Collin County is rich with centuries of history. Long before settlers arrived, Indian tribes, including Caddo and Comanche, claimed this as their territory. Later, brave settlers traveled here and made new lives on the fertile blackland prairie.

The early settlers
Before becoming a state, the Republic of Texas had financial troubles, and Mexico was threatening to invade. Its very existence depended on attracting people to settle the vast expanse of land. In North Texas, the answer lay in the Peters Colony, which began in 1841 when the Republic contracted with 20 men, offering land in exchange for organizing a colony. A married man received 640 acres; a single man received 320 acres.

Most of the colonists came from the upper South. They had relatively few slaves. Union sentiments were strong in Peters Colony, a fact that later led Collin County to be one of a handful in the state to oppose secession. Collin County developed with more of a midwestern culture than a southern one, which meant that the area had more artisans and professionals.

News of Peters Colony spread by word-of-mouth; therefore, many of the settlers already knew one another. As a result of these prior relationships, the colony developed commercially much faster than other inland parts of the state.

The history of Collin County
Collin McKinney played a conspicuous part in Texas’ struggle for freedom. He was a member of the provisional government organized in 1835, a signer of the Declaration of Independence from Mexico, one of the authors of the first constitution written for the state, and he represented the large Red River

Agriculture and the economy
Agriculture—especially developing dairy farming—continued to be an important factor in the county’s economy. By 1980, the introduction of light industry, combined with the growth of the Dallas metropolitan area, produced a successful diverse economy.

Overall, Collin County’s population increased from 41,692 in 1960, to 144,576 in 1980, to nearly 750,000 in 2007. The diversified economy continues to diminish the number of farms. Today, the county little resembles what was settled in the 1840s.

Preserving the past
Since growth has eradicated many small farming towns and sites of historical significance, the Collin County Historical Commission created this brochure as a driving tour through our beautiful county to preserve the stories of the past. We hope you will learn more of the history and have an appreciation of the struggles and triumphs of the early settlers of Collin County.
Synopsis of the County

McKINNEY—THE COUNTY SEAT
AND NORTHWEST COLLIN COUNTY
McKinney
Trade Days Grounds
Prosper
Celina
Weston

SOUTHWEST COLLIN COUNTY
Allen
Plano
Richardson
The Frankford Historic Site
The Shawnee Trail and Preston Road
Lebanon
Frisco

SOUTHEAST COLLIN COUNTY
Princeton

Farmersville
Copeville
Josephine
Nevada
Old Bellew (Abston) Cemetery
Lavon
Wylie
Murphy
Parker
Lucas
Lowry Crossing

NORTHEAST COLLIN COUNTY
Melissa
Anna
Westminster
Blue Ridge
Parkhill Prairie
Valdasta

Walking tours information available from:

- Allen: Allen Chamber of Commerce, 210 W. McDermott Drive
- Farmersville: Visitor’s Center, 201 S. Main Street
- McKinney: Old Collin County Courthouse, 311 N. Tennessee
- Plano: Interurban Museum, 901 E. 15th Street or call 972-941-2117
The northwest portion of Collin County is a diverse area, much of which lies in the path of the rapid expansion encroaching from the south. McKinney, the county seat, has served as the hub of Collin County for more than 150 years. From the three distinct historic districts on the east side of U.S. 75, to the housing and commercial developments growing on its west side, visitors discover a city with a great heritage.

**McKinney:** From U.S. 75, take Exit 40 and turn east on Louisiana. Travel two miles to begin your McKinney visit in historic downtown—the heart and soul of McKinney. Downtown offers good eats, a bit of the grape for wine aficionados, personal pampering at first-class salons and spas, and noteworthy galleries in addition to a wide selection of specialty shops. The Visitor Guide to McKinney, the Walking Tour of the Historic District and Downtown, and the tourism map are available at the McKinney Tourism Services visitor center or on the Internet: www.visitmckinney.com.

* The historic Collin County Courthouse, built in 1875 and drastically remodeled in 1927, anchors the downtown square and was recently restored as the McKinney Performing Arts Center. The cornerstone of performing and visual arts, its focal point is the Courtroom Theatre, seating 480 and featuring a vintage Wurlitzer Theatre pipe organ.

* A must-visit location is the McKinney Cotton Mill Historic District, which is listed on the national register of historic places. The Cotton Mill, located at 610 Elm Street, is the remaining building of what was once a “community” within McKinney. Houses for mill workers were located close to the site. At one time, this mill was the largest producer of woven denim cloth west of the Mississippi.

