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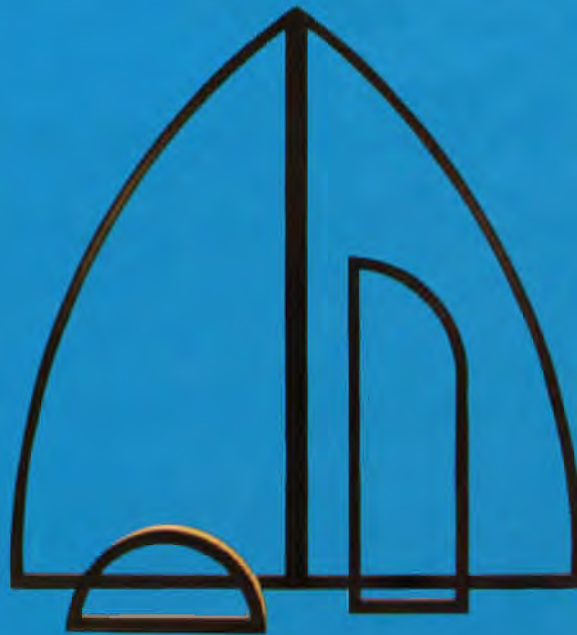
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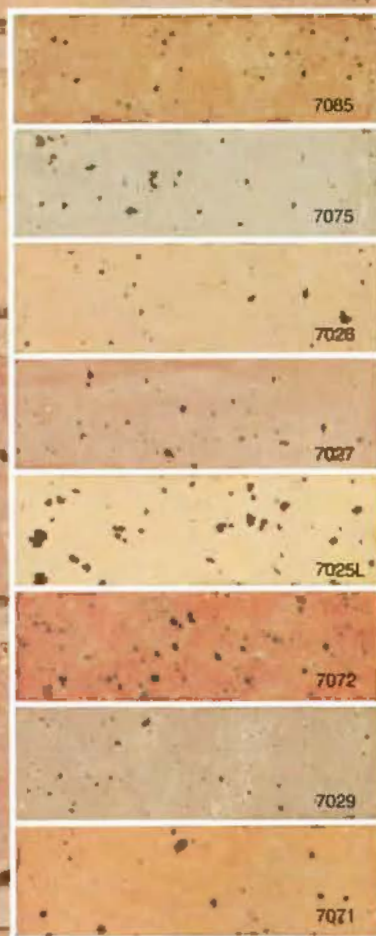


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ON THE COVER: Bassett Tower, El Paso; photograph from the Blumenthal Collection, El Paso Public Library.

COMING UP: Low-rise corporate-headquarters projects provide ample room for architects and clients working out how a company should organize and present itself to the community.



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EDITOR: "Richard Payne's Unfinished Sentences," [Jan/Feb '87] is a very fine article. Sasser sets aside any need to express editorial comment or author's ego, and brings us a well-crafted essay by Payne about Payne. Payne has matured—the seemingly impossible notion—his "unfinished" sentences are very complete indeed.

Robert Steinbomer  
Renfro & Steinbomer, Architects  
Austin

EDITOR: After receiving the January/February issue, I am upset by the neglect given to Dallas. It's true that certain aspects and projects of the city have been covered in excellent past articles, and several magazine covers have been Dallas sites, but in the last five years, I have not seen a major article on Dallas similar to past cover stories on Houston, Austin, San Antonio, Fort Worth and [now] El Paso. What has prevented Dallas from joining this distinguished group? Despite its size and dynamics, Houston seems to dominate, in some ways, most issues. Isn't the state annual architectural conven-

tion cover story material for a host city issue (e.g. Fort Worth and San Antonio)? Dallas was last year's host city. But what happened to the issue devoted to this great city? Is there a bias [against] Dallas? Coverage of the city's current downtown core as others have been done would be for so many people.

Richard Howard  
Project Business/IBM  
Boston, Mass.

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: There is no bias against Dallas. We no longer devote the November/December issue to the convention city.

EDITOR: A few months ago, I made a comment to a fellow architect that Larry Speck must have designed only three buildings in his life, and one or all of them seems to appear in each and every issue of *Texas Architect*. Since that time these same buildings have appeared three times! Are you that low on material? Speaking for the unpublished majority, we're bored!

Marjorie Claussen  
Austin

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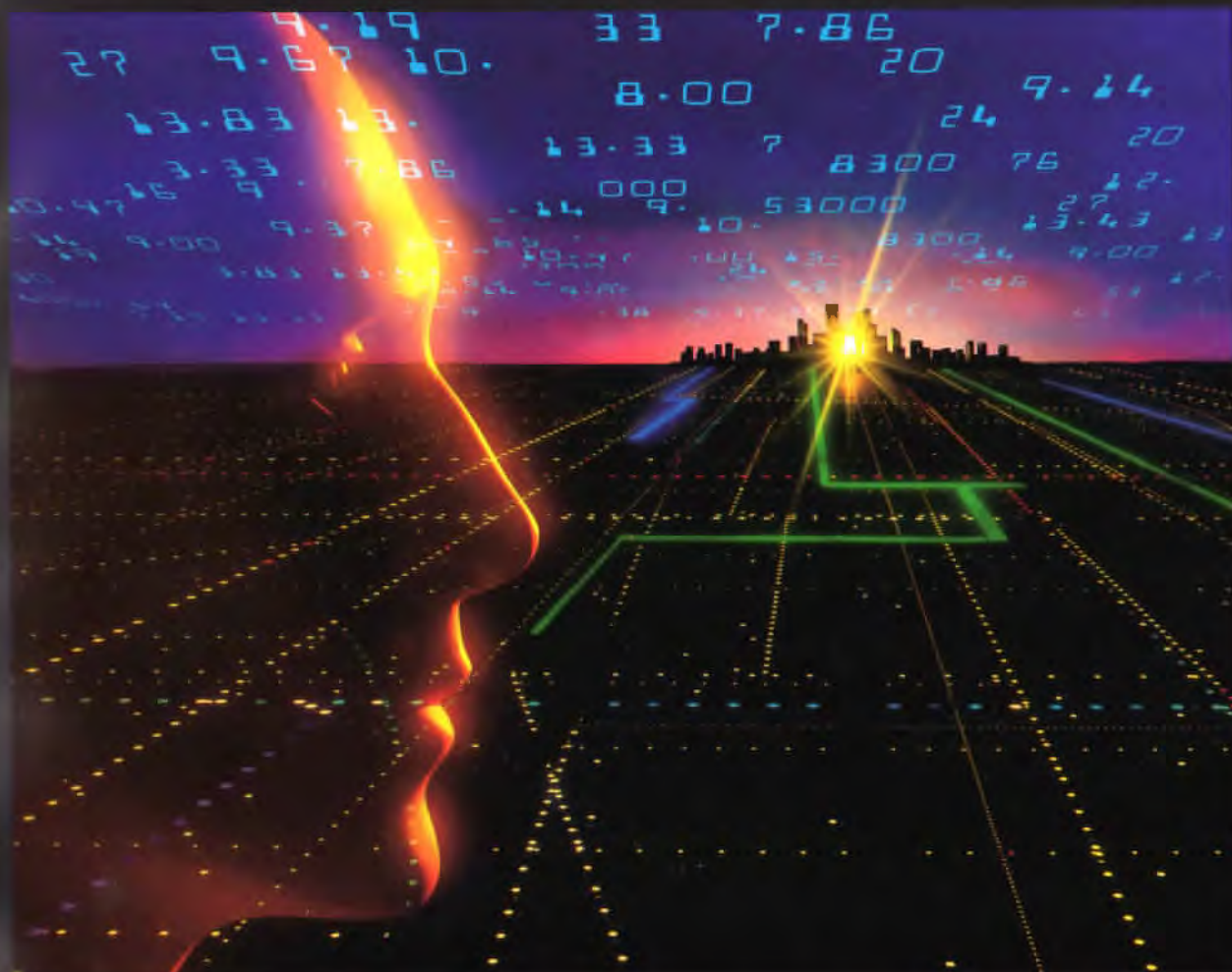


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*Project: Chinati Foundation Museum, Marfa, Tx.  
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The 100-year-old church of San Elizario, near El Paso, is the third structure on a site first occupied by the Spanish some time before 1727.

Some readers I have talked to recently told me that Lawrence Speck's provocative essay, "A Future for Texas Architecture," (*TA* Jan/Feb '87) was our most important story in years. Others, however, characterize it as naïve hype, a waste of time and paper. Surprisingly, given the diversity of viewpoints among the state's architects represented by such a range of reactions, and considering the unsettled philosophical and practical nature of contemporary architecture, we haven't received any mail on the topic.

Beyond acknowledging this fact (and renewing our invitation for all readers to write us), I mention reader mail only to bring up the other great constant of response to *Texas Architect*—a feeling that

the magazine gives insufficient coverage to the area west of the corridor linking Dallas, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio.

There's truth in the complaint. Stories about the state's five biggest cities are commonplace in almost every issue of *TA*, but it has been 10 years, for example, since we devoted an issue to El Paso. In that period much has changed economically and architecturally in the El Paso region, which includes the much larger and poorer Ciudad Juarez. To bring things more up to date, this issue looks at recent architectural projects on both sides of the border, including a groundbreaking study of a major Juarez architect by Vivian Silverstein. In addition, we have an illuminating essay on the work of Trost and

Trost and an evocation of Fort Davis, written by Dallas architect Larry Good. Special thanks for help in putting the issue together go to El Paso architect Morris Brown and the officers of the El Paso Chapter/AIA.

From the time of the first Spanish colonizers, the architects of El Paso and the West have designed buildings of great integrity with the simplest of materials. Modern times and economic growth have changed the materials available, but again and again local designers show that their best work involves lessons learned from straitened circumstances and attention to the humblest details—a good example for times like these.

—Joel Warren Barna



*Edited by Charles E. Gallatin*

## PONTE/TRAVERS: CONTROVERSY AND HOPE FOR DOWNTOWN DALLAS

Stepping out onto a downtown street at seven p.m. in any major Texas city, one is greeted by a strange and forlorn sight: boulevards that bustled with life and activity all day long are virtually abandoned. There are no pedestrians and little if any vehicular activity, because everyone has gone home. And few people make their home in a city's downtown area.

But a quiet downtown, while it is a nice break for the pigeons, is not a vital or economically healthy situation for the city. In order to check on the city's "vision" for the area, a \$300,000 comprehensive plan was commissioned in 1985 by the city of Dallas and the Central Dallas Association (CDA), a non-profit association of downtown business leaders and property owners. Planning consultant Vincent Ponte of New York and traffic consultant Warren Travers of New Jersey completed the plan last November, updating in many respects a similar study they had done in 1969.

The new plan aims to create an environment in which downtown housing can take root, so that life and activity will fill the streets beyond business hours. The idea is not a new one. Urban planners in Dallas have been promoting the benefits of a more integrated downtown, similar to those in East Coast cities, for many years. "It's a kind of a nostalgia," says Ponte. "People feel that their city is missing something without activity at night. Part of that nostalgia, that image, is people thronging the streets."

Ponte/Travers proposes to bring people back downtown by building two large parks, one on a six-acre tract near the West End and the other on a 12-acre site close to the Farmer's Market. These would provide the green space necessary

for attracting residential units, according to Ponte. "If you want to have the excitement of cities such as Boston, San Francisco, or Philadelphia, you have to have people living there. Without the shopping and without the housing, [downtown] Dallas will always be a quiet place after six o'clock."

Ponte also advocates increasing retail and entertainment activity. The plan calls for establishing an unbroken chain of shops along the streets around the remaining three department stores, integrating everything into an extended shopping "strip" or mall. The planner says the city is fortunate to have three downtown department stores left (Sanger Harris, Neiman-Marcus, and Joskes) but the forecast for those is uncertain unless changes are

made that will increase their trade.

In addition to housing and retail, the planners recommend completing the city's largely underground pedestrian walkway system. The suggestion is a controversial one, since many local architects feel the two-mile system already pulls people away from street level and reduces the chances of creating greater energy on downtown sidewalks. But as any downtown Dallasite will attest, people are using the system. Controversial aspects aside, none of the Ponte/Travers plan can succeed without city support and municipal tax dollars—no small hurdle, with the Texas oil-based economy producing dry holes.

Cost is only one of the problem areas in the plans according to local observers. Larry Good, a principal in Good, Haas &



