

BELL COUNTY'S 2025 JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

Schedule Of Events

- Downtown Street Party
- PRCA Rodeo
- Parade & Festival
- Fireworks & Backyard Party
- 175 Years of History

ESTABLISHED IN 1866

THE BELTON  JOURNAL

WELCOME TO BELL COUNTY!

We're so glad you're here! Whether you're visiting, relocating, or just passing through, Bell County welcomes you with open arms and a true taste of Texas charm. Nestled in the heart of Central Texas, our county is rich in history, natural beauty, and a strong sense of community.

From the scenic views of Belton Lake to the vibrant culture of towns like Belton, Killeen, and Temple, there's something for everyone to enjoy. Explore our parks, taste some local barbecue, and experience the warm hospitality that makes Bell County special.

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Belton Area Chamber of Commerce Welcomes all to celebrate the 4th

Welcome to the Belton 4th of July Celebration! We are excited to continue our cherished annual traditions again this year. The theme this year is "Celebrating 175 Years of Bell County." The City of Belton and Bell County were established in 1850, so it is fitting this year to reflect on our history.

The parade and rodeo are treasured traditions of our community, with generations of families joining together to celebrate the birth of our country, patriotism, and family values. In recent years, USA Today has referred to Belton as one of the top 10 places in the country to celebrate the 4th of July.

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce coordinates the festivities in partnership with event sponsors, the City of Belton, and an army of volunteers. We anticipate record participation and spectators this year, surpassing even the huge annual crowds that have made it the largest annual event in our area. It is estimated that over 50,000 people participate in the activities during the week of July 4th in Belton.

This year, the Chamber is bringing back the popular Downtown Belton Street Party on the Courthouse Square on Saturday, June 28. This will be a great way to kick off the weeklong celebration with live music, food trucks, family games, and craft beer featured. The event is free and open to the public. Featured entertainment includes the return of popular bands, Grupo Pession and the Leon River Band.

The 101st Annual Belton 4th of July PRCA/WPRA Rodeo will run July 3-5 at the Cadence Bank Center, providing exciting action and great family entertainment. Each night includes exciting PRCA and WPRA events, as well as the always popular Mutton Bustin'. Thursday is Military Appreciation Night where we celebrate our soldiers and families from Fort Cavazos and the surrounding area.

Friday is Hometown Heroes night, honoring our first responders and educators. Saturday is Family Night where we feature special ticket discounts and opportunities for children to participate in the Stick-horse Stampede in the arena prior to the rodeo.

The annual Carnival will also be open during the week in Liberty Park, providing fun and activities for the entire family.

Friday, July 4th will be a full day of festivities with the Patriotic Program, Parade, Festival on Nolan Creek, and ending with the Backyard Party at Schoepf's Concert and Fireworks, featuring Randall King and Jared Johnson, and an awesome fireworks display. The concert is a ticketed event, but the fireworks will be open to the public at no charge.

The Festival on Nolan Creek in Yettie Polk Park will include food trucks, vendors, the "Rev, White & Blue Car Show," and a special static display of equipment from Fort Cavazos. The popular pedestrian bridge will again be deployed by Fort Cavazos soldiers, crossing Nolan Creek to Liberty Park at the low water crossing behind the Bell County Appraisal District south of Central Avenue.

"We are excited about the variety of activities for the 4th of July Celebration again this year," stated Randy Pittenger, Belton Area Chamber President/CEO. "This is a wonderful opportunity for our community to celebrate together while bringing huge crowds of people to Belton to enjoy what we have to offer. It also serves as a great opportunity for our sponsors to get their message out to thousands of people."

For more information about these events or other activities and programs of the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce, visit the website at www.beltonchamber.com, call 254-939-3551, or email info@beltonchamber.com.

Contents

Cover photo courtesy of Belton Area Chamber of Commerce

WELCOME TO BELTON'S 4TH OF JULY	PAGE 4
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS	PAGE 7
DOWNTOWN STREET PARTY	PAGE 10
SECOND CENTURY OF RODEO/EVENTS	PAGE 12
BELTON'S 175 YEARS	PAGE 16
PARADE MAP	PAGE 20
BACKYARD PARTY AND FIREWORKS	PAGE 25
A LOOK BACK	PAGE 28
ANNOUNCER CHARLIE THROCKMORTON	PAGE 32
"BACKFLIP" RODEO CLOWN	PAGE 33
MUTTON BUSTIN'	PAGE 35
HISTORY OF INDEPENDENCE DAY	PAGE 36
FESTIVAL ON NOLAN CREEK	PAGE 38
BELTON LIONS CLUB FLAG PROGRAM	PAGE 40
PATRIOTIC PROGRAM	PAGE 43
STICK HORSE STAMPEDE	PAGE 44

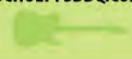
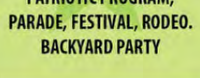
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FEBRUARY	MARCH	MARCH	APRIL	APRIL
HOME & GARDEN SHOW 301 W LOOP 121 	UMHB EASTER PAGEANT 900 COLLEGE ST. 	LEGENDS ON THE CHISHOLM TRAIL 	BELTON MARKET DAYS DOWNTOWN BELTON 	DOWNTOWN EGG HUNT DOWNTOWN BELTON 
GO TO WEBSITE FOR DATES	JUNE 13	JUNE 28 - JULY 5	AUGUST 2 - 3	AUGUST 28 - 31
SCHOEPP'S MUSIC SERIES 702 E CENTRAL AVE. SCHOEPPSBBQ.COM 	ROCKIN' ROTARY 702 E CENTRAL AVE. 	4TH OF JULY CELEBRATION DOWNTOWN STREET PARTY, PATRIOTIC PROGRAM, PARADE, FESTIVAL, RODEO. BACKYARD PARTY 	BELL COUNTY COMIC CON 301 W LOOP 121 	CENTRAL TEXAS STATE FAIR 301 W LOOP 121 
SEPTEMBER 26 - 27	OCTOBER 4	OCTOBER 10 - 11	NOVEMBER 15	DECEMBER 5 - 6
BELTON'S BACON, BLUES, & BREWS DOWNTOWN BELTON 	LION'S ON THE LEON 1502 PARK AVE. 	POLKA ON THE SQUARE DOWNTOWN BELTON 	BELTON MARKET DAYS DOWNTOWN BELTON 	CHRISTMAS ON THE CHISHOLM TRAIL DOWNTOWN BELTON 



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July 4th Celebration

Schedule of planned events

With an estimated 30,000+ people lining the streets, and a live televised broadcast reaching around the world, the 100-year tradition of the Belton 4th of July Celebration will include a 1 1/2 mile parade route running south on Main Street (FM317) from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor to the Bell County Courthouse, then east on Central Avenue, and north on Birdwell to the Belton Police Memorial. Following the parade, much of the crowd moves to the adjacent Liberty Park for the Festival on Nolan Creek with food and craft vendors, games, a petting zoo, static displays of military and first responder equipment, and live entertainment at the centrally located gazebo. Carnival rides and attractions fill Liberty Park located within a short walking distance on the Belton Hike and Bike Trail. The Rev, White, and Blue Car Show takes place alongside the Festival on Nolan Creek with a stunning lineup of classic cars, hot rods and custom builds. The three-night PRCA Rodeo is held July 3-5 at the Cadence Bank Center, an indoor, air-conditioned facility with a capacity for 5,900 rodeo attendees. Cowboys from around the country descend on the only PRCA Rodeo in Texas during this holiday weekend making it a must-see event. Music is an important part of our celebration with the Backyard Party at Schoepf's Concert and Fireworks show being an annual favorite. Kicking off our weeklong celebration is

the Downtown Street Party and Concert on June 28th! The Downtown Street Party is open to the public as a free non-ticketed event. Reserved VIP areas are available for sponsors. The Belton 4th of July Celebration is promoted extensively throughout Central Texas with a professional marketing campaign supported by local and regional media sponsors and marketing partners. Benefits to sponsors include access to high-volume pedestrian traffic, promotion through the marketing campaign, support of our local military families, the opportunity to be part of a "feel good" community event, and the chance to engage with a multicultural, family-friendly audience at the largest annual event in our Central Texas area.

