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# 1999 HONORS PROGRAM

## Call for Nominations

Each year since 1971 the Texas Society of Architects has recognized individuals and organizations outside the profession of architecture who share its commitment to the quality of life in Texas. Accomplishments by past honorees have included roadside beautification; wildlife conservation; open-space protection; passage of laws protecting the public's health, safety, and welfare; downtown revitalization; preservation of historic buildings and sites; public-school programs emphasizing environmental concerns; museum programs and exhibits about community architecture; and reporting, publications, and articles promoting the appreciation of the built and natural environment.

In addition, the TSA Honors Program recognizes TSA's exceptional members in several categories and distinguished Texas architectural educators and writers for leadership and achievement.

### Award Categories

#### Honorary Membership

Awarded to an individual for long-term association with architects and architecture in providing a better quality of life in Texas.

#### Citation of Honor

Awarded to groups or organizations outside the profession whose activities make significant contributions to the goals of the architectural profession for improvement of the natural or built environment in Texas.

#### Llewelyn W. Pitts Award

Awarded to recognize a TSA member for a lifetime of distinguished leadership and dedication in architecture.

TSA's highest honor, awarded in memory of Llewelyn W. Pitts, FAIA, who served as TSA president in 1961 and was an influential and dedicated AIA leader, recognizes a distinguished member for lifetime leadership and achievement in the profession of architecture and the community. Although no formal nominations are accepted, recommendations may be directed to the Honors Committee Chair.

#### Edward J. Romieniec Award

Awarded to recognize an individual architectural educator for outstanding educational contributions.

Awarded in memory of Edward J. Romieniec, FAIA, a former professor and dean of architecture at Texas A&M University and the first recipient of this award. Nominee must be a current or former member of the faculty of one of the seven accredited Texas schools or colleges of architecture, living at the time of nomination, and a full-time educator for at least five years. Criteria for selection will include evidence of the following: teaching of great breadth; influencing a wide range of students; and the ability to maintain relevance through the years by directing students toward the future while drawing on the past.

#### John G. Flowers Award

Awarded to recognize an individual or organization for excellence in the promotion of architecture through the media.

Awarded in memory of TSA's first executive vice president.

#### William W. Caudill Award

Awarded to recognize a TSA member for professional achievement in leadership development during the early years of AIA membership.

Awarded in memory of William W. Caudill, FAIA, recipient of the 1985 AIA Gold Medal and a pioneer of architectural design, practice, and leadership and service to the organization and community. Must be an architect member in good standing and an active member of the local AIA chapter for a minimum of two years (40 years of age is a recommended maximum for a nominee). The nominee should be a role model to the organization with these qualities: goes beyond the call of duty in service to the profession; influences improvement in the organization at the state level; encourages participation among fellow members and non-members; exemplifies qualities of leadership; and exemplifies qualities of professional practice.

#### Architecture Firm Award

Awarded to a TSA firm that has consistently produced distinguished architecture for a period of at least 10 years. The honors Committee will focus its evaluation on the quality of the firm's architecture and its meritorious

contributions to the profession and to the community.

Any TSA component may nominate one eligible firm. Firms practicing under the leadership of either a single principal or several principals are eligible for the award. In addition, firms that have been reorganized and whose name has been changed or modified are also eligible, as long as the firm has been in operation for a period of at least 10 years.

### Nomination Procedures

Except for the Llewelyn W. Pitts Award, each nomination must be submitted through the local chapter and must be in an approved format. TSA will provide nomination forms and portfolio criteria to each local chapter. Additional copies may be obtained upon request.

Nominations for the Llewelyn W. Pitts Award may be made by any TSA member in the form of a letter addressed to the Chair of the TSA Honors Committee. No portfolio is to be submitted.

### Selection and Notification

Recipients of all TSA Honors Awards are chosen by the members of the TSA Honors Committee in June of each year. Recipient names (with the exception of the Pitts Award) are ratified by a vote of the TSA Executive Committee at the summer meeting. Following the meeting, Honors Award recipients are notified of their selection and invited to the award ceremonies. The names of Honors Award recipients are published in *Texas Architect*.

### Presentation

Awards will be presented during TSA's 60th Annual Convention and Exposition in Galveston, Texas, October 21-23, 1999.

