

Recorded
TEXAS
Historic Landmarks



Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Mission (RTHL 1990)



Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks



The Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation is awarded to historic structures deemed worthy of preservation for their architectural integrity and historical associations. Authorized by the Texas Legislature under Texas Government Code, Chapter 442, RTHL is the highest honor the state can bestow on historic structures in Texas. Properties so designated are afforded a measure of legal protection and become part of the recorded history of the state's built environment.

The RTHL designation process is administered as part of the historical marker program of the Texas Historical Commission (THC). The THC, the state agency for historic preservation, has been instrumental since its establishment in 1953 in coordinating the marking of Texas' significant sites, persons, events and structures. The RTHL designation is conveyed by an Official Texas Historical Marker; designation comes only through participation in the marker process.

RTHL designation is denoted by any of the following:

- Official Texas Historical Building Medallion
- Official Texas Historical Building Medallion with interpretive plate
- Official Texas Historical Subject Marker when the final line of the inscription reads "Recorded Texas Historic Landmark."



El Paisano Hotel, Marfa (RTHL 1979)

Criteria For Designation



The THC's Official Texas Marker Policies (available by request from the History Programs Division) contain the criteria for RTHL designation. Basically, a structure must be at least 50 years of age and should retain its architectural integrity from a period of at least 50 years ago. The structure should be in good repair and an exemplary model of preservation. *In no case can a structure be considered for RTHL designation if it has been moved in the past 50 years or if artificial (aluminum, asbestos, vinyl, etc.) siding applied to the exterior within the preceding 50 years covers and/or alters its historic architectural materials or features.* Structures also should reflect the appearance they exhibited during their association with a significant person or event.

RTHL status can be attained for any historic structure, including but not limited to bridges, commercial buildings, churches, residences and schoolhouses. Whether vernacular or architect-designed, if the structure has retained integrity and its history can be documented according to Official Texas Marker Policies, it is a likely candidate for designation. If you would like a preliminary opinion on whether a particular property meets RTHL criteria, please send current snapshots of all sides of the exterior, a photo or photocopy of the structure's historic appearance and a cover letter giving a brief history to the THC's History Programs Division.

Process



Obtain the *Official Texas Historical Marker Guidelines and Application Form* through the THC or your local county historical

Benefits of RTHL Designation:

- ★ Recognition that a property is of local, regional or state significance
- ★ Protection for up to 90 days from exterior alterations, including demolition or relocation
- ★ Ad valorem tax exemptions, if granted by local taxing authorities
- ★ Eligibility for state preservation grant funds
- ★ Inclusion in the Texas Historic Sites Atlas <http://atlas.thc.state.tx.us>
- ★ Technical preservation assistance through the THC



XIT Ranch Headquarters, Channing (RTHL 1962)

commission. Read through the booklet carefully. It contains information on criteria and procedures involved in the process. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact the History Programs Division staff at the THC.

The components of a marker application are a narrative history, complete with reference notes, bibliography and construction history and information on the persons, events and/or organizations associated with the property. The narrative must be prepared at the local level either by the owner, a hired researcher or some other interested person or organization. Sample narrative histories are available from the THC.

Black-and-white photographs of all sides of the structure should be included, as well as at least one historic photograph that verifies the integrity of the structure's current appearance. A current photograph taken from approximately the same angle as the historic photograph is of great assistance. A site map and floor plan should be included as well. The application form should be completed, then the entire

packet should be given to the appropriate county historical commission for review. The THC does not accept applications without the approval of the county historical commission, except in rare cases of a direct appeal. THC staff reviews each property for historical and architectural significance to determine eligibility for the designation.

The historical marker itself is an integral part of the designation process. The cost of the marker, once the property has received approval, must be borne locally. There are no state funds with which to purchase markers. A price list is in the application form. THC staff prepare the marker text, but owners have an opportunity to review and approve the inscription before it is sent to the foundry for casting.

Historic photo, The Alamo, San Antonio (RTHL 1962)



Current owners, restorers of the property or persons dead for less than 20 years will not be mentioned in the marker inscription.

Protection



The built environment can be a marvelous reflection of the heritage of an area. Through the RTHL designation, buildings, residences and other structures are recognized as important, identifiable elements in the broader patterns that make up the fabric of Texas history. As such, it is important that these structures, especially once they are designated, retain their basic historical integrity. If significant cosmetic or structural changes, including the relocation or demolition of the structure, are desired, the owner will conform to the provisions of the Texas Government Code,

May-Hickey House, Yoakum vicinity (RTHL 1988)



Chapter 442, Section 442.006(f), which state that:

A person may not damage the historical or architectural integrity of a structure the commission has designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark without notifying the commission at least 60 days before the date on which the action causing the damage is to begin. After receiving the notice, the commission may waive the waiting period or, if the commission determines that a longer period will enhance the chance for preservation, it may require an additional waiting period of not longer than 30 days. On the expiration of the time limits imposed by this section, the person may proceed, but must proceed not later than the 180th day after the date on which notice was given or the notice is considered to have expired.