Hundreds of people and financial supporters work behind the scenes to make Belton one of the largest July 4th celebrations in Central Texas. Thousands of people will enjoy the snow cones, face painting, parade, entertainment, and food. Most of them won't be thinking about the many sacrifices it takes to put on the celebration and to keep it safe. That's okay, because: In 1776, delegates from the 13 colonies met in Philadelphia and chose Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson wrote the first draft in 17 days. He worked with Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Robert R. Livingston and Roger Sherman to finish it. The Declaration of Independence became a historic document that would be celebrated by succeeding generations.





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Patriotic celebration starts with Downtown Street Party

BY DAVID STONE

The Belton Journal

The annual Fourth of July Celebration in Belton kicks off Saturday, June 28, with the Downtown Street Party, sponsored by the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce and held at Courthouse Square, 101 E Central Avenue.

The party, now in its sixth year, features an array of music, food trucks, games and plenty of craft beer and wine made right here in Central Texas. Family friendly activities will be available throughout the event.

The free event begins at 5:30 p.m., and live music will start at 6:30 in front of the historic Bell County Courthouse. The first group to take the stage will be award-winning Tejano band Grupo Pession, followed by the popular Leon River Band at 8:30.

"We are excited about bringing this event to our community for the Fourth of July Celebration," said Randy Pittenger, Belton Area Chamber of Commerce president

and chief executive officer. "We are especially thankful for our event sponsors who are making this available to our community and visitors at no charge."

Arlington-based Grupo Pession is a Tejano band that was nominated for the best Tejano Group of the Year at the All-Star Music Awards.

Formed in 2003, the Leon River Band keeps dance floors lively with classic rock and country by artists such as the Eagles, the Doobie Brothers, Bachman Turner Overdrive, Heart, Fleetwood Mac, George Strait, Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings.

The Downtown Street Party kicks off a week of patriotic fun in Belton that celebrates America's birthday.

Other events include the Carnival at Liberty Park on July 2-5, the Fourth of July PRCA Rodeo on July 3-5, a Patriotic Program & Parade on July 4, the Festival on Nolan Creek on July 4, a "Rev, White and Blue" Car Show on July 4 and the Belton Fourth of July Backyard Party at Schoepf's BBQ on July 4.

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Fourth of July rodeo starts second century of thrills

BY DAVID STONE

The Belton Journal

Riding, roping and wrangling — the 101st edition of the Belton Fourth of July rodeo will bust out of the shoot July 3 at the Cadence Bank Center. The popular rodeo will continue July 4 and 5.

Tickets for the rodeo are on sale — reserved seats or general admission tickets can be purchased online at Belton-Chamber.com, at cadencebankcenter.com or at the Cadence Bank Center business office from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Adult seats are \$28 per night and children 12 and under are \$19. Discounts are available for military and seniors, and reserved seats sell out fast.

In addition to the regularly contested PRCA and WPRA events featuring the top cowboys and cowgirls from across the country, each night of the rodeo will also feature the always popular Mutton Bustin' with children hanging on to ride sheep for as long as they can.

"This popular crowd pleaser is always entertaining and worthy of big cheers and photos," said Belton Area Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Randy Pittenger.

Each night of the rodeo features a different theme, with opening night on Thursday, July 3, being Military Appreciation Night, featuring a special patriotic opening and oath of enlistment ceremony.

Friday, July 4, is Hometown Heroes Night honoring local emergency responders and educators.

The Saturday, July 5, rodeo also will feature the wildly popular Stick Horse Stampede at 6:30 p.m. July 5 is Family Night, and kids 12 and under will be admitted free with a paid adult general admission ticket.

Children will be invited to lead their stick horses onto the rodeo arena floor prior to the rodeo in a memorable and photo worthy experience. As an extra bonus, kids 12 and younger get in free with a paid adult general admission ticket on Family Night Saturday.

"The Stick Horse Stampede is one of my favorite events at the rodeo," Pittenger said. "There is no signup or registration. Kids bring their own stick horses and get to run around the dirt floor, having a blast. It's a great photo op for parents and grandparents."

"We are excited about this year's rodeo," he said. "This annual event provides a wonderful opportunity for local residents as well

as visitors to our community to enjoy great family entertainment in a safe and comfortable environment."

"Traditions developed over the past century are cherished by families, as we celebrate our history together," Pittenger added. "We know there will be many people in attendance who have grown up attending the rodeo, then taking their children and grandchildren to it. Celebrating our history is an important part of being a community."

Here's a bit of Belton rodeo history:

Ellis White Holland Sr. is credited with producing the first Belton Fourth of July Rodeo in 1924, and he continued on the rodeo committee until 1940.

Holland leased bucking horses from the Texas State Penitentiary during those early years. He was a rancher and businessman, and was in-

ducted into the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame as an honorary member. He also was inducted into the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame.

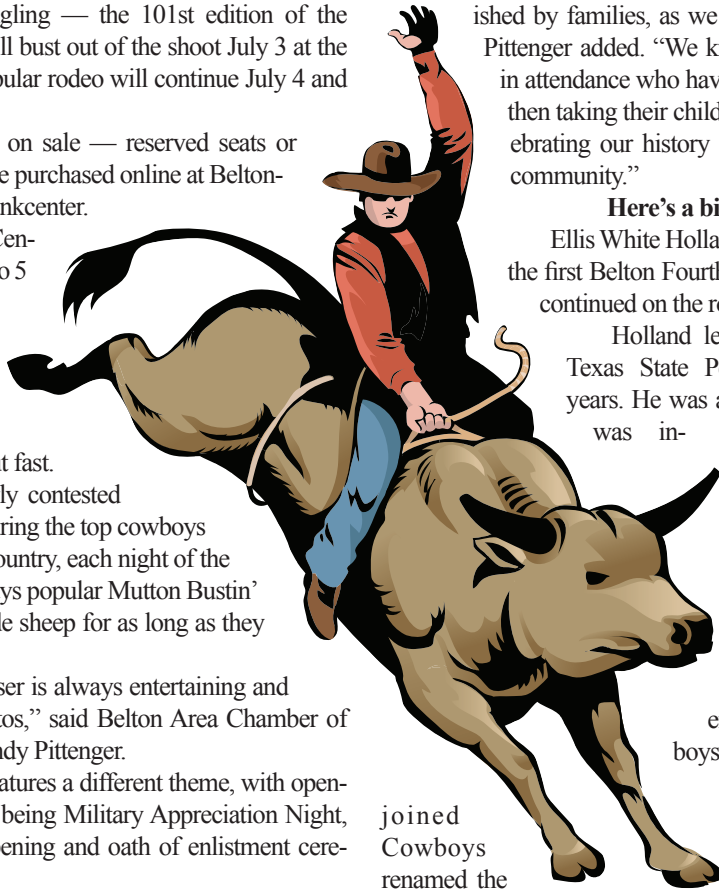
That first rodeo was held at the Penelope Street Hill arena in a simple, dry, rocky open space that offered just enough room for aspiring cowboys to show off their skills.

