

# COURTHOUSE CORNERSTONES

2011 Update of the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

## Historic Courthouse Preservation Program Preserves More Than Courthouses

**S**ince its inception, the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program has helped revive countless crafts and trades, and many highly skilled artists and craftspeople have emerged from across the state. Due to their monumental nature, historic Texas courthouses comprise a larger quantity of unique architectural details,



Photos courtesy of Ron Munden

materials, and ornament types than one would find in other buildings. Carved stone and wood, various forms of metal work, ornamental plaster and paint, flat lime gypsum plaster, masonry, millwork, stained glass, and tower clocks are the more obvious elements, but there are other examples of more obscure crafts found throughout these buildings.

*(Continued on page 14)*

A paint conservator applies a delicate touch, Harrison County Courthouse



Texas has more historic courthouses than any other state, with designs ranging from Romanesque Revival to Mission Style. Standing in the center of a community, they are uniquely poised to promote pride and prosperity. However, over the years, many have come to need our help. Time and the elements have taken a toll on many of these stately cathedrals of the prairie.

Courthouses restored through the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program have, in turn, been the catalyst for a revitalization of historic downtowns across the state. Administered by the Texas Historical Commission, many of these buildings have been returned to their former glory.

Since the program was established more than a decade ago, 55 of these magnificent structures have been funded for full restorations, with partial construction or planning underway on an additional 27. The restorations have not only breathed new life into downtowns throughout Texas, they have triggered an increase in heritage tourism for communities with the vision to participate in the program.

Texas' historic courthouses define our communities and connect its citizens with their past. Our courthouses are not only our personal treasures, they are our shared responsibility, and we must work together to ensure all Texans, present and future, will experience the remarkable legacy we have been so fortunate to have inherited.

Texas First Lady Anita Perry



As Texans, we are proud of our state's rich history – and we understand the responsibility of every citizen to preserve that history for future generations. As Governor, I worked with the Legislature to create the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. Over the last decade, this program has become a national model for the responsible restoration and preservation of historic buildings.

Laura and I congratulate the Texas Historical Commission and all those who work to protect some of our state's finest treasures. We encourage all our fellow Texans to support this important cause in the years ahead.



# Courthouse Preservation Catches On Across Texas

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) submitted an exceptional item request to the 82nd regular session of the Texas Legislature for \$20 million in funding for the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, the same amount appropriated in the preceding biennium.

“The program makes even more sense in tough economic times,” said Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program Director Stan Graves. “It plants the seed for recovery in communities across Texas.”

In the first six rounds of the program, the THC received 138 courthouse master plans, the first step required in the assistance process. Of those 138 plans, 127 were approved. At this time, 72 counties still need program funding. Twenty-seven of these have received either partial construction or planning grants, and 46 counties with approved master plans have yet to receive any program funding (many have applied in four or more rounds). A total of \$227 million has been distributed between 2007–2010 through five biennial appropriations of as high as \$62 million, with an average of \$40 to \$50 million per biennium.

“The program makes even more sense in tough economic times. It plants the seed for recovery in communities across Texas.”

Stan Graves, Director  
Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program

“The estimated current need to restore all remaining courthouses that have approved master plans is approximately \$250 million in state funds,” Graves said. “Those funds would be matched, in part, by local dollars creating jobs and stimulating adjacent business.”

The most recent funding for round six of the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program was included in the appropriations bill of the 81st Legislature in 2009, approving the sale of \$20 million in bonds, the smallest amount appropriated for the program since its inception. Subsequently, a total of 44 applications were received requesting more than \$173 million in state assistance. In January 2010, 20 projects were selected to receive grants. Three full restorations, three exterior phased projects, five emergency projects and 10 planning grants were awarded. The unfulfilled need from those counties that applied in round six and did not receive funds is \$151,928,916.

Over the last decade, 138 grants have been awarded to 82 Texas counties. To date, 43 courthouses have been fully restored including the recently completed projects in Brooks, Lavaca, Kendall, and San Augustine counties. By the end of 2011 the rededication of 10 more historic courthouses will be celebrated including: Cass, Cooke (final, interior phase), Hamilton (final, interior phase), Harris, Hood, Mills, Newton, Potter, Roberts and Trinity counties. Full restoration projects remaining under construction, which will be rededicated in 2012, include the La Salle and Comal county courthouses. Also underway currently are initial, exterior phase restorations in Colorado, Franklin, Hardeman, and Karnes counties.

In addition, the development of architectural plans and specifications has been funded through grants to Edwards, Fort Bend, Houston, Marion, Mason, Navarro, Stephens, Throckmorton, and Upshur counties in round six with Fannin, Lynn, and San Saba counties funded in round five. These 12 counties will have the “blueprints” in hand to restore their own courthouses and will be competing for construction funds in the next grant cycle.



1889 Wharton County Courthouse, Wharton

A \$20 million general revenue appropriation extended over two years, fiscal year 2012–13, would complete the restoration of approximately five additional courthouses. Of these projects, it is likely three would be second phase, interior projects to follow their exterior restorations and the other two selected would have previously received a planning grant.

“This request is less than in our earlier rounds, but is the same amount we received last session,” Graves said. “Because of the state’s economic and budget woes we felt compelled to request no more than we received last time, knowing that it won’t address more than a fraction of the need, but it will certainly keep the program alive and viable into the future.” ★

# Lavaca County Relives Its Past, Sets Sights on Future

The front page headline reads “Real Places Telling Real Stories,” and if walls could talk, what stories the Lavaca County Courthouse could add to the local newspaper’s cover piece on the building’s recent makeover. The 1899 Romanesque Revival building designed by Texas architect Eugene Heiner has seen few noticeable changes since its original construction, and that’s good news. Unseen, but

“Taking care of the crafts, the dances, the language, and the buildings that were left to us by those who came before, that’s what preservation is all about.”

