

**A HISTORIC WALK AROUND THE PARK  
(PRESENTED BY THE MIDLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY)**

Enjoy this walk around Centennial Park. In addition to the exercise, you will learn a bit of Midland's history.

Follow the instructions to guide you to each stop to compare what you see with these yesterday views. At each stop, use your imagination to stroll back in time and imagine what life was like here in these bygone years.

Besides these images, can you find any traces of what was once here?

1. Start your walk in front of the Midland County History Museum at the corner of Main Street and Texas Avenue. Take a moment to look at the museum building. It began its history as a Woolworth Store in the late 1940s.

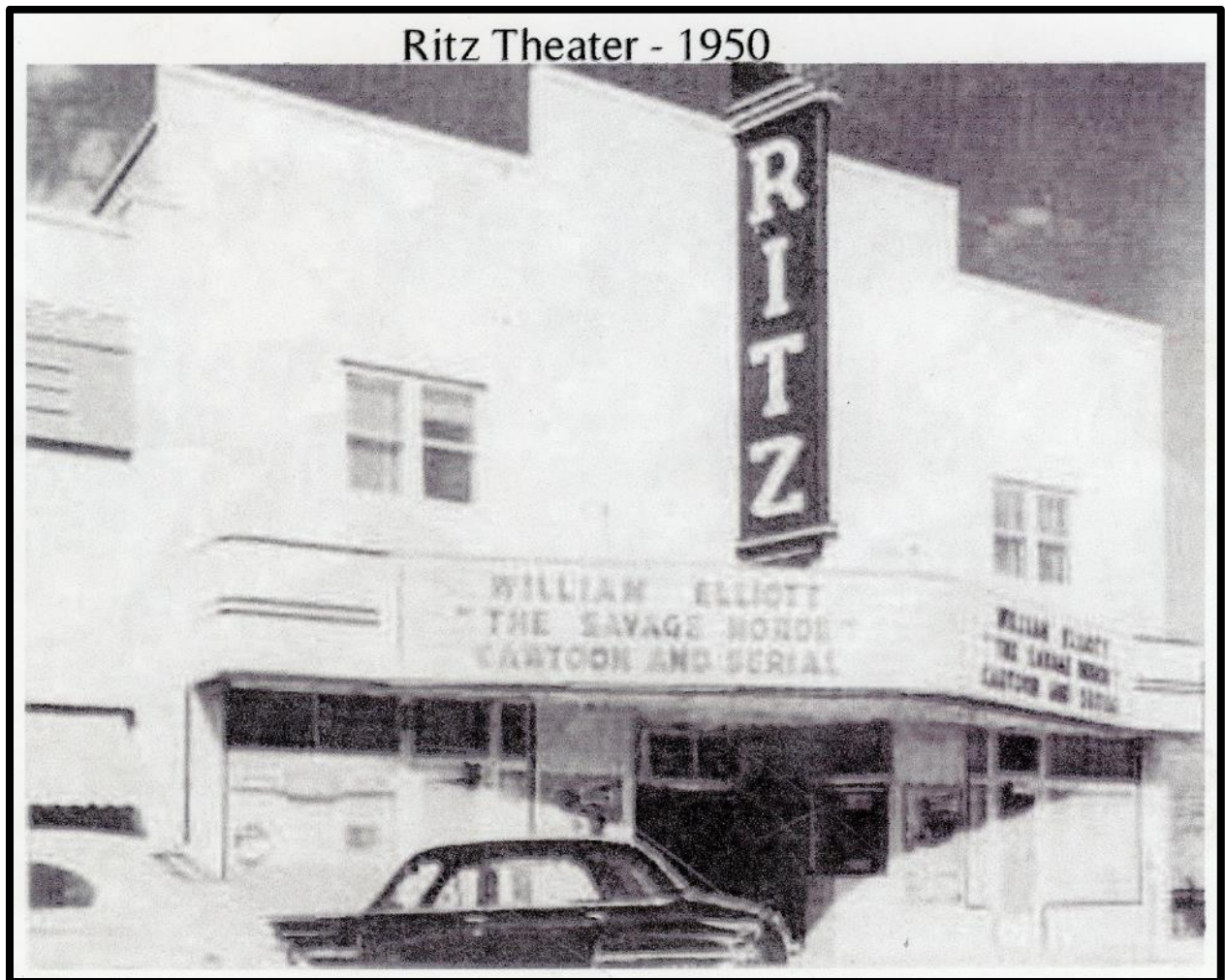
This is how it looked back then.



This is a view inside a typical Woolworth store. It may even be the Midland one, though we are not certain. The Midland Woolworth did have a lunch counter like the one on the right.