"In the early 1930s, Belton what was then known as the Turtle Association, later Professional Rodeo Cowc- association (PRCA)," Pittenger said. "During this decade, Belton also made history by hosting one of the first nighttime rodeos in the southwest. Reported- ly, the rodeos were such a hit that they lasted until midnight."

Following World War II, a new rodeo arena was built in what is now Liberty Park to accommodate the growing crowds. Once the huge arena, wooden bleachers, stock pens, and chutes were built, Belton began to draw top professional cowboys.

The rodeo grew to the point that additional bleachers were stacked with metal seats. The show continued to increase in size, Pittenger said.

In the 1980s the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce moved the rodeo to the new Bell County Expo Center — now known as Cadence Bank Center — where fans come from far and wide to enjoy quality family entertainment in addition to PRCA and WPRA Rodeo events.



Rodeo Event Guide

Bull Riding

Bull riding involves climbing onto a 2,000-pound bull and showcases a cowboy's fearless spirit. This thrilling and dangerous sport requires physical and mental toughness, earning riders significant respect and lasting stories. It is a popular rodeo attraction worldwide.

Riders can use only one hand to hold on for eight seconds, gripping a braided rope around the bull's chest. Each bull has a unique bucking style, darting left, spinning right, or rearing back. If a rider touches the bull or themselves with their free hand, they receive no score.

Bareback Riding

In bareback riding, the cowboy uses leather rigging that meets PRCA safety standards, secured on the horse's withers with a cinch. As the bronc and rider burst from the chute, the rider must keep both spurs on the horse's shoulders until its hooves hit the ground, a technique called "marking out."

As the bronc bucks, the rider lifts their knees, rolling their spurs along the horse's shoulders. To earn a high score, riders need strength and skill in their spurring technique, ensuring their toes remain outward while being ready for any surprises during the ride.

Saddle Bronc Riding

Saddle bronc riding is a classic rodeo event that contrasts with bareback and bull riding.

To properly mark out their bronc, riders must keep both heels above the horse's shoulders during its first jump. Unlike bareback riders, saddle bronc riders use only a thick rein attached to the halter for support and must



grip the saddle with one hand. Judges assess the horse's bucking, the rider's control, and spurring techniques. Riders strive to keep their toes pointed outward while spurring from the horse's shoulder to the back of the saddle.

Barrel Racing

In barrel racing, there are no judges or subjective scoring—time determines the winners.

Barrel racing centers around one female rider, three barrels, a horse, and a stopwatch. As the racer enters the arena, an electronic eye starts the clock, which stops when the horse completes the course. The horse must navigate a cloverleaf-shaped pattern around the barrels as quickly as possible. Once all racers have completed their runs, the clock serves as the sole judge.

Steer Wrestling

Steer wrestling, or "bulldogging," is the fastest rodeo event, with a world record time of 2.4 seconds.

In this event, the bulldogger starts on horseback while the steer gets a head start. When the barrier is released, the cowboy chases the steer, dismounts from the right side of his horse, and uses his right arm to grab the steer's right horn and his left hand to grasp the left horn. He then brings the steer down, which is deemed successful when the animal is on its side with all four feet pointing in the same direction.

Tiedown Roping

In tiedown roping, the mounted cowboy starts from a box, giving the calf a head start. A breakaway rope barrier is looped around the calf's neck and stretched across the box's opening.

When the calf reaches a designated point, the barrier is released. The horse stops as the cowboy throws the lasso to catch the calf. After catching it, the cowboy dismounts, runs to the calf, and flanks it by hand. The calf's three legs are tied with a pigging string. The horse pulls back to eliminate slack in the rope. When the tying is complete, the roper raises their hands to signal that the run is finished.



Team Roping

Team roping is the only true team event in Pro Rodeo, requiring close cooperation between two skilled ropers: the header and the heeler.

Ropers start from boxes on either side of the chute as the steer enters the arena with a head start. When the barrier is released, the header chases the steer while the heeler follows behind.

The header must catch the steer using one of three legal methods: around both horns, around one horn and the head, or around the neck. After securing the steer, the header turns it to expose its hind legs for the heeler, who then tries to rope both hind legs. The time stops when there is no slack in the ropes, and their horses face each other.



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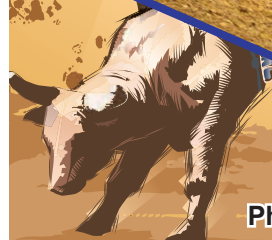
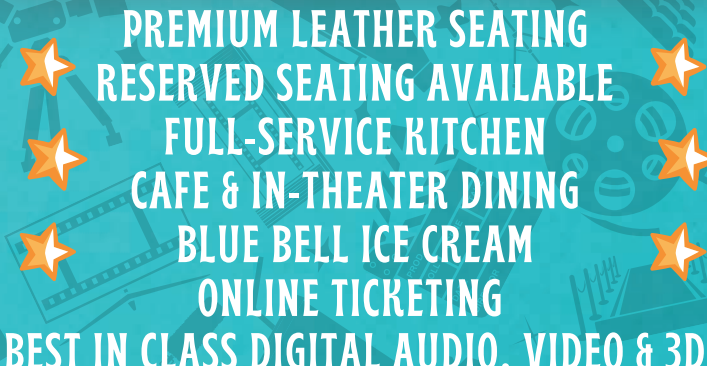


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Belton Celebrates 175 Years of Colorful History

This year marks the 175th anniversary of the City of Belton and Bell County. Located on Nolan Creek at the center of the county, Belton was first settled in the late 1840s as Nolan Springs. When Bell County was established in 1850, the city was renamed Nolanville.

In August 1850, the town was laid out in blocks and streets, with a courthouse square at its center, as described by longtime librarian Lena Armstrong. The name was changed from Nolanville to Belton in 1851. Initially, the only town in the county, Belton served as a key stop for pioneers heading west.

Soon after lots were sold, businesses and a post office were established, and mail arrived by horseback. But, a stagecoach route that started in Tennessee and ended in Brownsville made Belton a weekly stopping point. That brought more business and people to the county seat.



Main Street, looking North, Belton, Texas.

Although a fire in 1879 destroyed much of the central business district, the town quickly rebuilt and by the mid-1880s had a population of 4,000, daily mail service, three newspapers, and several schools and banks. Belton developed into a processing and shipping center for cotton, with the first cottonseed oil mill opening in 1879.

The arrival of the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad in the early 1880s brought growth, but Temple, established eight miles to the northeast, quickly surpassed Belton in size. Nonetheless, Belton retained its status as a county seat and continued to thrive, particularly after an electric interurban line connected the two towns in 1905.

Andrew Carnegie established over 2,500 free public libraries worldwide, including 300 in Texas. One such library fulfilled the dream of the Women's Wednesday Club, a literary organization founded in Belton in 1898 with 25 members who aimed to create a public library for the community. In collaboration with the Century Club, the Wednesday Club secured a \$10,000 donation from Carnegie in 1903 to build a library, provided the city would obtain a lot and maintain it. Local residents raised an additional \$1,500 for a lot on Main Street. The completed library, a two-story building with



A two-story log jail was erected in 1853, and it was quickly followed by a school, hotel, church, saloons, stores and other businesses. Most were log buildings or pole shacks, but as more people arrived the buildings began to be permanently constructed.

A log courthouse was built in 1852, followed by a limestone courthouse in 1859. By 1860, Belton had become the largest town in the county, with a population of 300.

The city has a great deal of history, and over this year, The Belton Journal will highlight a few of its treasures with pictorial stories. In the meantime, here are a few highlights about our great city and county:

Despite some pro-Union sentiment during the secession crisis, the county ultimately voted for secession. After the Civil War, Belton faced violence and lawlessness, marked by several lynchings. The town began to recover in the late 1860s and grew as a business center, especially for agriculture, with the establishment of the first bank in 1867 and the rise of the Belton Woman's Commonwealth.





