

Social Spacing

SS Giddings

Driving Tour



Social Spacing

SS Giddings Driving Tour

Welcome to Giddings, our little town of Hometown Hospitality!

Please enjoy this driving tour which showcases some of the highlights of Giddings that you can safely see from your car or, in some locations, feel free to get out and explore a little.

Make your own hours and schedule. Go at your own pace.

Keep in mind as you're adventuring that some of our restaurants close early.

Approximate Driving Time: 35 minutes.

With stops and eating could take between 1 hour- 2 hours or more.



START – Hometown Hospitality!

198 W. Austin (Hwy 290) (corner of Hwy290 & Burleson Street), Giddings TX

Welcome to Giddings, the City of Hometown Hospitality! This beautiful mural of a street scene in 1800's downtown Giddings was painted by local talent, Johnny Jones, during a city beautification project.

TRAVEL -

South on Burleson Street. Turn Right on Hempstead Street West.



STOP – Lee County Peanut Company

Just past the railroad tracks on the right

The metal buildings and barns are the back of the Lee County Peanut Company, built around 1890. It started as cotton oil but turned to peanuts in 1945.

Our peanut company and its 20,000 acres of land in the county, supplied peanuts to Disneyland in California and Panafina Peanut Butter, among others. They were also declared kosher by a rabbi from Dallas who came down special to give them a blessing. 2000-3000 tons of peanuts were produced every year. In 2010 the mill

closed and its equipment was sold to a company in Africa for a peanut oil mill. When you pass the front of the building on Highway 290, notice the logo with the Lee County Peanut.

TRAVEL –

Continue west on Hempstead Street.



STOP – Bethel St. Paul Baptist Church

887 W. Hempstead Street

(Historical Marker) This congregation was organized in 1870 by ex-slaves Bob Bennett, James Collier, Andrew Jackson, Elijah Lewis, Alford Williams, Steve Williams, Henry Wilson and their families. They worshipped first in a residence provided by Alford Williams, then erected a sanctuary in an area known as “The Flat.” One prominent early member was Matthew Gaines (1842-1900) a former slave who became a minister, state senator and spokesman for civil rights. St. Paul moved to its present location in 1911. The congregation supports a variety of community service activities.

Bethel St Paul Baptist is open Sundays for prayer at 8:30am, services at 10:45am. Wednesday services and Bible Study at 6pm.

TRAVEL –

Turn left on Dallas Street. Turn right on Bellville Street at the back of the cemetery.

Instead of continuing with the road’s curve, go straight forward at the Parks & Cemetery Dept. building. Take the first small paved road to the right. Go north about 2 blocks and look for a historical marker to your left, near a shady tree.

CAUTION: the cemetery roads are small and bumpy, not good for large vehicles with wide turning radius, or some low-to-the-ground sportscars.

CAUTION: the entrances to the cemetery on Highway 290 are under construction as of June 2020, take caution when entering or exiting. Consider going in/out the back of the cemetery as Highway 290 entrances are not good for low vehicles!



STOP – Grave of Wild Bill Longley, gunslinger of Giddings (so bad he had to be hung three times)

William Longley was born in 1851 and lived in the small town of Evergreen just north of Giddings. He killed his first man in 1868 at the age of 17 and claimed to have killed 32 during his lifetime. The first time he was hanged was while cattle rustling, but the rancher while making Longley “dance” as he hung, accidentally hit the rope instead breaking it and allowing Bill to escape.

Longley joined the US Cavalry but deserted twice and was captured in June of 1877. He was returned to Giddings where he was tried and sentenced to death for murder. In the cemetery at the gallows, the hangman cut Bill some slack, literally, by making the rope too long. Bill fell to the ground. The situation was corrected immediately and, as they say, the third time is a charm.

The Giddings City Cemetery is open from dawn til dusk.

TRAVEL -

Continue north on the cemetery road towards Highway 290. Turn right on Highway 290 going back towards Giddings.