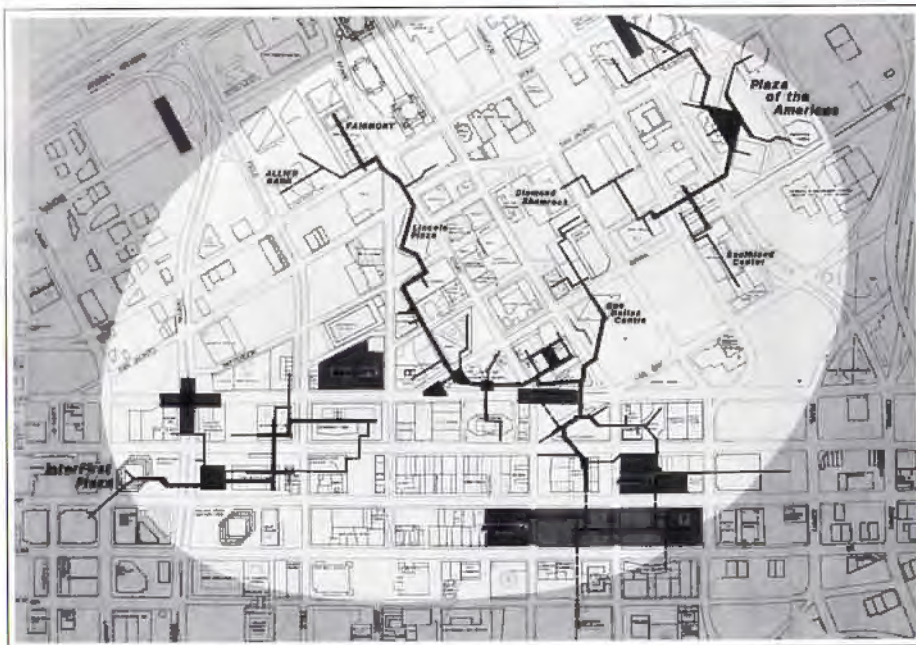
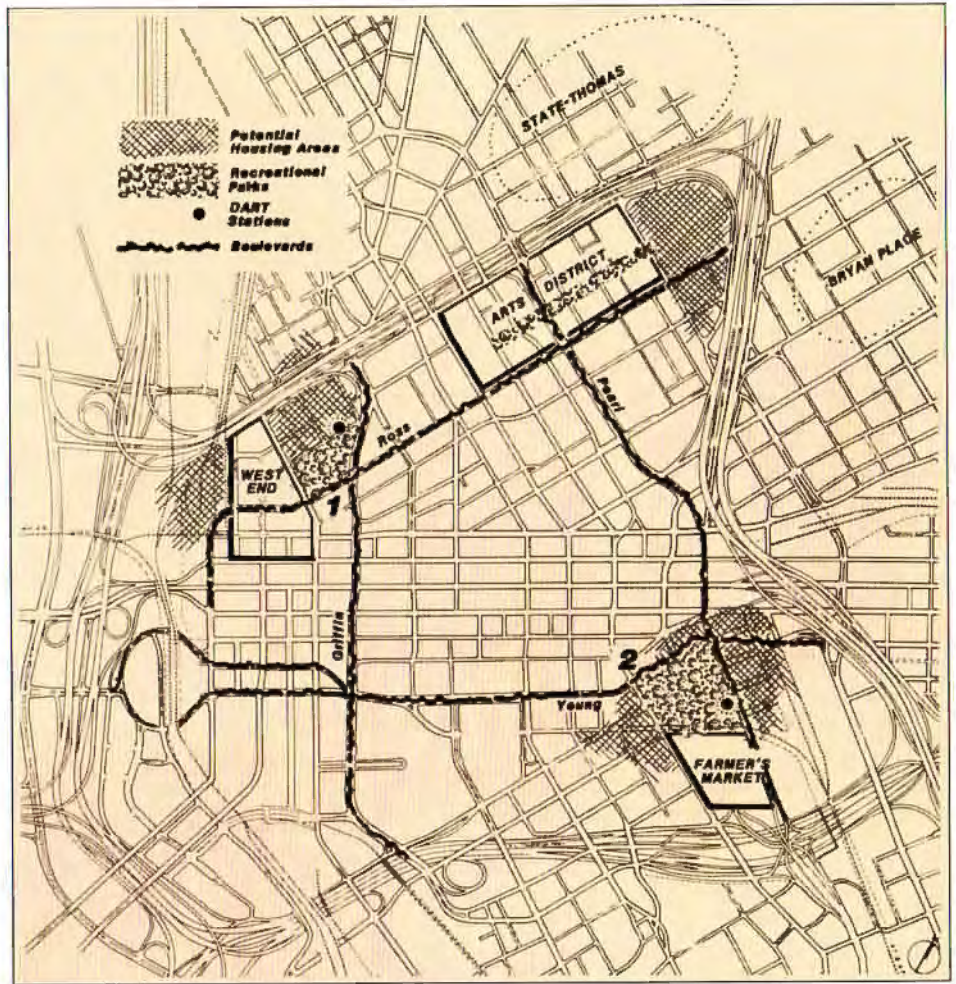
*Under the Ponte/Travers plan, Main Street would be lined with trees on each side.*



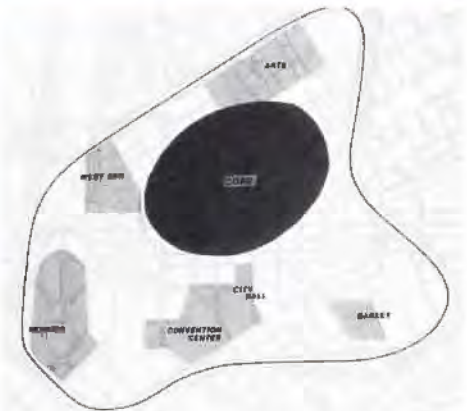
Fulton and a member of the CDA City Advisory Commission on the Downtown Plan, points out that land in the West End area is going for approximately \$150 a square foot, resulting in a \$39-million price tag for the six-acre park. At \$39 a square foot, the 12 acres of Market Place land would cost a more reasonable \$20 million, but the hope that the parks will attract residents is only that—a hope, he points out.

Nonetheless, Good says the commission, which has been given the task of examining the 49 recommendations distilled from the Ponte/Travers plan and reaching a community consensus on them, favors the idea of having parks in the downtown sector, although their size and exact location need more study.

While parks may not be a sure-fire residential draw, the commission wholeheartedly agrees that bringing people back downtown as residents is a worthwhile goal. "It's the chicken and egg problem," says Good. "My friends tell me they'll move downtown as soon as there's a grocery store nearby to shop at. But they agree that a grocery store won't locate there until [the demand] exists." In order to study the problem, a task force recommended by Ponte/Travers and seconded



ABOVE: Existing pedestrian system with dotted lines showing planned additions.



TOP: Number 1 indicates the six-acre park site, and 2 indicates the 12-acre site. ABOVE: Downtown Dallas





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by the commission may be formed to address that area specifically.

Although housing and related concepts have been well-received, one recommendation that many Dallas designers emphatically disagree with concerns the system of above- and below-grade pedestrian walkways, which Ponte advocates completing and improving. The issue has been hotly debated. Although he does not dispute the tunnel system's occasional usefulness in hot or rainy weather, Good believes that the artificial light, enclosed surroundings, and lack of fresh air in the tunnels create an environment that is inferior to that at street-level. Referring to two areas where the system opens to light and activity at street level, Good says, "[The

**"At least the idea for change has been planted and there's been some interest in it."**

**—Larry Fonts**

system's] most successful forms are when it tries to grab all the feeling from the street." Although the pedestrian skybridges do not have the same problems, they still block views and infringe on the ambiance of the big boulevards, he says.

Ponte makes a strong case for the system, however, in a recent commentary he wrote on the subject. The planner points out that the walkways offer a choice for those wishing to avoid traffic and bad weather. But his most telling response is to charges that the system killed and continues to discourage sidewalk retail activity. "In fact, shopping had all but disappeared from downtown long before the pedestrian system was conceived of," he writes. "The exodus took place in the '50s and '60s, when the stores that crowded Elm Street moved out of town, following their customers, and set themselves up in regional shopping centers where they have since remained." Ponte points out that street frontages are now swallowed up by office towers and banks. "Far from having destroyed shopping in the downtown, the pedestrian system gives shopping a place to come home to."

But not a place from which it can be seen and appreciated, according to Good. He even relates the issue to downtown housing. "I maintain we could get downtown housing faster if we could just get the retail activity up where people could see it, drive past it, and, just on impulse, use it once in awhile," he says.

The CDA City Advisory commission as a whole did not agree with Good's point of view, however, and approved Ponte's recommendation to add the so-called "missing link" to the pedestrian system as a high priority. The network currently exists in two halves, one in the east and northeast sectors, and the other in the western quadrant. The new section linking these areas would cross somewhere near the intersection of Akard and Pacific streets.

Out of the 49 recommendations distilled from the Ponte/Travers plan, the commission agreed in whole or part with the majority, clearly opposing only one, a small park proposed for Akard Street. Whether the city council and the electorate approve of the plan *in toto* remains to be seen, according to Central Dallas Association president Larry Fonts. But the plan is already making a difference in the community, he says, reporting that the Trammel Crow Company has come forward with an offer to donate land for a proposed park. "At least the idea (for change) has been planted and there's been some interest in it," he says.

**—Charles E. Gallatin**

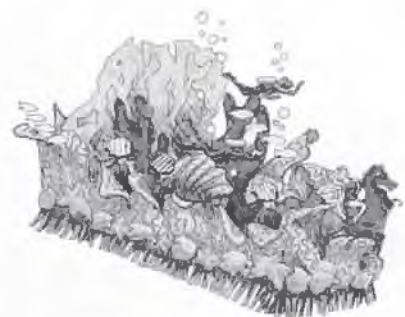
## DESIGN AFLOAT AT THE GALVESTON MARDI GRAS MOMUS PARADE

Three winners and three honorable mentions have been named in a competition to design floats for the Momus Parade, a premiere event of the 1987 Galveston Mardi Gras Celebration. The competition, held last fall, was sponsored by George Mitchell Interests and the Young Architect's Forum of the Houston Chapter AIA.

The jury was composed of architects Howard Barnstone, FAIA, and Coulson Tough; Earl Staley, artist; and Robert Reinhold, Houston Bureau Chief, *New York Times*. From 18 entries, the jury selections were:

### Winners:

- Team "Gal," architects Kim Schaefer and Kathleen Lipscomb;
- Celeste Williams, intern, with Dietmar Froelich;
- Barry Moore, FAIA



Award winning floats by TOP: Barry Moore, FAIA, and ABOVE: Celeste Williams and Dietmar Froelich.



Texas architects were well-represented in the third annual *Texas Homes Design Awards* competition. San Antonio architect and professor **Davis Sprinkle** won an Honor Award for his design of a free-standing mirror. Midland architect **Mark Wellen** received an Award of Merit for his knife-fork-spoon table design. **Peter Jay Zweig**, a Houston architect and teacher, served as a judge.

Fort Worth's **Kimbell Art Museum** has been selected as the site for the presentations of the **1987 Pritzker Prize**, one of the highest international awards in architecture. The \$100,000 prize will be presented to the winner during the ceremony May 2.

San Antonio native **Walter Nold Mathis** has been awarded an AIA presidential citation for his efforts in preserving the architectural heritage of the city. Mathis restored his own home in the King William District in 1968, initiating a preservation movement resulting in Texas' first historic district.

Groundbreaking was held Jan. 29 for the renovation of the historic **Missouri Pacific Railroad** depot in San Antonio. The \$3.1-million renovation will be completed by April 1988, when the 20,000-square-foot building will become the headquarters for the City Employees Federal Credit Union.



A group called the Sixth Street Conservation Society, founded by Austin architect **David Graeber**, has proposed building a 100-foot-tall star at the corner of Sixth and Red River streets east of downtown Austin. Construction would be funded by city-backed bonds.



Winning float by Team Gal: Schaefer and Lipscomb.

**Honorable Mentions:**

- Robert Morris Associates, Robert Morris and Bernardo Medina;
- CHS-Houston, Ed Ramirez and Bernardo Medina;
- OA+D, L. Phillip Schawe and Jay Baker

Three float bases owned by Mitchell and used in last year's parade were donated to the competition. Design considerations for the entrants included size restriction, construction methods similar to those used on the existing floats, and a \$2,500 budget. Although the parade has a theme, "Momus Sails the Caribbean," designs were not required to relate to this imagery. However



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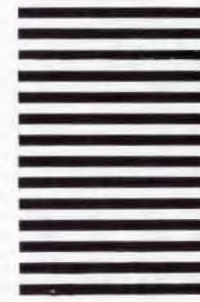
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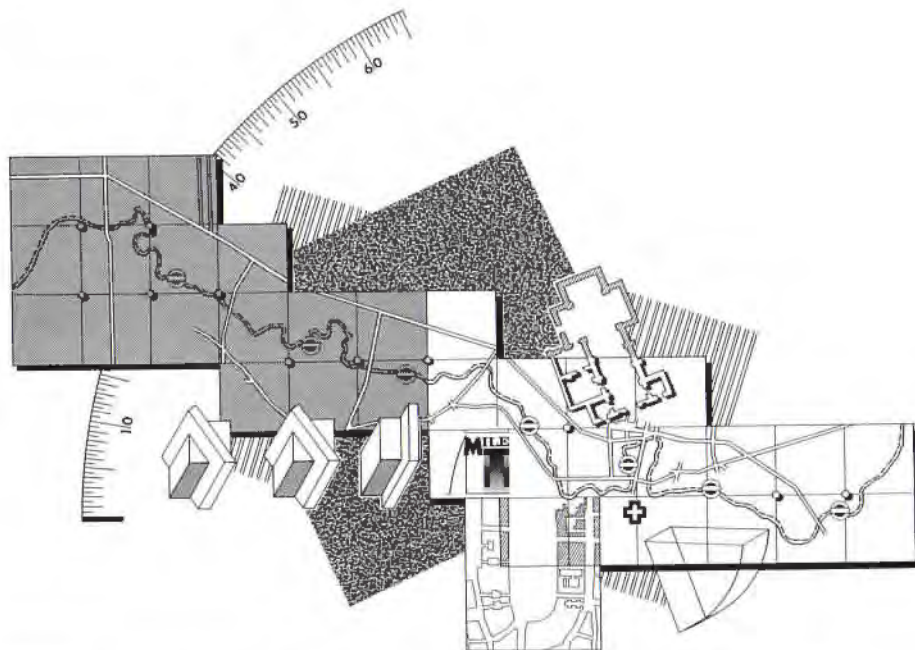


most entrants and all the winners related somehow to this imagery.

When completed the floats measured nine feet wide, 27 feet long, and 18 feet high; they are built of wood, stretched painted canvas, and various decorative materials. The winning designers rode atop their floats through the streets from Seawall Boulevard to the Strand District during the parade, which climaxed Galveston's revived Mardi Gras Celebration.

The entries will remain on exhibit through the Mardi Gras Celebration at the Galveston Arts Center, 2127 Strand, and later at INNOVA in Houston.

—Gerald Moorhead



*Schematic representation of the San Antonio River corridor mural by local artist Roland Rodriguez.*

### THE S.A. RIVER CORRIDOR MURAL: HISTORY ON DISPLAY

An important new work of public art has been built in a covered walkway linking Alamo Plaza to the San Antonio Riverwalk. It is a mural nearly 70 feet long and 15 feet high depicting development of the city along the San Antonio river, the latest in a series of explorations

of architecture and urban design by San Antonio artist and designer Roland Rodriguez.

Rodriguez's mural, installed in June 1986, consists of a base map of architectural, cartographic, and historical informa-

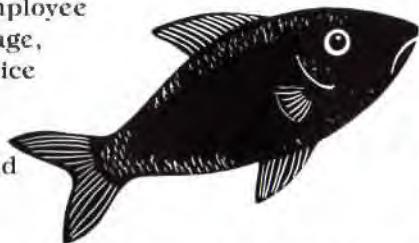
tion silkscreened onto 34 black, gray, and white Formica laminated panels. The Formica corporation contributed materials, and local developer Arthur "Hap" Veltman provided funding.

Rodriguez describes the mural as "a cu-

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bist-constructivist depiction of historical urbanism along the San Antonio river spine." He spent months researching the project, doing on-site surveys and studying maps, drawings, and photographs.