6,220 square feet, opened on May 15, 1905. However, it closed two months later due to funding issues, struggling for the next 25 years. By 1933, the library became a city department. After outgrowing its original location in the 1970s, a new building was constructed at 301 East First Avenue in 1974, while the original library now houses the Bell County Museum.

Significant developments included the establishment of a public water system in the mid-1880s, a fire department in 1884, and the introduction of electricity in 1889. In 1885, Baylor Female College moved to Belton, which later became the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.

A cotton yarn factory opened in 1901, and the population reached 3,700 by 1904.

Belton was dependent on the cotton industry from the 1880s to the 1920s. As a result, there was a need for a yarn mill to complement the cotton trade and to provide facilities for cotton processing locally. Cotton bought on the streets of Belton was manufactured into cloth and yarn.

The Belton Yarn Mill was a two-story building built by a group of businessmen in 1900. The mill was erected at a cost of \$25,000. The fuel used by the Belton mill was lignite, shipped from Rockdale in Milam County. The mill began operation in October 1901 and originally had 3,100 spindles and 100 looms. At its peak, the mill consumed from 2000 to 2200 bales of cotton annually.



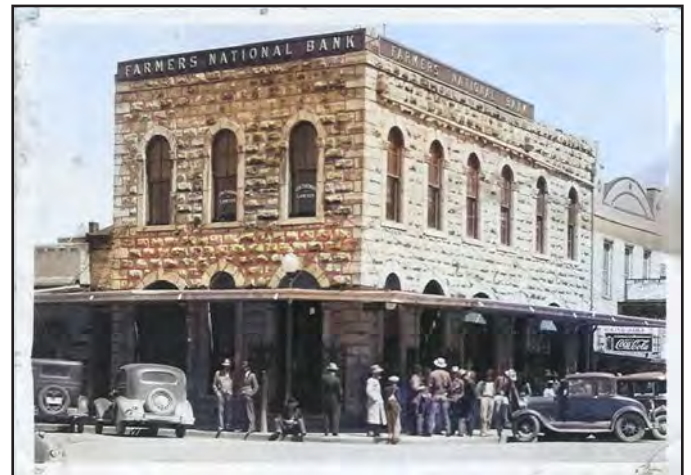
The mill employed approximately 112 people and had an annual payroll of about \$30,000. Most of the employees were residents of Bell County; some from poor families and some from tenant farms. The tenant farmers worked as semi-annual hands, coming to town twice a year in between cotton planting and cotton harvesting. The mill owned 25 cottages to house employees.

After the Panic of 1907, the mill closed and stood empty for nine years. It was eventually reopened and continued to operate until the late 1920s or early 1930s when the cotton industry in the county collapsed.

The building was sold and functioned as a school and library furniture manufacturer until a fire ravaged the 300,000-square-foot complex of buildings shared by Indeco Sales and Maco Manufacturing.

In its early history, Belton experienced several disastrous fires, and as a result, local residents were determined to build a waterworks system that would provide adequate protection.

After consulting with engineers from waterworks companies, Belton designed a complete water system including water mains in the business district, a 50-foot standpipe north of town, and a double pumping plant at the Leon River, all costing \$41,500 in bonds. The



first municipal water system was completed and delivered on July 1, 1884.

The original standpipe, an iron structure near 10th Avenue, was raised by 35 feet years later. Unfortunately, it deteriorated and burst in October 1909, flooding Main Street. The site was then abandoned in favor of a new standpipe south of town.

The Belton standpipe was built on Denison's Hill, standing 75 feet high and 24 feet wide, to provide water to residents south of Nolan's Creek.

In August 1928, the standpipe became a topic of concern when residents noticed small water bugs in their faucets. Rumors circulated about dangerous creatures allegedly crawling over it. The State Department of Health analyzed the water and found it safe, but fears persisted.

To address the concerns, the City Council moved up the planned cleaning of the standpipe. A raft with a dozen men was placed inside,

175th - From Page 17

and as water was drained, the raft sank. The Belton Journal noted that the men's efforts revealed only a few inches of sand, contrary to the expected debris.

By the mid-1960s, the standpipe was insufficient for the city's needs, especially during summer, leading to higher fire insurance costs. The City Council proposed a \$600,000 bond for additional storage, and in 1975, the standpipe was retired. City Manager George Ferrell reported leaks made repairs impractical, so the structure was drained and abandoned after a new 100,000-gallon overhead tank was completed.

Ultimately, it was decided to preserve the standpipe. Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990, it recently underwent a complete transformation and opened as a community park this year.

In December 1913, downtown Belton flooded, but the town thrived until the Great Depression, which caused many businesses to close. The population peaked at 6,500 in 1928 but dropped to 3,779 in 1931. The economy began to recover in the early 1940s with the development of nearby Camp Hood later named Fort Hood and now Fort Cavazos.

Belton has experienced a lot of growth since the 1970s and now sits at 25,171 according to the 2023 estimate census and Bell County now has over 450,000 residents.

Historical postcards and photos are courtesy of Lena Armstrong Public Library, City of Belton and the Belton Chamber of Commerce.

Ellis White Holland Sr. is credited with producing the first Belton Fourth of July Rodeo in 1924, and he continued to serve on the rodeo committee until 1940. During those early years, Holland leased bucking horses from the Texas State Penitentiary. He was a rancher and businessman who was inducted as an honorary member into the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame.

The inaugural rodeo took place at the Penelope Street Hill arena, a simple, dry, rocky open space that provided just enough room for aspiring cowboys to showcase their skills. In the early 1930s, Belton joined what was then known as the Cowboys Turtle Association, later renamed the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA). During this decade, Belton also made his-

tory by hosting one of the first nighttime rodeos in the Southwest, which reportedly lasted until midnight due to its popularity.

Following World War II, a new rodeo arena was constructed in what is now Liberty Park to accommodate the growing crowds. With the addition of a large arena, wooden bleachers, stock pens, and chutes, Belton began attracting top professional cowboys.

The rodeo's success led to additional bleachers being stacked with metal seats, causing the event to expand further.

In the 1980s, the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce moved the rodeo to the new Bell County Expo Center—now known as the Cadence Bank Center—where fans come from near and far to enjoy quality family entertainment, including PRCA and WPRA Rodeo events.





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Belton's July 4th parade is a historic institution in Bell County

Parade Theme: Celebrating 175 years of Bell County

The Belton 4th of July parade is part of a larger and more festive celebration of Independence Day in Central Texas. Belton is in the top ten of favorite places to celebrate the 4th in the United States.

Barbecue, street dances, patriotic concerts, and of course the parade all culminate in a fun, family-oriented party that highlights the freedoms we as Americans enjoy.

This year, on Friday, July 4, the morning will begin with a patriotic program at 8 a.m. by the courthouse, with the parade beginning at 9 a.m.

The parade itself starts on Main Street, at UMHB, and will head south and pass by the Bell County Courthouse, east on Central Avenue, and north on Birdwell to the Belton Police Memorial.

The 1 ½ mile long parade will attract thousands of people who will line the streets of Belton to view the amazing floats, decorated cars, military and veteran entries and high school bands that will pass by, showcasing the unique family feeling that Belton citizens have come to enjoy over the years.