* McKinney’s third Historic District—the Residential District—is roughly bound by the streets West Lamar, North Benge, West Louisiana, and North Oak. Architectural styles in this area include Queen Anne, late 19th- and 20th-century revivals, and late 19th- and early 20th-century American movements.

* Pecan Grove Cemetery, located at Hwy. 5 (McDonald Street) and Eldorado/Industrial Blvd., is situated on property originally granted by the Republic of Texas in 1845. Pecan Grove is the final resting place for many Texas pioneers, from governors to gunslingers. Heroes of the Texas Revolution are interred here, as are veterans of the Mexican War, The Civil War, and every war thereafter.
TRADE DAYS GROUNDS: From U.S. 75, take U.S. 380 west approximately three miles. You will come to the Trade Days grounds, located on the former county seat known then as Buckner. There is a small cemetery on the eastern boundary of the grounds. A Texas Historic Marker marks this spot.

PROSPER: Continue west on U.S. 380 to Prosper, originally founded as the Rock Hill Community. The already established town of Prosper moved when the Frisco Railroad came through in 1902 and established depots a few miles north. On the south side of Prosper at the intersection of First Street and Business Hwy. 289 is the historically significant Presbyterian Church.

CELINA: Return to Hwy. 289 and turn left (north) to Celina. Hwy. 289 lies just to the west of Preston Road/Shawnee Trail. This trail was a good route for early travelers because of its very rocky soil. The route, as originally laid out from Dallas to the Red River, did not cross any creeks and thus could be traveled quite easily. Celina was established in 1879 one mile south of its current location. Just like Prosper, when the railroad was established in the area, residents moved their homes and businesses to a new, closer location. A thriving business area developed on Louisiana Street facing the railroad. For more history of Celina, stop at the museum located at 205 Pecan Street, on the square.

WESTON: Leaving the square, go east on Pecan Street to the signal light at Hwy. 289 and F.M. 455. Take F.M. 455 9 miles to Weston, which lies at the intersection of C.R. 543 and F.M. 455. Settlers began arriving in this region prior to 1840, making Weston one of the oldest towns in the county. Weston’s early history was reputed to be “wild and wooly.” Downtown is only two blocks long and retains much of the early flavor.

Take C.R. 543 back to U.S. 75 and return to McKinney.
Today, southwest Collin County is known for its spectacular homes, upscale shopping and super highways. Where we see the city boundaries of Dallas, Richardson, Plano, Allen and Frisco, pioneer families saw rich, fertile soils and blackland prairies bursting with blooms in spring and lighted at night by the star-filled sky. To understand the county’s history, one must step out of today’s hectic pace and visit what remains of a fascinating past.

ALLEN: Beginning from the county seat of McKinney, drive south on U.S. 75 to the city of Allen. Established in 1870 by a railway agent and named for Ebenezer Allen, a railroad promoter, this city has the curious distinction of being the location of the first train robbery in Texas history, led by Denton outlaw Sam Bass.

Settled in the 1840s as a part of the Peters Colony—and inhabited prior to settlement by Caddo and Comanche Indian tribes—the farming community of Allen benefitted from its location along the north-south railroad tracks, as it was a convenient water-stop for steam engines, which required a refill every seven miles. To keep the water supply steady, a stone dam was built in 1874. This old stone dam is located north of Exchange Parkway, along Cottonwood Creek.

PLANO: Continuing south on U.S. 75 is Collin County’s largest city, Plano. Incorporated in 1873 and named by early settler Dr. Henry Dye as a description of the area’s terrain, Plano’s economy for much of its history was based on surrounding farms, ranches and its railroad stop.

Exit U.S. 75 at 15th Street and turn to the east. Originally called Mechanic Street, 15th Street is the heart of historic Plano. The Interurban Railway Museum, located between Haggard Park and the DART Rail Station, provides an interesting look at life in southwest Collin County for the first half of the 1900s. It is also a good place to begin walking tours of Downtown Plano or driving tours of the surrounding historic housing district. Consider these stops:

- **Old City Cemetery:** Now the Pioneer Cemetery, where many early Plano leaders are buried.
- **Douglass Community Wall:** A mosaic mural depicting the people and history of the Douglass Community, including leaders and churches. Today the Douglass Community is a candidate for designation as a Conservation District.

Travel approximately two miles west of Downtown Plano to 1900 W. 15th Street, the Heritage Farmstead Museum. A working farm from 1891 until 1972, and one of the few remaining farmsteads...
in southwest Collin County on its original site, the Farrell-Wilson Farmstead is representative of many prosperous farms of its day. Open to the public as a living history museum, the Heritage Farmstead exists to preserve, teach and demonstrate life on the Blackland Prairie of Texas from the 1890s to the mid-1920s.

