

# COURTHOUSE CORNERSTONES

2013 Update of the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program



## Seeing is Believing

**A**s public buildings, Texas courthouses are among the most widely recognized, used, and appreciated assets in our communities. With decades or even centuries of use, however, the time comes to reinvest in these beautiful, yet vulnerable, landmarks. The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program provides the incentive for counties



to make the investment to ensure their courthouses will always be inspiring places in which to work, conduct government business, visit, or simply enjoy. The benefits reaped by program participants are numerous: building functionality, a government and tourism attraction, and a tangible link to the past. Through generous grant support from the Texas Land Title Association, participating counties attend *(Cont. on page 4)*

## TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

*real places telling real stories*



Since 1999, the Texas Legislature has invested \$247 million in courthouse preservation through the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program and we are truly grateful for its support. We're also very proud of the fact that nearly every dollar invested in this program has been spent on courthouse restoration, not administrative overhead or other expenditures. In addition, the 83 Texas counties participating in this award-winning program have added more than \$174 million in matching funds.

The numbers speak for themselves: total courthouse contribution activity has generated nearly 10,000 jobs, \$269 million in income, and more than \$367 million in gross state product. More than 50 historic courthouses have been fully restored, generating more than \$21 million in local taxes and an additional \$22 million in taxes to the state. It is clear that courthouse preservation is an economic engine for Texas.

Equally important is the prestige a restored courthouse brings to a community and its citizens. Texans truly love their courthouses—they tell the real stories of the real people and places that make Texas what it is today—places of pride, and passion, and distinct personality. We're proud of our courthouses, and we let that show.

If you have not yet had the opportunity, I invite you to visit a restored historic courthouse—you'll find them throughout the Lone Star State. Admire the unique architectural styles, the craftsmanship and attention to detail, the stenciled walls, beautiful floors—from terrazzo or ceramic tile to restored wood—and in many cases a clock tower that can be seen for miles. I hope you too will take pride in the vision of our forefathers to create these majestic "temples of justice" and in our Texas communities that have had the foresight to preserve them for generations to come.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Kreisle'.

Matt Kreisle  
Chairman, Texas Historical Commission



**RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR • MATTHEW F. KREISLE, III CHAIRMAN • MARK WOLFE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TEXAS • 78711-2276 • P 512.463.6100 • F 512.475.4872 • TDD 1.800.735.2989 • [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us)

# Texas Courthouses: A National Treasure

The county courthouse is an American architectural icon. You can find a courthouse in nearly every one of the nation's 3,068 counties. Not surprisingly, Texas has more courthouses than any other state—235 are still in active government use. With their brick and stone towers, ornate cupolas, and soaring domes, the courthouses of Texas represent an impressive collection of public architecture. Currently, 139 Texas courthouses are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In June of this year, the National Trust for Historic Preservation included Texas courthouses on the 2012 list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. This is the second time they have included Texas courthouses on the list; the first was in 1998. Thanks to Gov. George W. Bush and the Texas Legislature, a bill was passed the following year to establish the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. Much has been accomplished since that first listing, with 83 courthouses receiving grants to carry out comprehensive rehabilitations and address critical structural, operational, and safety needs. Yet at least 75 additional historic Texas courthouses need funding for repairs and restoration work. Many are located in rural counties with limited financial resources. By listing Texas courthouses as endangered again in 2012, the Trust seeks to highlight the important preservation work that remains to be done.

Last year, the National Trust launched a new program to highlight significant and threatened historic places called America's National Treasures. National Treasures are endangered places of national significance where the National Trust's direct action will have positive implications for preservation nationwide.

"Each National Treasure is a place of national significance, demonstrates the power



Cooke County Courthouse

of preservation, and leverages the unique strengths of the National Trust," says Stephanie K. Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

National Trust staff and their preservation partners are working on a growing portfolio of National Treasures that currently includes 34 listings, including the historic county courthouses of Texas. Others on the list include individual sites, such as Miami Marine Stadium in Florida, regions of multiple sites like the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, and thematic groups of resources such as the Bridges of Yosemite Valley. In each case, the National Trust is committing a range of resources—legal, marketing, development, field staff—to meet specific preservation objectives, and says it is already seeing results from this approach.