CAUTION: if your vehicle is low to ground go out the back of the cemetery and make your way to Highway 290 down Dallas Street. (temporary construction)

GLANCE – at the Bright Blue Wooden Building

To your right, across 290 from the car wash. Private residence.

This brightly colored building used to be a hotel back in the day. It was where Bonnie and Clyde hid out from the police for a scant few hours as they ran through Giddings. If it hadn't been for the hotel owner who remembered where he had seen the “familiar looking” couple and the fast response of the police, they might have gotten a good night's sleep! As it was the couple had to flee out the back window, narrowly escaping capture once again.

GLANCE – at the Lee County Peanut Mill to your right to see the front side & the Lee County Peanut logo.

TRAVEL -

Across the tracks. Turn left on Burleson Street. Pull into the next gravel parking lot to the left between Orsags and the depot.



STOP – Bull Durham Smoking Tobacco Mural

Painted on the Orsag's Furniture Store building at 201 Hwy 290.

Bull Durham Smoking Tobacco was a world-famous loose-leaf tobacco by W.T. Blackwell & Company in Durham, North Carolina. It originated about 1850 and remained in production til August 1988. It was one of the most successful tobacco brands of all time, commonly known for its widely recognizable advertising campaign. In 1870, four teams of artists were hired to go around the states and paint huge ads on billboards or the sides of buildings, along major roads and rails.



STOP – The Three Depots

289 W. Railroad. Right beside Orsag's Furniture Store

There are 3 historic depots: a small freight off Highway 290 (1890), the long yellow freight depot (1880) and the red brick passenger depot (1920). These were established with the birth of the town in 1871 when the Texas & Houston Central Railroad laid its rails. The first passenger trains went from Waco to Yoakum. It was around the 1960's when the depots were no longer used. Now the long yellow freight depot is occupied by the Dime Box Distillery, manufacturer of Sixth Street Bourbon of Austin, open Thurs-Sat from 12pm-6pm.

TRAVEL -

Go (left) north on Burleson Street. Turn left on Houston Street. Go across the tracks. Find the water tank on the corner of Houston and Caldwell Streets on the right.

Nearby Restaurants: City Meat Market (barbecue), 101 W. Austin, M-F 7:30am-4pm; Sat 8am-2pm

Giddings Downtown Restaurant (home-cooking), 155 W. Austin, Sun-F 11-2:30



STOP – Home of the Buffalos Water Tank

Corner of Houston Street and Caldwell Street. (300 N. Caldwell)

This mural was painted by local artist Johnny Jones to immortalize Giddings, the Home of the Buffalo. Not that we see lots of buffalos in town, except the ones on the football team. The school mascot for all of Giddings ISD is The Buffalo.

TRAVEL -

Go north (right) on Caldwell Street. Turn left on Independence Street (FM 2440) going west. Simmang Park will be on the left.



STOP – Simmang Park – Dedicated to Hometown Hero, Hilton Lee Smith.

Keep your eyes out for a cute little park on the left with green-roofed pavilions. It's a great place to stop for a stretch or to have a picnic lunch. There are walking trails, wide open expanses of grass and a little playground.

This park was dedicated to local baseball hero, Hilton Lee Smith (born 1907) who was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2001. Smith was star pitcher for the Kansas City Monarchs and was famous for his curveball. After his retirement, he scouted for the Chicago Cubs.

TRAVEL –

Get back on Independence Street going right (east) towards Giddings. Cross the railroad tracks. Fire station ahead on the left.



STOP –911 Memorial

Giddings Volunteer Fire Department Station, 151 W. Independence Street

In front of the Giddings Fire Station is the 911 Memorial. The firemen at the station worked hard for 4 years to secure permission in order to obtain these pieces of the steel beams from the World Trade Center in New York; then to go and pick them up. It was a big community project to create this memorial in front of the station to honor of all the first responders who died serving their community that fateful September.

TRAVEL -

Go east (left) on Independence Street. Turn right onto Highway 77 (Main Street) at the stop light. Go to the large city parking lot on the right hand side of the road. You'll be able to see the depots you stopped at before across the parking lot.