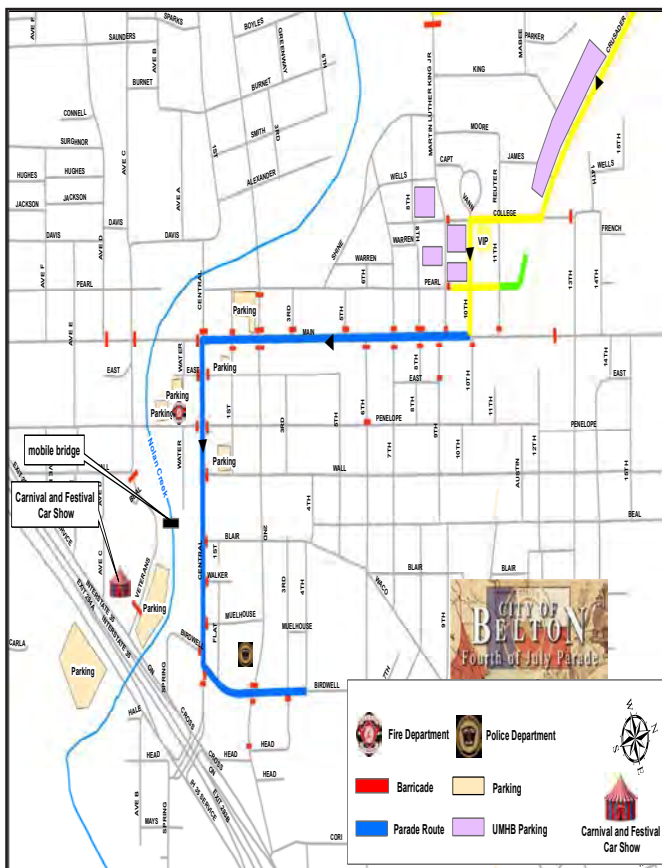
The Belton parade dates back to the early 1850's, and many of these early parades were dedicated to Civil War soldiers who had sacrificed their lives for freedom as well as veterans of World War I and World War II.

As far back as 1924, 25,000 spectators lined the streets of Belton to witness the beautifully decorated floats that had been put together by businesses, churches and schools.

The event was televised for the first time in 1982 by KCEN-TV and got national acclaim in 2008 when USA Today declared Belton one of the "Top Ten Places to Fly Your Flag on the Fourth." This success has continued to grow exponentially each year. Today, more than 30,000 spectators line the streets to watch the parade, now televised by KWTX-TV, and over 50,000 are expected to visit the city during the weeklong activities.

The City of Belton promises to give the citizens of Bell County and others from all over the great state of Texas a fun-filled and patriotic good time.

Those who travel a great distance to celebrate our country's independence will not be disappointed in what Belton has to offer this Fourth of July.





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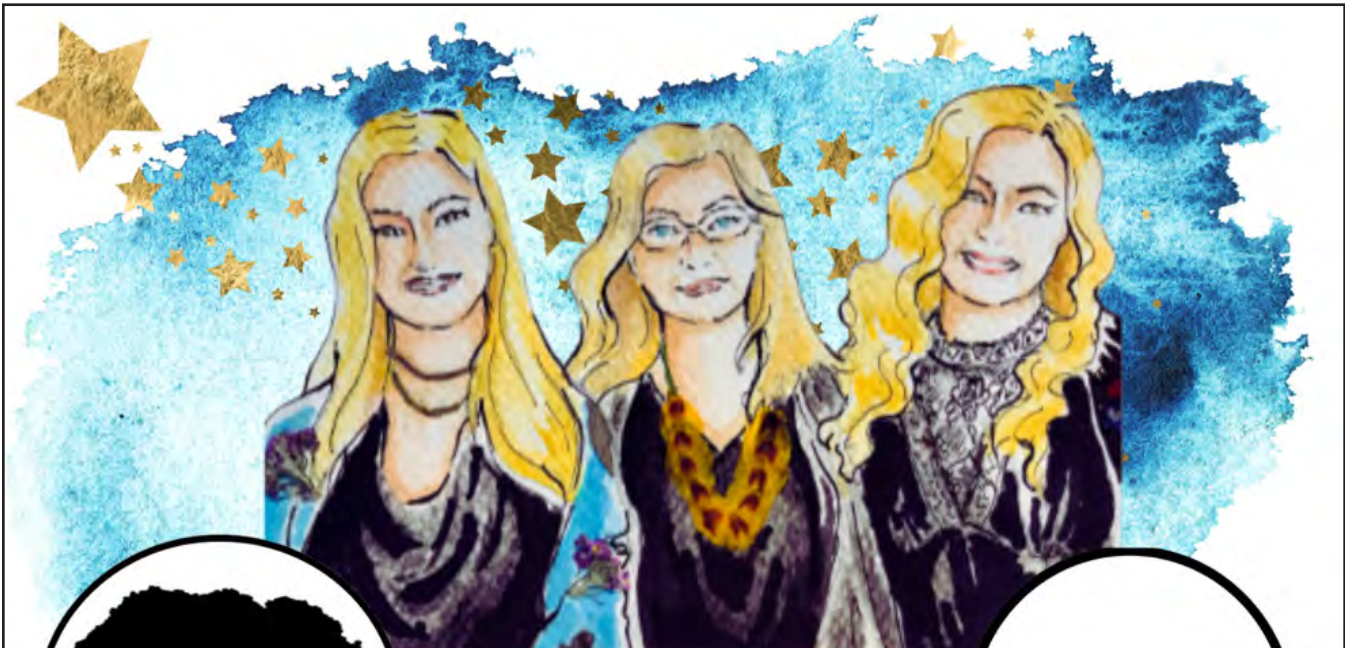
The Fritz Hodde Fabulous Six Band - Sat. 11:30 am - 3:30 pm

Jerry Haisler & the Melody Five - Sat. 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm

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King, fireworks to highlight Backyard Party



The final event of the Belton Fourth of July celebration likely will be one of the best.

This year's Backyard Party concert and fireworks exhibition will be at Schoepf's BBQ's outdoor stage. The concert will feature popular honky-tonk star Randall King along with Jared Johnson.

The doors open at 6 p.m. and the music will begin at 7. Seating is limited and only available by reservation. Tables are available for purchase, guaranteeing seating at the event.

General admission is \$20 and tables for six start at \$400. Tickets can be purchased at <https://tinyurl.com/mt3axjsx>. Sponsoring a table helps pay for bands and fireworks.

"It's going to be a great show," said Ronnie Schoepf, owner of the restaurant. "Bell County's own Jared Johnson will open the show, along with drummer Eric Raines. Eric has performed with several bands here at Schoepf's."

"Fireworks should get started at dark, and we'll have about a 30-minute show," he added.

The Backyard Party will be in the outdoor area behind the

restaurant, and no lawn chairs or outside food or drinks will be allowed. There will be a clear-bag policy — do not bring purses or backpacks, Schoepf said.

"There will be food and a full bar," he said.

The event is being co-sponsored by the Belton Area Chamber of Commerce and others.

"The Chamber has a lot of sponsors, and we have a sponsor that helps with fireworks costs."

Randall King is a crowd favorite, and he has never wavered in his honky-tonk allegiance — in fact, he's worn it like a badge of honor, growing with pride into a leading voice for today's traditional country.

Amassing over 300 Million streams with singles like *You In A Honky Tonk*, *Hey Cowgirl* and *Mirror, Mirror*, he's kept the twang alive in country's mainstream.

Schooled on icons like Keith Whitley, George Strait, Alan Jackson and John Anderson, but inspired by modern masters like Dierks Bentley and Gary Allan, King first built an independent, grass-roots following on the strength of his electrifying live shows.

He has since gone on to headline all across the US, the UK, and Europe, and he continues to play nearly 150 shows a year.