Mark Wolfe, Executive Director  
Texas Historical Commission

greatly appreciated through the restoration made possible with a \$4 million grant from the Texas Historical Commission (THC), are the modern sprinkler, heating, and air conditioning systems. Still, those attending the September rededication were perhaps more awed by the emergence of the original powder blue walls, green iron staircases, pressed metal ceilings and a beautiful collection of vault doors featuring decorative landscape paintings.

The restoration became a county-wide project, from fundraising to hands-on help. Friends of the Courthouse saved the unique tile by peeling it from the plywood that had covered it. The recovered tiles were then used to replace cracked or damaged ones in other parts of the building.

“It was simply restored to its original beauty,” said Rep. Geanie Morrison (R-Victoria) who spoke at the rededication ceremony along with Sen. Glenn Hegar (R-Katy). “It is the same courthouse we have known, loved, and brought many visitors here to see.”

Shirley Mozisek who owns Hallettsville Florist and Gifts on the courthouse square and whose shop is as old as the courthouse building is looking forward to an upswing in business as a result of the restoration.

“I think it’s picking up slowly but surely and I feel that when the Christmas season comes and they put all the lights on the courthouse it will be a big attraction.”

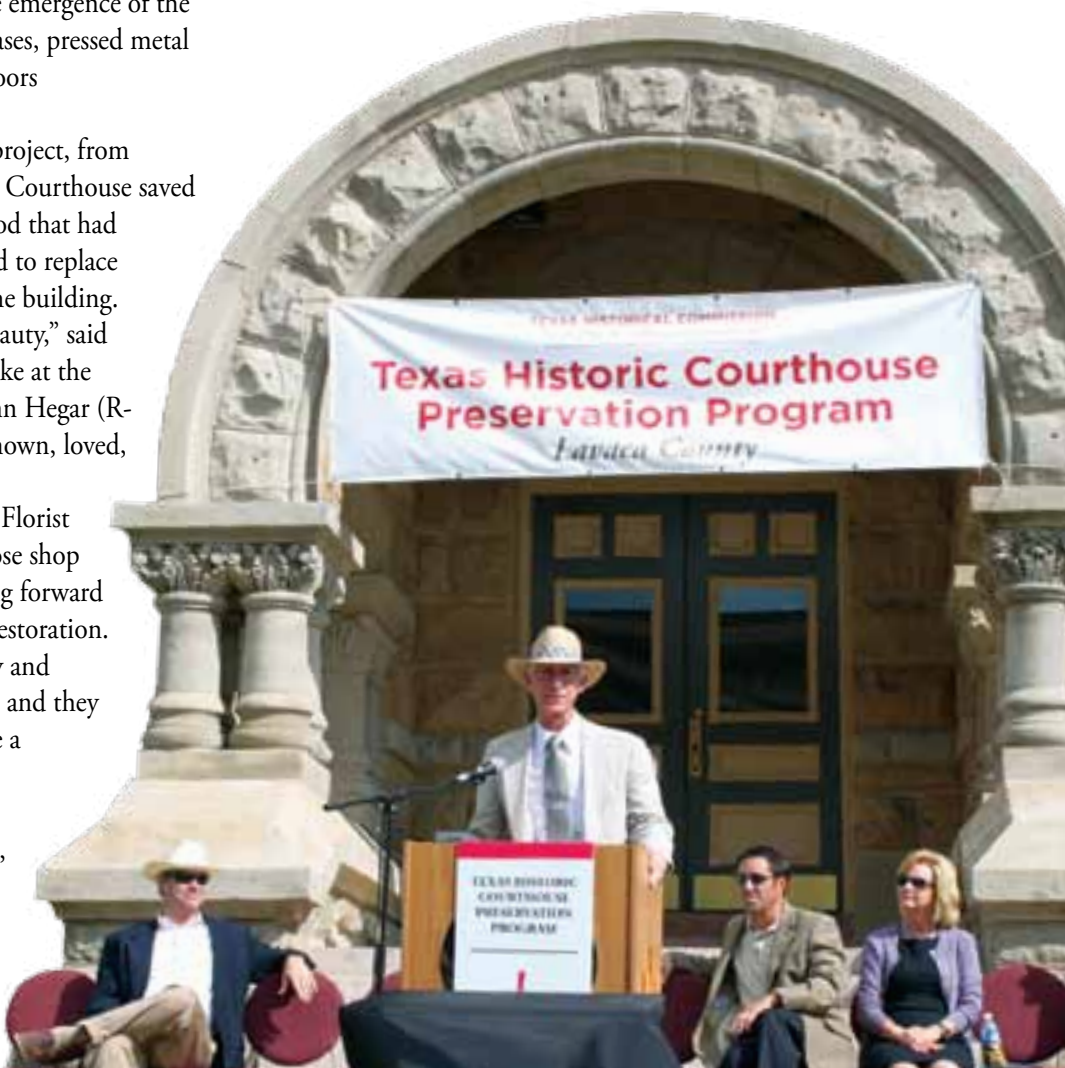
Mozisek did not have to wait that long. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, which held its annual conference in Austin in October, included the Lavaca County Courthouse on a tour of restored historic

courthouses in the Hill Country region. Out-of-state visitors traveled to Hallettsville and other nearby communities for a tour conducted by THC staff to see first hand some of those real places that tell the real stories of Texas.

THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe, who also spoke at the rededication, made the interesting connection that the rededication events are a facet of historic preservation.

“Carrying on traditions, remembering the way things used to be done, finding new ways to do them so that they stay fresh and interesting, taking care of the crafts, the dances, the language, and the buildings that were left to us by those who came before, that’s what preservation is all about,” Wolfe said.

