

EXPLORE



Discover the Rich History
of the "Gateway to
the Hill Country"

THE STORY OF DRIPPING SPRINGS

Eight years after Texas became the 28th state of the United States, three American families trekking from Mississippi and Kentucky decided to make their homes in this beautiful part of the Texas Hill Country. Following the road that carried supplies to a U.S. Army fort in Fredericksburg, the “Old Three”—the Pound, Moss, and Wallace families—stopped their wagons to form a frontier settlement between 1853 and 1854, amongst the area’s rolling hills, rock-bottomed streams, majestic views, and abundant wildlife.



By 1857, this modest settlement of log cabins and farmsteads needed a post office, which required them to pick a town name. Indiana “Nannie” Moss, pictured above, called it as she saw it: inspired by lush, fern-covered, limestone ledges that still drip with water to this day. Henceforth, the town would be known as Dripping Springs.

Throughout this time, the surrounding natural springs were utilized in creative ways. Milkhouse Springs, pictured on the cover, consisted of a rocky-ledged canyon and a cave-like spot at its base. The cold spring water flowing through it cooled the small cave naturally, making it an ideal place for storing milk and other perishable products for Dripping Springs residents, before man-made refrigeration made its way to the nearby farmsteads in the late 1800s.

Although there were homes and businesses scattered about over the years, Dripping Springs didn’t have a centralized location until 1881, when W. T. Chapman, a young entrepreneur, established a 12-block city plan. The resulting growth included a school, a hotel, mercantile stores, blacksmith shops, a livery stable, a stagecoach stop, a steam-engine-powered mill, and cotton gins.

Almost a century after the city plan was drawn, Dripping Springs still remained a sleepy farm and ranch community. It wasn’t until 1981 that the town would call an election to incorporate itself as a means to push back on the rapidly expanding jurisdiction plans of the City of Austin. Thus, Dripping Springs got into the business of governing itself, electing its first mayor, James W. “Jimmy” Glosson, and eventually experiencing its own significant growth spurt around 2010.

Many buildings and homes rich in heritage and history still exist in Dripping Springs and help shape the story of who we are today. The Dripping Springs Historic Preservation Commission and other preservation-minded citizens are pleased to present this historic brochure, with hope that the spirit of our pioneers, founders, and their families will live on.

1853-1854

The "Old Three"—the Pound, Moss, and Wallace families—are among the first to settle the area that would become Dripping Springs

1981

The city holds its first-ever election, electing Jimmy Glosson as its first mayor

2010

Dripping Springs experiences its largest growth spurt and gets its first H-E-B grocery store

2014

The Old Fitzhugh Road and Hays Street Historic Districts are established

1881

A town plan is drawn by W.T. Chapman that would ultimately become the city center of modern-day Dripping Springs

1857

In need of a name in order to create its first post office, Nannie Moss aptly calls the town "Dripping Springs"

2007

The Mercer Street Historic District is established

2014

The International Dark-Sky Association designates Dripping Springs as Texas' first International Dark Sky Community

2008

Construction of the city's first centralized wastewater system is completed, replacing the cess pools and cisterns that once served most of Dripping Springs

1958

Construction of Highway 290 bypasses the Mercer Street thoroughfare, separating Hays Street from the original city center

For more information about the historic districts and landmarks of Dripping Springs, visit: cityofdrippingsprings.com

HISTORIC DISTRICTS OF DRIPPING SPRINGS

Mercer Street Historic District

This district was the first historic district recognized by Dripping Springs, capturing the original “Main Street” that developed around the landmark springs for which the town was named. A blend of commercial, residential, and institutional structures built during the city’s development in the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century still stands today, having been preserved through the years and rehabilitated by new generations of owners. In 2013, 21 properties within the Mercer Street District were officially listed in the U.S. National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places.