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ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE

FRI. SEPT. 26

Breweries & Wineries - 5:30 pm - 10:00 pm

Food Vendors - 5:30 pm - 10:00 pm

Texas Flood - 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm

SAT. SEPT. 27

B4 Market - 11:00 am - 10:00 pm

Food Truck Competition with Bacon Inspired Dishes - 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

Pig Calling Contest for Youth (Ages 12 and Under) - 1:00 pm - 1:30 pm

Pig Calling Contest for Adults (Ages 13 and Up) - 1:30 - 2:00 pm

Jay White and the Blues Commanders - 4:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Awards Ceremony - 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm

The Damn Torpedoes (Tom Petty Tribute Band) - 7:00 - 10:00 pm



FOR MORE INFO VISIT:

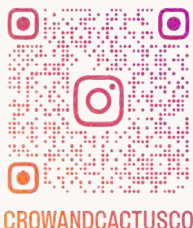
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Once upon a time on the 4th of July...a look back



BY BERNETA PEEPLES AND CASSIDY PATE

The Belton Journal

July the Fourth in Belton has a rich tradition, including one of Texas's oldest continuous Independence Day programs and parades. F.M. Cross who came to what is now Bell County, wrote in 1903 that the first recorded 4th of July celebration in Belton was held in 1852. That doesn't mean that the brave souls living in the wilderness didn't get together before then, as likely they did – it just didn't occur to them to carve a news story on a nearby tree trunk.

Those who moved west were 86 years from the American Revolution, and when the land wore out, they did what they had to do. They packed up and moved on, taking with them their traditions and hopes. By 1919, times were good. World War I had been fought to end all wars, and Bell County was at the peak of cotton farming.

As usual, it was the women who took the lead. The wives of several Belton businessmen decided that the July 4th program should be in honor of, and dedicated to, the veterans of the American Expedition Force, the American soldiers who won the war in Europe.



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Let's Build
Some Dreams.

So, there was a parade. Was the music by the famous White Horse band, or the Belton High School Band? Chances are both played as hand-decorated floats, wagons, and buggies made their way through town. There were surely lots of horses, already years old tradition at that time.

However, the main excitement was for the air show, featuring the Army Air Corps. Visitors reportedly came by train, right into downtown Belton. Lt Yantis Taylor, a Belton native, managed to bring a two-wing airplane from Kelly Field in San Antonio, and with Roy Sanderford, put on a show that dazzled the crowds.

All the stores stayed open on the 4th, and rural residents enjoyed a full day of shopping. In 1923, Cochran Blair & Potts Department Store had a half page ad in the Belton Journal, inviting people to listen to the new shipment of Edison records. Women wore new dresses made of Dotted Swiss, organdy or voile.

Boys had new shirts, and men wore linen suits or pressed slacks and ties. Everyone dressed in their Sunday best to come to town. The parade started at the corner of Main and 7th and made its way south on Main to Central, east to Penelope, west on Water and back north to Main. This created a bit of a bottleneck when the head of the parade met back up with the end. Members of the Belton Volunteer Fire Department directed traffic so the parade could continue west on Central, cross the jail bridge and join the day's festivities in Yettie Polk Park.

The carnival was held in the park, and it was truly a social gathering. Rural residents visited with friends they hadn't seen since the prior year. The twinkling lights of the Ferris wheel, the hoppy horse

calliope, the thrill of the occasional dime for a hobby horse ride, the house of mirrors that took a long time to get through, the noise, the smell of popcorn, the hamburger stands...there was nothing like it anywhere else. All through her senior year of high school, one girl was madly in love with the best baseball pitcher in Bell County. The problem was: he didn't know she existed.

On July 4th, the National Guard oversaw the house of mirrors. Finally, she asked, "How do we get out of here?"

"That way!" he said, pointing to his right. She turned and walked right into one of the thick glass walls, ending her affection for him.

Anybody who could afford it was allowed to set up a stand and sell hot dogs, hamburgers, sandwiches, or soda pops.

The late Joseph E. Wilson said his parents rented one of their tourist cabins the city owned in the park where the City of Belton Finance Department is located. Mrs. Wilson sold pimiento cheese sandwiches and cold lemonade. "She made enough money to help buy school clothes for all us kids," Joe remembered.

For several summers, there were canoe rides on Lake Bassel. Lake Bassel was created by a small dam on Nolan Creek, about midway between the Main Street Bridge and the low water crossing at Liberty Park. The resulting body of water was named for the mayor, Neal Bassel. The dam was removed in the early 1980s after repeated flooding.

Former Journal editors Berneta Peebles and Cassidy Pate both grew up in Belton.



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Rodeo Announcer Charlie Throckmorton

Rodeo announcer Charlie Throckmorton's career spans more than 50 years. He announced his first rodeo in 1969 while still in high school. Now a Gold Card member of the PRCA, Throckmorton has covered rodeo and bull riding competitions in 44 states across the nation. In April 2007, Charlie was inducted into the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame. This honor is in recognition of his abili-

ties and contributions to the sport of rodeo. Charlie Throckmorton's voice has been heard on live NBC television billboards, as well as many state fairs and rodeos throughout the country. Charlie lives in Cleburne, Texas where he enjoys riding his Heritage Softail Harley Davidson as a hobby. He has a son, Taylor, a daughter, Katy, and a granddaughter, Autumn.



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"Backflip" Johnny Dudley

Professional rodeo clown and barrel man "Backflip" Johnny Dudley of Denton, TX is one of the top talents in pro rodeo. He is known for amazing feature acts, along with his quick wit and off-the-cuff banter that keeps crowds laughing until their sides hurt. He has performed at rodeos from Florida to Alaska and just about everywhere in between. He has been chosen three times for the Turquoise Circuit Finals rodeo, six times for the PRCA's All-American Finals, nominated twice for PRCA Comedy Act of

the Year, and was voted as the 2019 Coors Man in the Can. But, before becoming a rodeo clown, Johnny served 8 years in the United States Marine Corps and then went on to



college where he graduated with a degree in International Business. Johnny is one of the most likable people you will ever meet and greets everyone with a big Texas smile.



Photo BY facebook.com/p/Backflip-Johnny-Dudley



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Mutton Bustin' at the Belton 4th of July Rodeo

One of the most popular highlights of the Annual Belton 4th of July Rodeo is a very special event for the youngest participants, Mutton Bustin'. Always a crowd pleaser, seeing these young cowgirls and cowboys ride sheep for as long as they can hold on while the animal runs and jumps around the rodeo arena is an experience that brings the loudest cheers.

Each night of the rodeo features up to 18 riders, all vying to be the champion who scores the highest. Scoring is based on the length of time they stay on the sheep, as well as the judges' assessment of their overall ride. Just like the cowboys who ride the bulls and bucking broncs, the sheep vary in their speed and jumping abilities. Some riders can hold on for only a brief time while others have more extended rides, adding to the excitement.

Children ages 4-7 weighing under 55 pounds are eligible to sign up in advance for this exciting event. Each year there is high demand for the limited slots available. Participants receive tickets to attend the rodeo as well as a commemorative Mutton Bustin' shirt.

Some children are understandably nervous about their first ride but soon find out the thrill of the ride is worth overcoming their fear. Safety is a high priority for every rodeo event, including Mutton Bustin', so the young riders are outfitted with protective equipment including a helmet and vest.

"We always look forward to the sign-up event to see the enthusiasm our youngest fans bring to the rodeo," stated Randy Pittenger, Belton Area Chamber President/CEO. "Then on each night of the rodeo, the anticipation of their big ride brings out many cameras from supportive family members and friends. Just like our



other rodeo participants, their event might only last a few seconds but the memories they make will last a lifetime."

