

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

THE **MEDALLION**

WINTER 2015

STAGE-COACH
MOTEL

NO VACANCY

**THE
HIGH
ROAD**

Explore Far West Texas
and the Mountain Trail Region
on the Bankhead Highway

410



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Andy Rhodes
Managing Editor
Judy Jensen
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www.thc.state.tx.us thc@thc.state.tx.us

THE MEDALLION

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FEATURES

4 **Compelling Courthouses**
THC's Preservation Program Reinvests in Texas Communities.



THC OUTREACH

6 **The High Road**
Explore the Bankhead Highway's Legacy in the Mountain Trail Region.



12 **Preservation Makes Cents**
New State Tax Credit Program Benefits Texas Economy, Historic Preservation.

ON THE COVER:
The circa-1924 Stagecoach Motel in Van Horn. Photo by Andy Rhodes.

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FAST FACTS

The THC's preservation programs are significant economic catalysts throughout the state.

Texas Main Street Program

\$2.9

BILLION REINVESTED
IN TEXAS DOWNTOWNS AND
NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICTS
SINCE 1981

+ \$260 MILLION since 2013

Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

\$288

MILLION
IN LOCAL INCOME
GENERATED

+ \$19 MILLION since 2013

10,381

JOBS SUPPORTED

+ 688 JOBS since 2013

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories



Dear Friends,

By the time you read this, the Texas Legislature will be in session, considering the vital issues that will shape our state's future. Their attention will be focused on efforts to continue the abundant economic success Texas has experienced, even during times of national economic challenges. That's an issue close to our hearts here at the THC, because many of our programs help to support our state's thriving economy.

One of our most visible endeavors is the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, which (through legislative appropriation) has invested \$251 million in our historic county courthouses, created 10,381 jobs, and generated \$288.4 million in local income throughout the state. Historic Texas courthouses are irreplaceable symbols of Texas history, culture, and law. But these beautiful historic courthouses are not only centerpieces for their communities; they are important destinations for heritage tourists.

The THC contributes to this vibrant sector of Texas tourism in many ways, perhaps most notably through our stewardship of the Texas Heritage Trails Program. That network of history- and preservation-based regional boards helps to preserve and promote historic destinations across the state, and it contributed significantly to the nearly \$6.7 billion spent by Texas' heritage travelers last year.

Finally, the new state franchise tax credit will benefit Texans by saving 25 percent of eligible costs for qualified rehabilitation projects. The program, which began January 1, will clearly demonstrate the significant impact historic preservation makes across the entire state. You can read more about this exciting new program on page 12 in this issue of *The Medallion*.

We realize we still have much to accomplish, with challenges and opportunities to face. Texas' population is growing by approximately 1,000 people each day, so we believe it's more important than ever to support and preserve Texas' distinctive heritage and values for every new Texan to appreciate. We continue to invest in the buildings, structures, and cultural landscapes that have defined Texas' special sense of place for centuries, and it's exciting to know we will be partnering in these efforts with all of you, throughout this great state.

We look forward to the year ahead and the opportunity it brings to protect and preserve the Lone Star State's history and economy for the benefit of future generations.

Sincerely,

Mark Wolfe, Executive Director
 Texas Historical Commission



GREG ABBOTT, GOVERNOR • GILBERT E. "PETE" PETERSON, III, CHAIR • MARK WOLFE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
 P.O. BOX 12276 • AUSTIN, TEXAS • 78711-2276 • P 512.463.6100 • F 512.475.4872 • www.thc.state.tx.us

Compelling Courthouses

THC Program Reinvests in Texas Communities

By *Andy Rhodes*
Managing Editor, The Medallion

Texas courthouses are among the state's most widely recognized, used, and valued assets. Their lofty gothic spires, classical copper domes, and stately silhouettes dominate the skylines of many counties, luring travelers to leave the highway and explore historic downtown districts.

The Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) is protecting these iconic structures in communities throughout the state. In the process, Texas is providing a cost-effective example to the nation on how to refocus community pride, utilize existing assets, and maximize the return on historic civic buildings in county seats.

The THCPP provides the incentive for counties to invest matching funds to ensure their courthouses will always be inspiring places to work, conduct government business, visit, or simply enjoy. Program participants experience numerous benefits, including building functionality and creating a tourist attraction and tangible link to the past.

Since the inception of the program in 1999, \$251 million has been awarded to 91 counties for the preservation of their courthouses. Including the FY 2013 appropriation of approximately \$4 million, construction activity related to the program has or will have generated 10,381 jobs, more than \$21 million in local taxes, and more than \$22 million in state taxes.

To date, 63 county courthouses have been fully funded with the assistance of this program. Eighteen counties have received emergency



Courthouse restoration projects have had lasting economic impacts in rural Texas, including Marshall's Harrison County Courthouse.

and planning grants and are awaiting major construction funds to complete their projects.

The economic impact has been especially significant in Texas' rural communities, where courthouses often anchor a historic downtown district, and the associated heritage travelers, who spend almost \$400 more per trip than average travelers, bring money to the community.

For many cities, simultaneous participation in the THC's various preservation initiatives—such as the Texas Main Street Program and Texas Heritage Trails Program—provides a successful outcome when combined

“A city’s involvement in urban revitalization through preservation of its historic town center...provides the vital link for a prosperous downtown,” says Gilbert E. “Pete” Peterson, III, THC chair.

with the restoration of its county courthouse.