"The city is a physical record of all kinds of activity occurring simultaneously," Rodriguez says. "It's a container that gathers a place and its activities."

Rodriguez is concerned with what he calls phenomenological mapping—the activities that make a place a *place*. This concern makes the Riverwalk mural provide a rich layering of levels—it is an accurate map of the city, a historical narrative of the evolution of the water network, an urban-design diagram that relates the downtown street grid to the river's original course, and an abstract composition. The mural follows the snaking path of the river from its headwaters north of Brackenridge Park to the area just south of the historic King William district, tracing the 7.5 miles that form the urban core of San Antonio.

For a planned second stage of the mural Rodriguez has designed three-dimensional representations of local landmarks and civic symbols—the Casino Building, the Emily Morgan Hotel, the Smith-Young Tower, San Fernando Cathedral, and the Alamo—to be made using Colorcore and photographic vignettes. The second stage is currently awaiting funding.

Rodriguez, who has lived in San Antonio most of his life, graduated from Notre Dame University with a degree in architecture and spent a year in Rome studying urban design. His approach to design arts has been an interdisciplinary one, incorporating architecture, urban design, art, and sculpture.

Another recently completed project by Rodriguez, a trompe l'oeil architectural mural called "Victory and Triumph," was constructed after a statewide competition sponsored by Target stores. The mural, painted on the side of the Hemisfair Arena that faces the Tower of the Americas, was completed in early 1986 as the first step in a plan to revitalize the Hemisfair area. Part of the mural was also used for the cover of *A Guide to San Antonio Architecture*, published earlier this year by the San Antonio Chapter/AIA.

Rodriguez says he hopes the two murals will create more public awareness of architecture and urban design in San Antonio, and will get more people think-

ing about the forces shaping their city. With the completion of these important additions to the Riverwalk and Hemisfair, Rodriguez has moved closer to achieving his goal.

—Jamie Lofgren

## MAJOR NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION ABOUNDS

Texas may be facing some of the hardest economic times in its history, but a casual observer of the state's universities and colleges would not be able to discern it judging from the number of new projects and additions planned.

The University of Texas system of schools and universities has more than 12 projects in the \$5- to \$10-million range in various stages of planning or construction. That level of activity includes a span of about four to five years from concept to ground-breaking, according to John Davis, Assistant Director for the Office of Facility Planning and Construction for the University of Texas System. As a result much of the work is carried over from years prior to the hard times the state is now experiencing.

Davis says the current economic condition of the state has already had an effect, as building has leveled off and new construction continues at a slower pace. "The Board of Regents is taking a prudent stance and not approving a bunch of new projects until they get a clear picture of what the financial situation really is," he says.

In the meantime, a reminder of Texas' good old days lives on in the work still underway. A sampler of activity around the state:



A fifth floor will be added to the Dental School building at UTHSC in San Antonio this summer.

NEWS, continued on page 49



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### LOOKING WEST TO EL PASO

Many forces shape the region around El Paso. First, there is the desert climate—clean and austere beautiful, but extreme and even lethal, moderated only by the Rio Grande. Next is the city's distance from the rest of urban Texas, making El Paso culture as connected to New Mexico and points west as to San Antonio or Dallas. Third, and most important, is El Paso's interdependence with Juarez and ultimately with the complex Mexican civilization.

While El Paso seems different, however, its connection with the rest of Texas is inescapable. From the desert hills to the current fragile boom in the twin-plant industries, El Paso presents a new perspective on Texanness for Texas architects.



# CONTEMPORARY LESSONS FROM FORT DAVIS

Story and photographs by Larry Good

Drawings by Lisa Welgehausen



Column detail, Officers' Row, Fort Davis

The Army, it seems, had a knack for locating its forts in dull, barren sites. Happily, however, Fort Davis in West Texas is an exception to the rule. In order to protect travelers on the then-new San Antonio-to-El Paso Road (the route of the Butterfield Overland Stage), Lieutenant Colonel Washington Seawell in 1854 established the site for the fort in a sheltered dead-end canyon on the eastern edge of the Davis Mountains. North of the fort lies Simmons Ridge; to the south is Sleeping Lion Mountain. Both are 300-foot-high outcroppings of large-scale metamorphic rock, sculpted in an intricate array of columns, spires, and balanced boulders, reminiscent of scenes from a late-night cowboy movie. From the trail along Simmons Ridge between the Davis Mountains State Park and the Fort Davis National Historic Site, the visitor can enjoy spectacular 30-mile views south across undulating grassy mountains and valleys and north into the canyon of Limpia Creek, the water source for the soldiers and visitors at Fort Davis 100 years ago.

Texans who want to see how a special place and a special landscape come together with unrivaled clarity should know Fort Davis. The simplicity and straightforwardness of the fort's buildings have much to teach us. In addition, the ensemble makes better a quintessential Texas landscape that is arguably the most scenic in the state.

The vegetation surrounding the fort is diverse. The grama grasses form a uniform carpet which seems to roll in waves over the plains to the east of the site and into the grazing lands on the lower slopes of the Davis Mountains. In contrast to this grassy background there are stands of Emery Oak, Gray Oak, Live Oak, Texas Madrone, Prickly Pear and Mountain Laurel like those in the Hill Country, as well as Sotol, Torrey's Yucca, and Cholla from the Big Bend. Most majestic of all, in nearby wetlands, are the 70-foot-tall Cottonwoods, like those which provided most of the lumber for construction of the fort buildings and fuel for the fireplaces and kitchens. On-

ly a few remain, but those which survived the early days at the fort are among the largest trees in West Texas.

The climate in the Davis Mountains is gentle when compared to the extremes of the Permian Basin or Big Bend, with hot days and cool nights in summer and temperate days and brisk nights in winter. Always, it seems, the humidity stays low and the sun shines. Although the fort was abandoned by 1891, it remains one of the most complete surviving examples of the typical Western frontier fort to be found. It was precisely this dry, sunny atmosphere which slowed the deterioration of roofs and, subsequently, adobe walls, and allowed much of the fort to remain when the National Park Service began its survey and restoration efforts in the early 1960s.

Robert Utley, Regional Historian with the National Park Service in Santa Fe, identified the early objective in the restoration of the fort: "The problem is to rehabilitate several dozen structures and to integrate them into an authentic pattern in which the design of the total complex, as well as that of separate selected units, emerges."

A combination of complete and modified restoration was proposed and undertaken from 1963 to 1966, using primarily in-house architectural talent from various offices of the Park

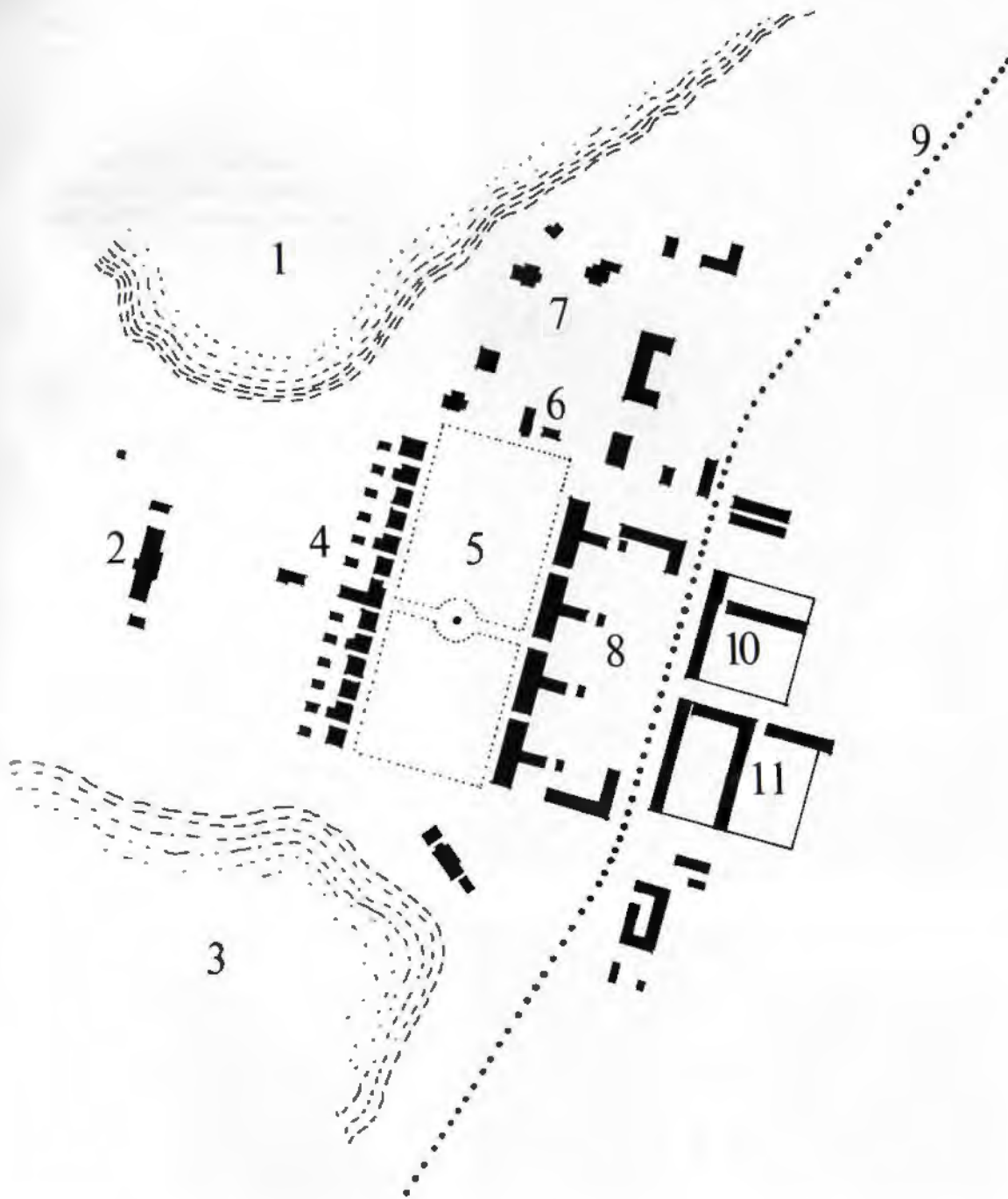


Window detail, Commanding Officer's Quarters





LEFT: View southeast from Simmons Ridge into Hospital Canyon



Site plan: 1). Simmons Ridge; 2). Hospital; 3). Sleeping Lion Mountain; 4). Officers' Row; 5). Parade Ground; 6). Chapel; 7). Bachelor Officers' Quarters; 8). Barracks; 9). San Antonio/El Paso Road; 10). Corrals; 11). Stables





*Bachelor Officers' Quarters, from Simmons Ridge*



*Bachelor Officers' Quarters*

Service. Three buildings are now completely restored and period furnishings have been added. A fourth building is restored and used as a visitor's center. On those buildings of only moderate deterioration, new roofs and porches were added, while on other structures adobe preservation techniques were applied, ruins stabilized, and foundations were exposed and stabilized. The restoration produced a kind of time warp: the visitor to the fort on one hand steps back in time and is immersed in late-19th-century Texas, and on the other hand is walking in the late-20th-century reality of crumbled adobe and the outline of long-ruined stone foundations. This ambiguity of time is a key component in Fort Davis' sense of place.

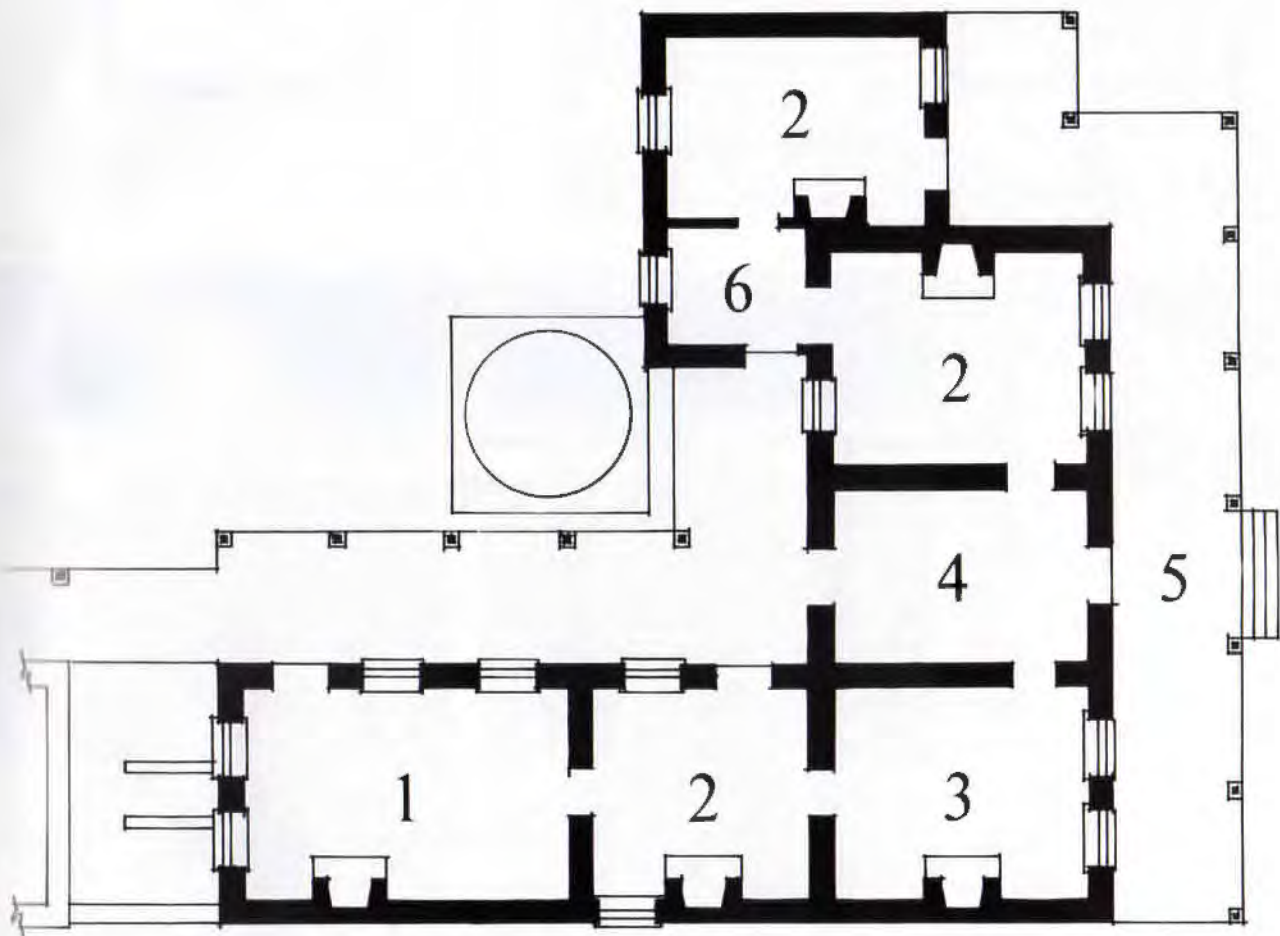
Another key component is the site plan, which holds several lessons for contemporary planning of residential or educational campuses. First, the parade ground is an organizing device for the arrangement of all 59 buildings in the complex. It is a pristine rectangular lawn, so large and open as to be undeniably West Texan in scale. Parallel porches (or piazzas, as they were called) on the fronts of Officers' Row and the Enlisted Men's Barracks line the east and west edges of the parade ground and lend a rhythmical sense to the facades of diverse buildings. In contrast, the two-story Bachelor Officers' Quarters are set picturesquely askew, related more directly to the canyon walls behind. The Chapel, as might be expected, occupies a central position at the "head" of the parade ground, facing south.