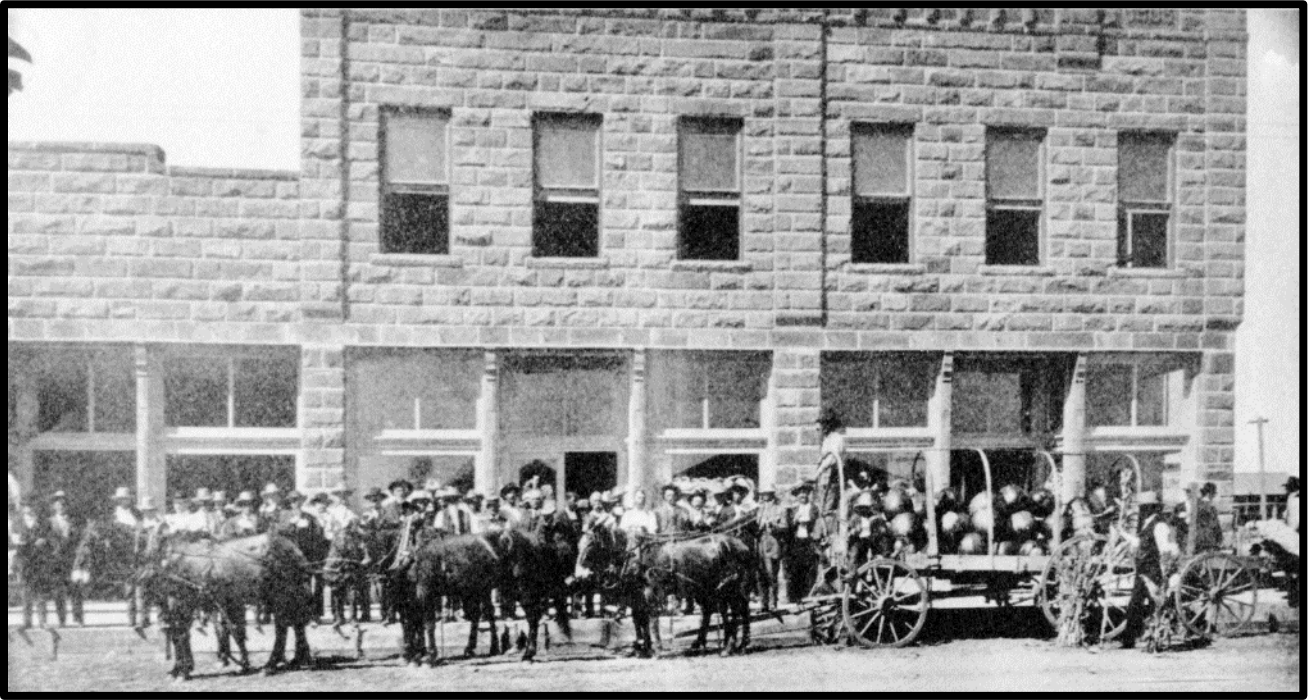
Look across Main Street and you will see the Ritz, which is now the home of Basin PBS. In the 1930s-1950s, it provided entertainment as a movie theater. This is a 1950 view of the Ritz from where you are standing.



Use the traffic light to cross Main Street and then Colorado Avenue to reach the corner of the Convention Center. This will be your next stop.

2. In 1906, this stone building was built on this corner of Texas and Main. In the early 1900s, George D. Elliott operated a mercantile business (an older name for a general store) in the building. In this photograph from around 1910, a crowd has gathered to view the load of watermelons brought to town.

Mr. Elliott helped establish the first electric company in Midland. The Convention Center now occupies this corner.



Turn around and look north on Main Street.

If you stood on this corner in the 1960s and looked north, this would be your view. The Ritz Theater is on the left. Anthony's clothing store was next to the Ritz. The Tower Theater across the street opened in 1947. This First Methodist Church building, built during World War II, can be seen in the background on the right. It was torn down after the current Sanctuary building was constructed in the late 1960s. Woolworth's, of course, is across the street. Other businesses line both sides of the street.



Now walk south on Main Street to the middle of the block. Stop, then turn and look back north on Main before looking at the next photograph.

3. This is a view from where you are standing of the 100 and 200 blocks of North Main Street around 1950. In the 1950s and into the 1960s almost all the Midland stores were located downtown. The Woolworth Building is near the center of the photograph and the Ritz is on the left. Other businesses you can see are Dunlap's (a clothing store) on the left and S and Q Clothiers on the right, next to Harris-Luckett (a general store). In the background near the center of the photograph is the tower of the First Methodist Church.