Other organizations such as the Texas Downtown Association (TDA) also offer considerable assistance. TDA Director Catherine Sak believes a county's investment in its courthouse demonstrates that the courthouse square plays an important role in the community while instilling confidence in developers who invest in properties following a courthouse restoration.

“A restored county courthouse and square creates an opportunity for the establishment of new businesses and events in the downtown,” Sak says, noting that TDA's recent award recipients were Amarillo and Granbury, following the full restorations of both county courthouses through the THCPP.

Unfortunately, Texas' historic courthouses are threatened, and the stories they tell may soon be forgotten unless counties intervene—in some cases immediately. This is often a monumental task for a county to assume on its own.

Water intrusion is one of the most common and pervasive threats to county courthouses. As time passes, even the solid construction of buildings meant to last centuries eventually falters without dedicated, consistent maintenance. Foundations leak, soils settle, and masonry deteriorates, as do roofs, windows, and doors.

In Round VIII of THCPP grants (2013) Dimmit, Upshur, and Van Zandt counties applied for funding to address water problems that threatened



“When old records are lost or destroyed, so is our history,” says Mark Wolfe, executive director of the THC. “County records are an important repository of the daily workings of our counties and the state. These records hold not only vital information, but are some of the earliest known histories of Texas.”

their daily business and vital records. While emergency grants were available to Dimmit and Upshur, Van Zandt County suffered due to limited THCPP funding, instead having to use its own limited resources to pay for waterproofing its courthouse’s foundation.

In addition, many factors contribute to the threat of fire at historic Texas courthouses. Significant threats include outdated electrical systems, lack of lightning protection, and inadequate fire suppression and smoke detection systems.

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records hold not only vital information, but are some of the earliest known histories of Texas.”

Perhaps the worst threats to historic Texas courthouses come from disinterest and misinformation—the false belief that it is easier and cheaper to “build new” and sacrifice a century or more of history and community to a construction landfill. According to Wolfe, it is neither cheaper nor sustainable to raze a historic courthouse and build a new facility with at best a 50-year life, when a historic courthouse can be restored and updated for the 21st century at a fraction of the cost and offer another century of service to the community.

“A city’s involvement in urban revitalization through preservation of its historic town center—particularly when partnered with a county’s restoration of its historic county courthouse—provides the vital link for a prosperous downtown,” Gilbert E. “Pete” Peterson, III, THC chair says. “All across Texas, we’ve seen it happen in counties that have joined the program to restore their beloved courthouses. They have made truly remarkable transformations.”



Above: Structural deficiencies at the Hunt County Courthouse in Greenville; Below: the restored 1901 Harrison County Courthouse.

The most recent funding for Round VIII of the THCPP was included in the appropriations bill of the 83rd Legislature in 2013, approving the sale of \$4.2 million in bonds, the smallest amount appropriated for the program since its inception. Subsequently, a total of 24 applications were received requesting more than \$7 million in state assistance. The THC submitted an exceptional item request to the 84th regular session of the Texas Legislature for \$40 million in funding for the program.

The THCPP can be the catalyst that encourages additional public and private investment in historic downtowns. Vacant buildings often exist in the central commercial district when a courthouse project begins, but vacancies dwindle by the project’s completion.

“The preservation of Texas’ historic courthouses is an investment that offers immediate returns, yet continues to pay generous dividends to the citizens of tomorrow,” says Sharon Fleming, director of the THCPP. “There are few places that can strengthen and transform an entire community, but a restored cherished courthouse truly will.”

For more information about the THCPP, visit www.thc.state.tx.us/thcpp or call 512.463.6094. ★



Mike Engelman
Texas Forest Trail Region



THE HIGH ROAD

Discover the Bankhead Highway's Legacy in the Mountain Trail Region

Text and photos by Andy Rhodes, *The Medallion* Managing Editor

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, cruising along the Bankhead Highway's main drag in Far West Texas was a gas. The transcontinental roadway brought recreation-seeking travelers to El Paso, Sierra Blanca, and Van Horn in colorful and stylish automobiles: Baby-blue Buick Rivieras, cherry-red Chevy Bel Airs, and forest-green Ford Thunderbirds cruised into town with license plates representing every state on the Bankhead from San Diego, California to Washington, D.C.

One of the busiest stops in Van Horn was McVay's Camp, a motor lodge and service station catering to the influx of travelers. At the time, a teenaged Darice McVay pumped gas and cleaned motel rooms for her family's business. She recalls checking oil and gauging tire pressure on the classy cars that wheeled into McVay's Camp.

"I remember one time a fella pulled up in a shiny new car—I think it was one of those Cadillacs with the fancy fins in the back," she says. "He told me to fill 'er up, so I walked around the car three times trying to find the gas tank on the side. Finally, I had to ask him where the tank was, and he said, 'It's behind the license plate, ya dummy.' Well, I'd never seen that before in my life—it was a whole new thing out here in Van Horn."

A century ago, train operators relied on the town's water tank and mercantile stores to replenish provisions. Later, gas stations and cafes would replace these services for Bankhead Highway travelers.

"We're strategically placed about 120 miles from everything, so trains, travelers, and truckers have always had

to stop here for refueling and supplies," McVay says. "This town grew around providing those services. It was one of the major crossroads of West Texas."

A historically popular stop in Van Horn was the Clark Hotel, which accommodated Bankhead Highway drivers until the late 1960s. Recently, a group of Van Horn residents met at the charming Old West-style structure, now known as the Clark Hotel Historical Museum. Participants included McVay, Museum Director Patricia Golden, and Van Horn natives Pete Torres and Heradio Luna (pictured at right).