On July 4, 1899, the Lavaca County Courthouse was originally dedicated to great fanfare. One hundred and eleven years later the beautifully restored building was rededicated with booths on the square, fiddler’s contests, a street dance, and a new set of principals. It was the story of history repeating itself, and the guest of honor was the only one that had been present both times. ★





# HISTORIC COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION

## An Economic Engine for Texas

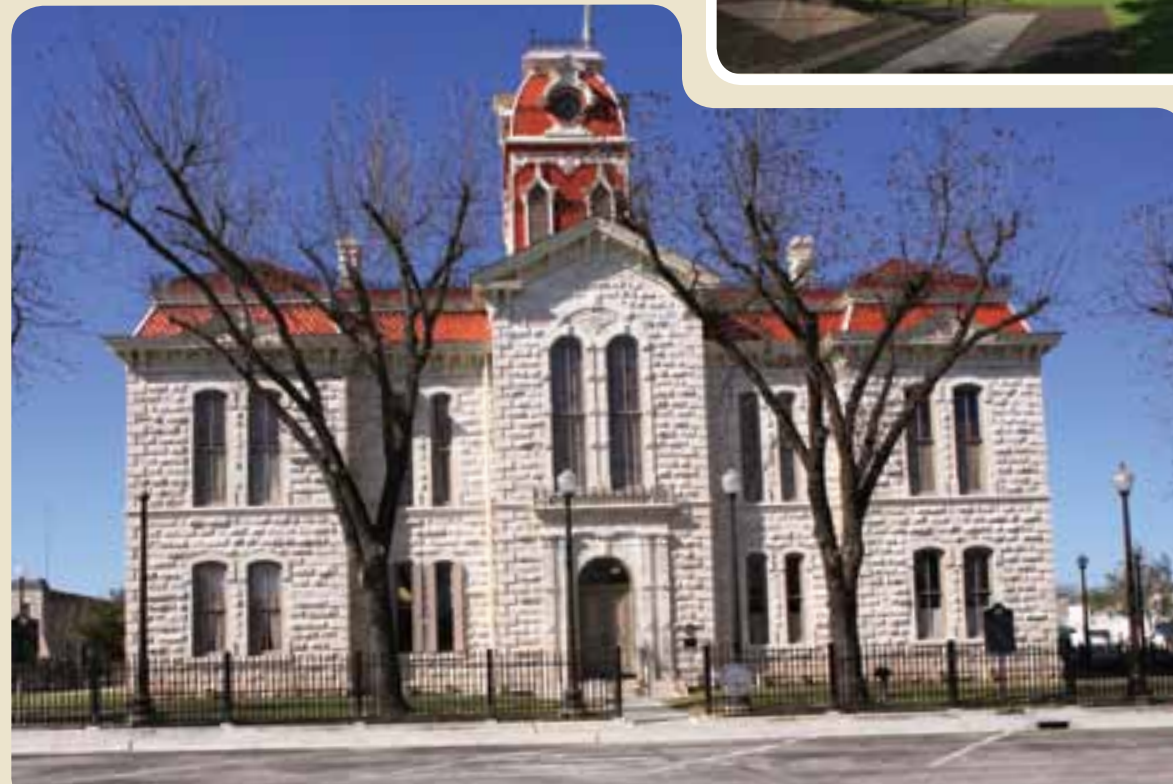
**D**riving the highways of Texas, you can't help but notice them. Their lofty gothic spires, classical copper domes, and stately silhouettes dominate the skylines of many counties, luring travelers to leave the interstate and explore the charm of downtown. Even before one sights the actual courthouse, its image is encountered in billboards across the state and on websites across the Internet. Historic courthouses are a county's personal brand, advertising the promise not only of a nostalgic return to the hometown of our childhood memories, but also the opportunity to visit a place defined by family-owned businesses, vibrant social gatherings, and a sense of community. In short, courthouses are the centerpieces of a growing economic boon to their counties.

The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program has generated 8,579 new jobs and preserved many others, in addition to generating more than \$19.5 million in income and an additional \$19 million in taxes to the state.

The State of Texas, through the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, is reinvesting in small towns across Texas at a time when they need it the most. The current economic recession has taken a heavy toll on small towns and their residents. In this time of economic duress, Texas is providing a cost-effective example to the nation on how to refocus community pride, utilize existing assets, and maximize the return on key historic civic buildings in its county seats.

Since 1999, Texas has invested \$227 million through the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, to which participating counties have added more than \$150 million in matching funds. This investment has not only resulted in the full restoration of 43 historic courthouses

across the state, it has rendered them once again as modern and efficient facilities in which to conduct county business. The preservation activities have generated 8,579 new jobs and preserved many others, in addition to generating more than \$19.5 million in income and an additional \$19 million in taxes to the state. This program has brought about an increase in the gross state product of more than \$325 million. The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program has not merely been an investment in our past; it is an investment in our future.



Clockwise from far bottom left: 1908 Randall County Courthouse clock tower; 1901 Harrison County Courthouse dome; 1899 Lavaca County Courthouse jury box; 1896 DeWitt County Courthouse; 1889 Wharton County Courthouse; and the 1883 Lampasas County Courthouse.