Old Fitzhugh Road Historic District

The historic resources in this district developed more organically, in a linear fashion, along an informal rustic street enveloped by a nearly continuous canopy of mature Live Oak trees. Taken as a whole, this district maintains a unique character and sense of place, the preservation of which plays a role in connecting Dripping Springs to its rural heritage. More eclectic and spread out, the buildings and landscapes reflect the town’s gradual evolution from a nineteenth century, farmstead community to a mid-twentieth century, residential neighborhood.

Hays Street Historic District

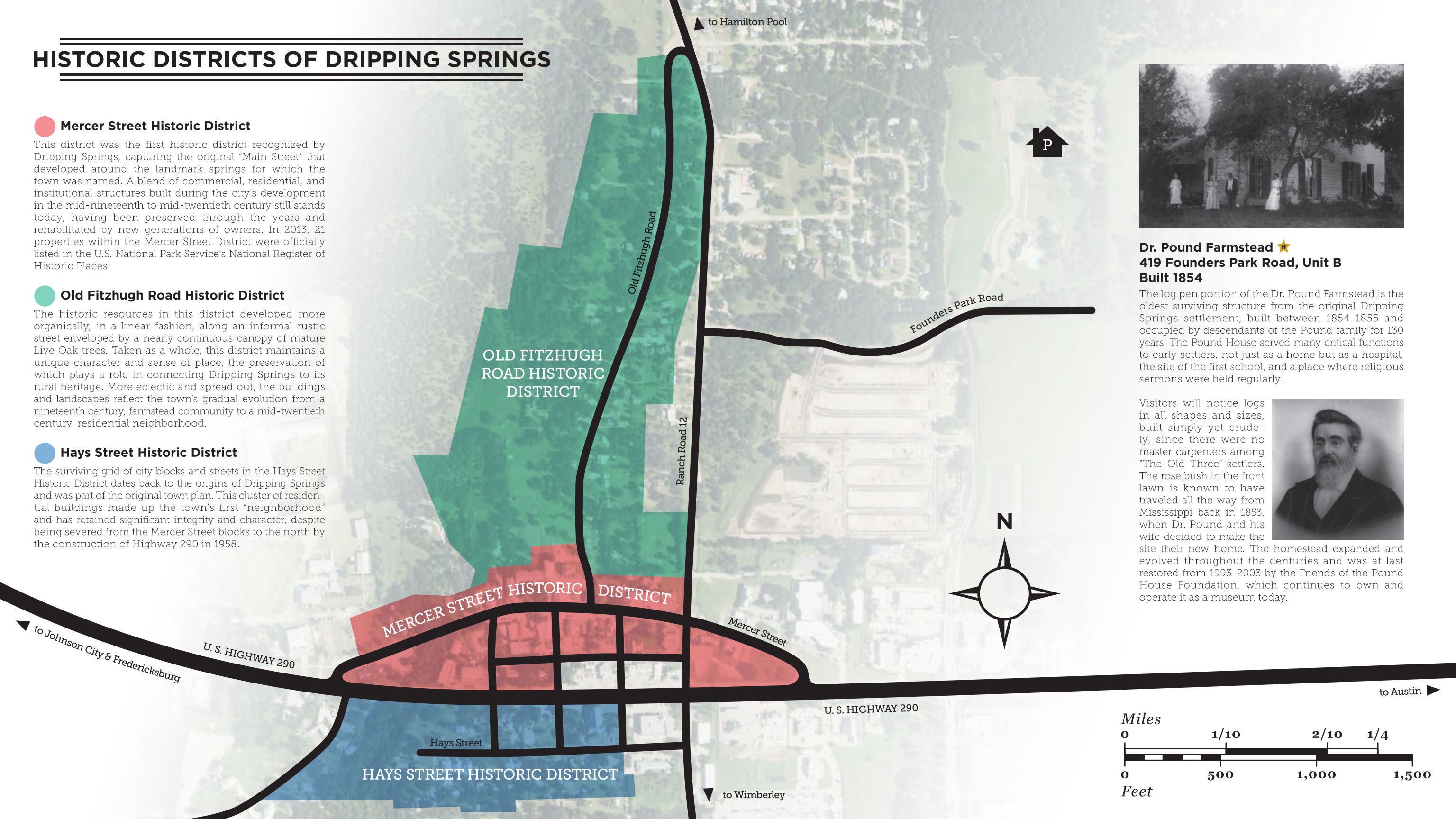
The surviving grid of city blocks and streets in the Hays Street Historic District dates back to the origins of Dripping Springs and was part of the original town plan. This cluster of residential buildings made up the town’s first “neighborhood” and has retained significant integrity and character, despite being severed from the Mercer Street blocks to the north by the construction of Highway 290 in 1958.