### Submission Deadline

All nominations must be received in the TSA office no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 28, 1999. Please direct questions to Gay Patterson at TSA, 512/478-7386. Nominations shall be sent to:

TSA Honors Committee  
Mary Crites, AIA, Chair  
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**On the cover:** Hill County Courthouse Restoration, Hillsboro; Architexas, Dallas; photograph by Gary Skotnicki

**Above:** Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Jefferson; Curtis & Windham Architects, Houston; photograph by Hester + Hardaway

## REVISITING HISTORY

- TEA-Time in Texas** 30  
*David G. Woodcock, FALA*  
Southern Pacific Railroad Station, Edinburg  
Hill County Courthouse, Hillsboro  
Port Isabel Lighthouse and Visitors Center, Port Isabel  
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# Forward to the Past

WHEN I STARTED TALKING to the architects who worked on projects featured in this issue, I heard stories again and again about what the buildings mean to their communities: stories about grassroots fundraising efforts to save the Southern Pacific Railroad Station in Edinburg and of the fierce determination of the citizens of Hill County to restore their courthouse after the fire that almost destroyed it.

Both the Edinburg train station and the Hill County Courthouse were restored using grants from the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA); more than \$70 million in ISTEA funds flowed into Texas preservation projects between 1991 and 1998 (see David Woodcock's story, beginning on page 30). Several of the architects of those ISTEA projects, using almost identical words, described ISTEA to me as "the most important thing that ever happened to preservation in Texas." Those same architects have been lobbying for the continuation of such federal support for preservation projects: The Texas Department of Transportation, which administered ISTEA, has proposed excluding preservation in its regulations for the follow-on federal transportation legislation, the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Architects, along with many others, have also been lobbying the state legislature to approve Governor George W. Bush's request for millions of dollars to save Texas' historic courthouses (see story, page 13).

And while architects and others in the preservation community will benefit from the success of these lobbying efforts, the implications and possible consequences go much further. These are, in fact, decisions that should be of interest and concern to all Texans.

In a time when every place looks more and more the same, historic buildings are a large part of what sets one community apart from another. These are not merely buildings, but repositories for the shared memories of the society, important in ways that go far beyond their more obvious functions. Revitalizing, rethinking, and re-using them is a way for us to be connected to a past that, in today's virtual world, is becoming harder and harder to remember.

• • •

WITH THIS ISSUE, we welcome Tamara Gill to the staff of *Texas Architect*. Tamara comes to *TA* from the University of Texas at Austin, where she designed university catalogs, course schedules, and other materials. Prior to that she was acting director of publications for the Federal Bar Association in Washington, D.C., where she edited the association's magazine, *The Federal Lawyer*. Tamara has a bachelor of arts degree in English from the University of Tennessee. She will edit the "News" section of the magazine and layout and produce many of the other pages as well.

I am also glad to announce the addition of yet another Dallas writer to our roster of contributing editors. I have worked on stories with Max Levy a number of times over the years—you may remember his pieces on Fallingwater and Monticello and on the possibilities of the prairie north of Dallas. Each experience has been both a pleasure for me and, based on the response we have received, for the reader as well. So, we are happy to report that Max has agreed to work occasional stories for *Texas Architect* into his busy schedule.

Susan Williamson

### UPCOMING ISSUES

We invite submission of projects to *Texas Architect*:

Sept/Oct (deadline 11 June: see Call for Entries in the May/June issue) "TSA Design Award Winners"

Nov/Dec (deadline 14 June) "Transportation Centers".

If you have ideas for "News" or "Survey," call us at 512.478.7386, fax at 512.478.0528, or e-mail at williamson@txarch.com.



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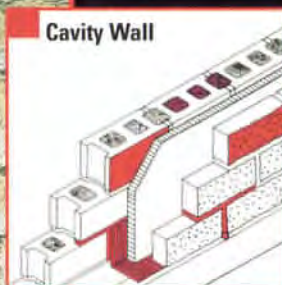
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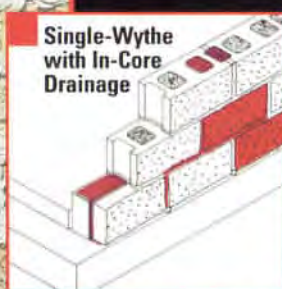
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## Corrections

The photograph of the Texas School for the Deaf on page 3 of the January/February 1999 issue should have been credited to Greg Hursley.