According to Golden, much of the Bankhead Highway between the region's Far West Texas towns was a rutted dirt road with varying sizes of potholes, depending on rainfall or runoff from the nearby Guadalupe Mountains. She notes that portions of the old road still traverse private property and ranches.

"We're reminded of the Bankhead every day with all the old service stations and motor courts right outside our doorway on the main strip," Golden says. "Some of these great old buildings are still being used as repair shops, motels, and apartments."

Torres recalls gas stations and tourist courts being constructed along the highway, along with several new car dealerships showcasing contemporary vehicles behind enormous street-side windows.

"Van Horn has been an important place for cars ever since the highway was completed through here," he says. "I can still remember seeing all those great old Studebakers, Plymouths, and Chryslers. Those were the days."





From left: Van Horn residents Pete Torres, Patricia Golden, Darice McVay, and Heradio Luna discuss Bankhead Highway history.

McVay’s vehicular connection to the Bankhead is similarly nostalgic, yet with a more direct connection to the road. She recalls playing a game called “ditch ‘em,” involving a nighttime cat-and-mouse car chase through downtown Van Horn.

“I was the ditch ‘em champ because I had this great trick that nobody figured out—I’d get ahead of the other cars and turn off my lights, then I’d drive on top of the railroad tracks before sneaking back downtown,” she says, adding that her father occasionally commented on the car’s deteriorating shocks and suspension. “I guess we didn’t have much else to do out here, but we had some fun on that old road.”

Good times came to an end for the Bankhead Highway in the mid- to late-1960s, with the completion of the behemoth Interstate 10. Torres notes that although the new freeway had a devastating effect on Bankhead businesses in nearby Sierra Blanca, its impact on Van Horn wasn’t as severe.

“Our city did a good job trying to discourage new businesses from building right along the new freeway,” he says. “They kept it so drivers had to come into town for most of the motels, restaurants, and gas stations. That’s one of the things that’s still keeping us going to this day.”

McVay agrees, adding that the Bankhead Highway “has been our lifeblood in Van Horn. It’s responsible for so much of our past, present, and future.”

FAR WEST TEXAS TOURING

For travelers interested in the Bankhead Highway—or even those looking for a different perspective on Far West Texas—the stretch between Van Horn and El Paso offers a fascinating expanse to explore. Much of this remote area is immune to the threat of teardowns associated with urban expansion on other portions of the roadway, resulting in an impressive collection of surviving roadside architecture. Tour the old-fashioned way by packing into an automobile (classic car optional) and taking time to discover the following heritage travel destinations.

The aforementioned **Clark Hotel Historical Museum** (432.283.8028) is Van Horn’s oldest existing structure, built in 1901. The National Register-listed site simultaneously served as a general store, opera house, saloon, courthouse, and newspaper office until local resident Fred Clark, Sr. converted it into a hotel in the 1920s.

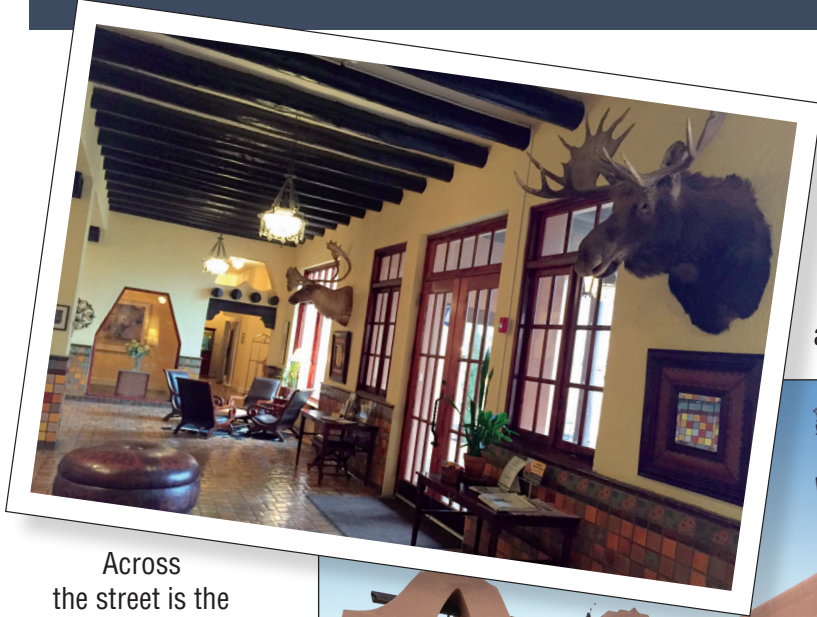
Visitors can explore the museum’s expansive collection of regional-themed exhibits and artifacts displayed in the hotel’s former first-floor lobby and second-floor lodging areas. Highlights include a massive 1876

mahogany bar imported from France, vintage furniture and photographs in the virtually unchanged hotel rooms, and knick-knacks from local families recalling the area’s pioneer heritage.



Above and left: Van Horn’s Clark Hotel in the early 1900s, and as a modern-day museum.





Across the street is the magnificent **Hotel El Capitan** (www.hotelinvanhorn.com, 877.283.1220), a recommended lodging destination for travelers in search of a genuine Bankhead Highway experience. The remarkable Mission Revival-style building opened in 1930, just as the Bankhead began carrying cross-country travelers to Van Horn.

The hotel represents the traditional style of noted architect Henry Trost, an Ohio native who moved to El Paso in 1903 and designed hundreds of buildings in the Southwest U.S. Travelers don't have to stay at the Capitan to enjoy its historic charm—they are welcome to explore its rustically elegant lobby and dine at its high-quality regionally themed restaurant.