Mutton Bustin' is one of many events at the rodeo, featuring family friendly entertainment. This will be the 101st consecutive year for the annual Belton 4th of July Rodeo, held July 3-5 in the air-conditioned Cadence Bank Center (formerly known as the Bell County Expo). Opening night on Thursday, July 3 is Military Appreciation Night. Friday, July 4 is Hometown Heroes Night, honoring local first responders, healthcare, and education professionals. Closing out the rodeo is Family Night on Saturday, July 5 that includes the Stick Horse Stampede.

For more information about the rodeo and other Belton 4th of July Celebration events, visit the website at www.beltonchamber.com, call 254-939-3551, or email info@beltonchamber.com.



The history of America's Independence Day

Few summertime holidays elicit as much excitement as the Fourth of July, also known as Independence Day in the United States. Each year, family, friends and revelers anticipate the arrival of the holiday so they can host barbecues, enjoy the sun, listen to their favorite summertime tunes, and commemorate the freedoms afforded by the monumental events that led to the holiday's establishment.

Independence Day became a federal holiday in 1941, but July 4th has stood as the birth of American independence for much longer. July 4th marks a pivotal moment in the American Revolution. According to PBS, the colonies were forced to pay taxes to England's King George III despite having no representation in the British Parliament. "Taxation without representation" became a battle cry and was one of several grievances colonists had with Great Britain.

Conflict between the colonies had been going on for at least a year



before the colonies convened a Continental Congress in Philadelphia in June of 1776, says Military.com. On July 2, 1776, the Continental Con-

gress voted in favor of independence from England. Two days later, on July 4, 1776, delegates from the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Inde-

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The Declaration of Independence is an historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was considered the strongest and most eloquent writer of the declaration writing committee charged with putting the colonies' sentiments into words. Richard Henry Lee of Virginia was one of the first people to present a resolution for American independence, and his commentary was the impetus for the formal Declaration of Independence. A total of 86 changes were made to Jefferson's original draft until the final version was adopted. The signing of the document helped to solidify independence, and eventually lead to the formation of the United States of America.

A total of 56 delegates signed the document. Although John Hancock's signature is the largest, it did not hold more weight than the other signatures. Rather, rumor has it, Hancock signed it so large so that the "fat, old King could read it without his spectacles." However, the National Archives says it was also customary that, since Hancock was the president of the Continental Congress, he be the first person to sign the document centered below the text.

The Pennsylvania Evening Post was the first newspaper to print the Declaration of Independence on July 6, 1776.

The first public readings of the Declaration were held in Philadelphia's Independence Square on July 8, 1776.



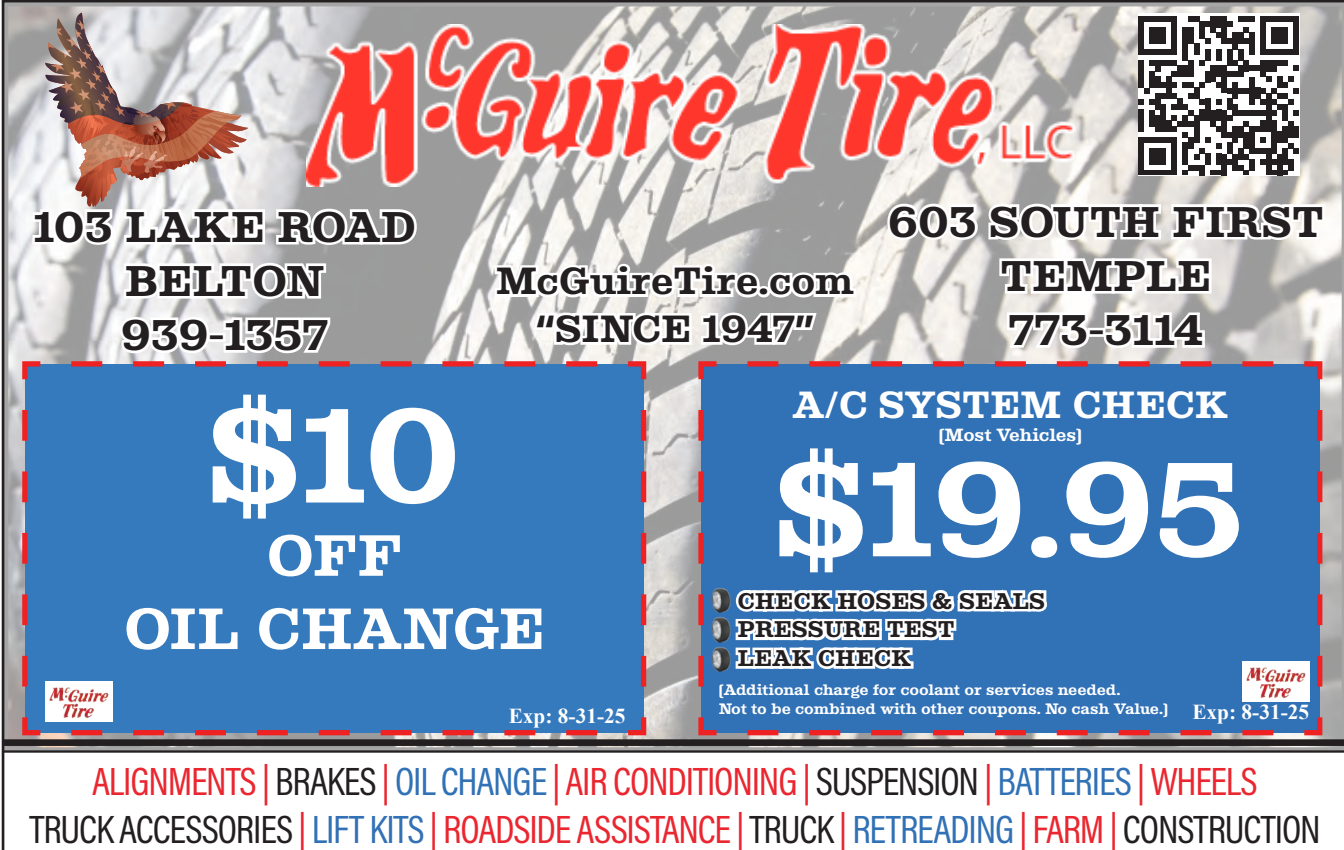
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4th of July Festival on Nolan Creek in Liberty Park

The annual 4th of July Festival on Nolan Creek will be held in Liberty Park again this year following the parade. Each year following the 4th of July Parade, thousands of visitors enjoy a variety of vendors, food trucks, music, games and displays at the Festival on Nolan Creek.

Liberty Park is located near the Belton Christian Youth Center (BCYC) on Veterans Way. Last year, the festival was moved downstream from Yettie Polk Park to help accommodate more space for vendors and the Rev, White & Blue Car Show, as well as being close by the Carnival.

Prior to the opening of the Bell County Expo in 1987, the annual Belton 4th of July Rodeo was held at the old rodeo grounds where BCYC is currently located. Many people remember Liberty Park being the location for the Festival on Nolan Creek prior to moving to Yettie Polk Park for many years.

In years past, there was a low water crossing behind the Bell County Appraisal District office that was used to provide easy access to the park from the parade route and downtown area. Again this year, the 36th Engineer Brigade from Fort Cavazos will deploy a temporary mobile bridge at the low water crossing. This bridge will allow pedestrians easy access to the Festival on Nolan Creek and provide for an impressive static display of military equipment.

The Belton Area Chamber of Commerce and City of Belton have also purchased a temporary event pedestrian bridge to be used whenever needed to facilitate access across Nolan Creek.

“We are excited about this wonderful Belton tradition as we celebrate ‘175 Years of Bell County’ as our parade theme, then continue the day of family fun with the Festival on Nolan Creek in Liberty Park,” stated Randy Pittenger, Belton Area Chamber President/CEO. “Many have

commented that they recall wonderful memories of attending the Festival under the shade of trees in beautiful Liberty Park.”