STOP – All Aboard for Hometown Hospitality Mural

located behind the City Meat Market at 101 W. Austin Street.

A simple mural dedicated to our railroad heritage and the trains that started our town, painted by Johnny Jones. The train is a 944 class locomotive of around year 1917.

TRAVEL –

Get back on Highway 77 going south (right), however, move quickly into the left hand lane as the small street of Old State Highway 20 is before the Highway 290 intersection. Turn left onto Old State Highway 20, going behind the Nitsche Group building.

Best suggestion for next stops: Park somewhere around the Nitsche Group or the Bank and walk to your next 3 stops, if possible.



STOP – This is So Good Mural

Located on the east facing side of the Nitsche Group building at 173 E. Austin (Hwy 290)

“MMMM...This is So Good,” declares the old-fashioned lady on the mural. This mural was painted in 2011 for the locally owned coffee shop 290 Grind, unfortunately now closed. The building is historic, constructed in 1870 as a general store. In 2007 when it was bought, much of the original structure was kept and restored including the store front display windows, original brick details and the Loblolly Pine floors, ceiling and walls.

TRAVEL –

Right next door to the Post Office. You can park in the parking lot or just pause under the shade tree near the parking lot entrance if you don't want to stop. However, you may want to get out for these!



STOP – Businesses of Giddings Mural

In the parking lot of the Post Office at 279 E. Austin (Hwy 290)

A lovely depiction of the businesses of Giddings, painted by Johnny Jones. In the mural you can see three local businesses: First National Bank, LaVerne's Flower Shop and Lee County Ace Hardware as well as a few locals. Everard rides his lawn mower in front of Ace, while LaVerne carries her flowers inside her shop. On the end, Bill, Randy and Fred look out the bank windows while Jimmy points out the nearby courthouse to his grandson.

This mural took a long time to create as Johnny and his son put amazing detail into the work, painting a shadow on every brick and item in the painting, making it entirely 3D.

Also, they hid 14 items within the painting itself, making it a fun scavenger hunt! Try to find them all: a fish hook, nail, clothes pin, marble, penny, four-leaf clover, lizard, needle and thread, safety pin, dime, and a butterfly.



STOP – Depression Era Mural – “Cowboys Receiving the Mail” by Otis Dozier inside the lobby of the Giddings Post Office, 279 E. Austin.

This Great Depression Era mural was painted in 1939 by artist Otis Dozier. This was part of the WPA, New Deal Arts Program created by President Roosevelt in order to provide economic relief to the citizens. The programs created 5000 jobs for artists and produced over 225,000 works of art for the American people.

Otis Dozier (born 1904) was raised as a cotton farmer somewhere in the area of Forney and Mesquite. He loved art. He traveled with his parents and three sisters on at least 3 trips through the American West in the 1920's, an experience that he would immortalize later in his paintings. When he graduated high school, he attended the Dallas Art Institute and then continued learning at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. Otis and his wife Velma played significant roles in the cultural life of Dallas TX until their deaths in the 1980's.

The Post Office Lobby is open to the public 24/7

TRAVEL -

Go east (right) on Old State Highway 20. Turn left on Leon Street, at the stop sign. Turn right on Houston Street going east. Turn right on Manse Avenue, going behind the Giddings Public Library.



STOP – Children’s Community Garden at the Giddings Public Library
behind the Giddings Public Library at 276 N. Orange Street

Pause and admire the pretty flowers and the vegetables being grown by the children of Giddings in this community garden. There are picnic tables under the awning if you’d like to stop and read or just look around.

The Children’s Community Garden is open from dawn til dusk.

TRAVEL –

Continue south on Manse Avenue, towards Highway 290. Turn at the next left on Railroad Row going east, which will turn into Raymond Street as you get near the park. The Veteran’s Memorial is ahead on the right.



STOP – Veteran’s Honor Park Memorial

at Veteran’s Park at the corner of Raymond Street and Montgomery Avenue.