The photographs of Bridgepoint Elementary School on page 33 of the January/February 1999 issue were taken by Gary Iwers only; Larry Pearlstone did not take any of the photographs included.

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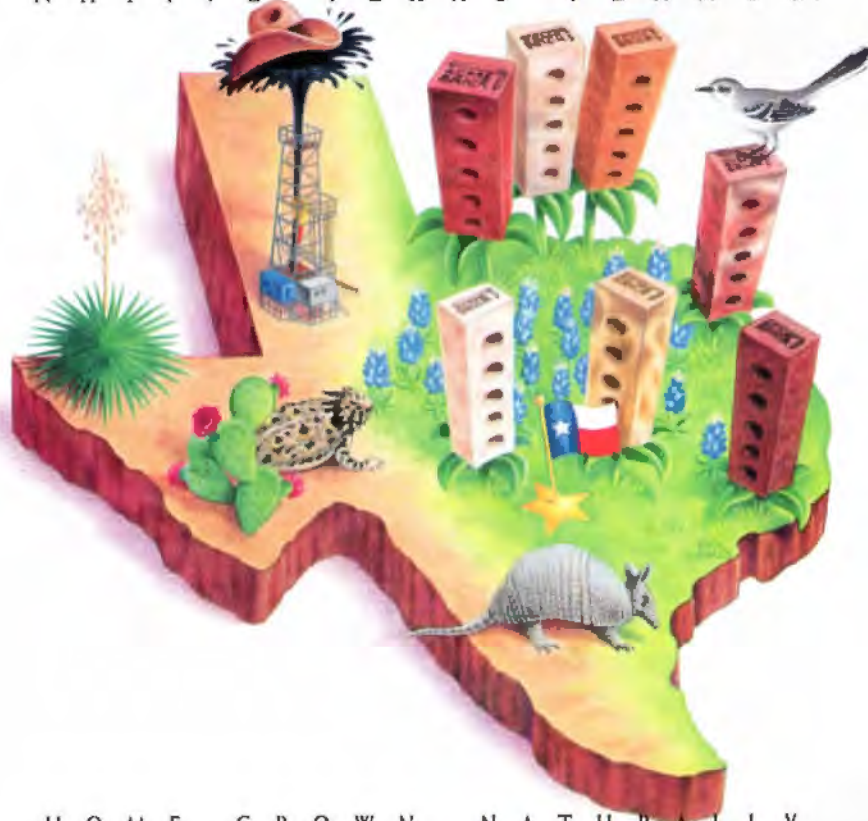