To get a true feel for the region's unbridled history and natural assets, book a tour at the nearby **Red Rock Ranch** (800.735.6911), owned by Darice McVay. Opt for a hike or guided jeep tour with McVay, who provides fascinating insight about the surrounding geological formations, Native American rock art, historic ranch house, and Western movie sets.

For Bankhead enthusiasts, Van Horn's Broadway Avenue offers a notable collection of vintage roadside structures. In fact, one of the most impressive is the **Red Rock Ranch headquarters** (305 W. Broadway), a historic Sinclair gas station adjacent to the former site of McVay's Camp. Now boasting a Magnolia Station paint theme, the building offers a window to the past along with similar nearby structures such as the **Flea Market** (300 block of W. Broadway), **Raul's Diesel** (607 W. Broadway), and **Sands Motel** (807 E. Broadway).

About 30 miles west of Van Horn lies the community of Sierra Blanca, historically known as the site where one of the first southern transcontinental railroad lines was completed in 1881. The town grew as a shipping and ranching center, and in 1917 Hudspeth County was officially formed.

The county's architectural legacy is nearly as grand as the surrounding mountain views—it boasts the only adobe courthouse in Texas. Completed in 1922, the **Hudspeth County Courthouse** (www.hudspethcounty.courthouse.webs.com, 915.369.2331) represents traditional construction of the region, with 18-inch thick walls insulating the building from the harsh desert environment.

By the late 1900s, the courthouse needed a façade restoration, new roof, and structural support. These and other improvements were completed through the THC's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, culminating with a rededication ceremony in 2004. Visitors are welcome to tour the courthouse and admire its impressive interior and exterior upgrades.

Just south of the courthouse is **El Paso Street**, the local name for the Bankhead Highway. Although the continued use of buildings in Sierra Blanca is not as prominent as in Van Horn, the existing structures offer a remarkable reflection of highway travel during the Bankhead era. Photographers and travelers interested in abandoned roadside architecture will be especially drawn to a quarter-mile stretch of El Paso Street west of Archie Street.

About an hour's drive to the west, things are much different in the metropolis of El Paso. The urban nature of the Bankhead's route resulted in numerous building alterations, teardowns, and a rapidly changing context. Still, there are notable vestiges of the historic highway in the eastern portion of the city, especially on Alameda Street and Texas Avenue.



The Hotel El Capitan's elegant lobby and entry retain their historic charm, which welcomed Van Horn's Bankhead Highway travelers during the 1930s–60s.

Right: This historic gas station, which once served Bankhead Highway travelers in Van Horn, is now tour headquarters for the nearby Red Rock Ranch. Opposite: El Paso's 1930 Plaza Hotel was the first high-rise Hilton hotel.





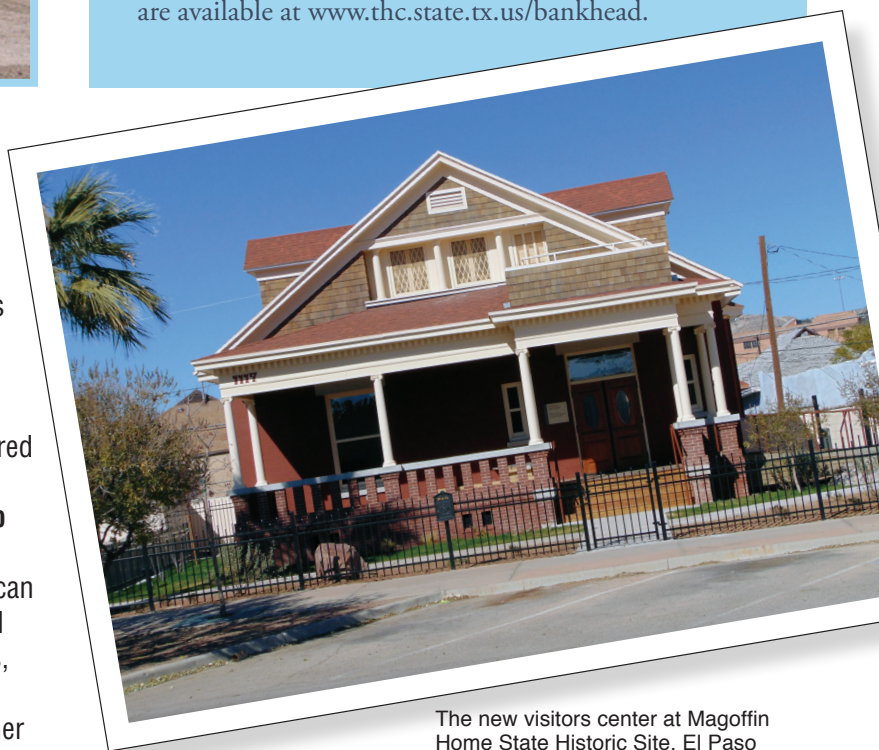
Hudspeth County Courthouse, Sierra Blanca

The Bankhead Highway was responsible for the development of many cities across Texas. For the past several years, members of the THC's Bankhead Highway resource team have been surveying and documenting nearly 850 miles of the road as part of the Texas Historic Roads and Highways Program. The THC and Texas Department of Transportation jointly administer the program, established by the Texas Legislature in 2009. Results of the team's extensive documentation and a free travel brochure are available at www.thc.state.tx.us/bankhead.

