

While all of these structures were built during the New Deal Era, they definitely aren't all the same. Below are a few of the architectural styles you can expect to see on this tour.

NPS RUSTIC: This is a style of architecture and construction often associated with structures found in national parks and other lands operated by the National Park Service (NPS). It uses locally sourced materials and aims to blend structures with their natural surroundings.

ART DECO: Widely popular in the 1920s and 1930s, Art Deco boasts bold geometric and linear accents and a high level of ornamentation.

WPA MODERNE: Named for the Works Progress Administration, or WPA, this style shares similarities with Art Deco in its modern and futuristic appearance. However, it lacks the ornate detailing you will find in Art Deco. WPA Moderne structures were usually built by crews employed by the WPA and other New Deal-era programs.



LISTEN WHILE YOU DRIVE

Scan the QR code for an audio tour of each of these stops and to learn more about Hamilton County and the New Deal.

PLEASE NOTE:

Several of these historic buildings are located on school properties. Please be aware of school rules and property lines before exploring the sites, especially during school hours.



Courtesy TxDOT Photo Library

EDUCATORS!

Scan the QR code for educational activities about local New Deal-era architecture.

- After discussing the history of roadside parks, students put pencil to paper to design their own park with all the creature comforts they want.
- A mapping activity allows kids of all ages to explore the local New Deal history in their own backyards.
- Short writing exercises invite students to think critically about the impact the New Deal had in their community.



Visit www.txdot.gov/about/campaigns-outreach/beyond-the-road-campaign to discover how TxDOT goes Beyond the Road.

**BEYOND
THE ROAD**
TxDOT



Courtesy Jennifer M. Ramos

A NEW DEAL FOR HAMILTON COUNTY DRIVING TOUR



Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration

Travel back into Hamilton County's past and explore how the people and programs of the New Deal Era shaped the architecture we interact with every day.

Use this driving tour to explore nine historic structures from this period that are still standing today. Ranging from school auditoriums to bridges, you'll learn how and why they were built and their special places in the community.



Courtesy TxDOT Photo Library

STOP 1: ROADSIDE PARK

909 N. Rice St., Hamilton, TX 76531

Take a few minutes to stretch your legs at the Hamilton roadside park on Highway 281. While planning for the Texas Centennial celebration in 1936, state leaders expected thousands of Texans to hop in their cars and head to Centennial Park in Dallas. To make the long hours in the car a little more comfortable, Texas Highway Department officials decided to build roadside parks where travelers could take a break from the road and relax for a bit. The Hamilton roadside park is one of many built by the National Youth Administration (NYA). It still has many of its original features, including some picnic benches, a grill, and a firepit. Make sure you visit the pink granite marker commemorating the Texas Centennial, too.

STOP 2: HAMILTON ISD GYMNASIUM AND SPORTING COURTS

400 S. College St., Hamilton, TX 76531 (gymnasium is visible from S. Taylor St., one block west)

Can you guess why locals call this building the “rock gym?” Built between 1939 and 1940, this limestone building originally served as the Hamilton High School gym. The athletes who competed here went on to win over 15 state titles in various sports. The gym floors even hosted the 1952 Girls Basketball State Champs. Meanwhile, the nearby sporting courts provided space for community members to play when school was out. If you look carefully, you can spot the Art Deco influence on this WPA Moderne-style complex. The curved roof, pilasters, and amphitheater-style seating on the courts all speak to its roots in these modern styles.



Courtesy Jennifer M. Ramos



Courtesy Jennifer M. Ramos

STOP 3: HAMILTON POST OFFICE

120 Rice St., Hamilton, TX 76531

Louis A. Simon, the supervising architect of the Public Buildings Administration, oversaw the design of hundreds of post offices across the nation, including the one right here in Hamilton. The Colonial Revival style comes through in the double-hung windows, hipped roof, and small portico, while the eagle statue poised above the entrance ensures everyone knows this is a federal building. Inside, take a moment to examine the mural *Texas Rangers in Camp*. Commissioned by the Treasury Section of Fine Arts, artist Ward Lockwood created a fresco depicting four rangers sitting around a fire and singing as they rested for the night.



Courtesy Jennifer M. Ramos

STOP 4: PECAN ST. PARK SWIMMING POOL

307 E. Pierson St., Hamilton, TX 76531

Dive into history at the Hamilton City Pool. Built in the NPS Rustic style, the Civil Works Administration used local white limestone to create the simple pool buildings. Over the years, the community added onto the complex with upgrades including modern bathrooms, a playground, and additional picnic facilities. For almost 90 years the pool has provided the community with opportunities to play, exercise, and get out of the blazing Texas summer sun.

Visit the plaque on the front of the building, which features a photograph from one of the many “bathing beauty” contests in the 1950s.

STOP 5: E. HENRY ST. AND N. BELL ST. BRIDGES

On E. Henry St. between N. Pecan and N. Bell Sts., Hamilton, TX 76531

On N. Bell St. between E. Boynton and E. Ross Sts., Hamilton, TX 76531

Hoping to be recognized as “the friendliest town in Texas,” in 1939 Hamilton citizens outlined a plan to “Build a Greater Hamilton” through various infrastructure projects. One way they sought to do this was by adding three concrete bridges across Pecan Creek. Built in 1940, the bridges at E. Henry St. and N. Bell St. are simple in design, reflecting the utilitarian designs typical of New Deal relief agencies like the Works Progress Administration and the Civil Works Administration. Made of concrete with stone abutments, these bridges highlight the simplicity needed for them to be constructed by less skilled workers.

Follow the walking trail under the bridge to view the stone abutments supporting the bridge.



Courtesy Jennifer M. Ramos

STOP 6: CRANFILLS GAP HIGH SCHOOL

505 2nd St., Cranfills Gap, TX 76637

When several local schools consolidated into the Cranfills Gap School in the 1930s, officials quickly realized they didn’t have enough space to educate all their students in one place. So, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) built Cranfills Gap its first dedicated high school building between 1938 and 1939. Architects designed it in the WPA Moderne style, blending neoclassical design with modern Art Deco elements. You can still see some original details, like the masonry cornice that runs across the original roofline.



Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration



Courtesy Jennifer M. Ramos

STOP 7: EVANT HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM

US 281 at E. Campbell St., Evant, TX 76525

From stage lights to Friday night lights, the Evant High School Gymnasium and Auditorium has seen it all. Built at the same time as Highway 281, which connected Hamilton County from north to south, the building became an important part of the Evant community. Beyond hosting high school basketball games and school plays, spaces like this often hosted community events. The WPA Moderne style still shines through despite modern upgrades to the roof, windows, and doors. Look for brick details that reveal where the original door and window frames were installed.

STOP 8: HICO SCHOOL GYMNASIUM

614 Kirk St., Hico, TX 76457

To visit this site, please check in at the district office at 901 Cedar St. first.

Swarmed with students, the Hico schools desperately needed more space to house students and events. To address this need, the Hico School Gymnasium and Auditorium building was created to relieve the overcrowding in other school buildings. In addition to creating dedicated spaces for the sports teams and bands, the new building provided space for the agriculture department. The gym hosted volleyball and basketball games, and even a boxing tournament put on by the school’s Future Farmers of America. Parapets rise from the facade of the building, creating a dynamic roofline. The modern metal roofing and handrails add a pop of color to the otherwise historic building.



Courtesy Jennifer M. Ramos