Two groups of graduate students at Texas A&M University are researching the metrics of preservation economics in Lampasas and Wharton counties, both of which have restored their historic county courthouses through the THC program. Student teams are interviewing civic, community, and business leaders and collecting data for research and analysis. The teams are led by Texas A&M Youngblood Endowed Professor of Land Development, Geoffrey Booth. A final report detailing

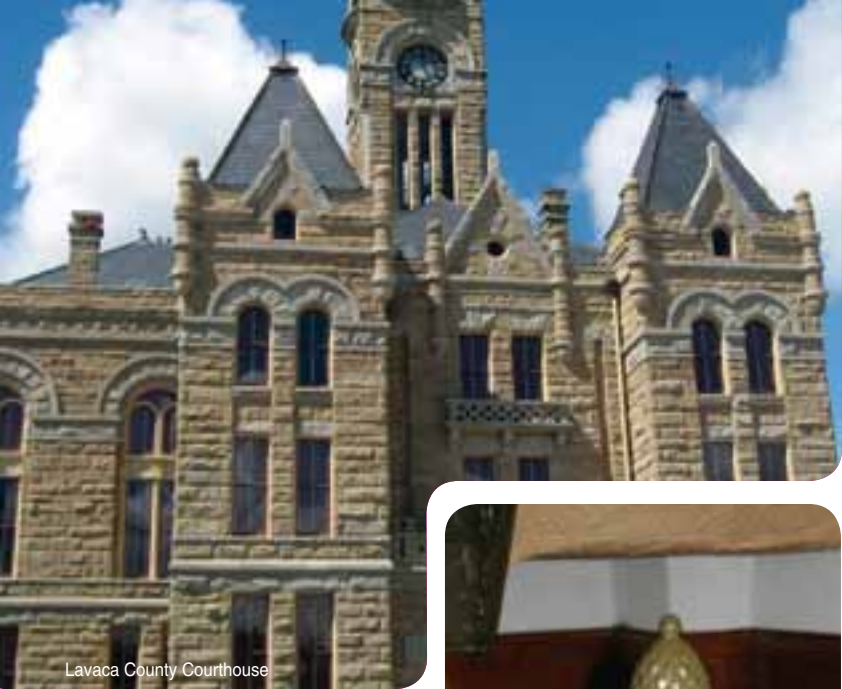
the economic, environmental, social, and visual dividends accrued from the restoration projects in both counties will be made available to the public through the THC. Preliminary findings indicate the courthouse restorations in both communities have served to stabilize and enhance tenant demand for real estate in the vicinity of the courthouses, and property values have increased.

Additionally, the restoration of these two historic buildings, as opposed to demolition or relocation, represents a tangible commitment by the state to both the community and sustainable development in Texas.

Courthouse preservation projects help create a business-friendly environment through improvements to infrastructure, such as enhanced parking and traffic flow, increased pedestrian accessibility, expanded event hosting capabilities, and the development of a unique and inviting historic context or "sense of place" centered upon the restored courthouse. They promote increased visitation to the downtown business community by hosting events and encouraging heritage tourism, in addition to creating a secure and inviting environment that entices courthouse visitors to stay and explore the square.

The Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program can be the catalyst that encourages additional public and private investment in the historic downtown. Often there are vacant buildings 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. ★





Lavaca County Courthouse



Kendall County Courthouse courtroom



Lavaca County Courthouse newel

Partial Restorations

|          |              |             |      |
|----------|--------------|-------------|------|
| Bexar    | San Antonio  | complete    | 1897 |
| Colorado | Columbus     | in progress | 1891 |
| Franklin | Mount Vernon | in progress | 1912 |
| Gray     | Pampa        | complete    | 1928 |
| Hardeman | Quanah       | in progress | 1908 |



Rains County Courthouse



Denton County Courthouse



Kendall County Courthouse

Planning Grant Projects

|              |              |             |      |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|------|
| Crosby       | Crosbyton    | complete    | 1914 |
| Edwards      | Rocksprings  | in progress | 1891 |
| Falls        | Marlin       | complete    | 1940 |
| Fort Bend    | Fort Bend    | in progress | 1909 |
| Houston      | Crockett     | in progress | 1940 |
| Lynn         | Tahoka       | in progress | 1916 |
| Marion       | Jefferson    | in progress | 1913 |
| Mason        | Mason        | in progress | 1910 |
| Navarro      | Corsicana    | in progress | 1905 |
| San Saba     | San Saba     | in progress | 1911 |
| Stephens     | Breckenridge | in progress | 1926 |
| Throckmorton | Throckmorton | in progress | 1891 |
| Upshur       | Gilmer       | in progress | 1937 |



Harris County Courthouse detail

Fully Restored Courthouses

| County        | City            | Rededicated | Originally Completed |
|---------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------------|
| Archer        | Archer City     | 5/12/05     | 1891/1926            |
| 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                 |
| 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                 |
| Grimes        | Anderson        | 3/2/02      | 1894                 |
| Harrison      | Marshall        | 6/20/09     | 1901                 |
| Hopkins       | Sulphur 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                 |
| 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                 |
| Parker        | Weatherford     | 6/4/05      | 1886                 |
| Presidio      | Marfa           | 1/5/02      | 1886                 |
| Rains         | Emory           | 10/17/10    | 1909                 |
| Red River     | Clarksville     | 10/26/02    | 1884                 |
| San Augustine | San Augustine   | 11/20/10    | 1928                 |
| Shackelford   | Albany          | 6/30/01     | 1883                 |
| Sutton        | Sonora          | 6/11/02     | 1891                 |
| Val Verde     | Del Rio         | 7/23/04     | 1887/1915            |
| Wharton       | Wharton         | 8/4/07      | 1889                 |
| Wheeler       | Wheeler         | 10/16/04    | 1925                 |
| Williamson    | Georgetown      | 12/8/07     | 1889                 |

Full Restoration Construction Projects

|          |               |             |      |
|----------|---------------|-------------|------|
| Cass     | Linden        | in progress | 1860 |
| Comal    | New Braunfels | in progress | 1898 |
| Cooke    | Gainesville   | in progress | 1912 |
| Hamilton | Hamilton      | in progress | 1887 |
| Harris   | Houston       | in progress | 1901 |
| Hood     | Granbury      | in progress | 1891 |
| LaSalle  | Cotulla       | in progress | 1931 |
| Mills    | Goldthwaite   | in progress | 1913 |
| Newton   | Newton        | in progress | 1903 |
| Potter   | Amarillo      | in progress | 1932 |
| Roberts  | Miami         | in progress | 1913 |
| Trinity  | Groveton      | in progress | 1914 |