Of particular interest is a 1929 **Goodrich Silverton gas station** (501 Texas Ave.). Although the Spanish Colonial Revival-style building has been adapted into a restaurant and business offices, the historic service doors and fueling area remain evident.

Further east lies the **Stagecoach Inn** (4110 Alameda Ave.), with a distinctive Pueblo Revival style. The classic U-shaped motor court, which opened in 1924, once featured a large windmill at the entrance. Less than a mile to the west is a historically significant site now housing **El Torito Grocery** (3205 Alameda Ave.). It once served as a motel featured in the *Green Book*, which assisted African American travelers in the early 1900s with finding services “that will keep them from running into difficulties, embarrassments, and to make trips more enjoyable.”

While in El Paso, travelers are encouraged to visit other heritage attractions, including the THC's **Magoffin Home State Historic Site** (see page 13). Visitors can explore the remarkable surrounding neighborhood with the help of a recently published Magoffin Historic District walking tour brochure, available at www.visitmagoffinhome.com.



The new visitors center at Magoffin Home State Historic Site, El Paso

Trost designed several other notable El Paso buildings on the plaza, including the towering 1930 **Plaza Hotel** (the first high-rise Hilton Hotel, 106 Mills Ave.) and the Spanish-Moorish-style 1914 **Palace Theater** (209 S. El Paso St.).

Nearby is one of the city's most prominent historic buildings, the 1930 **Plaza Theatre** (www.theplazatheatre.org, 915.534.0600), known for its intricate interior design and pioneering technology, including the elevating, sonically innovative Mighty Wurlitzer Organ. Just down the street is the **El Paso History Museum** (www.elpasotexas.gov/history, 915.351.3588), featuring informative displays and historic photos related to the city's heritage along with numerous eye-catching displays, maps, and interactive exhibits.

For information about other heritage tourism destinations in this area of Far West Texas, order a free copy of the THC's *Texas Mountain Trail Region* travel guide at 866.276.6219 or www.texasimetravel.com. ★



A mile west, El Paso's historic downtown plaza offers travelers a glimpse of the city's early-1900s development. For those interested in Bankhead-associated lodging, there's the 1912 **Camino Real Hotel** (115 S. El Paso St.), designed by Henry Trost. A step inside reveals the hotel's centerpiece—a 25-foot diameter Tiffany stained-glass dome.

View a slideshow of more photos at www.thc.state.tx.us

Access Encouraged

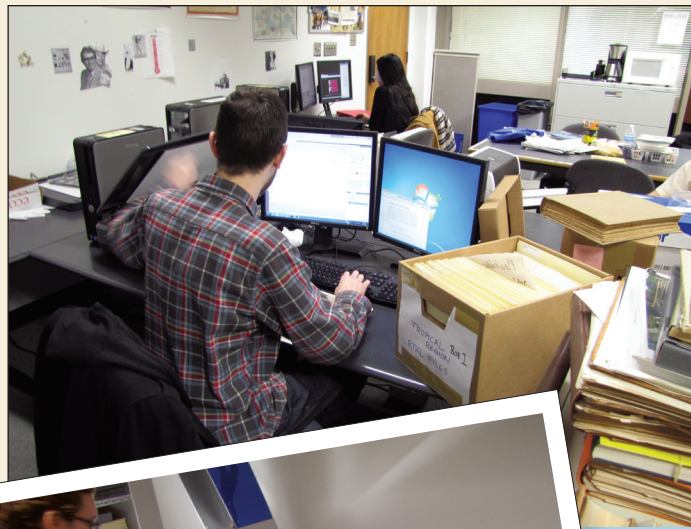
THC's RTHL Files Now Available Via Portal to Texas History

By Sarah McCleskey
THC Marker Program Staff

In the digital age, many historical research materials are available to the public through online collections. Researchers have primary and secondary source documents available at their fingertips from the comfort of their home or office. Not all research can be done from a computer, but with the technology available today, it is much easier.

A new and exciting collection on the Portal to Texas History—one of many notable websites devoted to digitizing Texas' rich heritage maintained by the University of North Texas (UNT)—is the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) collection. RTHLs are buildings and structures that are judged to be historically and architecturally significant, and are commemorated through the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Official Texas Historical Marker Program. Since the designation's origins in 1962, the THC has marked more than 3,600 RTHLs throughout the state.

As part of the application process, structural plans or drawings and photographs are required and kept in the RTHL file in the THC's library. The RTHL designation and the maintenance of their files are a method of preserving the tangible heritage of our great state. In the past, RTHL files were only available by request, or in-person for researchers who opted to visit the THC's library.



Workers at UNT's Digital Projects Lab assist with scanning and organizing hundreds of THC marker files.

worked in the Digital Projects Lab since 2013 and assisted with digitizing the City of Dallas' JFK files, scanned documents, and photos of RTHL properties. McLellan said he enjoyed working on the RTHL project because he was able to see historic photographs of places he has visited.

Other students entered metadata on each file, an extremely painstaking and detail-oriented skill that allows the files to be keyword-searchable on the Portal. In total, more than 10 months were devoted to preparing, transporting, scanning, and cataloging the first phase of the project by UNT and THC staff.

"In some ways, this can be a thankless project because the results of all the hard work aren't necessarily tangible," says Bratten Thomason, director of the THC's History Programs Division. "However, it's extremely meaningful for generations of future researchers and members of the public who will undoubtedly be accessing this information for things such as historical reports, academic projects, and even family genealogy."