Just as at Jefferson's University of Virginia, service structures such as hospital, kitchens, and corrals are placed in a second tier of buildings behind the first, disciplined to the same organizing grid as the primary structures.

Another lesson from Fort Davis is the influence on building placement exercised by physical characteristics of the site. Because the parade ground is turned in a north-south orientation, rooms in the narrow buildings lining both sides allow the prevailing westerly breezes from the mouth of the canyon to sweep through the structures.

The palette of materials used at Fort Davis harmonizes with the site. The Commanding Officer's Quarters (1868) and several other key structures were built with walls of load-bearing stone—a volcanic tuff still quarried between Fort Davis and Alpine. This is the same stone that crops out on the ridges above the site, and it has a beautifully varied color range of pinkish-brown to green when cut. Other buildings were built of adobe and covered with plaster. It appears that the choice between stone and adobe was based on the time available between

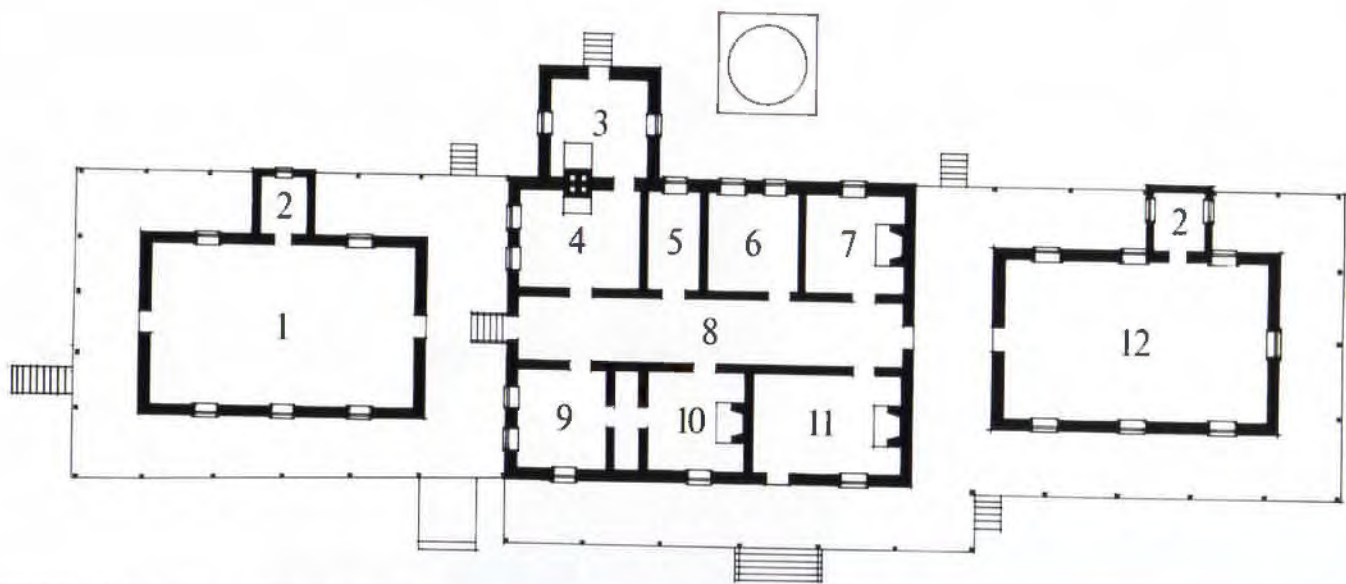




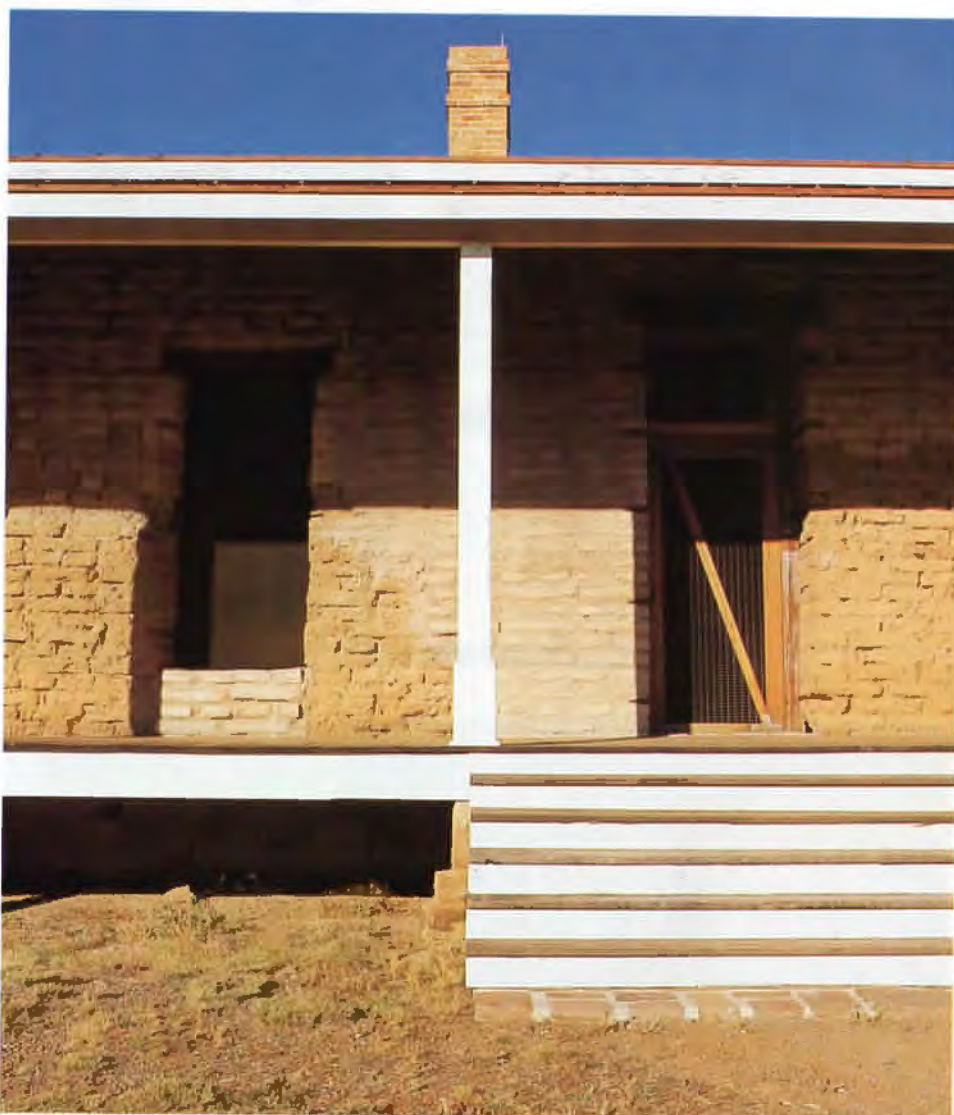
TOP: Commanding Officer's Quarters, site plan: 1). Dining; 2). Bedroom; 3). Parlor; 4). Hall; 5). Piazza; 6). Bath

LEFT: east elevation





ABOVE: Hospital, plan: 1). South Ward; 2). Wash Room; 3). Kitchen; 4). Dining; 5). Linen; 6). Storeroom; 7). Isolation; 8). Hall; 9). Steward; 10). Office; 11). Dispensary; 12). North Ward



Hospital detail



Indian uprisings and the priority of construction. In either case, there is a harmony of the stone masonry and (now exposed) adobe with the colors and textures of the place; in addition, the thick masonry walls take advantage of the thermal time lag between hot days and cool nights.

Of all the structures of the fort, none is more charming and effective in ensemble than Officers' Row, built between 1868 and 1882. Thirteen small houses, each basically 48 feet wide by 21 feet deep (with varied dependencies) line the western side of the parade ground. With their tautly detailed hipped roofs (8-in-12 pitch with 5-1/2-in-12 on the porches) and five-bay fronts, they exhibit disciplined repetition of form yet offer variety in the subtle progression of wall-surface materials and degree of restoration. The design of these structures looks adaptable for use in current single-family market housing. In fact, the National Park Service rangers say that on several occasions visitors to the fort have asked for plans on which to pattern new houses for themselves. The buildings have 12-foot-high ceilings, tall windows, and entry halls that funnel cool breezes through the house. The "piazzas" on the east fronts provide a shady place to relax on hot afternoons. Ornament is limited to porch column bases and capitals, porch railings, shutters, and projecting window sills and lintels.

A favorite building at Fort Davis is the hospital. Although it was built in stages from 1875 to 1891, the hospital looks for all the world like the houses designed by O'Neil Ford in the 1950s for the Bergers, Haggertys, and Greens in Dallas. The building is an asymmetrical composition of stepping, elevated platforms, with broad porches and low-slung standing-seam metal roofs made up of multiple roof segments. A double dog-trot scheme and ridge-line venting provided maximum ventilation for the surgeons, nurses, and patients.

The visitor comes away from Fort Davis with a deep respect for the anonymous soldiers who designed and built structures both of visual beauty and appropriate "fit" for a scenic landscape. Likewise, one is taken by the skill of the National Park Service architects who restored Fort Davis, making it both of *its* time and of *our* time. It suggests that architects, to be adept at the creation of place, must come to know intimately the location in which we are building—we must "live" with it as the creators and stewards of Fort Davis have. ■■■■■

*Contributing editor Larry Good is a partner in the Dallas firm Good, Haas & Fulton.*



*Hospital*



*Officers' Row, view of piazza alignment*



*Officers' Row, east front*



# OSCAR SANCHEZ CORDERO: JUAREZ MODERNIST

Story by Vivian Silverstein

Photography by Oscar Sanchez Cordero



*La Aduana, the 1900 customs house in Juarez, shows the francophilia that prepared Mexican architects to accept the international style modernism.*

On a hilltop in Juarez, Mexico, across the border from El Paso, stands the Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Constructed in the 1930s as a church, the cathedral was restored and enlarged 10 years ago by Juarez architect Oscar Sanchez Cordero. Although the cathedral represents the largest and perhaps most challenging project of Sanchez's career, it belies both his Modernist background and the full breadth of his work. Sanchez is a product of the social ferment caused by the Mexican Revolution. To appreciate his architecture is to recognize why modernism succeeded in Mexico; it is also to grasp the problems inherent in practicing architecture in Mexico's provincial areas.

The story of architect Sanchez really begins in 1900, 21 years before his birth, when a customs house ("La Aduana") was constructed a few blocks from the main plaza in Juarez. With its mansard roof and elaborately sculpted ceiling, the French-inspired structure epitomized Mexico's predilection for things European and distrust of things from the powerful neighbor to the north. This preference intensified after the Mexican Revolution and would shape the work of an important generation of architects, including Oscar Sanchez Cordero.

By 1930, after a bloody revolution during which the U.S. and Mexico exchanged gunfire on several occasions, modern architecture began to proliferate in Mexico even more robustly than the francophilia that stimulated the construction of La Aduana at the turn of the century.

It is in this historical context that Sanchez arrived in Mexico City in 1941 to complete his college preparatory studies. Old photographs reveal Sanchez as a tall, thin, pensive young man in rather prominent octagonal wire-rimmed glasses. Two years later, Sanchez entered l'Escuela Nacional de Arquitectura; his professors were among the most zealous transatlantic disciples of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier.

José Villagrán García, the leader of modern architecture in Mexico, taught theory and design. His sanitarium in Huipulco (1929) is con-

sidered a landmark of functionalist architecture, along with Juan O'Gorman's home for Diego Rivera (1930), and Juan Legoretta's early designs for workers' housing (1934). According to Sanchez, taking Villagrán's course in architectural theory was "like opening a window and looking at the world."

Mario Pani (who was trained at l'Ecole des Beaux Arts) and Augusto Alvarez were among the other faculty members who professed the International Style. Yet it was Mauricio Campos, Dean of the School, who became Sanchez' favorite design professor. Campos extolled honesty and utility as the foremost characteristics of excellent architecture, but did not wave the modernist manifestos across his students' drawing boards.

Before graduating in 1951, Sanchez observed the development of the grand new design for the "Ciudad Universitaria" in Mexico City. Planned on 1,700 acres, C.U. was created by a talented bank of 150 architects, engineers, sculptors, and painters. Mario Pani from the architecture faculty helped shape the initial campus plan and also designed many buildings. Felix Candela, the brilliant architect-engineer, soon to be renowned for his "cascarones" or concrete shells, collaborated with others on the Pavillion for Cosmic Ray Research. This work represents his earliest exploration of hyperbolic paraboloids. Juan O'Gorman left perhaps his most celebrated mark on Mexican architecture in the Main Library, whose multicolored stone mosaics boldly proclaimed the country's prehispanic roots and provided the intelligentsia with fuel for a "national" architecture. Professor Villagrán designed the school of architecture, which, although larger than Crown Hall, bore more than a passing resemblance to its Chicago predecessor.

The impact of C.U.'s majestic Corbusian spatial vistas, floating rectangular slabs, innovative engineering feats and exuberant detailing contributed by artists and artisans would materialize later in the architecture Sanchez created in Juarez.