Attractions and entertainment for the Festival on Nolan Creek in Liberty Park will include the 1st Cavalry Rock Band from Fort Cavazos performing at the pavilion, the third annual Rev, White & Blue Car Show, the Dr. Watts Cooling Tent, and dozens of food trucks and vendors.

While parking is always a challenge on the 4th of July due to the large crowds of people, in addition to parking being available at the park, Crossroads Church has offered the use of their parking lot for close access. The church is located nearby Liberty Park on the east side of I-35, with easy access via the Nolan Creek Hike and Bike Trail.

The 4th of July will be full of activities and events, including the Patriotic Program, Parade, Carnival and Festival on Nolan Creek in Liberty Park, Hometown Heroes night of the 101st Annual PRCA Rodeo at the Cadence Bank Center (formerly known as the Bell County Expo), and then close out with the Backyard Party at Schoepf’s Concert and Fireworks, featuring Randall King and Jared Johnson prior to the fireworks show. The concert is a ticketed event, with sponsorships and reserved tables available.

For more information about these events, visit the website at www.beltonchamber.com, call 254-939-3551, or email info@beltonchamber.com.





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Showing our patriotism through the Belton Lions Club flag program

BY DANIEL MOCTEZUMA

The Belton Journal

It's encouraging to see the patriotism of so many in our community as you proudly fly the flag of the United States of America! ~ *Belton Lions Club*

Every year the Belton Lions Club encourages residents to sign up for its year-round Flag Program.

The program provides homeowners with a mounted American flag for \$30 a year, including the flag, pole, and ground sleeve. The club maintains and replaces flags as needed.

"We currently have about 147 flags out," said Karen Stagner, club secretary. The club actively looks to add more each year.

The program originally involved volunteers placing and removing flags on specific holidays. In time, the club shifted to a "perpetual" model where flags stay up year-round, provided they're lit at night in accordance with flag code. Replacements are handled by the club upon request.

"Wouldn't it be great to drive into your street and see it lined with flags?" said Stagner. "It shows pride and also supports everything we're able to do in Belton."

Participation has decreased by over 50 homes in the last few years, according to the club. To counter that, members are reaching out to local HOAs and considering door-to-door block walking to reconnect with residents and grow the program.

"We've had a lot of people move in and out. When that happens, sometimes the flag just sits there or disappears," Stagner said. "We want the new folks to know this program exists."

While the Flag Program is the focus for the summer, it's also one of the club's key fundraisers. The Belton Lions Club uses proceeds to support children with disabilities, underserved families, and various community programs.

This includes collecting eyeglasses for the Texas Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center, sponsoring students with two annual scholarships, funding the Lions Pavilion and accessible playground at Heritage Park, and supporting the



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Texas Lions Camp, a free summer camp for children with physical, intellectual, and medical conditions.

The club also helps with Project Heartbeat's Angel Tree program for Belton ISD students, holiday food baskets for families with special needs, and Back-to-School with God, an event on July 19 at Yettie Polk Park where kids receive haircuts, eye exams, and free hot dogs.

They also host Christmas with Santa, a sensory-friendly celebration for special needs families that includes therapy dogs, gift bags, and support booths from local organizations.

Another major annual fundraiser is the "Captain D Dash for Sight" 5K on October 4 at Heritage Park. The fun run is followed by the Wacky Boat Race on Nolan Creek, where custom homemade boats compete for prizes.

The club also organizes community efforts in partnership with groups like the Temple-Belton Lady Lions. On May 22, 2024, they helped deliver food and drinks to recovery crews working across Morgan's Point after the severe storm.

"That's the reason we do fundraisers — without our supporters and sponsors, there's a lot we wouldn't be able to do," Stagner said.

For more information, visit beltonlionsclub.com.



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The advertisement for Water Street Waffle Co. features a dark, chalkboard-style background. At the top, there are images of various food items including waffles, fries, and a drink. The company logo is prominently displayed in the center-left. Below the logo, the tagline "Creating Comfort Food Completely from Scratch!" is written in a cursive font. Further down, it states "Specializing in the Liege Waffle out of Belgium". To the right, the contact information for both the Belton and Temple locations is provided, including addresses and phone numbers. At the bottom, the website URL is listed. The bottom of the ad is decorated with more food images, including a waffle topped with fruit and a plate of waffles with toppings.

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Patriotic program, music to start 4th of July celebration

BY DAVID STONE
The Belton Journal

The Fourth of July promises to be a day full of patriotic fun, and it all starts with a special program at Courthouse Square in downtown Belton.

"We will have several speakers at the service, including Bell County Judge David Blackburn, Belton Mayor David Leigh, and the commander of the 13th Armored Corps Sustainment Command at Fort Cavazos," said Belton Area Chamber of Commerce President Randy Pittenger.

The current commander of the 13th ACSC is leaving

Fort Cavazos and the new commander's name has not been released by Army officials.

The program will begin at 8 a.m. The 13th ACSC color guard will post colors, and the Belton High School Madrigal will sing the National Anthem. A local Scout will lead the pledge, Pittenger said.

"The service is about a half hour," he added. "We definitely will be done by 8:30 so people can get to the parade."

The annual Fourth of July Parade begins at 9 a.m.

Following the service, the Belton High School Marching 100 will be performing patriotic music at the courthouse.



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Stick Horse Stampede: A Fun Way for Kids to Get Involved in the Rodeo

Are you looking for something enjoyable for your child during the rodeo? The Stick Horse Stampede might be the perfect event for them!

Originally known as the Stick Horse Grand Entry, the Stick Horse Stampede will take place on Saturday night, which is family night at the rodeo. This event is open to kids aged 12 and under, allowing them to experience the thrill of riding like a cowboy across the rodeo arena.

Children who wish to participate can line up in the front lobby from 6:15 to 6:30 p.m. on family night. No prior registration is required for this event. Additionally, kids aged 12 and under can enter for free with one paid adult ticket.

For those without a stick horse, one will be provided. After lining up, the kids will be escorted to the arena floor, where they will get to stampede into the arena alongside cowboys and rodeo clowns.

Children will have the opportuni-



ty to run, skip, or gallop onto the arena floor with their stick horses, giving them a true rodeo cowboy experience. In previous years, kids have had a blast running around the arena, while adhering to safety precautions as no animals are present during this event. Many children have

creatively acted out their cowboy personas by making lasso-throwing motions and yelling "yeehaw" to entertain the on-lookers.

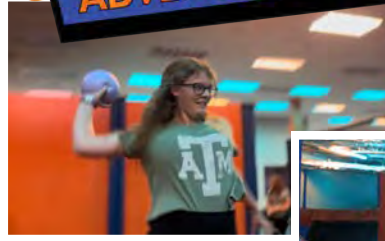
This event also offers parents a wonderful chance to capture great photographs of their kids charging through the arena like cowboys.

The Stick Horse Stampede provides an opportunity for those aged 12 and under who didn't get a chance to participate in Mutton Bustin'. Mutton Bustin', another popular event at the rodeo, involves kids riding sheep for as long as they can. Due to its popularity, participation is limited, making the Stick Horse Stampede an excellent alternative for kids eager to join in on the rodeo fun.

Each night of the rodeo will also feature the much-loved Mutton Bustin', which delights the crowds and offers plenty of chances for cheers and unforgettable photos.



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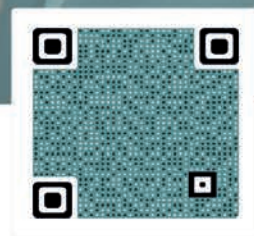


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