Thomason adds that the scanning project encompassed half of the THC's Texas Trail Regions, including Mountain, Pecos, Tropical, Hill Country, and Independence—more than 1,700 files spanning 94 counties. Just a few of the counties represented are Aransas, Bexar, Caldwell, Fort Bend, Galveston,



In late 2013, UNT received a TexTreasures grant from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to digitize half of the THC's RTHL files for access through UNT's Portal to Texas History. After many hours sifting through hundreds of marker files, the documents were transported (carefully) to UNT's Digital Projects Lab in Denton. State-of-the-art equipment and processes fill the Digital Projects Lab, from flatbed scanners to experimental techniques with digital cameras to large machines for scanning delicate historic newspapers.

UNT student Sean McLellan, an electrical engineering major who has

The THC's RTHL collection on the Portal to Texas History is available to researchers, teachers, consultants, students, and the general public to learn about historic structures in Texas. The RTHL collection and other collections on the Portal will allow users to access primary and secondary source documents to enrich their understanding of Texas history. To view the RTHL collection, visit <http://texashistory.unt.edu/explore/collections/RTHLF/>.

Harris, Liberty, San Patricio, Travis, and Washington.

Digitizing the RTHL files has been beneficial for public access and preservation, and it also assisted the THC's marker program staff while preparing the files for digitization. The project gave staff members an opportunity to cull through files and familiarize themselves with decades-old RTHL properties throughout the state, providing an opportunity to correct or add information about a property to the agency's database.

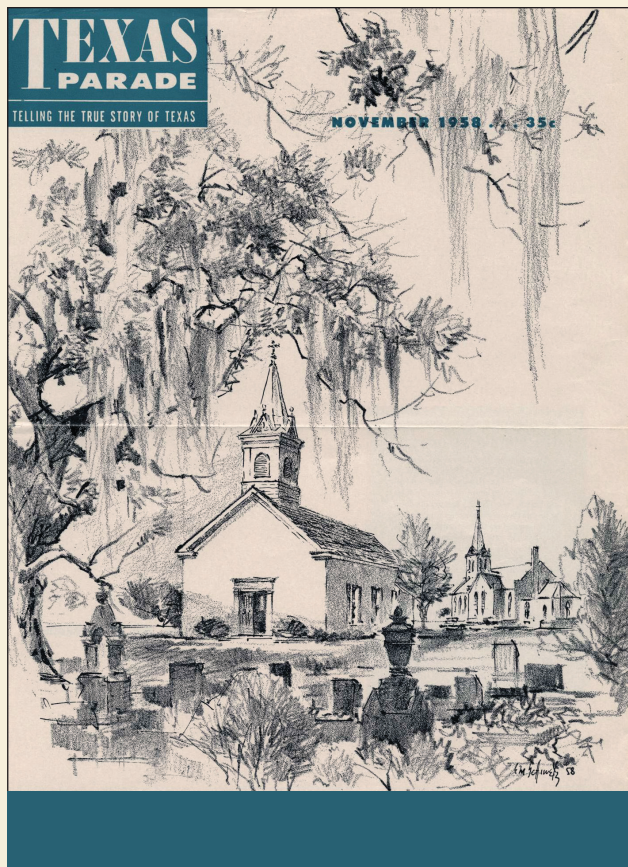
"This closer review of historical files has allowed the THC to make important corrections and updates to entries on the Texas Historic Sites Atlas," explains Bob Brinkman, coordinator of the THC's marker program.

According to Brinkman, another positive outcome of the project was the opportunity to view remarkable photos, images, sketches, and paintings of Texas' most historic and iconic buildings. Many structures that were designated in the 1970s and 1980s included ink sketches by notable Texas artists or the property owners themselves.

Reviewing the files also shed light on the application process for certain properties. For example, some files revealed interesting developments that the applicant uncovered during the research process such as the architect of a building that was previously unidentified. Other files disclosed tense communication between local historians that disagreed over a

date, place, or the correct spelling of a name.

"Without a doubt, the most amazing portion of the project was witnessing the dedication and hard work that local historians and County Historical Commissions put into preserving their history," Thomason says. "The vast majority of CHCs are volunteers who do historical research in their spare time. These remarkable people help others preserve their history for future generations and researchers—they should be commended." ★



Above: Among the RTHL file-digitization discoveries was this sketch of Meyersville's St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church by E.M. "Buck" Schiwetz, noted artist and illustrator. Left: The Half House, an RTHL property in San Antonio.

A Historic Tax Break

New State Tax Credit Program Benefits Texas Economy, Preservation

By *Andy Rhodes*
 Managing Editor, The Medallion

Many of Texas’ commercial property owners are eligible for a new state tax credit worth 25 percent of eligible costs for rehabilitation projects.

In 2013, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill 500, which established a state tax credit to assist the rehabilitation of certified historic structures. Administered by the Texas Historical Commission’s (THC) Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program, this incentive requires the proposed work to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation to qualify for the credit. In the absence of a state income tax, the credit is applied against a business’ franchise tax liability. The state credits can be sold or transferred to other investors.

Certified historic structures include properties that are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of a historic district, or designated as Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks or State Antiquities Landmarks. The eligible rehabilitation costs for the

project must exceed \$5,000 to qualify, and the rehabilitated building must be put into an income-producing business use.

THC officials anticipate many project applicants will seek to pair the new tax credit with the existing 20 percent federal historic preservation tax credit. The federal tax credit requirements differ from the state tax credit requirements on some key points. For the federal program, projects must meet a higher cost threshold to be considered a substantial rehabilitation, and only National Register properties are eligible as certified historic structures.