When Sanchez returned to his childhood



home in 1951, Juarez was prospering as an expanding cotton market added to the revenues from drugs, gambling, prostitution, liquor, and "quickie divorces" that since Prohibition had lured hordes of Americans across the Rio Grande.

Sanchez, far more urbane after a decade of academic and social nurturing in the capital, found himself back in the provinces as an employee of CUNSA, a national construction company.

Although the local economy was healthy thanks to the cotton crop, Juarez was culturally backward, with no museums or concert hall. The city's population was approaching six figures, and half the residents lived without indoor plumbing or electricity. The tallest building stood five stories high. Devoid of a master plan, the city grew horizontally: it was a haphazard concoction of characterless residential, commercial, and industrial structures. From the beginning, Sanchez encountered problems synonymous with overpopulation, poor living conditions, and a lack of architectural appreciation by the town's citizens.

From 1951 to 1957, he was the only architect in this border city. All other construction, according to Sanchez, was "done on impulse." He won a competition to design a girls' school which helped him establish a client base. Unlike his American counterparts, who cooperate with contractors, Sanchez assumed the role of master builder, a characteristic of most Mexican architects, juggling responsibility for design, construction, paying laborers and post-construction liability. With a personality bestowed with diligence, probity, patience, and enthusiasm, Sanchez was the right man for the profession as it exists in Mexico. He soon learned that unless his client was exceedingly patient, it was best to utilize indigenous building materials. This avoided the long delays commonly associated with ordering out-of-town goods. Another fact of life for practicing architecture on the border was the difficulty of finding talented, reliable artisans. Finally, because building maintenance is often lax in the provinces, Sanchez learned to keep to a minimum his use of electrical systems in public-oriented facilities.

In 1957, he established his own firm in association with a civil engineer, which endured 20 years. During this time, Sanchez would design several schools, residences, religious structures, and a bus station. His first important commission occurred in 1959, when the Catholic Diocese of Juarez asked him to design the Bishop's Office.

Sanchez fondly describes the Bishop as a "man who types his own letters." A lasting



*TOP: The towers are all that remain of the 1930s cathedral in central Juarez, restored 10 years ago by Sanchez. They still serve as landmarks in a sprawling, lowrise city.*

*LEFT and ABOVE: Though deceptively scaled, the Bishop's Office in Juarez was designed by Sanchez to serve a churchman "who types his own letters."*





*Central court of the Villareal Residence*



*CENTER: Interior of the rebuilt cathedral is lit by stained glass designed by Willis Griffin of El Paso. BOTTOM: The Yepo Mausoleum's stark concrete forms dramatize the grave of a businessman of Chinese ancestry.*

friendship developed between them while the office was being designed. Both men shared a love for space and light which constitute the major strengths of the two-story building.

The main brick facade of the Bishop's Office displays two mosaic coats of arms and concrete columns overlaid with Chihuahuan cantera, a soft, pinkish-gray quarried stone. Even though concrete is available throughout Mexico, the Chihuahuan variety is a lugubrious shade of gray that Sanchez dislikes, so he added a three-quarter inch layer of cantera over the concrete columns.

Throughout the office, detailing draws upon the architect's functionalist training as well as his personal inclination toward simplicity. The most outstanding aspect of the spacious foyer is a curved mosaic-covered staircase suspended above a polished terrazzo floor. A sense of spiritual reflection and reverential emptiness exist in this wide, light-filled entry area.

The Bishop's Office contains no mechanical heating or cooling systems, relying instead on passive solar heat and natural ventilation. In the cleric's actual work space on the south side of the building, floor to ceiling windows allow a tranquil unbroken plane to develop between the office and terrace gardens, thereby extending the atmosphere created by the vastness of the foyer. A ceiling overhang above the Bishop's desk serves as the only clue to his status. The office was completed in 10 months—record time for Juarez.

In the Casa Villareal, an early 1960s project which stands among Sanchez' finest residential designs, a "golden-hued" stone from Guadalajara was selected as the major building material. According to the architect, Señor Villareal specifically requested a "long, rectangular house." To assuage the potential monotony of such an elongated core, Sanchez patterned the walls with protruding stones, thereby allowing a stage for the sun's shadows to perform intricate light spectacles. Concrete walkways, textured with rock aggregate banding, offer a kindred foreground for the Guadalajara stone walls.

Where the rectangular forms of the Villareal Residence and the Bishop's Office are straightforward and serviceable, the geometry of the Yepo Mausoleum (1980) is bold and powerful. Created from concrete poured over wood forms, the mausoleum houses the remains of a wealthy Chinese businessman who spent most of his life in Juarez. Holding only 14 coffins, the mausoleum's scale is deceptive due to its great height. The descent into the family prayer area is a dramatic experience evoking ancient ritual, and retaining a Catholic vision of a



wealthy man's burial. A steep stairway, devoid of rail supports, suggests a prehispanic temple or tomb. Yepo's prominence is conveyed on the exterior with the wrought-iron fence that contains the structure, the large, hammered steel doors, and the spectacular stained-glass windows. These details were executed by Mexican artisans under the architect's direction. However, the stained-glass windows rendered by El Pasoan Willis Griffin attest to the limited scope of the arts and crafts community in Juarez.

The paucity of fine craftsmen and lack of rich materials were especially significant problems when in 1977 Sanchez was asked to rebuild and add to the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Built 40 years before, in the 1930s, the church was in poor condition. With a cracked dome and an equally vulnerable pair of Baroque colonial towers, it stood perilously on the main plaza. Because the structure was to be upgraded to a Cathedral, offices and meeting spaces were to be added as well.

Since the towers could be seen from a distance, the citizenry wished to save their striking silhouette. The dome, however, was beyond repair. Ultimately, the entire church was torn down except for the towers. Because the church stood adjacent to the city's most venerable structure, an early 17th-century chapel, special care was demanded during construction.

The altar's curvilinear shape resolves the client's mandate to isolate the church three meters away from the old chapel. In fulfilling this demand, Sanchez created a magnificent contemporary altar; on the exterior, an interesting series of mixed geometries are established which also underline the architect's capable and expressive handling of building materials.

Concrete was poured on site and left the way it emerged from the casting forms. On the north wall (street side), the concrete was reinforced with "yellow stone" and cantera, which resemble limestone and travertine respectively. The south wall, also constructed of concrete, allows space for the stained-glass.

A veritable odyssey ensued to find rich materials within the client's budgetary constraints. Accompanied by the parish priest, Sanchez made several trips throughout Mexico. Ultimately, mahogany was located in Quintana Roo and marble in Puebla. The prismatic stained glass that Sanchez longed to use in the Cathedral would have taken years to make and deliver from within Mexico. This situation resulted in Willis Griffin being called in from El Paso for his stained-glass artistry. Within six months of being retained for the job, Griffin delivered 2,200 square feet of glass panels to the site.

Beneath the church, Sanchez created space for offices. Never one to sacrifice natural lighting, he designed several 10-foot wells to light the new underground facilities. Marble from the old church was recycled for the office floors.

Completed in 1982, the entire project took five years from ground breaking, and is a great success.

Unfortunately, municipal authorities eliminated the plaza a few years later, to discourage vagrants. The traditional benches, trees, and kiosk were removed, and one of the last vestiges of Old Juarez was destroyed in the process. The new plaza, devoid of these features, is a stark companion to the more amicable church and chapel.

For many reasons, Mexico proved to be a perfect crucible for carrying out the precepts of modern architecture. The Mexican Revolution resulted in constitutional reform which provided a mandate to build socially responsive architecture. Francophilia and other European preferences established during previous regimes offered further reinforcement. Sufficient numbers of Mexicans have studied abroad since then and have been otherwise receptive to trends occurring across the Atlantic to continue to keep the tradition alive in Mexico. Finally, the raw materials required to emulate Corbusian forms were indigenous; concrete was perfect for Mexico's mild climate and its plastic qualities suited cultural inclinations toward structural expressionism which have existed since prehispanic times.

Sanchez, along with his teachers and classmates, was swept along in the aesthetic momentum created by the Revolution. Given the opportunity to design in a more progressive location than Juarez, his portfolio might have brightened further. Sanchez made the most out of a city whose environment seems to consist of poverty and diesel fumes. Certainly his work is far superior to the designs of architects imported from the interior, because Sanchez possesses an inherent understanding of local values and realities, as well as their resulting constraints. Never an elitist, he could design with the simple and utilitarian attitude that Professor Campos emphasized—and be fulfilled. Above all, he turned modern architecture into a personal inheritance to share with his fellow "Juarences."

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*TOP: Grated light wells illuminate cathedral offices under the plaza. BOTTOM: Rear elevation of cathedral shows Corbusian forms and materials.*



# TROST AND TROST IN EL PASO

by Jay C. Henry

Photographs this page by Jay C. Henry



Douglas Gray Residence



Williams House



Stevens Bungalow



J.J. Nesom House

When Henry Trost, who had practiced architecture in Tucson since 1898, established a second office in El Paso in 1904, the border city was emerging as a regional entrepôt for the American Southwest. It was ideally situated to mediate between the different nuances of regional culture in New Mexico and West Texas. El Paso quickly became the principal headquarters of Henry and Gustavus Trost, and the firm joined other new professional practices in Texas as a purveyor of 20th century American architecture: Sanguinet and Staats of Fort Worth and Houston, Atlee B. Ayres of San Antonio, C.H. Page and Brother of Austin, Lang and Witchell of Dallas, et al. For 30 years, at least until the death of Henry Trost in 1933, his firm would dominate the practice of architecture in Arizona, New Mexico, and West Texas.

The consensus for an American architecture had emerged in the 1880s with the work of H.H. Richardson, and had been propagated further by Richardson's spiritual heirs, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Most of the new Texas firms responded in some degree to the ornamental conventions of Sullivan or the form conventions of Wright, which comprise the two poles of the Prairie School, used sometimes separately and sometimes in conjunction. In El Paso, Henry Trost's admiration for Wright's work can be seen in the architect's own house on Yandell Drive of 1908, perhaps the finest Prairie School house in Texas, as well as in the Caruzzo Apartments on North Prospect Street of 1914-15. Here the second-story windows are constrained to a horizontal band between the continuous sill line and the overhanging eave of the hipped roof, a common Prairie School convention. Trost also employed the brilliant ornament of Louis Sullivan on frequent occasions, as on the Douglas Gray Residence of 1904, where a frieze of Sullivanesque ornament borders the front porch. The blank plaster walls and arcaded window voids seem to allude to the environmental and historical regionalism of the Southwest rather than to the Prairie, however.

The Midwest was one source of an autonomous American architecture at the turn of the century; California was another, where the Bungalow and Mission styles originated. As El Paso was both environmentally and historically more closely related to California than to the Midwest, these Western styles appear in the work of Trost and Trost concurrently with the Prairie School. In Tucson Henry Trost combined Sullivanesque ornament with the forms of the Mission Style; this does not seem to have occurred in El Paso. His grandest exercise in the Mission Style is the Williams House on Rio Grande Avenue, contemporary with the Henry Trost House nearby. The plaster walls, arcaded porches, tile roofs, and scroll gables with quatrefoil windows testify to the architect's equal command of the Southwestern regional idiom. Trost also designed a number of exercises in the Bungalow mode, of which the Stevens House at 1201 E. Arizona is representative, and combined manifestations of the Mission Style and Bungalow typology on the Nesom House at 1226 E. Boulevard. Thus although Henry Trost's personal affection for the Prairie School may be inferred from his own residence, he was equally adept at manipulating the regionalism that many of his clients seemed to prefer.

This combination of progressive and eclectic tendencies in the work of Trost and Trost can be demonstrated further by comparing four of their major El Paso institutional buildings of the decade before the World War. The Paso del Norte Hotel of 1913 is a typical exercise in the Edwardian Baroque, scarcely distinguishable from many contemporary hotels in the same genre elsewhere. Even the ornate lobby, preserved in the recent renovation, impresses by its opulence rather than its originality. The marbled surfaces, heavy gilded ornament, and art glass skylight and window patterns are entirely conventional, without the original Prairie School details that the architects had used previously at the Santa Rita Hotel in Tucson. El Paso High School of 1916, despite its grand setting commanding the athletic field and pros-





Trost Residence photographs copyright 1978 by Shirley McCollum/Thomas P. Armstrong



Audiman Collection, El Paso Public Library

TOP and ABOVE: El Paso High School

Trost Residence, ABOVE, front elevation; BELOW LEFT, north elevation

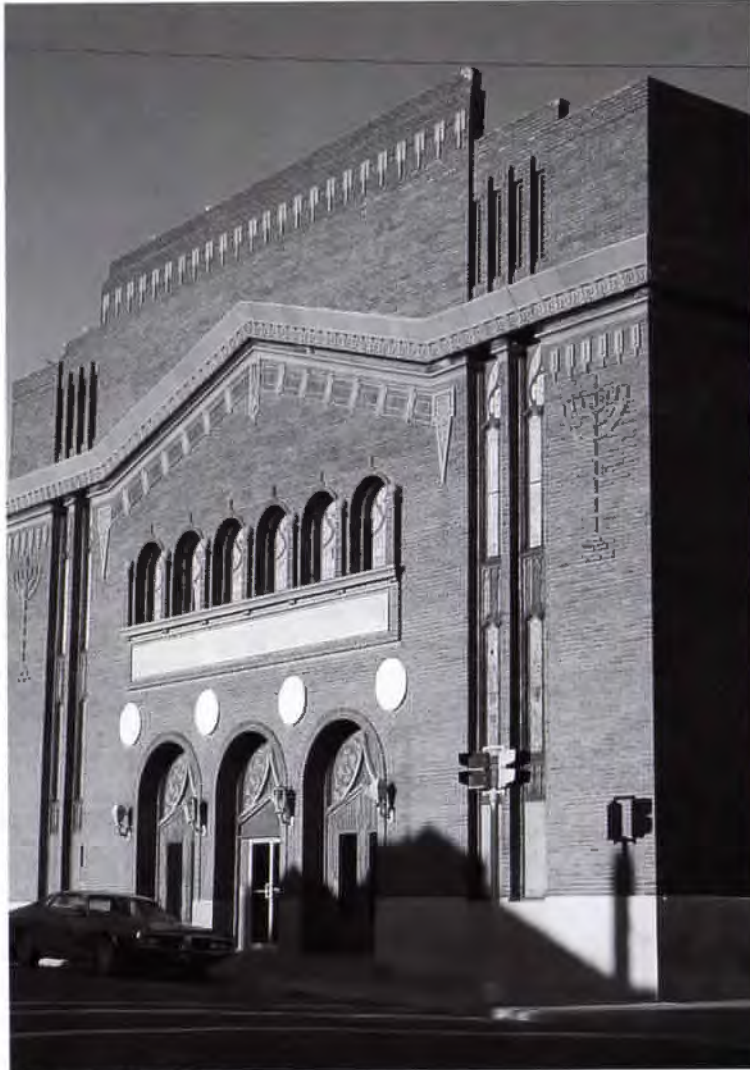


Like the exterior, the living room of Henry Trost's house on Yandell Street shows the architect's admiration for the work of Frank Lloyd Wright





Trost Residence, living room detail



Old Temple Mt. Sinai Synagogue



Loretto Academy

Joe C. Henry

pect of the city beyond, is also a thoroughly conventional exercise in the Beaux Arts Classic mode, sometimes described as a revival of the Classic Revival after 75 years of Victorian eclectic exuberance. The materials, hard-finished tan brick with buff terra-cotta trim, are commonplace in American architecture of this decade. In its scenographic monumentality, the high school rivals the grandest achievements of Daniel Burnham or McKim, Mead and White. It is El Paso's most imposing commitment to the City Beautiful Movement. But original it is not.