Continue your walk south on Main to the corner of Main and Wall for your next stop.

4. (You are standing at the corner on the left of the photograph) If you looked north as you were crossing the street at the intersection of Main and Wall in the late 1950s, this is what you would see. Lee Optical and Kruger Jewelry were located where Tkilza's restaurant now operates. The Wall Street apartments now occupy the rest of the block. The Crawford (on the left) was formerly the Llano. It closed in 1962. Next door was Kress' department store. Banners advertising the Midland Rodeo, a big annual event, float above the traffic in the background.



This is a view from long, long ago. It was taken across the street from the corner where you are on Christmas Day in 1895. The building is the Llano Hotel, Midland's first lodging establishment. A group of cowboys have lined up in the street as other people stand on the street or hotel balcony. This corner of Main and Wall was then known by the former names of these streets. Wall was Iowa Street; Main was Abilene Street (following the pattern of naming the North-South streets after stations on the Texas-Pacific Railway line). The Convention Center now sits in the space once occupied by all the buildings you can see.



Walk west on Wall Street to the crosswalk from the Convention Center to the Doubletree Hotel for your next stop. Turn and look back east.

5. This is the December 1957 view of downtown Midland from about where you are standing, looking east on Wall Street. The Crawford Hotel is on the left and the First National Bank is on the corner on the right. It is the only building in this photograph that remains today.

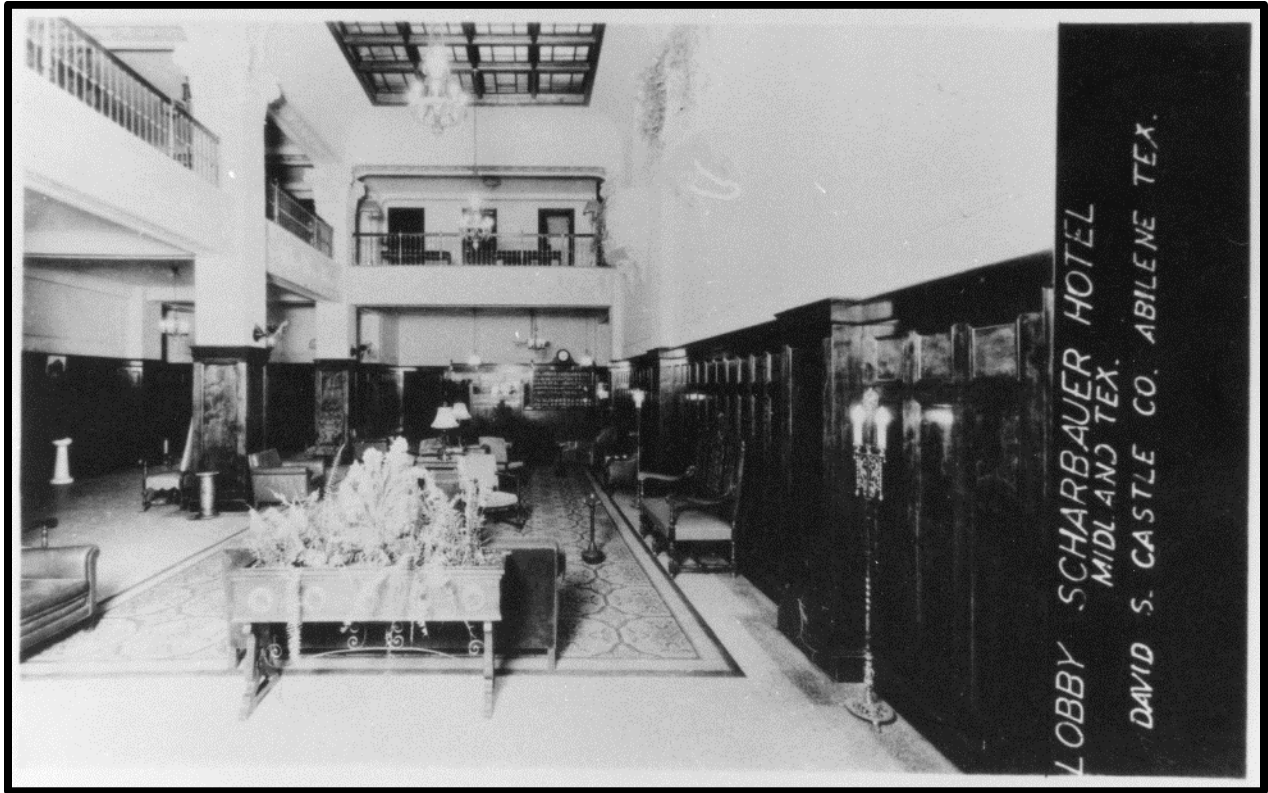


Continue west on Wall Street to where Loraine Street crosses the park (now the walkway).