The National Trust will work with the Texas Historical Commission, Preservation Texas, and local partners to highlight the continuing need for funding to finish the job of saving the state's amazing collection of historic courthouses now noted as some of America's National Treasures. As examples of a uniquely American building type, as symbols of civic pride and identity, and as centers of local community and economic life, Texas courthouses are indeed a national treasure worth saving.

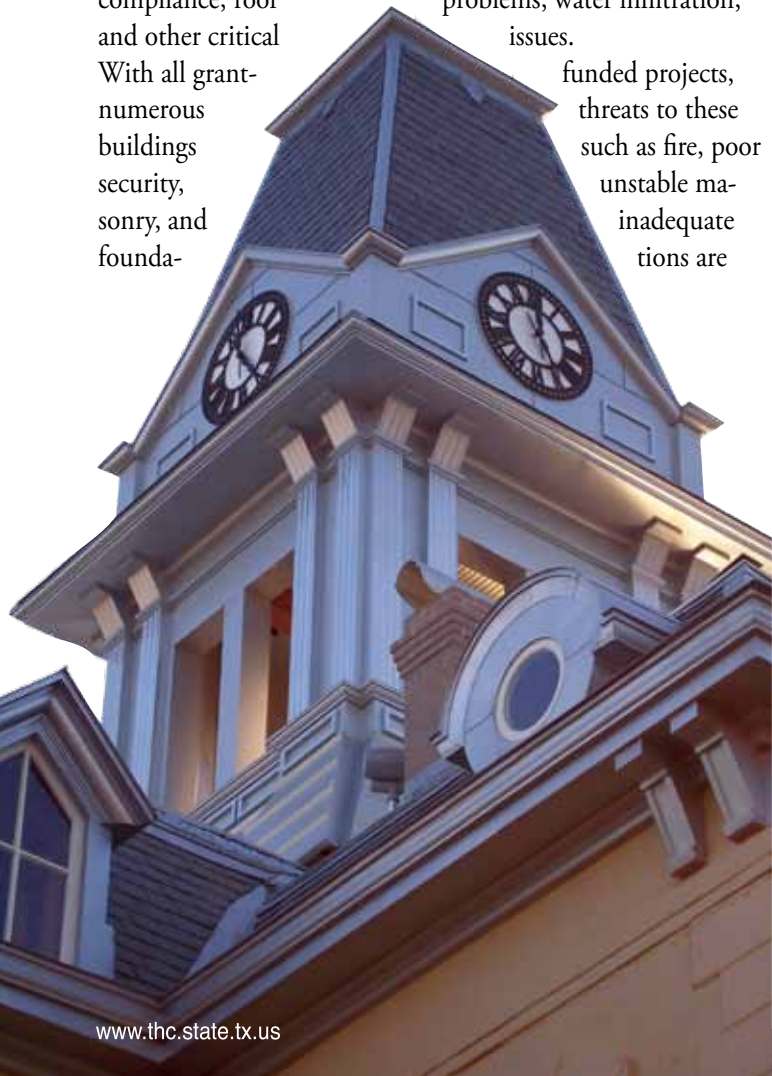
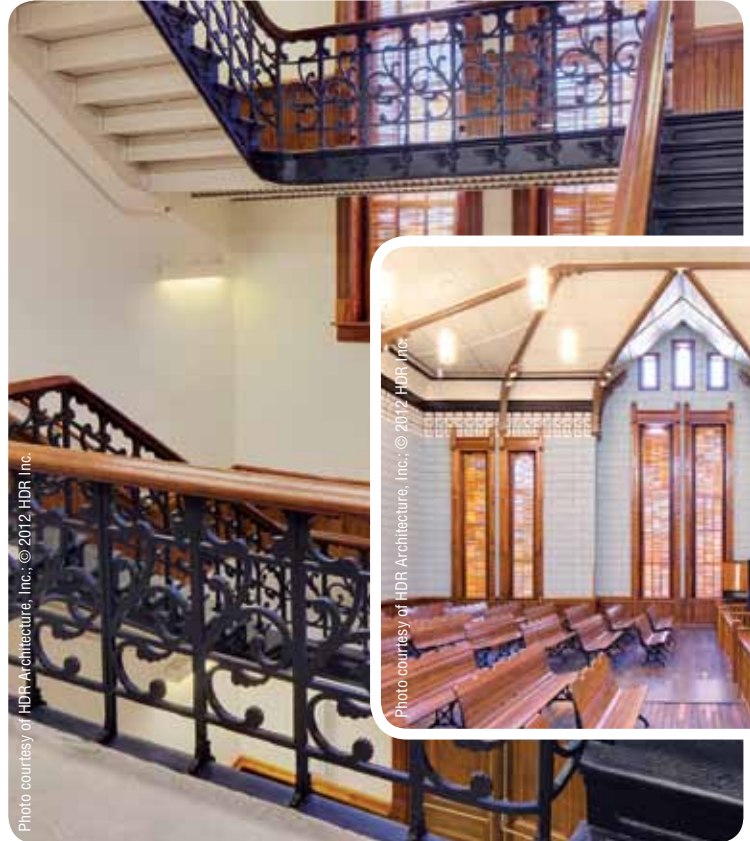
(Continued from page 1)