Gray County Courthouse



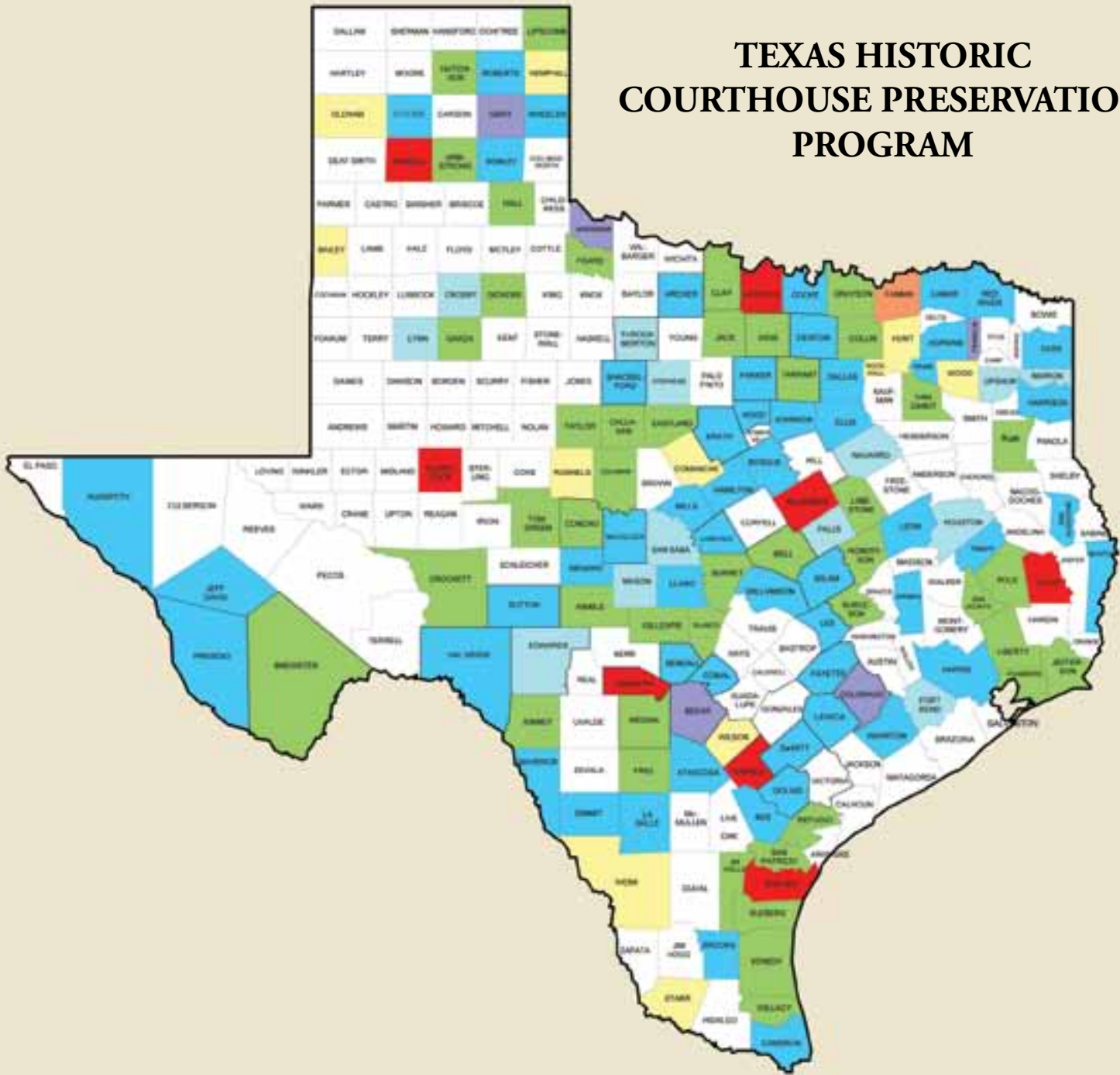
Bexar County Courthouse roof tiles

Emergency Construction

|           |                |             |         |
|-----------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| Bandera   | Bandera        | complete    | 1891    |
| Glasscock | Garden City    | in progress | 1894    |
| Karnes    | Karnes City    | in progress | 1895    |
| McLennan  | Waco           | in progress | 1901    |
| Montague  | Montague       | complete    | 1913    |
| Nueces    | Corpus Christi | complete    | 1892    |
| Randall   | Canyon         | complete    | 1908    |
| Tyler     | Woodville      | complete    | 1891-92 |
| Fannin    | Bonham         | in progress | 1889    |

Emergency Planning

TEXAS HISTORIC  
COURTHOUSE PRESERVATION  
PROGRAM



ROUNDS I-VI

Grants Awards

- 55 Full Restorations
- 5 Partial Restorations
- 13 Architectural Plans and Specs
- 8 Emergency Construction
- 1 Emergency Plans and Specs

Master Plan Status

- 55 Master Plans Approved (not yet funded)
- 11 Master Plans in Progress or Returned for Revisions

Updated 1/11



McCulloch County Courthouse

PROGRAM STAFF  
Stan Graves, Director, AIA  
Sharon Fleming, Assistant Director, AIA  
Bess Althaus Graham, Architect, AIA  
Dennis Cordes, Architect  
Mark Cowan, Project Reviewer  
Susan Gammage, Project Reviewer  
Lisa Harvell, Historic Interiors Specialist  
Lyman Labry, Architect  
Tina Ray, Program Specialist  
Debbi Head, *Courthouse Cornerstones* Editor



Montague County Courthouse



# STANDING OUT AMIDST THE SKYSCRAPERS

## Harris County Courthouse

Sustainability in the built environment involves promoting energy-efficient buildings and minimizing their impact on the environment.