RICHARDSON: Returning to U.S. 75 and continuing south is the northern section of the city of Richardson. It was founded in 1873 as a result of the railroad and named for its contractor, E.H. Richardson. There are two historic sites in the Collin County section of Richardson, both cemeteries.  
• Located at Glenville between U.S. 75 and Plano Road, and between Renner and Campbell Roads, lies the Jacob Routh Cemetery, established in 1852. It bears a Texas State Historical Marker.  
• Off Brand Road in Breckinridge City Park is the Gatlin-Race-Hilltop Cemetery. This fenced, private cemetery was known from 1882-1886 as the Race-Catlett Cemetery.

THE FRANKFORD HISTORIC SITE: Return to U.S. 75. Exit Campbell Road and head west until it intersects with Frankford Road. Turn west onto Frankford Road to the North Dallas Tollway southbound access road. Turn south and then east onto Briargrove. Turn right onto Spyglass Road and right again at Muirfield to reach the Frankford Historic Site, which is now a part of the city of Dallas.  

Originally called Indian Springs, it is the most intact example of 19th-century settlement still existing in Collin County. Important to both Native American Indians and pioneers, Frankford once boasted the White Rock Masonic Lodge, a post office, schools and businesses. Today, the site consists of a beautifully restored prairie gothic church built in the 1890s; a windmill attesting to the early reliance on pumped ground water; the old Addison depot, relocated on the site in mid-20th century; and a historic cemetery.

THE SHAWNEE TRAIL and PRESTON ROAD: The Shawnee Trail runs north following the ancient Texas Road, and was carved by centuries of migrating buffalo and traveling Indians. From Dallas to the Red River, the Shawnee Trail came to be known as Preston Road (S.H. 289). The springs at Frankford provided a camping ground, encouraging Native Americans, buffalo, settlers, Spanish longhorns and produce wagons to follow this route. So heavily used for so long, it is said that wagon ruts still exist along its perimeter. The Shawnee Trail Texas State Historical marker is at Lebanon Road.

LEBANON: West of Preston Road and three miles southeast of Frisco is Lebanon. Now only a street name, it once was a bustling community and center for the cattle being driven north.

FRISCO: Now one of the fastest-growing cities in America, the heart of Frisco lies at Preston Road and Main Street (F.M. 720). Once a village that benefitted from the cattle drives and, later, a permanent train station, it developed as a hub for area cotton farmers, providing cotton gins and grain elevators. Sculptures at Frisco Central Park feature the Shawnee Trail longhorn cattle and drovers and brings life to a fascinating history. The Heritage Village Park and Museum houses relocated area historic buildings and memorabilia of North Texas’ history.

From the intersection of Preston Road and S.H. 121, turn east and return to McKinney.
Southeast Collin County is home to several communities which retain their early 20th-century character and reflect the agricultural heritage of the area. All surround Lake Lavon, which was built on the East Fork of the Trinity River in the early 1950s for flood control and water supply.

PRINCETON: Driving east from McKinney on U.S. 380, you will come to the city of Princeton. The town began in 1886, after the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway Company extended its line from Greenville to McKinney. During the 1880s and ’90s, the town became a center for cotton and onions.
- Labor and War Camp: In 1940, a migrant-labor camp was built in Princeton north of what is now U.S. 380. In 1945, this location was turned into a prisoner of war camp. A Texas State Historical Marker gives the history of the camp. A sign on U.S. 380 indicates the direction to the site and marker.

FARMERSVILLE: Continuing east on U.S. 380, you cross Lake Lavon and enter Farmersville. The town, named by pioneers for their chief occupation, was incorporated on June 1, 1873. By 1900, the town had six cotton gins and two railroad lines, which hosted six passenger trains a day. In the 1930s, Farmersville was known as the Onion Capital of North Texas, shipping out more than 1,000 carloads of “East Collins Sweets” each year. Audie Murphy, the most decorated soldier in WWII, called Farmersville home. His life is commemorated each June on Audie Murphy Day. A walking tour brochure of the Historic Downtown is available at the Visitors’ Center, 201 S. Main.

COPEVILLE: From Farmersville, drive south on Hwy. 78 to Copeville. The town, originally known as Black Spot, was located just north of the present-day Garland Electric Plant on Lake Lavon. In 1886, however, the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railway Co. came to the vicinity, and the residents of Black Spot moved to the present location which became known as Copeville.
- Central National Road: Turn east on C.R. 543, which will become C.R. 596. Drive 4.5 miles to C.R. 641. On the south side of the intersection of C.R. 596 and C.R. 641 is a Texas State Marker identifying the route of the Central National Road of the Republic of Texas.