6. If you look across Wall Street to the Doubletree Hotel, for many years, the Scharbauer Hotel stood on this location. Built in the 1920s, the Scharbauer was Midland's finest hotel, a destination for many travelers. Its ballroom hosted many of Midland's social events. The Cactus Café was on the corner of Loraine and Main in this 1940s postcard.



If you had entered the Scharbauer Hotel, this is what you would have seen in the lobby. Cattlemen, Landmen and Petroleum businessmen often met in this lobby to work out the details of million-dollar deals.



Scroll down for another view from this location.

(You are standing on the corner of Wall and Loraine Street in front of the Ever-Ready Service Station.) The Ever-Ready Filling Station, Midland's first service station, opened in 1927. It provided gasoline, tires, and other service to local customers and travelers on the Bankhead Highway which ran through Midland along Wall Street at that time. The Scharbauer Hotel is on the right. In the background (just right of the water tower) is the First Baptist Church. This photograph was probably taken some time in the 1930s.



Continue your walk west on Main to the Clock Tower.

7. This is a view of the Midland County Courthouse, after it was remodeled in 1974. The clock and tower were erected in 1976, as part of Midland's celebration of the Bicentennial of the United States. After the purchase of the new Midland County Courthouse building further north on Main Street, this building was demolished to create Centennial Park. The courthouse sat on what is now the grassy area of the park. The Clock Tower remains today.



The Midland County courthouses have changed over the years. The 1974 remodel was made over the courthouse built in 1930. This is the way that courthouse looked, when originally constructed.



And this is the view of the courthouse replaced by the 1930 one. This building was erected in 1905 and made of red sandstone from the Quito Quarry near Barstow, Texas for a cost of \$30,000. In the early years, a pond stood on the courthouse grounds. The tradition was to toss the bridegroom in the pond on his wedding day. This building was torn down to make way for the 1930s courthouse.



Continue west to the intersection of Wall and Colorado. Stop there.

8. If you stood on this corner around 1950, this is what you would have seen. Across the street was the Yellow Cab Company and the Book Stall. The first tall building on the left was the Wilkinson-Foster Building and, behind that, the McClintic Building. On the right, you can see a bit of the Petroleum Building.



Scroll down for a better view of the Petroleum Building.

This is a great photograph of the Petroleum Building taken across the street from where you are standing as it looked in 1929, shortly after it was built. You can see the sign for the Yucca Theater on the left of the building. The Yucca opened as a music theater and motion picture venue and billed itself as one of the first to have air conditioning in the area. Now the home of Summer Mummies, the interior still preserves the original Assyrian décor.



Enjoy a leisurely walk north on Colorado Street to the corner of Colorado and Texas to reach your next stop, the corner of Colorado Street and Texas Avenue.

9. Take a few moments as you head east on Texas Avenue to carefully study the architecture of the Petroleum Building across the street. This Art Deco building was designed by Fort Worth architect Wyatt C. Hedrick for oilman T. S. Hogan. The twelve-story building was Midland's first skyscraper. Completed in 1929, Hogan planned to create office space for the booming oil industry of the Permian Basin. Hogan's timing was unfortunate, however. The buildings, which opened just before the stock market crash of 1929, sat largely unoccupied for several years. The building includes many classic architectural features. Look at the top of the building and you will see that it is lined with a number of Gothic spires.



Examine the side of the building. Note the number of intricate designs that cover the entire building. Take some time to enjoy and study the intricate detail and the marble trim that adds a touch of elegance.



Look at the windows along street level that have Moorish arches. Notice also the marble along ground level. All these are intended to give the building elegance and respectability.