Dr. Pound Farmstead ★
419 Founders Park Road, Unit B
Built 1854

The log pen portion of the Dr. Pound Farmstead is the oldest surviving structure from the original Dripping Springs settlement, built between 1854-1855 and occupied by descendants of the Pound family for 130 years. The Pound House served many critical functions to early settlers, not just as a home but as a hospital, the site of the first school, and a place where religious sermons were held regularly.

Visitors will notice logs in all shapes and sizes, built simply yet crudely, since there were no master carpenters among “The Old Three” settlers. The rose bush in the front lawn is known to have traveled all the way from Mississippi back in 1853, when Dr. Pound and his wife decided to make the site their new home. The homestead expanded and evolved throughout the centuries and was at last restored from 1993-2003 by the Friends of the Pound House Foundation, which continues to own and operate it as a museum today.



HISTORIC MERCER STREET WALKING TOUR

1 Marshall-Chapman House ★ 500 Mercer Street • Circa 1855

This is one of the first houses early settlers built from lumber, not logs. The limestone rock portion was added after the house was moved to Mercer Street in 1871. Burrell Marshall used this home briefly as a post office while he was postmaster. It was then occupied by W.T. Chapman's family and their descendants until 1942 and, as one of the oldest area homes, is now a designated Texas Historic Landmark.

2 Namesake “Dripping Springs” ★

This city landmark lies just north of the bridge over the creek at the west end of Mercer Street and is marked by a granite monument donated by the Lions Club. Lush, fern-covered, limestone ledges surround these springs, a former gathering place for native Tonkawa Indians and a vital source of water for early settlers.

3 Bill Garnett Bungalow & Rock Fence ★ 402 Mercer Street • Circa 1925

The Garnett Bungalow is one of the best local examples of the Craftsman-inspired architectural style. Distinctive elements include the tapered wooden columns and raked roof eaves. A unique attraction of the yard is the relic rock fence made of petrified wood. It also includes a cannonball, bayonet, shotgun barrel, and spur embedded in the construction.

4 Garnett Gulf Station & Garage 400 Mercer Street • Circa 1925

On the site grounds of the old livery stable, Bill Garnett sensed the winds of change and built one of Dripping's first service stations for horseless-carriage (i.e. automobile) drivers in 1925.



5 F.W. Miller Texaco Station ★ 310 Mercer Street • Built 1940

One of the few mid-century buildings to retain its appearance through the years, Miller's station is a clear reflection of a time when Dripping Springs was a small town and life's pace was slower.

6 F.W. Miller Rock Café ★ 304 Mercer Street • Built 1940

Deciding that a café would be a good addition to his business, Fritz Miller built this small rock building next door to his Texaco station. Also known for many years as Bonnie's Café, it is now an antique store.



7 Patterson Mercantile Store ★ 302 Mercer Street • Built 1906



Built as a 1-1/2 story general merchandise store directly across the street from Davis Mercantile, the limestone Patterson Building was used as a grocery (with owners sometimes living in its loft) and post office,

until 1942. Since then, it has been used as a feed store, lumber yard, furniture store, theater, dance studio, office space, and now serves as a retail store. Destroyed by fire in 1938, it was rebuilt with only a single story.