Restoring historic buildings—made with materials more enduring than many of those used today and designed to withstand the elements and the years—is an exercise in sustainability. Not only does the preservation of historic buildings support environmental responsibility by revitalizing properties that already exist, it creates jobs and puts millions of dollars into the economy.

The Harris County Courthouse restoration in Houston is an exercise in sustainability in more ways than one. The 1910 building has watched Houston grow up around it, nestled among the high rises and hustle of downtown, but in its day it was the tallest building in the city. The project will bring the historic building back to its original condition, including restoring the east and west entrances, removed during a renovation in the 1950s.

“It shows people how you can take a 100-year-old structure and rework it to become not only a beautiful



The glass dome will be restored in Houston's Harris County Courthouse.

building but also a useful resource for the community,” said Dan Reissig, assistant manager of architecture with the Harris County Department of Public Infrastructure. “Once the project is completed, it will be the home of the First and Fourth Court of Appeals. This is a very natural fit for the building because we are restoring the two main courtrooms on the third floor for their use, and the Appeals Court Judges are very excited about being able to occupy this historic courthouse building.”

Ironically, contractor Tom Vaughn is the grandson of the contractor who worked on the building's renovation in the 1950s, and he couldn't be more excited.

“It was my grandfather's last project before he passed away,” Vaughn said.

“Granddad and dad were distraught about modernizing the courthouse and turning that treasure into a modern building. We're undoing everything he did. I consider this the Vaughn family legacy to Harris County.”

In addition to removing the steps, the third and fourth floor mezzanine areas were filled with concrete floors during the 1950s renovation to add interior space, eliminating a six-foot rotunda opening to a sky-lit roof. The rotunda will be restored and the mezzanine reopened—no easy feat, turning a dark, low-ceilinged interior into a well-lit and lofty space. It took some sleuthing on the part of those involved to get certain elements exactly right.

“It's like a combination of Indiana Jones and Sherlock Holmes,” said Texas Historical Commission Project Reviewer Mark Cowan who crawled through a small hole in the suspended plaster ceiling and walked on a thin metal grid supported by wires to discover a remarkable amount of remaining original decorative plaster. “You get to go into all these dark places with a flashlight held in your teeth that people are afraid to go into and try to put together clues that tell the story of a building and its construction.”

Not all mysteries surrounding the restoration were as easy to solve. Jeff Mills, who is producing a documentary on the building's restoration for the Documentary Alliance of Houston, describes the case of the missing cupola.



skylights in their rotundas. There is another interesting tie to the Johnson and Cooke county courthouses.

“One of the architects who had originally designed the courthouse in 1910 had formerly worked for Frank Lloyd Wright,” said Cowan. “The designer was Charles Erwin Barglebaugh. He had worked for Wright prior to 1907 in his Oak Park, Ill. studio. Barglebaugh designed some elements of the design on the Harris County Courthouse as well as the Johnson and Cooke county courthouses. I think we can attribute to Barglebaugh many of

the Prairie style and Sullivanesque details that we see in the plaster ornamentation.”

These and other discoveries are a part of the reason Vaughn Construction chose to document the restoration—and in doing so, created more jobs associated with the courthouse restoration.

“I thought, this is a once-in-a-lifetime project,” Vaughn said. “I didn't want



Counterclockwise from opposite page, far left: Harris County Courthouse in downtown Houston; crane is used to cap the Harris County Courthouse; exposed marble interior of the Harris County Courthouse. Photos courtesy of Nash Baker Photography.



“It was a pawn, it looked like a chess piece, and early photographs and drawings showed it there, and at some point it just disappears,” said Mills. “There were no records, no court orders, even in the newspaper about what happened. Now that they've replaced it I get a sense of how massive it was.”

So massive, in fact, that on March 14, 2010, it took a crane to place the 15-foot high copper cap on top of the dome.

The dome itself has a similar tale to tell. There were no pictures to be found of what it originally looked like, despite pleas to the public through the *Houston Chronicle* and a thorough search through county archives. The design team ultimately looked at other Texas courthouses from the same time period as a guideline, including the Cooke and Johnson county courthouses, which retained their historic

to lose the daily discoveries of what we've learned.”

Mills, who chairs the Documentary Alliance of Houston, anticipates the project will be aired on PBS and used by Houston preservation organizations, exposing a broader audience to the benefits of preserving a historic building and the generations of people and processes associated with such a grand structure.

“The county courthouse played a bigger role that today's generations don't have a sense of,” Mills said. “Places like this, from that era; it was just a golden era in architecture in general. You tell younger generations about it and they say ‘You're crazy, how can that be? Nobody builds anything like that’ and you show them this and say well, there was a time...” ★





# RESTORATION RANGE

## A Tale of Two Counties

A vast distance separates the Roberts and Marion county courthouses. The first is located in the state's Panhandle region and the second deep in East Texas; other than geographic location, the difference between these two buildings is minimal. The historic courthouses share architectural designs, and the counties share political leadership positions with the Texas Association of Counties.

Both courthouses were designed by noted Texas architect Elmer George Withers in the Neo-Classical architectural style popular in early 20th century American public architecture. Construction of both the Marion County Courthouse in Jefferson and the Roberts County Courthouse in Miami was completed in 1913. Of the seven Texas county courthouses designed by Withers, the Marion and Roberts county courthouses are nearly identical in floor plan, architectural style, and construction materials and are virtually indistinguishable from the exterior.

“Courthouse restoration is a tremendous program for rural Texas. It’s a boost and an asset to smaller communities and counties.”

*Roberts County Judge Vernon Cook*

Texas architect Elmer George Withers designed both the Roberts and Marion county courthouses.

Like their respective courthouses, Roberts County Judge Vernon Cook and former Marion County Judge Gene Terry share a history, though much briefer, through their leadership positions at the Texas Association of Counties, the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) partner in county courthouse stewardship. Cook is the current president of the association, and Terry is its recently elected director.