JOSEPHINE: Continue on C.R. 596 east to Josephine. In its early years, Josephine was a thriving town that included the Josephine State Bank and a silent movie theater. The town was destroyed by fire in 1910 and again about 25 years later. In 1986, Josephine was honored with the Governor’s Community Achievement Award through the efforts of the Josephine Beautification Committee.

NEVADA: Take Hwy. 6 west to Nevada. In 1886, the Cotton Belt Railroad came through Nevada, then a small town of industrious pioneers. Town lots and streets were marked off, houses were built and businesses were established facing an area in the form of a square. In May of 1927, a tornado struck Nevada, killing 27 and wounding 75 people. The only structure on the square which survived was the Well House. The town never recovered.

OLD BELLEW (ABSTON) CEMETERY: From Nevada, return to Hwy. 78 on Hwy. 6 and turn back north. Travel about one mile, and pull to the left to a roadside park. Elias Bellew Cemetery is named for a slave who is buried in the cemetery. A Texas Historical Marker honors the
Gravesite of John Abston (1761-1856), a soldier in the American Revolution.

**LAVON:** Take Hwy. 78 south to Lavon. This town, settled in 1854, was first named Thompson Switch. The Southwestern Railroad came through in 1888, and growth ensued. A bank built in 1907 and later used as a café was featured in the 1967 movie, “Bonnie and Clyde.”

**WYLIE:** Continue on Hwy. 78 to the city of Wylie, which was incorporated in 1856 along the rights-of-way of the Colorado and Santa Fe Railroads. By 1920, the community had more than 35 businesses, including two banks, a school and a weekly newspaper.

**MURPHY:** From Wylie, take F.M. 544 to Murphy. Attracted by the offer of land grants from the Peters Colony, the first settlers of Murphy arrived in the area in 1846. The St. Louis Southwestern Railway reached the area in 1888. From the 1880s until the 1950s, Murphy served as a shipping point for area farmers and livestock owners.

**PARKER:** Going north on F.M. 2551, you will pass the South Fork Ranch, made famous in the TV show “Dallas.” The city of Parker developed around the gristmill and general store built in the early 1880s. The St. Louis, Arkansas and Texas Railway surveyed the community and laid out town lots. Later, the company decided to run its tracks through Wylie instead. Although bypassed by the railroad, Parker continued to serve as a retail point for area farmers.

**LUCAS:** Turn right on F.M. 2514 and go to F.M. 1378. A left turn takes you through Lucas. Very little is left of the original town. Lucas was named after Gabriel H. Lucas, whose father arrived in 1844. Gabriel opened a store there in 1870. For nearly a century, the economy of the area was based upon agriculture, chiefly cotton and corn.

**LOWRY CROSSING:** Turn right on F.M. 3286. Go over Lake Lavon and watch for F.M. 546. Turn left and follow this winding, picturesque road for several miles through former agricultural land that is rapidly being developed. At the point where Bridgefarmer Rd. (C.R. 729) comes into F.M. 546, turn right. About 1/8-mile south of this point is the historical Trinity River crossing that gave the town of Lowry Crossing its name. John Lowry, who settled in the area in the mid-19th century, made a living as a grocer—and as the owner of mules which would be invaluable as they pulled wagons out of the nearby muddy river.

Continuing on Bridgefarmer Rd., go to U.S. 380. Turn left and return to McKinney.
The northeast portions of Collin County were once part of the empresario colony, known as the Peters Colony. Colonists came and settled—despite trouble with Indians and the conditions of the Peters’ organization. The towns did not evolve until the railroad extended from north to south in 1873. Today, there are only remnants of a few communities that were founded, and many no longer exist at all.

**MELISSA:** From McKinney, head north on U.S. 75; take the S.H. 121 exit; get in left lane exiting at Hwy. 5 to Melissa. A railroad engineer became the first merchant in Melissa in 1874. The school was one of the first buildings erected, followed by churches, gins and other businesses. In April, 1921, a tornado caused extensive damage to the city; the community remained small during the 1900s.