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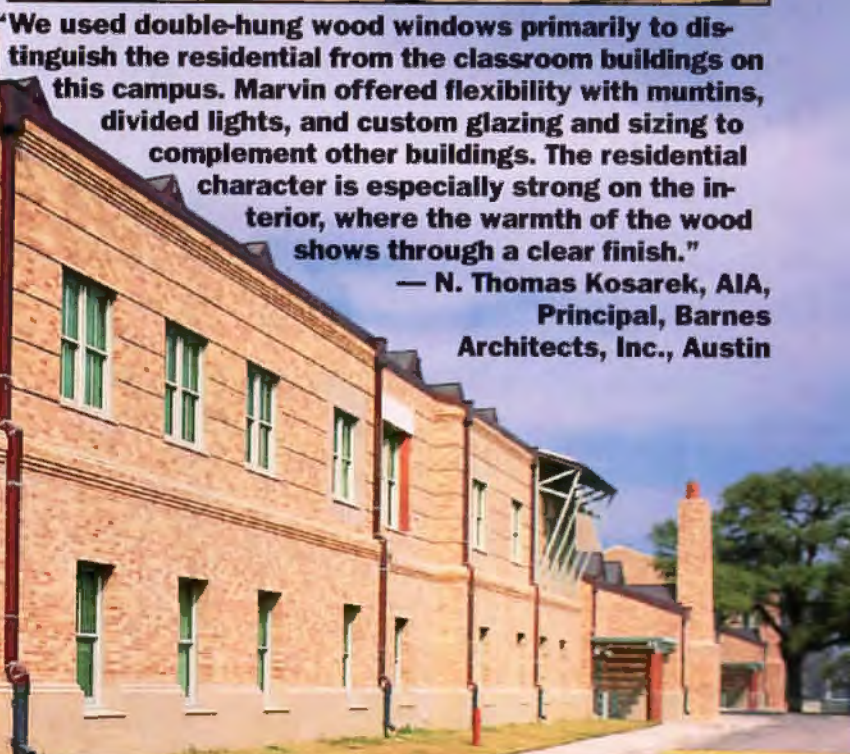
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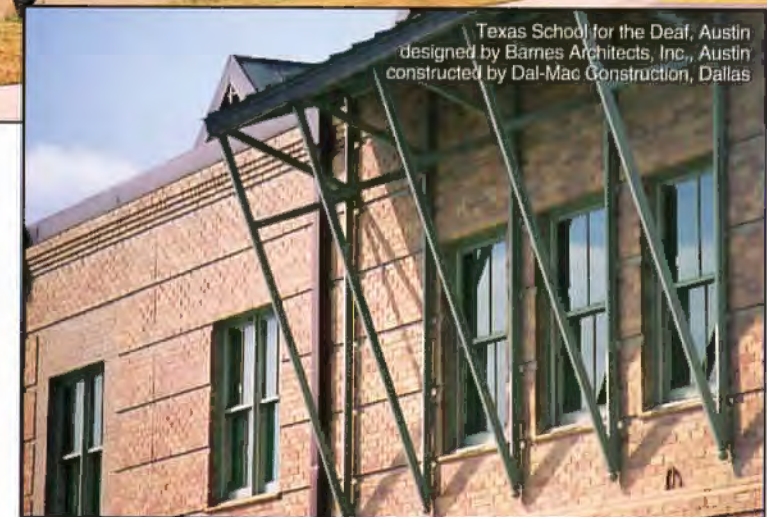


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# News

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**FORT WORTH** Tadao Ando's design of the new Modern Art Museum is complete; an exhibition of the design is underway at the existing museum.

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**AUSTIN** Governor George W. Bush has asked the state legislature to approve an appropriation of \$100 million to preserve the historic county court-houses of Texas.

## Honoring Fort Worth 17

**FORT WORTH** Jurors selected six projects to receive awards in the Fort Worth chapter's design awards competition.

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**EL PASO** Two projects received honor awards in the El Paso chapter's design awards competition.

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## Ando and Fort Worth

**FORT WORTH** Tadao Ando's design process for the new Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth is the subject of an exhibit currently on display at the existing museum. Drawings and models elucidate in narrative form the definition and refinement of the project, which is now in the construction document phase.

The design phase of the project began with Ando's hiring in May 1997. Ground-breaking is scheduled for fall of 1999 in expectation of completing the project in the year 2002, coincident with the 110th anniversary of the founding of the art museum, the oldest in Texas. Kendall-Heaton Associates of Houston, is the architect of record and the project budget is estimated at \$60 million.

The conceptual design with which Ando won the 1997 competition was titled an "Arbor for Art" (see *TA*, July/August, 1997) and

posited the museum as an "L" configuration of six parallel concrete bars. Two longer bars contained the entry, public areas, and administrative offices, while four shorter bars contained concrete galleries within glass-walled perimeter circulation that served as an environmental buffer and as a light-mediating filter to the linear concrete display volumes.

The structure was sited on property acquired across the street from the Kimbell Art Museum and was distanced, actually and conceptually, from an adjacent intersection by a new copse of trees and a shallow water garden upon which the volumes appeared to float. The two-story, tripartite massing, parallel volumes, material, palette, and quiet sensibility established a strong rapport with the Kimbell, and the Modern's thin, flat roof system further enhanced the Kimbell's cycloid roof forms by gracious formal deference.

The roof shown in the proposal implied a layered, woven mat of horizontal glazing, steel structure, and

*"Ando," continued on page 16*



courtesy Modern Art Museum

view of façade on Darnell Street with Kimbell Art Museum in distance

## Of Note: Two for Texas

**WASHINGTON, DC** Two Texas projects were selected as winners in the 50th anniversary American Institute of Architects Honor Awards program; the 1999 awards were announced in January and will be presented at the AIA convention in Dallas in May. Both had previously won Texas Society of Architects design awards.