Both projects are currently funded by grants from the THC's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. Marion County received a planning grant award in round six, while Roberts County received a construction grant award following completion of its previously awarded planning grant in round five. As the efforts proceed, each project has informed the other through their shared architectural heritage. Project architects are consulting with THC staff and other preservation professionals for assistance in determining original interior finishes, furnishings, fixtures, and architectural details.

“Courthouse restoration is a tremendous program for rural Texas. It’s a boost and an asset to smaller communities and counties,” Cook said. “Legislative leadership and funding has helped many of the less-populated counties take care of these beautiful and important local buildings.”



When historic resources such as photographic documentation, original drawings, and commissioner court minute records are inconclusive, direction can often be determined from the actual physical evidence that remains. In this case, consultants and THC staff are able to refer to existing features in the sister buildings to assist in the accurate duplication of missing elements.

Following the completion of Marion County's planning work this year, the county will be poised to receive its own construction grant in the next Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program funding cycle. Thanks to a shared history and shared goal of restoring their historic courthouses, these two counties have much in common, even though they sit at opposite ends of the state. ★

# COMMUNITIES UNITED BY A COURTHOUSE

Joyous courthouse rededication celebrations have been repeated in counties throughout Texas. However, these ceremonies don't just highlight the refreshed columns and clock towers of restored courthouses; they commemorate the years of commitment, both emotionally and financially, of entire communities determined to protect their most significant local assets.

“Counties have really surprised us with the unique programs they develop to raise the funds needed to restore their historic county courthouses,” said Stan Graves, director of the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. “From holiday ornaments to nonprofit groups, communities utilize varying tools, adopting their courthouse as a symbol of local pride that they’re determined to save.”

The 12 golden eagles that adorn the Harrison County Courthouse in Marshall represent this unique partnership between community and courthouse. The Eagles for Eagles program, created in part by the nonprofit Courthouse Preservation Council of Harrison County that oversaw funding for the restoration, involved the adoption of the decorative eagles by 13,000 Harrison County students. Classes competed with one another by collecting quarters to assist in the replication of their adopted eagle. The project culminated on May 13, 2004, when students were invited to a special reinstallation ceremony of the final eagle atop the courthouse.

“Everyone was just so proud to see the eagles flying again. Students were mesmerized by the experience and I heard several children say, ‘that’s our eagle,’ ” remembered Jennifer Larned, chair of the Harrison County Historical Commission. “They had a tangible connection to the courthouse, and I’ve seen several students come back, even now, to show family members what they helped save.”

In San Augustine County the local garden club spearheaded the restoration of their 1927 historic county courthouse. A \$115,000 grant from the T.L.L. Temple Foundation of Lufkin was instrumental during their fundraising efforts, as well as smaller community based events like bake sales, chili cook-offs, and auctions.

“Our courthouse is a sophisticated lady that the community wanted to see brought back to life,” said Betty Oglesbee, chair of the San Augustine Garden Club. “It’s the people’s house, and whether they could only afford to send five or 10 dollars, they wanted to contribute.”

In DeWitt County the restoration truly became a labor of love when a lack of funding resulted in local volunteers hand painting more than 300 ceiling tiles in the district courtroom.

“Participant ages ranged from eight to 80,” said County Treasurer Peggy Ledbetter. “We added our own little piece of history to the courthouse.”

Although counties utilize different tools to finance their courthouse restorations, they are bound by a common commitment to preserve their irreplaceable local landmarks. After all, courthouses don't just represent the salvation of one building, they often symbolize the spark that ignites the preservation fire in communities across Texas. ★



Students watch as the eagle they sponsored is reinstalled, Harrison County Courthouse





*(Continued from the cover)*

Many of the artisans interviewed said that the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program has enhanced their businesses, allowing them to work entirely within the state of Texas; and for many, the program provides 50 to 80 percent of their work.

“Ninety-nine percent of my historical work has come through the THC’s courthouse preservation program,” says metal worker Brad Oldham, who has recreated statuary and hardware for several courthouse projects. He recalls the challenging replication of custom glazes for hearth tiles in the Donley County Courthouse. The original tile was made with leaded glazes, which can no longer be used, making replication of the historic colors a real challenge.

Artisans across the state have invested a great deal into mastering their crafts and are respected for their patience and commitment to otherwise-dying arts. Historically, training for these crafts was obtained through apprenticeships. Today, there are primarily two categories of

craftspeople—those who learned from hands-on work with an older master (often a family member) and those who learned through a training program at a trade school, college, or university. Some individuals experience an unforeseen transition to artisanship from an unrelated career.



(Top) Interior staircase at the 1901 Harrison County Courthouse; (center) Michael Van Enter of Van Enter Studios restores a hand-painted vault door; (following page) 1912 Cooke County Courthouse clock tower.

In 1993 Gene Galbraith entered a six-year apprenticeship with Ray McGuire of the oldest clock and watch repair business in the state of Texas, after being given an Ansonia “General” clock. At an auction in 1997, the veteran choir teacher purchased a tower clock in need of restoration and never turned back. He has since been involved in the restoration of five historic Texas courthouse tower clocks, and in 2008 opened the Southwest Museum of Clocks and Watches in Lockhart where he trains apprentices interested in entering his field. Through his work on courthouse projects he expects 50

percent of his business to shift toward Texas courthouse tower clock restorations. Galbraith removes and transports grimy, lifeless courthouse tower clockworks to his studio in Lockhart

where he and his apprentices individually restore each element of the complex mechanisms to achieve, in Galbraith’s words, that “unmistakable heartbeat of the seconds ticking.”

