



NOMINATION FORM  
HALF MILE OF HISTORY

Hm05-13-008

**Section A: Nomination Information**

Name of Nominated person, place or event: Frances Marion Bell

The nominee is being honored for outstanding contributions in the area(s) of (please check all that apply):

<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment/Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Philanthropy
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Government/Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Culture	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Aviation	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention/Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/> Sports
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Business/Corporate Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Oil/Gas	

**Section B: Nominator's Information**

Name of person making nomination: Henry Bell III

Address: 608 Green Lane

City: Tyler State: Tx Zip: 75701

Daytime telephone: 903-360-2927 Email: hbell@tylertexas.com

Relationship to nominated individual: great-great grandson

Nominated Individual's year of birth: 1824 Nominated Individual's year of death: 1854

**Section C: Narrative**

The narrative section of the application is the most important. It is the primary source of information judges use to make their selection of new inductees. The two-page narrative submittal must utilize size 12 Times New Roman font and be double spaced. Please include a recommended 25-30 word marker caption at the end of the narrative. Any additional material will be referred to only for verification of accuracy of the nomination. No submitted materials will be returned.

The narrative section must contain an explanation of the nominee's enduring contribution that make this person/place/event worthy of the honor. Please describe the impact the nominee has had on the community, county, region, nation and/or world. For Individuals, please include any honors earned by the nominee as well as a list of organizations in which the nominee has been involved. Also, please indicate their educational background as well as the length of time the individual has lived in Smith County. Inclusion of photos is preferred but optional. Do not send original photos. All submitted materials will become property of the City of Tyler and its Historical Preservation Board.

Please submit nominations to:  
City of Tyler Historical Preservation Board  
Attention: Half Mile of History  
P.O. Box 2039  
Tyler, Texas 75710

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT

## City of Tyler: Half Mile of History

### **Frances Marion Bell**

Francis Marion Bell (FM Bell) was born in North Carolina in 1824. FM came to Texas in 1845 having just married Martha Marsh from Alabama. His father-in-law sent him to this new frontier to find a suitable area for the entire family to relocate. Bell stopped in East Texas in an area which was later designated as Tyler, Texas. He began purchasing land that we now know as the area from Front and Broadway to Houston and Broadway and west to Vine Street. Bell opened the first grocery store in Tyler located on the northeast corner of the public square. When the 2<sup>nd</sup> Texas Legislature met in 1847, Tyler gained corporate status. The first municipal elections were held with a Mayor and four Aldermen elected representing the four wards that divided Tyler's 506 acres at the time. Bell was elected one of the original City Alderman and helped shaped the future of Tyler. Bell returned to Alabama several times to report to the family that Tyler was indeed the place the Bell and Marsh families could relocate and build in the future. He wanted to build a home for his family before they arrived and built one of the oldest homes in Smith County in 1851 on family property on what is now College Street. The house still stands today at 421 S. College. FM and Martha had two sons, Frances (Frank) Marion Bell, Jr. and Bryan Bell. The entire family moved to Tyler permanently and joined FM in 1854. Unfortunately FM died in 1854 and never saw his sons grow up in the community he helped to shape and grow. Martha continued developing the land as did his two sons. FM Bell left behind his family, who for many generations have been instrumental in leading and helping Tyler grow; including Frank Bell, Henry Bell Sr., Henry Bell Jr. Henry Bell 111 and Allen Bell. He is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Tyler.

TYLER &  
SMITH COUNTY, TEXAS  
AN HISTORICAL SURVEY



BICENTENNIAL EDITION

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The Southern Pacific Railroad had indirectly touched Tyler once already. In 1853, when the Legislature had offered a bountiful grant of land to any railroad company who could show it had at least a fighting chance of constructing a road across the state, William Ward, a Marshall politician interested in railway development, had conducted a meeting in Tyler to try to raise enough money to satisfy the requirement for a deposit of \$300,000. Ward had received a legislative charter in 1853 to construct a cross-state road. When it became apparent his group could not raise the \$300,000, he sold his charter to the northeastern entrepreneurs who later formed the corporation for a few hundred dollars. The route in question later became that of the Texas and Pacific Railroad.<sup>23</sup>

By the outbreak of the Civil War, the Courthouse Square could boast a number of brick buildings. From the first residence, that of John Lollar, and the grocery store of Nacogdoches merchant, Charles Chevallier, each located on the present North Broadway Street, the town had grown rapidly. Chevallier had been in the freight hauling business. He moved to Tyler when the Texas Supreme Court found him liable for the loss of a wagonload of cotton he was transporting. The cargo had been consumed by fire when Chevallier pulled his wagon too close to a campfire on a cold winter night.<sup>24</sup> The case, which set a precedent for determining that anyone hauling any item for profit was a common carrier, was one of the more important decisions rendered by the early Supreme Court.<sup>25</sup>

When the Second Legislature met in 1847, the town gained corporate status. The first municipal elections were held in 1848, with William Bartlett elected mayor. The Legislature gave Tyler a strong mayor form of city government. The four aldermen, selected from wards, were Francis M. Bell, Dr. William Caldwell, Frederick J. Ham, and Rufus B. Sigler. The size of the corporation was fixed at 506 acres, with the city boundaries running along straight lines at a distance of three-quarters of a mile in each direction from the courthouse.<sup>26</sup> Nine brick structures had been completed by 1860, with a row of two-story buildings lining the north side of the square, the upper floor of these served as the federal courthouse.<sup>27</sup>

As originally laid out, the town ran four blocks from north to south and five blocks from east to west, though one additional street on each side had been added by 1861 to make forty-two square blocks.<sup>28</sup> Initially, the streets

<sup>23</sup>Thomas J. Rusk to David Rusk, Correspondence during 1853 and 1854, Thomas J. Rusk Papers, University of Texas Library, Austin.

<sup>24</sup>Ward, p. 80.

<sup>25</sup>Chevallier *vs.* Strahan, 2 Texas 115 (1847).

<sup>26</sup>Woldert, M.S., p. 524.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 491.

<sup>28</sup>John J. Wyatt, "Tyler in 1861", *Chronicles of Smith County*, 6 (No. 2, 1967): 29.