The Brooks County Safety Rest Area, by Richter Associates Architects of Corpus Christi, was one of the two projects to win an award. The rest area is two miles north of a Texas-Mexico border check-point near Falfurrias, (see *TA*, September/October 1998). The public amenities buildings were designed to resemble historic border struc-

tures, and the individual shelters have a hand-built quality. No trees were sacrificed in the construction, and the bulk materials used in the project were salvaged and recycled from earlier structures. The jury described the project as an example of how award-winning architecture can have a modest program and be accessible to all. The project, jurors said, is a richly detailed, inventive place that expands the architectural model of the American rest stop.

The second winner is located in Houston and was designed by New York-based architect François de Menil. The Byzantine Fresco Chapel Museum was constructed to display a pair of restored 13th-century frescoes owned by the Menil Foundation (see *TA*, July/August and September/October 1997). *Sarah Willis*

# On the Square

**LEGISLATIVE** The historic Texas courthouse has been much in the news over the past few years, mostly for negative reasons. First, there was the fire that nearly destroyed the Hill County Courthouse in 1993 (see stories, pages 25-26 and 33), followed by the inclusion of the courthouses as a group on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 1998 list of America's 11 most endangered historic places.

Now the courthouses are getting some more positive attention. Preservation and other interested groups across the state, including the Texas Society of Architects, are lining up to support a proposal by Governor George W. Bush to create an Historic Courthouse Preservation Program; the program would grant or loan state funds to preserve or restore the state's historic county courthouses. A bill to create such a program was filed in the Texas House of

The courthouses, designed by some of the finest architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries stand at the hearts of their communities, symbols of economic and civic vitality. When they were built, Graves says, counties could only take on debt to build a courthouse. Partly as a way to attract the railroads then pushing westward, towns competed for the right to house the county seat; if chosen, they built magnificent, even extravagant, courthouses.

Over the years, a lack of continued funding for proper maintenance, as well as outdated mechanical and other systems, have resulted in buildings that are inefficient, if not hazardous. In addition, many of the courthouses do not comply with current codes and standards, including those governing accessibility. These problems have put many of the historic courthouses into harm's way: vulnerable to fires like

The proposed legislation would help fill that gap by establishing a mechanism to provide state funds to counties for courthouse preservation or restoration. Under the terms of Rep. Gallego's bill, buildings more than 50 years old and actively used as courthouses would have precedence, as would projects where the owner would provide at least 15 percent of the cost. The bill stipulates that all eligible projects must have a completed master preservation plan and must follow recognized preservation standards. Eligible expenses include costs for structural, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems; code and environmental compliance; replication of missing architectural features; removal of inappropriate additions; and restoration of courtrooms or other significant public spaces. As introduced, the bill specifies a maximum grant of \$4 million per project although that



1 detail of the Nueces County Courthouse in Corpus Christi; designed by Harvey L. Page in

1914, it was abandoned as a courthouse in 1976. A re-use feasibility study is currently underway.



photographs courtesy Texas Historical Commission

2 The Old Reagan County Courthouse in Stiles was designed by William Martin in 1911. When the railroad bypassed Stiles in 1910, the county seat was moved to Big Lake. The building has been abandoned for years; plans were underway to restore it when it was destroyed by arson in December 1998.

Representatives by Rep. Pete Gallego (D-Alpine) in early February. According to Rep. Gallego, an initial appropriation of \$100 million has been recommended to fund the project.

Texas has 254 counties and more than 200 of those have active courthouses located in historic structures, according to Stan Graves, director of the architecture division of the Texas Historical Commission; the THC would administer the courthouse program under the terms of Rep. Gallego's bill. An additional 25 historic courthouses are either abandoned or used for some other function—museums, community centers, city or county government offices.

those at Hill County and Reagan County, to abandonment, and even to demolition.