Royce Renfro of Casci Ornamental Plaster in Dallas attained knowledge of his craft from Giovanni Casci, who emigrated from Italy through Ellis Island in 1921 at the age of 15. After training in Chicago with his uncle, Casci opened his own plaster business in Dallas. In 1971 Renfro purchased ornamental plaster from Casci, who generously offered to help install it. An air traffic controller at the time, Renfro eventually purchased the business and asked Casci if he would stay on for one year to train him. Today, Renfro can count among his many accomplishments recreating the highly decorative plaster missing from the Harrison County Courthouse district courtroom.

Matt Henson of Professio Plaster Studio in Lubbock learned the craft of flat gypsum plaster from his father, who plastered walls during the original construction of Texas Tech University. World War II veteran Clive Smith taught Henson the more dramatic craft of ornamental plaster from his experience observing the restoration of war-damaged buildings in Europe. Henson has since taught his son, and they continue to pass on the craft to apprentice assistants.

Jhonny Langer of the paint conservation studio Source in Galveston has worked on several courthouse projects, and learned his craft through formal education in fine art at the San Francisco Art Institute. He later trained in museology at the Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice, Italy, and held apprenticeships with a master gilder and mask maker during his time away from the Guggenheim.

**The average number of subcontractor companies that work on a single Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program restoration project is 23. One of the more complex and involved projects, the Wharton County Courthouse, required 64 different subcontractors for its completion.**

### **Skilled Artisans Span Lone Star State**

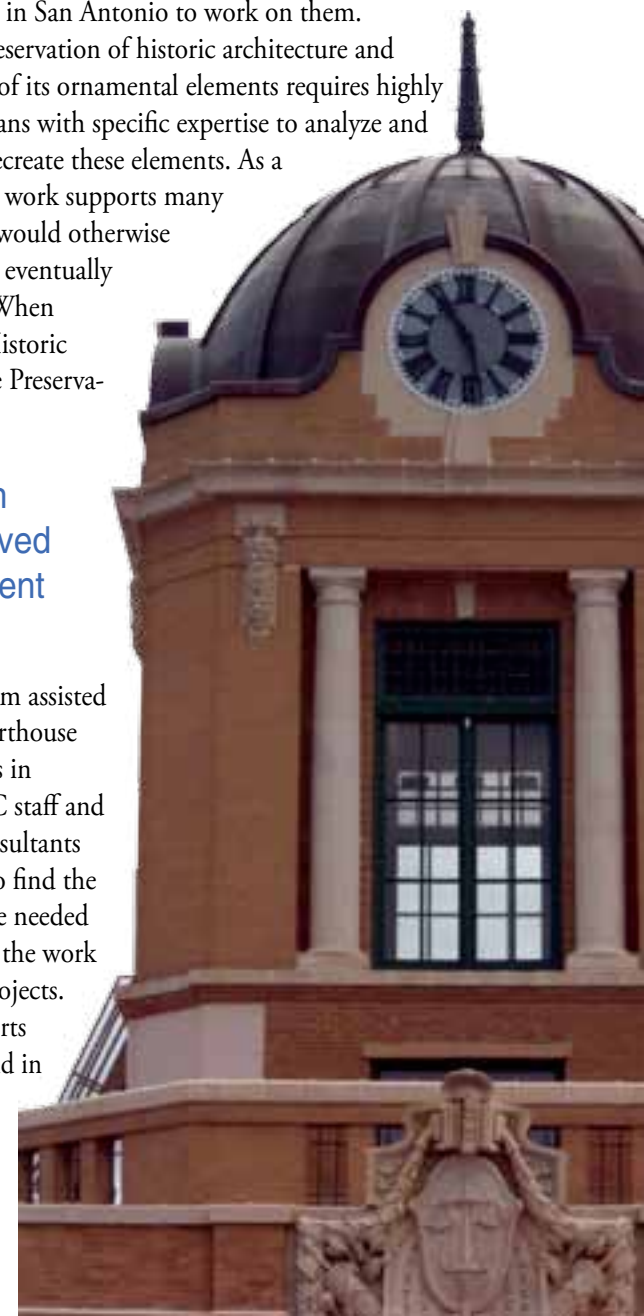
Perhaps one of the more ubiquitous crafts found in some form in nearly every courthouse is ornamental painting. Painted decoration revealed in historic Texas courthouses comes in the forms of stenciling and free-form decorative and faux painting on plaster, metal, and wood. This painting is also found on vault doors, which were finished in the factory with hand-painted pastoral scenes, graphic designs, and gold lettering. The first step in paint conservation is to uncover the original paint and designs. Next is to determine whether the existing paint can be preserved. The last step is to recreate what’s missing. Paint finishes on steel vault doors pose a unique challenge to paint conservators.

According to Michael Van Enter of Van Enter Studios in Dallas, the behavior of paint on metal is quite different from paint on other substrates due to the relatively volatile nature of a metal surface, which can make preservation of the historic paint much more complex. While preserving and restoring the decorative paint finishes on vault doors in courthouses across the state, Van Enter has used his experiences of restoring motorcycles and metal sculpture conservation to fully comprehend how paint reacts with metal and how metals react with one another.

Preservation of historic craftwork can have unique challenges that only masters of various trades can tackle. As a reward for retaining dust covered, salvaged glass from a church in Floresville for more than 20 years, Cavallini Studios was able to provide a perfect match for a green glass that required replacement in the Cameron County Courthouse. Adrian Cavallini and his father, who came to the U.S. from Italy in 1949, had to be particularly careful when removing, transporting, and reinstalling the stained glass panels to their studio in San Antonio to work on them.

The preservation of historic architecture and restoration of its ornamental elements requires highly skilled artisans with specific expertise to analyze and restore or recreate these elements. As a result, their work supports many trades that would otherwise decline and eventually disappear. When the Texas Historic Courthouse Preserva-

tion Program assisted its first courthouse restorations in 1999, THC staff and project consultants struggled to find the craftspeople needed to perform the work on these projects. Today, experts can be found in every trade right here in Texas. ★







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