Agency staff members report that several proposed rehabilitation projects in Texas would greatly benefit from the new state tax credit. For example, San Antonio’s downtown Joske Building—considered Texas’ oldest department store—is restoring its iconic Art Deco exterior and renovating five interior floors for retail space. Project representatives report the proposed \$23 million development includes

eligible rehabilitation costs exceeding the required benchmark.

THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe says, “This type of project is a win-win for everyone involved—the applicant saves money on construction costs, and Texas’ historic buildings receive appropriate preservation practices.”

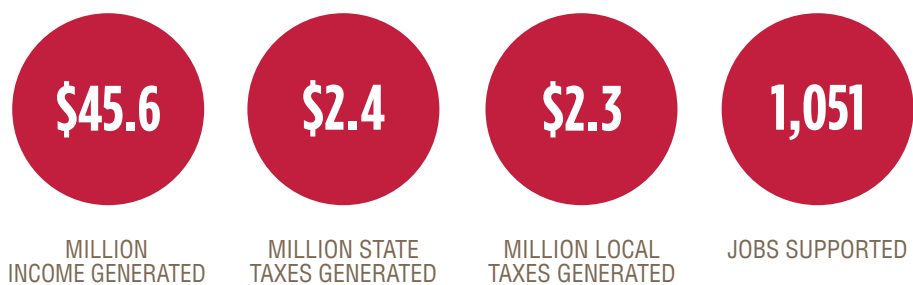
Wolfe adds that many of the state’s historic buildings and businesses have already benefitted from the existing federal tax program, and they stand to gain even more if state credits are added to the mix. He notes that since the federal program’s inception nearly three decades ago, over 500 Texas rehabilitation projects have been responsible for providing more than 29,000 jobs, \$1.28 billion in rehabilitation costs, \$814 million in income, and \$254 million in tax credits to individuals and businesses.

These economic benefits are expected to increase when property owners combine the state and federal tax incentives, as evidenced in the 34 other states where both options exist. For example, the most recent available reports show that spending on completed rehabilitations through the federal program in Massachusetts totaled \$527 million, compared to \$38 million in Texas.

“This just goes to show how much a state program can influence the use of the federal program,” Wolfe says. “We expect a busy year ahead as many Texans take advantage of these incentives, which will help improve our state’s economy and, in the process, support historic preservation.” ★

FAST FACTS

The THC-administered Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program makes an annual economic impact in Texas.



Housing History

Magoffin Home's New Visitors Center Offers Historical Connections and Charm

By *Andy Rhodes*
Managing Editor, The Medallion

Often, the opening of a visitors center involves a new structure with contemporary architecture and amenities. For the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Magoffin Home State Historic Site in El Paso, the "new" facility is an appropriately 114-year-old home with its original architectural designs carefully restored and sensitively adapted for modern use.

Also fittingly, the newly refurbished house—located directly across the street from the Magoffin Home—has a historical connection to the THC's existing site.

Dr. August Justice, the home's first owner, passed away six years after his family moved into their new dwelling in 1901. His widow Estella continued to live there, and offered several rooms to renters. During this time, she befriended her neighbor and fellow widower Joseph Magoffin, namesake of the current historic site. In fact, their relationship nearly became much more than a neighborly friendship.

"According to the Justice family, Joseph proposed to Estella but her sister talked her out of it," says Magoffin Home Site Manager Leslie Bergloff, who learned the news from Justice family members while researching the home's history. "It's a really great story. Who would have known when we purchased this property more than 100 years later that there was a real connection between these two families?"

The visitors center was restored throughout much of 2014, with an official opening party held on December 13. Bergloff notes that although workers encountered a few challenges during the construction process, none

were insurmountable. Most were related to the home's previous subdivision into eight apartments, each with separate utility services and reconfigured windows. In addition, the front porch had been converted into an enclosed room, requiring contractors to consult historic photos for a brick-by-brick reconstruction.

"We've worked on a lot of historic properties before, so this is pretty familiar territory for us," says Randy Oden, site superintendent for the project. "We're working with local people as much as we can—much of the specialty woodwork is being done by Alejandro and Francisco Fernandez from El Paso Wood Products. His shop is right around the corner from here, and he's done a great job providing reproductions based on the original items."

One of the more fascinating discoveries made by Oden and his crew during the demolition was an old shoe in the wall cavity. Intrigued by the finding, Bergloff learned that the custom of concealing shoes in building walls was practiced in England as far back to the Middle Ages. These "concealment shoes"—also found in other parts of the United States—were thought to ward off evil spirits.

"We decided to put it back in the wall where we found it, and our contractor built a Plexiglas window around it so visitors can see it," Bergloff explains.

In addition to the shoe, the new visitors center will feature an exhibit



Attending the Magoffin Home visitors center opening were, from left: former THC Chair Jon Hansen, Magoffin Home Site Manager Leslie Bergloff, THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe, and THC Chair Pete Peterson.

area with information about the Magoffin family and their home across the street; an archive with documents dating from the 1850s to the 1970s; a room for workshops, lectures, and traveling exhibits that may be rented by community members; and new staff offices, which will result in several rooms at the historic Magoffin Home becoming available for restoration and interpretation.