annual stewardship workshops to learn how to best maintain their newly restored courthouse so it does not again fall into disrepair. The State of Texas benefits as well. More than 9,600 jobs have been created since the program's inception in 1999. More than \$22 million in state taxes and an additional \$21.5 million in local taxes have been generated, and the gross state product has been increased by \$367,495,476.

To date, 63 counties have received full funding for their construction projects, 55 of which were completed and rededicated by the end of 2012. Another eight courthouse restorations will be completed in 2013–14. Twenty counties received partial funding for planning or emergency projects; those 20 and another 55 qualify for additional funding. More than 100 counties in addition to these are eligible to participate in the program.

Thirteen counties received grants in the most recent \$20 million grant cycle (FY 2011–12), which was announced in January 2012. In a highly competitive scoring process, Colorado, Franklin, Hardeman, Edwards, Bexar, Navarro, and Throckmorton counties received major construction grants of between \$1.3 and \$4.4 million. These grants were combined with more than \$21 million in local matching funds to complete extreme makeovers. Mason, Marion, San Saba, Upshur, Cameron, and Polk counties each received grants under \$250,000 to target emergency issues such as ADA compliance, roof problems, water infiltration, and other critical issues.

With all grant-funded projects, numerous buildings such as fire, poor security, sonry, and inadequate foundations are





From left, clockwise: THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe at the Potter County Courthouse rededication; San Augustine County courtroom; Hood County courtroom and stairwell; McClellan County Courthouse dome; and Newton County Courthouse tower.

addressed. Nearly invisible design and construction improvements provide a safer and more usable building while preserving the historic character of the courthouse.



The impact of revitalization also extends beyond the physical courthouse building, and rekindles the community itself. For example, the Potter County Courthouse in Amarillo, once threatened with demolition, is now the site of High Noon on the Square concerts, drawing more than 500 people each Wednesday evening to the courthouse lawn for live music. Camaraderie is created among those who worked on the restoration project.

“One of the things Panhandle communities did early on when entering into a contract was to ensure local businesses were hired to do the work,” said Panhandle Regional Planning Commission Director John Keihl. “At least 75 percent of the monies generated in the courthouse projects went to local businesses and in the pockets of local merchants and vendors.”

The momentum of good public investment is transformative when it finds its path. Since 1999, when La Salle County received a Smart Start grant for a courthouse preservation plan from the National Trust, the small community has initiated a Main Street program, added five hotels, and recently nominated a historic district to the National Register of Historic Places. In 2013, its renovated city park will have as its backdrop a stunning restored county courthouse.