8 Rinky Dink Domino Hall ★ 300-C Mercer Street • Built 1939

The construction of this tiny, “rinky dink” building was funded on a pay-as-you-play plan — 25¢ here and there, until the costs were repaid. Never residing on land it could call its own, the domino hall had to move from its original spot next to the F.W. Miller Rock Cafe to the back alley, after protests that playing Moon, a domino game much like Texas 42, was an act of gambling.

9 Stephenson Building ★ 101 Old Fitzhugh Road • Built 1939

Originally built as a high school addition to the Dripping Springs Academy, it was only used for ten years for its original intention. Since being replaced in 1949, it has served as a community meeting center, a school, and county offices and is owned by the city today.

10 Dripping Springs Academy ★ 103 Old Fitzhugh Road • Built 1881



This building is one of the first that would later become the city center of Dripping Springs. Operated initially as a private school by W.T. Chapman, it consisted of a stone, one-story, two-room main building. It went on to serve as a Baptist church from 1881-1902 and became a public schoolhouse from 1889-1949, during which time a second story was added for the growing student population in 1921. In 1952, the building became the new home of the Rambo Masonic Lodge, and the group still meets there to this day. It was dedicated as a Texas Historic Landmark in 1967. The image above shows the building as it stands today; the image below captures the building when it served as Dripping Springs Academy in the early 1900s.



11 C.S. Graham House ★ 222 Mercer Street • Built 1884

This house originally faced west, but two stories exist as to why that changed. One version says it burned down; the other says it was simply remodeled. Whichever is true, the building was rebuilt using the same fireplace and, this time, with the front door facing Mercer Street (south).

12 Crenshaw Garage & Texaco Station ★ 207 Mercer Street • Built 1926

Originally constructed of wood and tin, this gas station and garage was built at a business hot spot at the intersection of Mercer and San Marcos Streets, on the old highway between Austin and Fredericksburg. The rock exterior was added as a facelift in 1938. Since the rerouting of Highway 290, it's been used as a residence, as a barber shop, and now as a beer and wine bar.

13 Goslin Drug Store ★ 209 Mercer Street • Built 1941

This rock building first served as a popular drug store and soda fountain but also served as the town bus stop for many years. Today, it is a boutique clothing shop, but one can still find circular concrete fillings in the floor where soda fountain seats once stood.

14 Haydon Central Garage & Mobil Station ★ 299 Mercer Street • Built 1937



Known for its unusual rockwork, this service station is constructed from rock, granite, and even petrified wood from numerous Central Texas resources.

15 A.L. Davis Mercantile ★ 301 Mercer Street • Built 1891

In 1891, A.L. Davis Jr. built the first two-story rock structure on Mercer Street. The building changed ownership throughout the century, serving as a mercantile, a meeting place for the Masonic Lodge, and other numerous businesses. The rock addition to the west side of the building was added in 1971 and today serves a local coffee shop.



16 Spaw Barber Shop & Post Office ★ 305 Mercer Street • Built 1937

Johnny Spaw and his wife, Mary, drew a line right down the middle of this tiny building, with a barber shop on one side and the post office on the other. Mary, then Dripping's postmistress, conducted the postal business through a little metal window and (it's rumored) stored the money in a safe beneath a trapdoor in the floor.

17 Crow Wool & Mohair Store ★ 204 Mercer Street • Circa 1939

From 1920-1970, raising sheep and goats for wool and mohair was an important part of the local economy. Will Crow's wool center opened in 1937, to serve this industry. Two years later, the store burned while fully stocked with wool. However, Crow soon reopened and then added the town's first hardware store to the site in 1946.



18 Short Mama's House ★ 101 College Street • Circa 1900



Beulah Crumley Haydon, more widely known as “Short Mama,” lived in this two-story house until her death in 1989 at the age of 97. Short Mama bought one of the first washing machines in Dripping Springs. After she was done using it, she would allow neighbors to use it, free of charge, making the little house out back one of the first public washaterias in town. More notably, Short Mama was one of the first women to hold public office in Dripping Springs, dutifully serving out her husband's term as commissioner of Hays County when he died in 1938.



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