- As you travel north on Hwy. 5, note St. Paul Baptist Church on your left. This church was demolished by the tornado, but it was later rebuilt. An annual homecoming has been held for more than 100 years.
- Continue north to Fannin Road. Turn left and follow to Melissa Road. Veer right and watch for the cemetery sign on the right. Melissa Cemetery was a private family cemetery that later became public. Lewis Sherley, who originally homesteaded the land, was buried here in 1867. Purchased from the family in 1889, the cemetery has graves of many early pioneer families and descendants.
- Backtrack to Hwy. 5 and turn left. Go two blocks to Harrison Street and turn left. The Scott-Barker House, built in the 1870s, lost only one chimney during the 1921 tornado. It is a fine example of an L-Plan Victorian dwelling with distinctive mansard-type roofs.
- Crossing Hwy. 5, going east on Harrison, the Melissa Christian Church will be on your right. The sanctuary, built near the present site in 1878, was destroyed by the 1921 tornado. It was replaced by the present structure in 1924.
- Retrace the route to Hwy. 5, turn right going north to the outskirts of the town. Turn left on C.R. 365 until you see a sign for Highland Cemetery, where you will turn left on to C.R. 364. This cemetery holds graves of families that settled the Highland area early on.

**ANNA:** Leaving Highland, turn left and follow C.R. 365 north. The road will bend to the right and meet Hwy. 5. Turn left and continue to Anna. This town credits its beginnings with the railroad, as settlement began in 1883. A thriving agriculture community for many years, the population dwindled after years of crop failure and with the advent of WWII, when many moved to the cities to work in war factories.

- Go to Fourth Street and turn right. Just over the railroad tracks is A. Sherley and Bro. Store and Museum. Built in 1889, this first brick building in Anna housed a business that sold a complete line of goods for the agricultural area: hardware; leather goods, including saddles and tack for horses and teams; household furnishings and groceries; farm machinery; grain; lumber; caskets and burials. (Shown by appointment; 972-924-3927)
- Looking south of Sherley Bros., by the water tower is the First Christian Church, a denomination brought to Texas by Collin McKinney and his family. It was built in 1893 of cypress wood, and an addition was added in the 1950s.
- Continuing south from the church, turn left at the dead end (F.M. 455) and continue east. Cross over S.H. 121 and continue on C.R. 475 to see two old iron bridges. Turn onto C.R. 476 to the first bridge, then retrace to C.R. 475 to the second bridge. Replacing wooden structures, these iron truss bridges were built to accommodate mechanized farm equipment. The uniqueness of the bridges can be found in their handmade quality, using square-headed nuts and bolts.

**WESTMINSTER:** Retrace the route back to S.H. 121 and turn right. You reach a sign that says Westminster (F.M. 2862). Turn left to drive into what was once a thriving town with a railroad spur. Begun in the 1860s and known then as Seven Points, this town was home to a Methodist, and, later, a Baptist, college. The demise of the railroad combined with changes in agriculture and WWII caused the population to dwindle.
BLUE RIDGE: Return to S.H. 121, cross over and follow F.M. 2862 until it dead ends. Turn left on F.M. 545 going to Blue Ridge. The leaders of 70 pioneer families found a ridge covered with tiny blue flowers and decided this was the perfect place to settle. The first post office was established in 1876. Once a thriving community, Blue Ridge later met the fate of many other agricultural towns in the area. The town is now growing once more.

- Just before reaching a dead end, look to your right and see the town square. On your left will be N. Main Street; turn left to see the Blue Ridge Methodist Church on your right. The original church had a tabernacle for summer revivals. This building was moved to this spot in 1913, survived a devastating tornado in 1919, was expanded in 1923, and continues the tradition of its founders.
- Continue on N. Main until you see the Blue Ridge Cemetery. Settlers were buried here as early as 1876. Later, four lanes lined with cottonwood trees in the form of a cross were added, leading to the center tabernacle used for funerals.

PARKHILL PRAIRIE: To reach Parkhill Prairie, take the street south of the cemetery. Go east to find Hwy. 78. Turn right (south), watch for C.R. 825 and turn left (east). Drive a distance, and watch for signs. C.R. 825 will turn right (south). Follow this to C.R. 668 going east. The prairie will be on the left. Parkhill Prairie is a 436-acre preserve featuring a 55-acre relic of the Blackland Tallgrass Prairie. It represents one of the best examples of rare, unspoiled prairie habitat within the state. The preserve provides magnificent views of the countryside, much like those seen by early settlers more than 100 years ago.

Today less than one percent of the original 12 million acres of Blackland Prairie remains in Texas.

To return to McKinney, backtrack on C.R. 825, cross over Hwy. 78 to Business 78 into Blue Ridge. Turn left on F.M. 545 and travel down to historic Valdasta. Take F.M. 1827 south to U.S. 380. Turn right on U.S. 380 into McKinney and onto U.S. 75.