If appreciable or unwarranted changes are observed to have been made on a landmark structure, the State Marker Review Board may withdraw the designation and the marker.





Historic photo, Pampa Post Office Building, Pampa (RTHL 1992)

Violation of this law is subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$50 nor more than \$1,000 for each day of violation.

To ensure the continued landmark designation, the THC strongly encourages owners considering changes to their buildings to contact its Architecture Division as early in the planning process as possible. THC staff architects can provide technical advice and referrals for sources of hard-to-locate materials. In addition, by consulting with staff early, property owners can avoid incorporating treatments that may be inappropriate for or destructive to the particular historic landmark. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* are utilized in project reviews. Copies are available upon request, or may be found on the web at www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/secstan1.htm.

While the RTHL designation and listing in the National Register of Historic Places employ many of the same criteria, there are significant differences between the two programs. Only RTHL designation requires

the participation of the county historical commission and the purchase of an aluminum marker. Only National Register designation allows for federal tax benefits for rehabilitation and federal grant assistance when funds are available. RTHL designation does not automatically guarantee listing in the National Register or vice versa. Likewise, RTHL designation is not a prerequisite for National Register listing or vice versa. For further information on the administration of National Register programs in Texas, contact the THC's History Programs Division.

Further Assistance



Further information on the preservation of historic structures and on the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark designation may be found in the following publications. Please call or write the THC to obtain copies.

Official Texas Historical Marker Guidelines and Application Form. Revised annually.

Documenting Local History.

The Medallion, bimonthly publication of the THC, available through free subscription.

Remembering Texas: Guidelines for Historical Research.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division.



St. James Methodist Church, Waco (RTHL 1986)

Preservation Briefs, Numbers 1-41, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division, Technical Preservation Services:

1. *The Cleaning and Waterproofing of Masonry Buildings*
2. *Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Brick Buildings*
3. *Conserving Energy in Historic Buildings*
4. *Roofing for Historic Buildings*
5. *The Preservation of Historic Adobe Buildings*
6. *The Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning on Historic Buildings*
7. *The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra Cotta*
8. *Aluminum and Vinyl Siding on Historic Buildings*
9. *The Repair of Historic Wooden Windows*

10. *Exterior Paint Problems on Historic Woodwork*
11. *Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts*
12. *The Preservation of Historic Pigmented Structural Glass*
13. *The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows*
14. *New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns*
15. *Preservation of Historic Concrete: Problems and General Approaches*
16. *The Use of Substitute Materials on Historic Building Exteriors*
17. *Architectural Character — Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character*
18. *Rehabilitating Interiors In Historical Buildings*
19. *The Repair and Replacement of Historic Wooden Shingle Roofs*
20. *The Preservation of Historic Barns*
21. *Repairing Historic Flat Plaster — Walls and Ceilings*
22. *The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco*
23. *Preserving Historic Ornamental Plaster*
24. *Heating, Ventilating, and Cooling Historic Buildings: Problems and Recommended Approaches*
25. *The Preservation of Historic Signs*
26. *The Preservation and Repair of Historic Log Buildings*

27. *The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron*
28. *Painting Historic Interiors*
29. *The Repair, Replacement, and Maintenance of Historic Slate Roofs*
30. *The Preservation and Repair of Historic Clay Tile Roofs*
31. *Mothballing Historic Buildings*
32. *Making Historic Properties Accessible*
33. *The Preservation and Repair of Stained and Leaded Glass*
34. *Applied Decoration for Historic Interiors: Preserving Composition Ornament*
35. *Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation*
36. *Protecting Cultural Landscapes: The Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes*
37. *Appropriate Methods for Reducing Lead Paint Hazards in Historic Housing*
38. *Removing Graffiti from Historic Masonry*
39. *Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings*
40. *Preserving Historic Ceramic Tile Floors*
41. *The Seismic Retrofit of Historic Buildings: Keeping Preservation in the Forefront*

The above preservation briefs, as well as other helpful publications and information, can be accessed also through the National Park Service web site:

www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/index.htm.



Detail, Hutchings, Sealy & Co. Building, Galveston
(RTHL 1992)

Keep in Mind

- ★ Owner permission must be secured prior to designation.
- ★ Structures designated as RTHLs do not have to be open to the public.
- ★ Owners must notify the THC before alterations, other than normal maintenance procedures, are made to the structure. Such alterations would include re-roofing, window or door replacement, addition of artificial siding, reconstruction of historic elements, additions or porch projects.
- ★ RTHL status is a permanent designation which is retained with the property even upon a transfer of ownership.
- ★ Designation applies to exteriors only.
- ★ RTHL designation does not imply eligibility for federal tax incentives for rehabilitation.



History Programs Division

512/463-5853

Architecture Division

512/463-6094



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711-2276

PHONE 512/463-5853 • FAX 512/475-3122

800/753-2989 (TDD)

www.thc.texas.gov

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