Judged solely by the criterion of originality, Old Main (1907) at the El Paso College of Mines would rank as Henry Trost's premier achievement, if the Bhutanese Revival had not been imposed upon him by the school's academic administrators. The serene hills above El Paso suggested a Himalayan landscape, and a Buddhist lamasery an appropriate image for a mining college. Today one would be hard pressed to make the historical and stylistic connection were the intention not documented explicitly. Old Main and the later buildings modeled upon it seem rather like a highly original attempt to cross-breed progressive forms and historical or regional allusions, somewhat similar to Frank Lloyd Wright's later flirtation with Meso-American influences or Rudolph Schindler's fascination with New Mexican pueblo forms.

The synagogue as a problem in symbolic and expressive form had also challenged American architects for three centuries: a building type expected to look like a house of worship without resembling a church. Victorian architects had frequently cross-bred Gothic and Islamic forms to achieve an appropriate association of ideas. Henry Trost rose to this challenge with Temple Mt. Sinai of 1916. In its cubical massing the synagogue vaguely suggests the Prairie School. It falls somewhere between Wright's slot-and-pier corner articulation and Sullivan's integral geometric forms defined by terra-cotta ornament. The palette of rich tapestry brick and natural terra-cotta trim is also similar to that employed by Sullivan on his

Joe C. Henry



contemporaneous series of banks. And yet the details are eclectic in the most creative sense of the word: round arches more Lombard Romanesque than Renaissance, and window tracery evocative of the flamboyant forms of late Gothic. Nothing is quoted literally; the details are suggestive allusions, nothing more.

The Prairie School and other progressive manifestations in American architecture virtually perished in the "return to normalcy" which followed the World War. In this regressive cultural milieu, architects necessarily reverted to historicism, academically correct or creatively eclectic as their talent and patronage moved them. In the Southwest, this renewed historicism was frequently based on a generic Mediterranean *parti* combining tiled roofs with Classical or Romanesque forms, often constructed of brick. Sometimes it was combined with specifically Spanish historical details, such as elaborate eave bracketing or beamed ceilings. Occasionally these details rose to dominate the composition, which became recognizable as a Spanish Colonial or Baroque mode of expression. The Spanish Baroque as a manifestation of Southwestern regional eclecticism came to supplant the Mission Revival after the World War, responding to critics' demands for a more academically learned style. Henry Trost proved an adept manipulator of the Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial genres. In El Paso, the firm's two most noteworthy essays in these styles are Loretto Academy of 1923 and the Cortez Hotel of 1926.

As a grand pictorial composition, Loretto Academy invites comparison to El Paso High School of the previous decade. Again wings converge on the main entrance at the interior angle, but now the chapel replaces the classical portico, and the stylistic vocabulary is freely combined of a Baroque chapel entrance and a Romanesque bell tower. The Academy is the sort of picturesque ensemble at which Henry Trost excelled, and which he incorporated in most of the splendid series of small town hotels in Arizona, New Mexico, and West Texas which collectively comprise the firm's most significant body of work during the 1920s. The same cannot be said of the Cortez Hotel, unfortunately.

The Cortez embodies all of those problems inherent in applying detail from one historical period to buildings of a type and scale for which the ornament was never intended. There were no 11-story buildings in Renaissance or Baroque Spain. At best the ornament could be spotted selectively at street floor and mezzanine levels and at the cornice, but the Cortez has no satis-



Cortez Hotel



Paso Del Norte Hotel



San Angelo City Hall and Auditorium



Eliel Saarinen, project for Finnish Parliament

factory cornice. The soft, variegated brick competes for attention with the intricate terracotta ornament. The faults of the Cortez are common to most brick buildings in the Spanish Colonial Revival. The style comes off best when rendered in plaster (or authentically in stone). Mediterranean effects in brick are achieved most satisfactorily in the Romanesque mode where much of the historical detail, such as arched corbel tables and pilaster strips, originated in a brickbuilding culture like Lombardy.





Joy C. Henry

Luhrs Tower, Phoenix, Arizona



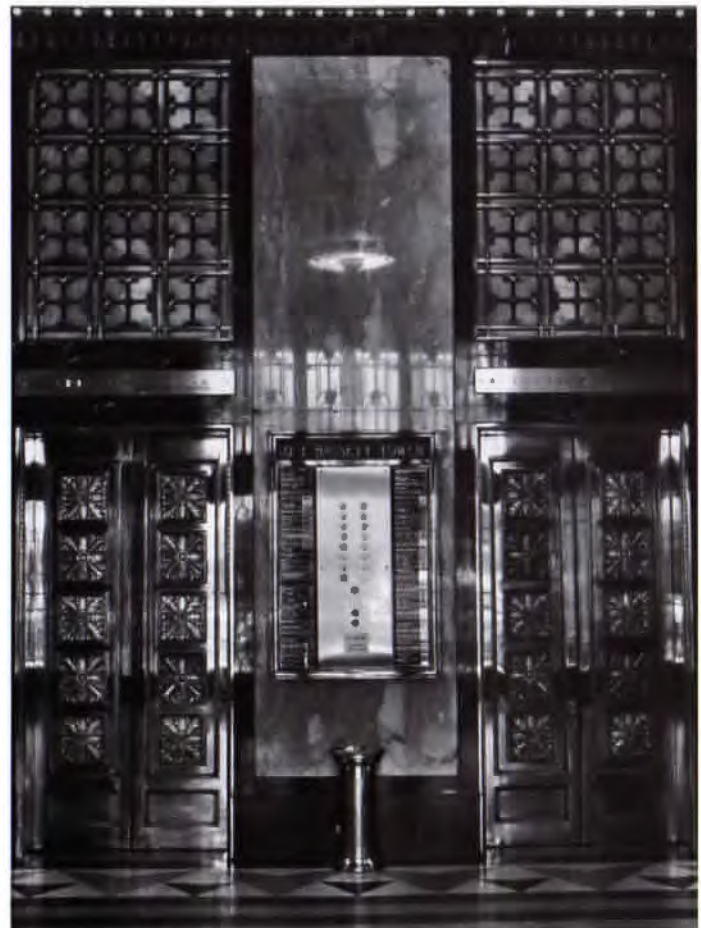
Joy C. Henry

Bassett Tower, El Paso



Frank J. Hunter, Jr.

Bassett Tower, lobby detail



Frank J. Hunter, Jr.

Bassett Tower, lobby detail



If the exterior of the Cortez is an embarrassment of mediocrity, in the interior Henry Trost's command of the Southwestern regional idiom is affirmed. The public spaces of the Cortez share with the smaller Trost hotels of the Southwest a vernacular consensus of tiled floors, exposed beam ceilings, rough-cast plaster walls, carved woodwork, and forged iron. The occasional quatrefoil or arabesque traceable to specific Spanish sources is the exception rather than the rule.

In the meantime, new impulses were being assimilated into American architecture. The expectation of a new style appropriate to the modern age, on the analogy of past styles of decorated construction, had survived the return to normalcy even if more avant-garde conceptions of modern architecture had not. Several persuasive models for such a modernistic architecture had emerged: Eliel Saarinen's project for the Finnish Parliament of 1908 and his Helsinki Railroad Station, completed in 1914. The Parliament project, repeated in the Canberra competition of 1913, provided a model for American architects in search of a modernistic idiom for monumental public architecture. Trost and Trost appear to have seized on this model for the San Angelo City Hall and Auditorium of 1929. The details are largely Mediterranean classical, however, and the interior is Spanish Colonial.

This symbiosis of the eclectic and the modernistic in the work of Trost and Trost was exemplified in the Hilton Hotel in El Paso, opened with great fanfare in 1930. Although the majestic interiors of this somewhat bland skyscraper hotel have long since been remodelled out of existence, both contemporary newspaper accounts and surviving photographs testify to the rich combination of Southwestern sources in the interior design. As the *El Paso Times* reported on November 5, 1930: "The ceiling of the lobby is as a majestic cathedral ... embellished with Indian art. The ... fixtures conform to the general appropriateness of the setting, and find their motif in the Indian ... symbolic figures." As American Indian art has long been recognized as one of the constituent sources of Art Deco ornament, the conjunction of a modern skyscraper hotel with an interior featuring American Indian iconography is not entirely surprising.

But there was yet another strand of modernistic inspiration to be assimilated before the disasters of Henry Trost's death and the Great Depression put a virtual end to the productive life of this extraordinary firm. The Zig-Zag Moderne originated in Europe, where it was

crystallized if not created at the Paris *Exposide l'Arts Decoratifs* of 1925. The new ornamental vocabulary based on the zig-zag line spread quickly to the United States, where it enjoyed a convenient affinity to Eliel Saarinen's entry in the Tribune Tower competition of 1922. The conjunction of these two sources led to the so-called Skyscraper Style, widely adopted by American architects in the later 1920s. Henry Trost employed this style twice: at the Luhrs Tower in Phoenix and at the Bassett Tower in El Paso. Whereas in exterior massing the two skyscrapers are virtually identical, each consisting of five parallel slabs rising in ascending sequence toward the center, the ornamental detailing of the two is quite different. Although both can be described as Art Deco or Moderne, the detail at the Luhrs Tower reads as a stylized abstraction of Trost's conventional Southwestern regional sources, whereas the Bassett Tower derives from Parisian sources mediated through Chicago and New York: Saarinen's Tribune Tower entry and perhaps Raymond Hood's American Radiator Building. Both towers are set back from street and property lines, and rise from a street level plinth of retail concession space, again suggestive of Hood's Radiator Building in New York.

The Bassett Tower was the capstone of Henry Trost's career in El Paso, begun 25 years before. This essay has discussed only a small fraction of his firm's production in the city, and has largely ignored its enormous regional practice over three states. More than a dozen Trost and Trost buildings may be found in downtown El Paso within a block or two of the Paso del Norte, the Cortez, the Hilton, and the Bassett Tower. Standing in the Main Plaza, one may truly say of Henry Trost: "If you seek his monument, look about you." ■■■■■

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# AN EL PASO PORTFOLIO

by Joel W. Barna

Oscar Sanchez Cordero



View of downtown El Paso from Juarez



Oscar Sanchez Cordero

"Twin plants" like this one in Juarez give a boost to El Paso's economy.

To update Bishop Berkeley's conundrum about the tree in the deserted forest: If a city west of the Pecos has a business boom and nobody from Dallas or Houston notices, does the boom exist?

To the half-million citizens of El Paso it does. Led by the growth of the *maquiladora* industries and federal defense spending, the economy of Texas' westernmost city (and its sixth largest) has been quietly expanding recently, even though the state as a whole is locked in a spiraling downturn.

Tucked up against Ciudad Juarez, the largest city between Houston and Los Angeles, El Paso has long been cut off from the ups and downs—particularly the ups—of the Texas economy. In the early 1980s, while other areas in Texas were still building on the speculative value of high-priced oil, El Paso was absorbing the effects of repeated de-

valuations of the Mexican *peso*. Once worth 16 cents each in exchange for U.S. currency, *pesos* recently reached an all-time low of 1,000 to the dollar. This has all but strangled sales to shoppers from Mexico, who had streamed across the border to buy American goods during their oil boom. Changes in the clothing manufacturing industry cost the city 2,500 more jobs in 1986.

In spite of such problems, however, El Paso keeps coming back. Population increased by 13 percent between 1980 and 1985, according to UT El Paso researchers. And over the same period, while the unemployment rate for the city climbed from 9 percent to 10.8 percent, per-capita income rose over 32 percent, and the value of building permits issued rose 19.5 percent, to \$243.2 million.

The first reason for El Paso's economic growth stems from the presence of the mili-



Julius Shulman

In the '60s and '70s, many major projects in El Paso used sculptural forms recalling regional construction techniques in adobe and wood. ABOVE: El Paso Civic Center, 1972, by Garland & Hilles; RIGHT: Holy Family Chapel, 1962, by Nesmith & Lane



18 Lindbergh



tary: Fort Bliss, for example, contributed \$747 million to the El Paso economy in 1986, over 10 times its contribution a decade earlier. And hundreds of area professionals are retired military personnel who were stationed in El Paso and decided to stay put. In addition, local observers are hoping that laser research at the nearby White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico, proposed as part of the administration's Strategic Defense Initiative, will bring billions more into the area economy. In a recent issue, *Texas Business* magazine predicted that El Paso could become a center for defense contractors involved in such research, citing plans by LTV Aerospace and other firms to open new assembly plants in the area.

Second is the boom in the *maquiladora* or twin-plant industries, which use low-cost Mexican labor to fabricate components for later assembly into competitively priced finished goods, particularly automotive and electronic's products. General Motors, GTE, Tonka Toys, and Allen Bradley Electronics are among the firms with large assembly plants in Juarez. Honeywell will soon be assembling microswitches there, and both Union Carbide and Toshiba have announced plans to locate plants across the border from El Paso. These industries have brought thousands of hand-labor jobs to the desperately poor north of Mexico, and at the same time, since 1977, they have accounted for as many as 40,000 jobs in El Paso, mostly in management.

Local architects, while delighted to have work in their offices, sound a little puzzled by the current spell of economic growth.