The Veteran’s Honor Park Memorial is the first step in the creation of the Honor Park. The structure gives honor to our Veteran’s from all the military branches as well as the MIA’s and POW’s.

This project, established by Lee County and the Lee County Veteran’s Administration, will eventually include additional memorials, landscaping, benches and walking trails.

TRAVEL -

Turn right on Montgomery Avenue going south towards Highway 290. Turn right onto Highway 290. Move into your left-hand lane. Turn left onto Knox Avenue (near Stoney’s Liquor), just a few blocks up. Turn right onto Hempstead Street. Go to the corner of Hempstead and Manse Avenue. Look to your left at the big white house with the columns.

Nearby Restaurants: Lost Pines BBQ, 1534 E. Austin, Tue-Sun 11am-7pm
Sonic, 1254 E. Austin, M-Th 7am-11pm; Fri-Sat 7am-12am; Sun 8am-11pm
Dairy Queen, 977 E. Austin, Fri-Sun 10am-10pm



PAUSE – The Knox House

Private residence at 900 E. Hempstead Street, on the left near Pieratt's Pharmacy

The Knox Home was one of the first homes in Giddings. The land it sits on is just one portion of a 2682 acre tract given by the state of Texas to Jesse Barker in 1863. It went through many hands including those of Captain Rufus King, a confederate veteran, before coming to WA Knox in 1878. After 20 years, it went to his nephew John Knox, a county surveyor, who lived there for 50 years.

John and his twin brother Robert were known around town as The Knox Brothers. On the day they were born their older sister, Jo, was delighted to find that she had not one baby brother but two. She asked her Mama anxiously if they could keep both of them or if they would have to send one back. The two brothers were so close they even spoke in their own language and didn't learn English properly until they started the first grade.

The Knox family were long time members of the Immanuel Lutheran Church. Rumors have it that after many years of young adulthood sitting on the hard, wooden seats of the church, the Brothers decided it was time for something more comfortable. The chairs were donated to the courthouse and pews were bought for the church sponsored by the Knox Brothers. When the Brothers died, they had accumulated a lot of wealth from oil wells. This money was donated to the Texas Ranger Museum in Waco TX.

TRAVEL -

Continue on Hempstead Street for less than a block and stop before Orange Street. Look to your right at the white and green house.



PAUSE – The York House

Private Residence at 811 E. Hempstead St.

This was the house of Dr. William Edward York who was born in Evergreen in August of 1870. He graduated Tulane University in 1894 with a medical degree. He married Annie Patton and had 4 children. After special training in dermatology

in New York City, he bought the first x-ray machine in this part of Texas. He was known throughout Lee County as the “Baby Doctor” as he delivered over 2000 babies during his 55 years of practice (none of whom were delivered in a hospital.)

Dr. York was the local physician of the Southern Pacific Railroad, member of JD Giddings Masonic Lodge and on the board of the American Medical Association. He was the first person in Lee County to own a car, a 1909 white Buick, with no windshield or doors. The horse and buggy he still kept around for rainy days. He and Annie celebrated their Golden Anniversary in 1944.

LOOK -

Directly across the street to your left. House has an iron fence & historical marker.



PAUSE – The Edward R. Sinks Home

Private Residence at 818 E. Hempstead Street

Neoclassical Home of Judge Ed R. Sinks who moved to Giddings in 1875 and built his beautiful home in 1890. The outside wood is of Cypress. The Sinks owned this whole city block at that time and in addition to the house- a barn, livery and surrey. His oldest daughter Mina was christened at the First United Methodist Church when it was still holding services in the school.

Sinks was the first district judge out of Lee County, State Representative for 3 years, charter member of First National Bank and its president for 50 years. But as well known as he was, his mother and father had statewide historical importance. His father was the first chief clerk of Post office bureau of Texas. His mother Julia, who came from Ohio in 1840, was a talented Texas chronicler who knew all the statewide officers, including Sam Houston, wrote about them all. She was a founder of the Texas Historical Commission, which back then was questioned; should a woman be a member of such an organization. Rumors say that Julia owned an original order of Santa Anna signed directing his generals to leave Texas.