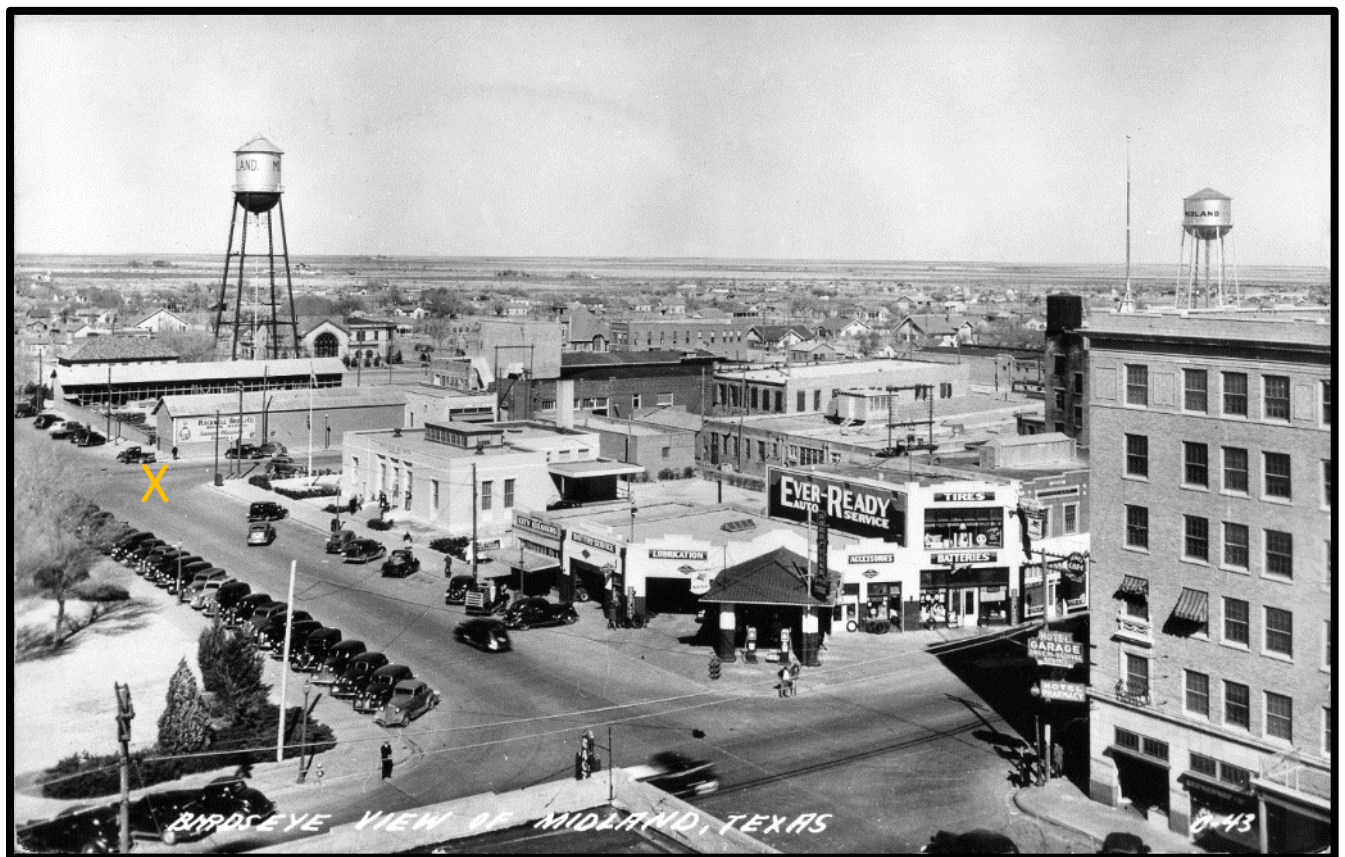


Take time to enjoy the architecture then scroll down to learn a bit of its history.

Several oil companies occupied the building in the early days, including Magnolia Petroleum – precursor to Mobil Oil, now part of Exxon, George Abell’s Tex-Mex Petroleum, Shell Petroleum, and Phillis Petroleum, Throughout the years, the building also housed a barber shop, pharmacy and lawyers, dentists and physicians’ offices. It even housed a future president. Former President George W. Bush once had offices in the building.

After you finish your study of the Petroleum Building, walk east on Texas Avenue until you come to the intersection with Loraine Street.

10. You are now at the spot marked with an “X” in this 1930 photograph you saw earlier. Across the street was the Rockwell Brothers lumber company. If you turn and look into Centennial Park along the walkway across the park, you are viewing what was once an important part of Loraine Street.



For many years, the Main Post Office for Midland was located at 114 N. Loraine Street (about where the stage area is now). With the Midland County Courthouse just across the street from the Post Office, this would have been a very busy part of downtown.



You can finish your historic walk by continuing on to the corner of Texas and Main. Or you may want to walk along the concrete path that was once Loraine Street and imagine the bustle of people and cars here in the 1930s into the 1960s.

We hope you have enjoyed this short stroll into Midland's past and have a better idea of how different downtown Midland looked in earlier years. To learn more about the interesting past of our community and county visit the Midland County History Museum! We look forward to seeing you there!

Midland Historical Society <http://midlandhistoricalsociety.weebly.com/>