“There are few places that can strengthen an entire community, but a restored cherished courthouse truly will,” said THC Architecture Division Director Sharon Fleming. “We’ve seen it happen in Cass, Cooke, Harris, Hood, Mills, Potter, and a myriad of other counties that have joined the program to restore their beloved courthouse. ★

## Economic Benefits of Restored Historic Courthouses

- Since 1999, **9,693 jobs** for Texans have been created through courthouse preservation projects
  - **\$269,310,968** in income generated
  - **\$22,037,507** in state taxes generated
  - **\$21,517,029** in local taxes generated
  - **\$367,495,476** increase in gross state product
- At least **17 major motion pictures** include scenes shot in a historic Texas courthouse, including “Bernie,” “True Grit,” “Lone Star,” and “The Tree of Life.”
- Tourism in Texas is a **\$63.2 billion industry**. Texas towns with restored courthouses are frequently a heritage tourism destination as demonstrated by visitors from 29 states and seven countries to the DeWitt County Courthouse over a three-year period.
- Travelers in Texas who visit a historic site **spend \$347 more per trip** than other travelers.
- **Nearly half** of Texas’ restored historic courthouses are in a Main Street community.
- An example of how a Texas community can benefit from its courthouse restoration is Lampasas, which now has **more than nine courthouse square events that draw approximately 9,000 people annually**.
- A common story among communities with restored courthouses: the commercial properties on the Wharton County Courthouse square experienced a **279 percent increase in property values** between 2006–10, after the courthouse project was completed. **Occupancy rates increased from 30 to 70 percent** during the same period.

Terrazzo tile floor, Roberts County Courthouse



**Fully Restored Courthouses**

County	City	Rededicated	Originally Completed
Archer	Archer City	5/12/05	1891
Atascosa	Jourdanton	6/14/03	1912
Bee	Beeville	5/20/06	1913
Bosque	Meridian	9/22/07	1886
Brooks	Falfurrias	2/26/10	1914
Cameron	Brownsville	10/17/06	1912
Cass	Linden	2/18/12	1860
Comal	New Braunfels	1/22/13	1898
Cooke	Gainesville	11/12/11	1912
Dallas	Dallas	5/15/07	1892
Denton	Denton	11/6/04	1896
DeWitt	Cuero	10/27/07	1896
Dimmit	Carrizo Springs	11/18/04	1926
Donley	Clarendon	7/4/03	1891
Ellis	Waxahachie	10/4/03	1895
Erath	Stephenville	8/20/02	1892
Fayette	LaGrange	6/25/05	1891
Goliad	Goliad	12/4/03	1894
Gray	Pampa	4/12/03	1928
Grimes	Anderson	3/2/02	1894
Hamilton	Hamilton	4/28/12	1887
Harris	Houston	8/23/11	1901
Harrison	Marshall	6/20/09	1901
Hood	Granbury	10/27/12	1891
Hopkins	Sulpher Springs	12/7/02	1894
Hudspeth	Sierra Blanca	7/3/04	1920
Jeff Davis	Fort Davis	11/8/03	1910
Johnson	Cleburne	12/1/07	1913
Kendall	Boerne	4/10/10	1870
Lamar	Paris	9/3/05	1917
Lampasas	Lampasas	3/2/04	1883
La Salle	Cotulla	1/26/13	1931
Lavaca	Hallettsville	9/11/10	1899
Lee	Giddings	10/8/04	1897
Leon	Centerville	7/1/07	1887
Llano	Llano	6/15/02	1892
McCulloch	Brady	9/5/09	1889
Maverick	Eagle Pass	10/13/05	1885
Menard	Menard	11/11/06	1932
Milam	Cameron	7/4/02	1892
Mills	Goldthwaite	8/27/11	1913
Newton	Newton	12/8/12	1903
Parker	Weatherford	6/4/05	1886
Potter	Amarillo	8/18/12	1932
Presidio	Marfa	1/5/02	1886
Rains	Emory	10/17/10	1909
Red River	Clarksville	10/26/02	1884
Roberts	Miami	6/2/12	1913
San Augustine	San Augustine	11/20/10	1928
Shackelford	Albany	6/30/01	1883
Sutton	Sonora	6/11/02	1891
Trinity	Groveton	7/22/11	1914
Val Verde	Del Rio	7/23/04	1887
Wharton	Wharton	8/4/07	1889
Wheeler	Wheeler	10/16/04	1925
Williamson	Georgetown	12/8/07	1889