TRAVEL -

Just across Orange Street and pause. Look to the big 2-story house with columns and a porch/balcony on the right.



PAUSE – The Cherry House

Private Residence at 787 E. Hempstead Street

This beautiful house belonged to W.H. (William Henry) Cherry and his wife, Mootie. They had seven children. W.H. was born in 1863 in Indiana. He established himself as a successful merchant in Giddings and belonged to many organizations and clubs in town including the JD Giddings Masonic Lodge, National Railroad Adjustment Board, and the First United Methodist Church.

TRAVEL -

Continuing traveling west on Hempstead Street. Go just across Leon Street and pause. Look to your right at the brick building on the corner.



PAUSE – JD Giddings Masonic Lodge

286 E. Hempstead Street

J. D. Giddings Lodge No. 280, A. F. & A. M. Chartered by the Grand Lodge of Texas in 1865, this Masonic Lodge had its beginnings in the community of Evergreen. Relocated to the new town of Giddings in 1872 after the railroad bypassed Evergreen, the lodge has played an important part in the civic life of its adopted city. Over the years, lodge facilities have been shared with the public schools, as well as with a number of community organizations and governmental agencies. A new lodge hall was built at this site in 1969-70. The lodge continues to be an active part of the community. (#8153)

TRAVEL -

Continue on Hempstead Street. The Presbyterian Church is less than a block ahead on the left, as is the Schubert-Fletcher Home and Courthouse. Park in front of the Courthouse or Schubert-Fletcher House to enjoy looking around the Square.



STOP – First Presbyterian Church

200 E. Hempstead Street

When the town of Giddings started in 1871 the Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians all worshiped together at the school. When the Methodists built their own church, the Presbyterians worshiped in the courthouse until they built their own sanctuary. The First Presbyterian Church of Giddings was organized in April of 1876 with thirteen charter members. One of the Charter members, Frank Morris, is responsible for constructing the present sanctuary in 1886. In 1960 the Presbyterian church in Dime Box merged with the Giddings one, making this the only Presbyterian church in Lee County as well as the oldest church still in continuous use in Giddings.

The church is open on Sunday and has services at 9:30am.



STOP – Schubert-Fletcher Home

183 E. Hempstead Street

This lovely home was built by August W. Schubert in 1879 for his wife and his ten children. It was later sold to the Immanuel Lutheran Church in 1894 to house Concordia Lutheran College. Unfortunately, the College did not succeed and the house was sold to the Fletcher Family in the early 1900's. The Fletchers lived happily here until the mid-1980's when they donated the house to be used as a museum.

The Schubert-Fletcher house now holds the Lee County Museum as well as the Giddings Chamber of Commerce & Visitor's Center. Operating hours are Monday-Friday from 9am-5pm. Drop by for complimentary maps and brochures as well as to see the museum and learn more about the history of Lee County. The shady yard with its picnic tables is open to visitors from dawn til dusk, so feel free to take a break under the trees with lunch from Reba's Deli and Pizzeria (right across the street).



STOP/END – Lee County Courthouse

200 S. Main Street

This courthouse was completed in June of 1899 and replaced the previous courthouse of 1878 which was destroyed in a fire. It was built by J. Reiley Gordon who designed courthouses all over Texas, including towns of San Antonio, Waco, Gonzales, Canton and Victoria and also the State Capital of Arizona. The architecture is Richardson-Romanesque, with large classic columns made of Texas granite. It is octagonal in shape and each of the four sides face the four points of the compass. The designs on each of the four corners are each decorated a little differently, as if Mr. Gordon had told his builders they could have fun and decorate each entrance how they wished.

The Courthouse is still in use and is open Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm. You are welcome to come in and look around! Be sure to visit the large 2nd story court room and the basement, where you can see the “feet” of the courthouse.

Nearby Restaurants: Reba’s Deli & Pizzeria (pizza, sandwich, salad, soup), 208 E. Austin, 10am-9pm

Please come again to Giddings!