"As a border city, our economic base is low anyway, so a slackening in the economy of the state doesn't tear us up like it does Austin or Houston," says Tom Razloznic of Carr/Razloznic Architects, 1987 president of the El Paso Chapter/AIA. "We didn't have the high of the rest of the state, so we aren't having the low either. But by comparison to the rest of the state, our cur-

Balthazar Korab



Fouts Gomez followed the Bhutanese style for the imposing new library at UT El Paso. **BELOW RIGHT:** roof detail



The American Heart Association building, by Edward E. McCormick (now a principal with McCormick, Kuykendall, McCombs, Suerken Architecture, Inc.) is a hexagonal glass-walled building hugging a dry hillside.

rent growth looks good, even though it's not that dramatic."

The same can be said of much of the work that came to *Texas Architect* when we requested that El Paso architects send us examples of their recent projects. There are skilled architects in El Paso,

as well as a solid base for architectural growth. But the current trends in the economy create demand for industrial and retail space instead of the speculative commercial and residential projects that have fueled architectural exploration east of the Pecos. The

Marty Sornstrom

Balthazar Korab



Terrance Brown



Garland and Hilles restored the Union Station in downtown El Paso, **ABOVE** and **BELOW**.

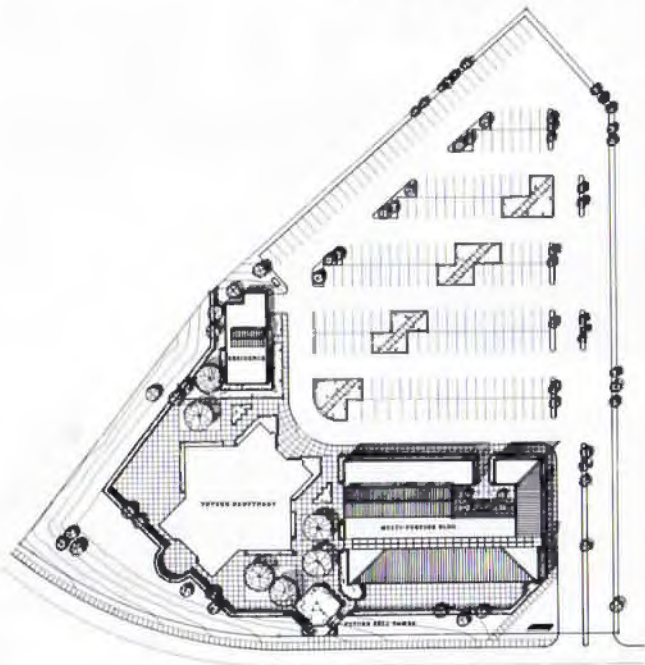
Terrance Brown







*Queen of Peace parish multipurpose hall, by Carroll DuSang & Rand: ABOVE: front entrance; BELOW LEFT: site plan*



*ABOVE and BELOW: St. Luke's Methodist Church, by Carson Consultants*



*Peace Lutheran Church, by Booth Keirseij Mijares: ABOVE: model showing site; RIGHT: perspective of model*





limitations of such building types—tight budgets and inexpensive, short-term construction—have affected a lot of the building during the recent boom.

To some, indeed, the glory days of El Paso architecture ended with the death of Henry Trost in 1933. California bungalows and Prairie-style houses, which had flourished in the city up until the Depression of the 1930s, all but disappeared from later building in El Paso. So did the masterly high-rise eclecticism of Trost and Trost, demonstrated in a number of buildings that still dominate the El Paso downtown skyline. Only the Bhutanese style at the University of Texas at El Paso, begun with the Old Main building by Trost and Trost, has continued.

The last major growth spurt in El Paso, from the mid-'60s to the mid-'70s, produced a number of important buildings, however. The firm of Carroll & Deauble (now Carroll DuSang & Rand) designed office towers with a taut Miesian look. And later, with projects like the El Paso Civic Center and the Sun Bowl stadium, the firm of Garland & Hilles produced work in massively sculpted concrete that blended a dramatic modern sensibility with influences from regional building techniques in adobe and wood.

Some of the recent El Paso projects show these and other influences. The firm of Fouts Gomez designed an imposing library for the UTEP campus, closer in spirit to Old Main than many recent campus additions have been. The firm of McCormick, Kuykendall, McCombs, Suerken Architecture, Inc., designed an office for a local association that uses hexagonal geometry and a low, Wrightian profile. Mack Caldwell, now a professor of architecture at the University of Oklahoma, produced the El Paso Multipurpose Center, combining sensuous adobe forms with sophisticated passive and active solar technology. Only a few projects, such as Carson Consultants' steel-skinned drive-in American Bank of Commerce East, draw on



*NCO Academy, Ft. Bliss, by Fouts Gomez Moore, Inc.*



*ABOVE and BELOW: Mack Caldwell's El Paso Multipurpose center combines adobe with high tech.*



explicitly technological imagery. The concern with shapelessness, perhaps the chief ingredient of a late-modern El Paso look in architecture, is found in St. Luke's United Methodist Church, also designed by Carson Consultants; it is one of several new churches in the burgeoning El Paso suburbs. Finally, the legacy of the past has not been neglected. Most of Trost and Trost's buildings



*TOP RIGHT: American Bank of Commerce East was designed by Carson Consultants. ABOVE: Booth Keirseij Mijares adapted two floors of the Cortez Hotel as offices. BELOW: Duffy B. Stanley Architects' First Financial Banking Center*



still stand, and a number of important restoration and adaptive reuse projects have been completed, including the work by Garland & Hilles that restored the Union Station to a form closer to its original, and the cosily post-modern offices in the Cortez building designed for Peat Marwick by Booth Keirseij Mijares.

More projects, including implementation of long-pending plans to bolster down-

town, could get the chance they have been waiting for, if the current economic growth can continue and widen. With its strong history and lessons from today's expansion, El Paso could be on the verge of making its presence felt by the rest of the state. ■



*Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture*

Chester H Liebs

Little, Brown and Company/A New

York Graphic Society Book, 1985

258 pages; 17 color and 252 black & white illustrations

*Reviewed by Kenneth Hafertepe*

Chester H. Liebs, director of the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Vermont, has traced the impact of the auto upon the American cityscape and countryside, demonstrating in the process how the auto has changed everyday life in America.

Part One is labeled "Space," but might be more appropriately called "Space, Time, and Roadside Architecture," because it provides a historical overview of the changing ways commerce meets the road. It begins with an imaginary through-the-windshield trip along a main artery from the city center, past older suburbs and small shopping centers, then newer

suburbs and mega-malls near the Interstate, and finally to the open country.

Having mapped out the terrain, the author attempts to explain how we got from Main Street to Miracle Mile. Before the 20th century, commerce centered on each town's major street, which was scaled for pedestrians, horses, and horse-drawn carriages. Late in the 19th century, streetcar lines created major arteries out of town, fronted by new one-story commercial establishments, beyond which were "streetcar suburbs." Into this situation roared the automobile.

Cars created the need for broader streets, rounded curbs, more parking space, and

for new building types, particularly for selling and servicing autos. Initially downtown adapted to these needs, installing gas pumps at curbside and building automobile showrooms. However, congestion and other factors led to the construction of drive-in filling stations and strips of automobile showrooms on the periphery of town. Autos further facilitated the growth of suburbs and of neighborhood shopping centers. More recently, relatively cheap land and the construction of the Interstate Highway system has spurred the development of frontage roads along the Interstate with shopping malls, restaurants, and motels.

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Part Two, "Image," chronicles the evolution of roadside forms, which are, in author's phrase, "architecture for speed reading." Initially roadside merchants hewed to the traditional imagery of Main Street, usually some variant of classicism. But the incentive to sell led merchants to abandon architectural propriety in favor of more eye-catching designs. The '20s and early '30s were a heyday for such designs: some merchants invested in domestic associations, while others indulged in fantastic imagery, such as the infamous Big Duck on Long Island, or in regional and historical imagery, such as the Mission Revival style. The '30s and '40s saw the adoption of the zigzag patterning of Art Deco, of "aerodynamic" streamlining, and of the International Style.

Liebs characterizes the "Googie" architecture of the '50s as "exaggerated modern," structural expressionism taken to absurd lengths. In the '60s, concern over visual pollution and air pollution led to the demise of the Googie, and to the rise of the "environmental look." This style attempted to regain some of the propriety of Main Street by blending in

with suburban life; the result was an amplitude of shingles, a sea of "tasteful" mansard roofs, and diminutive corporate logos. The latest developments, in the author's view, are the "Old House Look" and the "High-Tech Look." Most of these styles have been discussed before, but Liebs places them in a convincing chronology.

*Leibs says that to attract car-crazy consumers, merchants and designers made buildings into texts for speed reading.*

In the last section, "Types," Liebs goes in depth into the evolution of a number of building types. Time and again he uncovers the obscure origins and evolution of commercial building types. He illustrates the very first drive-in movie theater, which opened in Camden, New Jersey on June 6, 1933, and the original Holiday Inn, built in Memphis in 1952. And, inevitably, he discusses the genesis of Mc-

Donalds' "Golden Arches," which architects Stanley Clark Meston and Charles W. Fish designed in 1952.

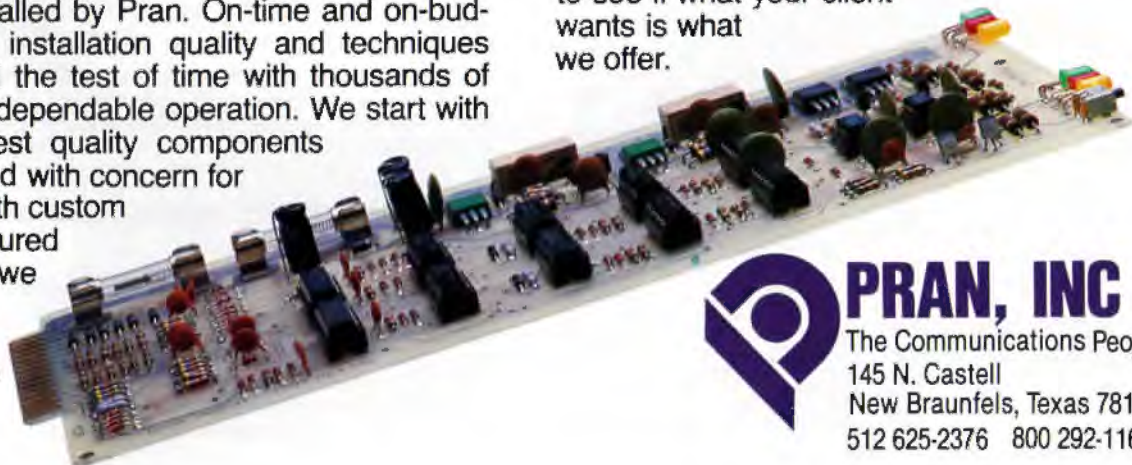
Clearly any book of this sort owes a debt to the work of landscape historian J.B. Jackson and to such works as Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas*. But Liebs has provided a comprehensive survey of roadside types considered chronologically, spatially, and typologically. It is filled with information about merchants, designers, and consumers, and is extensively illustrated, not just with out-sized ducks and donuts but also with the more typical architecture of the American roadside. Lieb's book will be of great use in classes on architecture and on cultural history and is well worth the perusal of the general reader. —

*Kenneth Hafertepe, who has a Ph.D. in American Civilization from UT Austin, is the author of America's Castle: The Evolution of the Smithsonian Building and Its Institution (1984), and of one of the principal essays in Austin: Its Architects and Architecture, published by the Austin Chapter/AIA last September.*

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• **Baylor University** in Waco has scheduled a \$13-million special events center for construction this summer. The 150,000-square-foot building, designed by C/A Architects of Houston, will be a two-level, circular domed stadium with an arena, offices, and weight rooms.

• **Texas A&M University** has approved a 166,000-square-foot bio-chemical/bio-physics building. The five-story structure will cost an estimated \$18 million, and has a construction start date of May. Harper Kemp Clutts and Parker, Inc., of Dallas is the architect. The school also has an \$11.4 million engineering/transportation building underway. Actually a pair of buildings, an eight-story office tower and four-story lab and classroom, the structure was designed by 3D/International of Houston. Completion is set for early June.

• **UT Austin** is remodeling and expanding Goldsmith Hall at a cost of \$8.7 million. A joint venture of Chartier Newton & Associates of Austin and Thomas & Booziotis of Dallas, work on the classrooms and offices includes 51,000 square

feet of remodeled space and 32,000 square feet of new construction. In addition to the ongoing work a \$9-million recreational sports facility is also planned. The 120,000-square-foot structure, designed by F&S Partners of Dallas, will include a variety of courts, locker rooms, and weight rooms. Anticipated construction start date is early 1988.

• **UT Arlington** currently has a new \$27.6-million engineering building under construction. Architect for the 244,000-square-foot structure is Albert S. Komatsu & Associates of Fort Worth. Completion is set for late 1989. Also underway is a remodeling and addition to the student union building. JPJ Architects, Inc., of Dallas is architect for the \$9-million project, which includes 42,000 square feet of remodeling and 73,000 square feet of new construction.

• **UT Dallas** is getting a new engineering and computer science building, designed by Omniplan of Dallas. The \$16-million building will contain classrooms and laboratories in 150,000 square feet of space. Construction start is set for June 1988.

• **UT El Paso** is building a new phy-

sical plant. The \$6.5-million plant by Langford Anderson Thacker, Inc., of El Paso will include offices, workshops, and warehouse space. Completion is set for March 1988.

• **UT San Antonio** has an \$11-million engineering and bio-technology building planned. JonesKell Inc., of San Antonio is architect for the 110,000-square-foot project. A construction start date has not been determined.

• **The UT Health Science Center** at San Antonio has been approved to build an 88,000-square-foot expansion of the Dental School building. The \$15.5-million project will add a fifth floor to the building and allow for expansion of other departments. Architect for the project, scheduled to begin construction this summer, is Chumney/Urrutia of San Antonio.

• **Trinity University** in San Antonio is also getting in on the act with an \$11.5-million expansion project that will include a dormitory, parking garage, physical plant, and nursery. The 5.5-acre development will be completed by fall 1988. Bradley/McChesney Architects of San Antonio is responsible for design and development. —CEG

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Ten firms have been selected 1986 Houston Chapter/AIA Design Award winners. The architecture jury consisted of Laurence Booth of Booth/Hansen Architects, Chicago; George Hartman of Hartman Cox, Washington D.C.; and Thom Mayne of Morphosis, Los Angeles. The interiors jury included Stanley Abercrombie, editor of *Interior Design Magazine*; Ken Walker of The Walker Group, New York; and Judy Urrutia of Urrutia Associates, San Antonio.