"This is a lovely building, and it's been worth all the hard work," Bergloff says. "People already love the Magoffin Home, and the visitors center will allow us to increase our educational programs and community outreach. This project also allows us to contribute to the improvement of our historic neighborhood. We're very proud to continue to promote the history and heritage of our community." ★

MAGOFFIN HOME STATE HISTORIC SITE
 1120 Magoffin Ave. • El Paso, TX 79901
 915.533.5147
www.visitmagoffinhome.com

Navarro Cenotaph to be Dedicated at Texas State Cemetery

A cenotaph of José Antonio Navarro, namesake of the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Casa Navarro State Historic Site in San Antonio, will be dedicated at Austin's Texas State Cemetery at 11 a.m. on February 27. The cenotaph—a statue honoring a deceased person entombed in another location—is considered a distinguished honor reserved only for people who have made significant contributions to the state of Texas.

The special ceremony will be held on the anniversary of Navarro's 220th birthday and will include state officials and historical groups such as the Tejanos in Action Veterans, Moses Austin Sons of the Republic, and Former Texas Rangers. The cenotaph will reportedly be the first monument in the state cemetery dedicated to a native-born Tejano, and will stand among the most famous names in Texas history.

The cenotaph project is sponsored by the Friends of Casa Navarro. For additional information, contact Sylvia Navarro Tillotson, president emerita and founder of the Friends organization, at stillotson@aol.com. ★



This photo illustration shows the anticipated Texas State Cemetery location of a José Antonio Navarro cenotaph by sculptor Gilbert Beall.

EXPLORE TEXAS' HERITAGE WITH THC'S NEW TRAVEL GUIDE



Experience the Lone Star State's vast history via the THC's new *Texas Heritage Travel Guide*. Encompassing all 10 Texas Heritage Trail Regions, the statewide guide highlights historic destinations that tell the real stories of Texas. From beautifully restored courthouses to historic frontier forts, the guide provides

a starting point for your next adventure. The guide is available for free via download, or print versions may be requested; copies are available at www.thc.state.tx.us/orderguides or by calling 866.276.6219. ★

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN DALLAS

The second annual Texas African American History Conference will take place February 19–21 at the African American Museum in Dallas.

Conference attendees will discuss the importance of assisting preservationists throughout Texas with cemetery identification and documentation. They will also address the problem of cemetery destruction and the importance of documenting cemeteries via the THC's Historic Texas Cemetery designation.

The conference theme is "Creating Preservation Partners to Protect and Locate Historic African American Places and People." Registration deadline is February 15, and conference details are available by contacting Dr. Ray Barnett at 214.565.9026, ext. 335. ★

SAN JACINTO DAY FESTIVAL AND BATTLE REENACTMENT APPROACHES

The San Jacinto Day Festival on April 18 will feature a dramatic battle reenactment with booming cannons, thundering hooves, and battle cries as hundreds of history reenactors recreate the events leading up to Texas winning its independence at the decisive Battle of San Jacinto.

The event commemorates historic events at the San Jacinto Battleground, where Gen. Sam Houston led his Texian soldiers to victory over the Mexican Army in 1836. This reenactment is the centerpiece of the free San Jacinto Day Festival, held from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on the 1,200-acre San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site in La Porte, just east of Houston.

For more information, visit www.sanjacinto-museum.org or call 281.479.2421. ★

Ask the Preservation Experts

Consider the Many Ways THC Staff Members Serve CHCs

By Amy Hammons
County Historical Commission Outreach Coordinator

The month of January is a particularly exciting time for the County Historical Commission (CHC) Outreach Program. CHCs from across the state submit annual reports, allowing us to learn what local preservationists have accomplished over the last year and document their substantial contributions to the state of Texas.

CHCs reported more than 440,000 volunteer hours for the 2013 term of service, which means CHCs provided in-kind services with a monetary value of more than \$10 million. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) honors these efforts by providing programs that enable CHCs to invest in their communities and celebrate what is best about our state. THC staff strive to address the tangible and intangible challenges that face CHCs.

Consider how the THC addresses these basic needs of local preservationists:



THC staff, including these members of the History Programs Division, work with CHCs to answer preservation-related questions.

Technical Advice: THC historians, archeologists, and architectural reviewers provide assistance on a daily basis to help citizens understand the value of their history and historic resources. Find

staff assigned to your area on the “Contact Us” page of the THC website (www.thc.state.tx.us).

Acknowledgement: The THC provides affirmation to preservation champions each year through a variety of award programs, including the Texas Treasure Business Award and the Distinguished Service Award. Other THC awards can be found by searching our website using the term “THC awards.”

Moral Support: THC staff field a variety of calls and emails from citizens who don’t know where else to turn. After providing recommendations, THC staff also connect citizens to local, regional, and statewide partners.

THC staff members are always available to answer your history- and preservation-related questions. Submit yours by using the “Ask an Expert” box located in the right column of the THC’s website. ★

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Our Mission

To protect and preserve the state’s historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.

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WHERE ON EARTH...IN TEXAS

Know your Texas history? Put your skills to the test by identifying the pictured site! The first three people who correctly identify the location will receive a prize and be named in the next issue of *The Medallion*. Send your answer to: *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or email to medallion@thc.state.tx.us.

Need a clue? This circa-1853 home is part of a National Historic Landmark District in the THC's Texas Tropical Trail Region.



Answer to the photo from the last issue: These pictographs, located in Big Bend Ranch State Park on the road to the Saucedo historic district, were likely painted during the Late Archaic and Late Prehistoric periods (spanning circa 500 B.C–A.D. 1000). The 311,000-acre park contains nearly 600 known prehistoric and historic sites. Congratulations and prizes go to the following readers who correctly identified the site:

Angela S. Giessner of Grand Prairie and Lety Gonzales of Alpine. Thanks to all who participated! ★