**In Progress—Construction Projects**

Bexar	San Antonio	in progress	1897
Colorado	Columbus	in progress	1891
Edwards	Rocksprings	in progress	1891
Franklin	Mount Vernon	in progress	1912
Hardeman	Quanah	in progress	1908
Navarro	Corsicana	in progress	1905
Throckmorton	Throckmorton	in progress	1891



Randall County Courthouse

**In Progress—Emergency Construction Projects**

Karnes	Karnes City	in progress	1895
Polk	Livingston	in progress	1923
Upshur	Gilmer	in progress	1937

Nearly every dollar invested in the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program has been spent on courthouse restoration, not administrative overhead or other expenditures.

**PROGRAM STAFF**

Sharon Fleming,  
Director, AIA, DSHPO

Mark Cowan,  
Project Reviewer

Susan Gammage,  
Project Reviewer

Bess Althaus Graham,  
Architect, AIA, LEED

Lisa Harvell,  
Historic Interiors Specialist

Tina Ray, Program Specialist

Debbi Head,  
*Courthouse Cornerstones* Editor



La Salle County Courthouse



Hamilton County Courthouse

**Planning Grant Projects**

Crosby	Crosbyton	completed plans	1914
Falls	Marlin	completed plans	1940
Fannin	Bonham	completed plans	1889
Fort Bend	Richmond	completed plans	1909
Houston	Crockett	completed plans	1940
Karnes	Karnes City	completed plans	1895
Lynn	Tahoka	completed plans	1916
Marion	Jefferson	completed plans	1913
Mason	Mason	completed plans	1910
San Saba	San Saba	completed plans	1911
Stephens	Breckenridge	completed plans	1926
Upshur	Gilmer	completed plans	1937

**Emergency Construction Projects**

Bandera	Bandera	phase complete	1891
Glasscock	Garden City	phase complete	1894
Marion	Jefferson	phase complete	1913
Mason	Mason	phase complete	1910
McLennan	Waco	phase complete	1901
Montague	Montague	phase complete	1913
Nueces	Corpus Christi	phase complete	1892
Randall	Canyon	phase complete	1908
San Saba	San Saba	phase complete	1911
Tyler	Woodville	phase complete	1891



Texas Historical Commission  
P.O. Box 12276  
Austin, TX 78711-2276

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Cass County Courthouse

**“Only in Texas!  
A visual delight.”**

—Mr. & Mrs. Greg Franklin  
Houston, Texas

**“We spent time with our friends in San Augustine  
on Tuesday and even on that chilly, cloudy day,  
their renovated courthouse was a ray of light.”**

—Mary Turner,  
Texas Forest Trail Region Executive Director

**“Beautiful  
building!!!”**

—James & Mauree Keman  
Cornwall, England

**“We loved touring your beautiful  
courthouse, eating the best tamales  
in the world, and shopping!”**

—Catherine Sak  
Texas Downtown Association



Trinity County Courthouse

*“Great  
preservation  
of history!”*

—David & Lucille  
Cavendar, Luverne, Alabama

“Thank you for  
the wonderful tour  
and history lesson.”

—Martin Griffin & daughter  
Joan, Sacramento, California

**“Awesome!”**

—Bill & Linda Hillert  
Dawsonville, Georgia

“Not a week goes by that I don’t have out of town  
visitors to the courthouse. They come from all over  
the country—and the world! If I have time,  
I give them a tour.”

—Atascosa County Judge Diana Bautista, Jourdanton, Texas