### Architecture Honor Awards:

- Blake Summer House, Lake Charles, Louisiana, by Cannady, Jackson & Ryan Architects;
- A Farmhouse, Praha, Texas, by Hall Architects;
- A House for a Carpenter's Family, Hammond, Louisiana, by Stephan Hoffpauir;
- Private Residence, Galveston, by Office for Architecture + Design;
- The Post Oak Centre, Houston, by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill;



Blake summer home, Big Lake, Louisiana



A farmhouse for Mr. and Mrs. Cutler, Praha, Texas

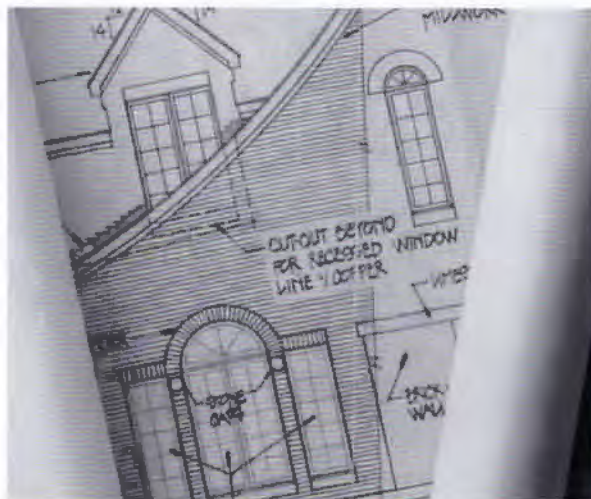
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House for a carpenter's family, Hammond, Louisiana



Private residence, Indian Beach, Galveston



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The Post Oak Centre, Houston



Van Mosman Merchandising, New York, N.Y.



Office suite for Alsey Newton Architects, Houston



St. Mark's School of Texas Master Plan, Dallas



Carrington, Coleman, Sloman &amp; Blumenthal, Dallas

• Master Plan for St. Mark's School of Texas, Dallas, by Charles Tapley Associates;

#### Interior Honor Awards:

- Van Mosman Merchandising Jewelry Manufacturing Headquarters, New York, by CRSS, Inc.;
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Two architects also received the Young Architects Award, Laura Horstman, Vice President, Facilities for Allied Bancshares, and Tess Wagner Shine, an Associate with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. The award is given for exceptional work in a specific area of practice, such as design, building technology, or project management, or for general excellence in a wide range of architectural activities. Ar-



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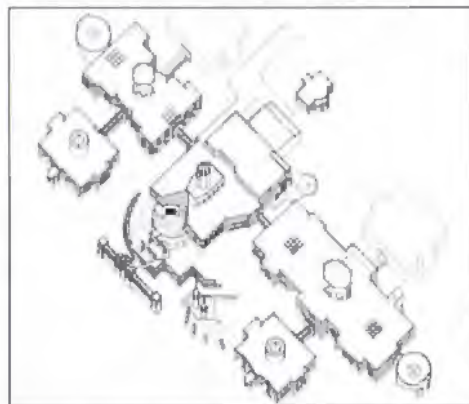
chitects between the ages of 25 and 39 are eligible. Judges for the award were Ray Bailey, FAIA, Ray Bailey Architects; Gerald Moorhead, Lloyd Jones Fillpot; and William Jenkins, Dean, School of Architecture, University of Houston.

## IN PROGRESS

**CASTNER HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, EL PASO; FISCHER CORDOVA PRESTIDGE ARCHITECTS & ENGINEERS, EL PASO**

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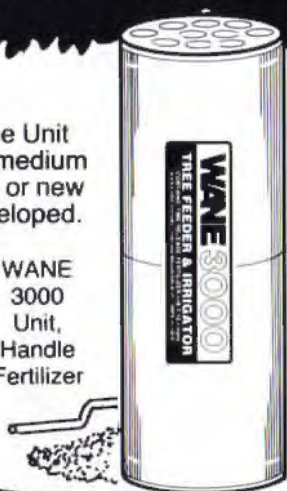
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"School [officials] came to us and asked us to do something different—get out of the brick box syndrome. I don't think they were expecting us to go this far, but when they looked at it they said, 'What the heck, go for it!'" says project manager Guillermo Barajas.

Sited adjacent to a public park, the school is an extension of the playground in spirit as well as image. More serious symbolism is at work as well: a *sopraporta* in the shape of an open book, the basic unit of learning, welcomes students into the library/administration building after they pass through a series of page-like squared-off arches that segue into a curved proscenium wall punctuated with wide, square cut-outs. The design creates a busy, active environment in harmony with the swarms of young children as



*Sited adjacent to a public park, the school is an extension of the playground in spirit as well as image.*

they mill around waiting to start school or board buses.

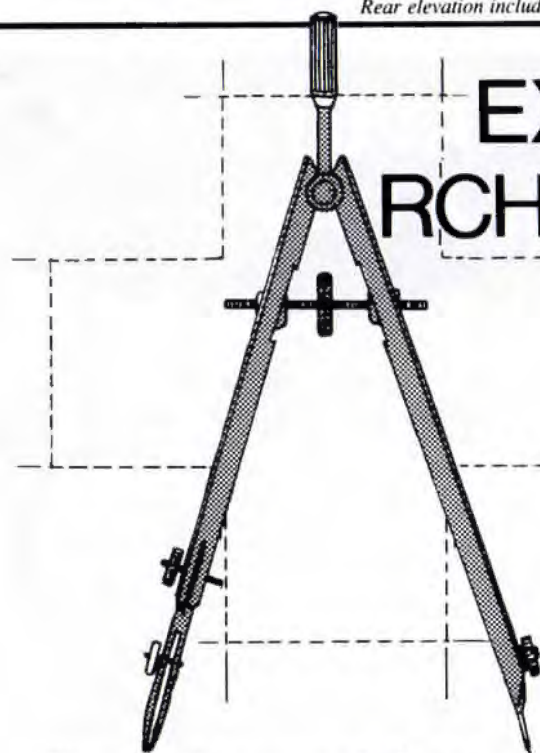
Rather than housing all school functions in one block building and adding another box-like school to the collection, FCPAE separated Castner Heights into numerous satellite buildings. The individual structures will be connected by trans-

parent walkways that give an expanded look to the facility. Since the school is divided into units, future expansion will not disrupt ongoing activities.

The imaginative forms and shapes flow into creative and colorful graphics throughout the interior, providing direction and extending the concept of the playground to



*Rear elevation including pencil/rocket tower*



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the inside of the school.

The school consists of 36 classrooms including science rooms, art rooms, band and choir rooms, along with administrative areas, a combination cafeteria and auditorium, and a custodian residence; totaling approximately 80,000 square feet. Spaces are composed along a circulation spine that widens at intervals to form atriums. The atriums break up the long corridors and provide special areas where teachers can conduct classes or set up displays of current class projects.

—Charles E. Gallatin

## SCHOOLS

Recent private and professional work of the faculty of the School of Architecture of the **University of Texas at Austin** will be on display at the Battle Hall Library, UT campus. The "Third Biennial Faculty Exhibition" will appear April 10 to May 8.

UT Austin presents "Character Reference," a lecture by Michael Graves. At the LBJ Auditorium March 10. Registration is \$5, \$3 for students. The lecture is co-sponsored by the Institute of Business Design and the Austin Chapter/AIA.

An endowed scholarship for graduate study in architecture is being initiated in the UT Austin School of Architecture in honor of Hal Box, who recently completed 10 years as dean of the school. The scholarship in his honor was the idea of alumni and the members of the School of Architecture advisory council. Box is a former dean of the School of Architecture at UT Arlington.

## EVENTS

**March 1 to April 12:** "Texas Architecture: The State of the Art," featuring recent works of architecture in Texas (pre-viewed in the January-February 1987 TA). At the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, UT Austin. call 512/471-7324 for more information.

**March 12:** "Traditional versus Contemporary Design," a Sack Lunch Seminar by Decorative Center Houston. Cost of \$5 per person includes sack lunch and seminar by a panel of well-known designers. Open to the first 100 callers at 713/961-9292.



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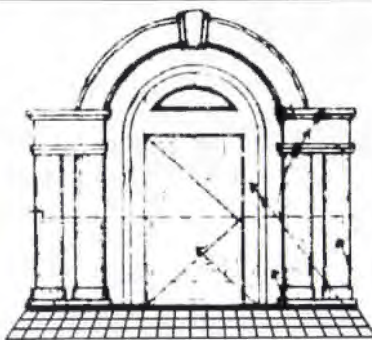
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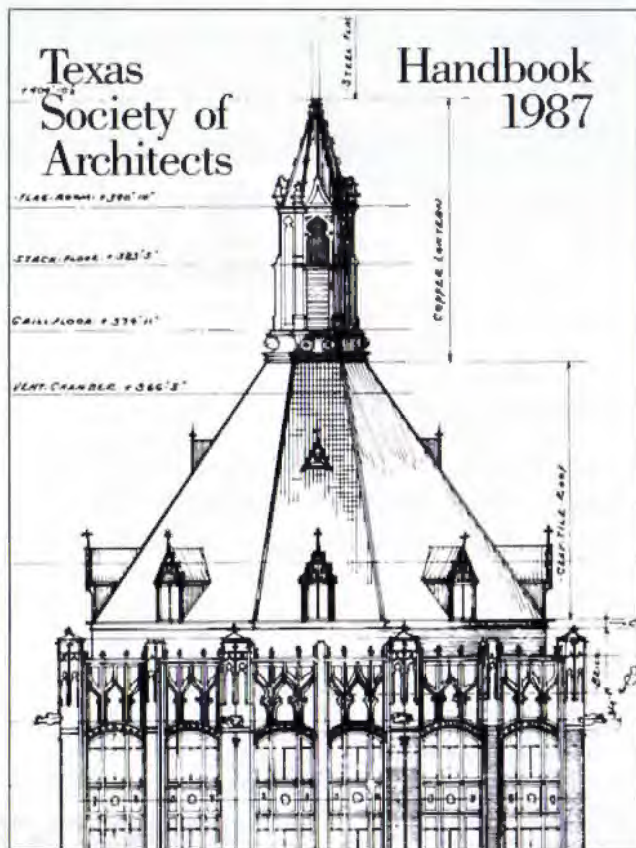
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**March 31:** Entry deadline for the "1987 Architectural Photography Competition," sponsored by the St. Louis Chapter/AIA. Competition is open to all members and association members of AIA who are not professional photographers. First place award includes a \$1,000 prize. For more information call 314/621-3484.

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The Serpent, from Harden Industries

"The Serpent" is an elegant new design in **Harden Industries'** decorative line of bathroom faucets. The style may be ordered in 12 different finishes and two enamel colors with a variety of handle and escutcheon options. For more information circle number 32 on the reader inquiry card.

**International Conservation Systems, Inc.**, introduces the Ultralight 800, a presence-sensing automatic light switch that turns on lights whenever a person enters the room. Lights are automatically turned off if no presence is detected for a pre-programmed period ranging from five to 25 minutes. For more information circle number 33 on the reader inquiry card.

A new solar-powered calculator from **Sharp** now computes measurements directly into yards, feet, or inches. The unit also calculates length, area, and volume, converts fractions to decimals, and offers all standard arithmetic functions. For more information circle number 34 on the reader inquiry card.

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ON HOLIDAY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

I did not attend the annual meeting of the Texas Society of Architects last fall. There was a rumor, I am told, that I was dead, but I am not. It is not that I haven't considered death as an alternative to architectural practice. It's just that I have given up the idea because it is not covered by my professional liability policy.

The Annual Meeting is bored with me and my schtick, and we have already eaten in all the Dallas restaurants, so we decided to leave those who haven't to their own devices, and, on the spur of the moment, go "on holiday" to the United Kingdom.

In so many ways the British are similar, but different, to us. To visit their nation and compare is a joy, knowing we are as funny to them as they are to us. In some ways it is easier for us. A Texan in London knows what to expect behind a door on which the graphics state "Gentlemen," but have pity on the Londoner in Houston who needs relief and has no idea he's a "Caballero."

Contrary to current public opinion, one is in no danger from terrorist attack in England. Other hazards abound, however. Danger is ever present in the form of the British motorist, the lurking kerb, the roundabout, and clotted cream. For the uninitiated, the typical British motorist fancies himself a direct descendant of Sir Malcolm Campbell, who drove the Bluebird to the world's land speed record on the Salt Lake flats.

The kerb (as distinguished from the American "curb") is a four-inch thick piece of granite, buried four feet deep in the tundra and located directly at the edge of most roadways (there being no shoulder). Kerbs are always at blind corners, giving you the opportunity to hit one at 60 miles per hour and flatten your left front wheel rim into the profile of an oyster.

A roundabout is a planned circular trafficway that gives an Ameri-

can motorist the opportunity to hit five British motorists simultaneously. If you did not fly a Spitfire in the Battle of Britain, you are emotionally unsuited for even approaching a roundabout.

Clotted cream is a form of pure cholesterol used throughout the UK to beef up the count of any dessert thought to be lacking. Architects over 40 who have led sedentary lives have been known to suffer a severe disabling attack of arteriosclerosis from just looking at clotted cream.

There is one other general minor hazard of importance for the Texan architect who is perambulating off continent. This is a disease bearing the latin name "mas cathedral perusal." If you have ever heard your spouse exclaim, "If I have to *examine* another cathedral, I'll scream," you know what I mean. Since there are 40 cathedrals in England alone, you can readily see how any sort of in-depth study will consume your entire holiday.

It is better to utilize your time sitting quietly for a few moments to let your senses fully absorb their grandeur. Then wander to the altar (as I did) to light a candle for your architectural colleagues back in Texas, with prayers for economic resurgence and a pox to descend on all trial lawyers.

Our basic quest was the Lake District of Cumbria. The Cumbrian lands are without equivocation the most beautiful in all the world. It is here that one can experience the true meaning of human scale. A mountain only 3,000 feet high is something you can grasp. A lake you can walk around in four hours is a trip you can do. On the footpaths of Cumbria, the English come to restore their souls. I can only suggest that when you are at your lowest ebb, scrape up your last dollar, come here, and walk.

Dave Braden is a partner in the Dallas firm Dahl/Braden/PTM.

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