to research, survey and write reports about the Bankhead Highway along with a Statewide Historic Context on Texas Highway development. The two-year project documented over 2,700 road-related resources along 850+ miles of historic highway. THC staff created research reports and interpretative measures that provide valuable heritage tourism information.

### Meridian Highway Project

The second project under the Historic Roads and Highways Program focused on the historic Meridian Highway, an international highway running from Canada to Mexico, roughly paralleling today's I-35 with a lateral branch going from Waco to Galveston. The Meridian project will follow the same two-year process as the Bankhead Highway with funding from a Federal Transportation Enhancement grant.



Shown above: View along the Bankhead Highway in the vicinity of Sweetwater, Nolan County.

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### How to Reach Us

The Historic Texas Highways Program office is located at 105 West 16th St. in Luther Hall. Staff members are available to answer questions and provide preservation assistance. Please contact us at:

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