

Arthur O'Connor won first place in the 880-yard run and ran on the winning 880-yard relay team at the state track meet in 1909 to help Belton win the state track team championship in an era when all high schools in the state (regardless of size) competed in the same "class." O'Connor was also captain of Belton's "first all-student football team" in 1908. He practiced law in Belton until his death in 1975.

Arthur O'Connor was born on Jan. 6, 1892, in (Midway) Bell County to Charles and Mary O'Connor and was one of six children. He attended the Old Rock Church School in Midway and Belton High School where he graduated in 1909. Arthur married Irene Smith of Kansas in 1922 and the couple had one child, Patricia, who graduated from BHS in 1942, obtained a Ph.D. in linguistics from UT, and later taught at Stanford U. in CA and Brown U. in Providence RI until her retirement in 1989.

The year 1909 marked the third year that the State of Texas had held an official state track meet as team winners from every region of the state were invited to Clark Field at the U. of Texas on May 7-8, 1909, to compete for the state team championship. Belton (the team was not called the "Tigers" in 1909 but was simply referred to as "the Belton team" or "Belton High School") won the Central Texas regional with 42 points over Temple (31 points), Waco (15), McGregor (6), and Corsicana (0) and advanced to the state track meet along with the three other regional winners, Dallas High School, San Antonio High School, and Austin High School. Thus the 1909 track meet was an early example of "The Final Four" (teams) as applied to track and field.

Belton won the state track championship in 1909 by scoring 53 points to 28 for second place San Antonio, 20 points for third place Austin, and 16 points for fourth place Dallas. Belton athletes were state champions in 7 of the 13 individual events. The 1909 annual reported that Belton broke eight of thirteen State high school records in the state high school track meet on Fri-Sat. and in the Monday dual meet with "academy champion" Allen Academy which Belton lost 58-55. Senior Roy E. Holcomb broke state records in four events: the 100-yard dash (10.8), 220-yard dash (23.2), hammer throw (121'4'), and the 880-yard relay (1:40). Senior Pat H. Dougherty broke state records in three events: the broad jump (19'8"), discus (96'3) and 880-yard relay (1:40) and senior Arthur O'Connor broke state records in two events: in the 880 yard dash (2:11.2) and the 880 yard relay (1:40). His 880 state record was broken in 1915. It appears that the 2:11.2 record time in the 880 was in the dual meet against Allen Academy and that his winning time in the state high school meet the prior weekend was 2:12.4.

Arthur O'Connor was an all-around student as he was president of the student council and captain of the debate team in high school. His athletic talent was not limited to track and field as the 1909 high school yearbook indicated that he was the third baseman on the 1909 baseball team and was one of the starting halfbacks on the 1908 football team which he later described (in a Belton Journal column in 1969) as the "first all-student football team" in the history of the high school. Before 1908 teams were seldom fielded and, if so, also included members of the faculty as O'Connor

reported that the superintendent played fullback and another faculty member was the quarterback of one of the teams from 1903-1907. The 1908 team comprised only of students had to “reach down” to the seventh grade to find enough “big boys” who “were permitted by their parents to play football.” The 1908 team played only 3 games, losing twice to Temple and playing a scoreless tie with Lampasas.

Arthur attended the University of Texas from 1909-1913 where he participated in intramural track winning the 880 yard dash as a freshman in the “Class Track Meet” of 1910. He graduated from UT in 1913 with a degree in pre-law and from UT law school in 1916. He served 4 years in the U.S. Marines including time on the Battleship Pennsylvania and then moved to Houston to practice law. He returned to Belton in the early 1930's “to take charge of his farm and ranch holdings” and “handled only special cases in the higher courts, as his time would permit.” He opened a law office in Belton in 1943 where he practiced law until his retirement in 1970. He served for a time as Bell County District Judge and worked in semi-retirement until his death in 1975 at the age of 83. In 2009, his only child, Dr. Patricia O’Connor (a former Ivy League professor), lived in Belton on the family estate.