The Hill County fire galvanized preservationists: the THC established the Texas Courthouse Alliance project to document 55 of the state's oldest and most endangered courthouses; that project was paid for with federal funds available from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Additional ISTEA grants paid for rehabilitation of individual buildings: 23 courthouse restoration projects received nearly \$17 million in ISTEA funds between 1994 and 1997. The availability of ISTEA funds was a boon for Texas' courthouses, but the follow-on legislation, the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) which superseded ISTEA last fall, is not expected to provide federal funds for courthouse projects (see story, page 30).

amount—as well as other details—may change before the bill is passed, Rep. Gallego says.

Preservation Texas, a statewide preservation organization, is one of the groups that has been lobbying in support of the courthouse program. Executive Director Elizabeth Ann Gates says, "Texas has more historic courthouses than any other state and this bill gives us the opportunity to preserve a unique group of public buildings." The THC's Graves seconds her take on the importance of the legislation: "We would be derelict as public citizens not to take care of this collection of cultural resources."

*Susan Williamson*

*The Courthouse Preservation Program is a legislative priority of the Texas Society of Architects; to check the status of the bill, visit TSA's website at [www.tsaonline.org](http://www.tsaonline.org).*

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light control not unlike Renzo Piano's work at the Beyeler Foundation Museum in Switzerland, or the Menil Collection and Cy Twombly Gallery projects, both in Houston; and in fact, these buildings were researched by the museum as possibly relevant precedent. Cantilevered roof overhangs over each bar varied between 8 feet and 32 feet, with east ends supported by Y-shaped concrete columns similar to those employed by Ando in his 1992 Otemae Art Center in Hyogo, Japan, and in his 1994 Suntory Museum in Osaka, Japan.

The actual design phase obviously affected and redefined many of these elements. The size of Ando's original proposal—at 230,000 square feet almost twice the size of the Kimbell, and 55,000 square feet over the museum's program—as well as the extremes of Texas weather were among the first design issues to be addressed. The size of the building was reduced to 120,000 square feet with an additional 30,000 square feet of basement storage vaults and mechanical rooms. Actual display space was reduced from the 75,000 square feet indicated in the program to the 50,000 square feet now included. This was accomplished by removing one of the four shorter gallery bars entirely and by excising a 24-foot section from the length of every bar. The underground parking shown in the competition proposal was eliminated en-

tirely and surface parking now fills the south and west sides of the property.

Although the original 40-foot-24-foot-40-foot rhythm still exists in the north/south section, curatorial concerns for greater diversity of display spaces and fewer works of art on a wall have broken the original linear concrete volumes into smaller rooms with more casual transverse circulation. In addition, also for curatorial reasons, many of these interior walls are now painted drywall surfaces rather than concrete.

The conceptual roof design has perhaps been affected the most by constraints and

now consists of five parallel concrete slabs with incisions rather than the glass and steel layering indicated in the competition proposal. Gabled skylights and thin vertical clerestories protected by flush metal awnings are the only sources of light at the roof plane.

The ceiling section alternates between suspended translucent vaults beneath gabled skylights at 24-foot bays and flat ceilings with daylight from linear clerestories at 40-foot bays. Mechanical ductwork and lighting are carefully and uniquely integrated in section with the roof slabs, now supported on parallel, four-foot deep, V-shaped concrete elements.

The building will have an 18-foot floor-to-floor dimension that will allow a 16-foot ceiling height at each level as desired for display. The top of the roof plane will be at 40 feet above grade and the considerable 32-foot steel and glass cantilevers of the proposal have been reduced to 16 feet by pulling the Y-columns outside the building envelope and into the water garden. The longest concrete roof cantilevers are now stiffened by exposed beams on the top of the roof slab.

Matte-finished anodized aluminum panels, not unlike those employed by Ando in his 1995 Gojo Museum project, will be incorporated in the main entry façade and have thin, horizontal windows somewhat evocative of the Kimbell's fenestration.

Peter Arendt, director of design and construction for the MPA Foundation, which is acting as owner of the project, says that "Ando has been an incredibly resourceful and collaborative design architect, and it has been an absolute joy working with him on this project."

Full-scale mockups of reinforced concrete wall and roof sections are being constructed on the site as tests for concrete mix, formwork, reinforcement, and finishes. The exhibition of the design process of the new building will be on display indefinitely at the existing museum. Further information and images of the new architectural model are provided on the museum's website at [www.mamfw.org](http://www.mamfw.org).

*W. Mark Gunderson*

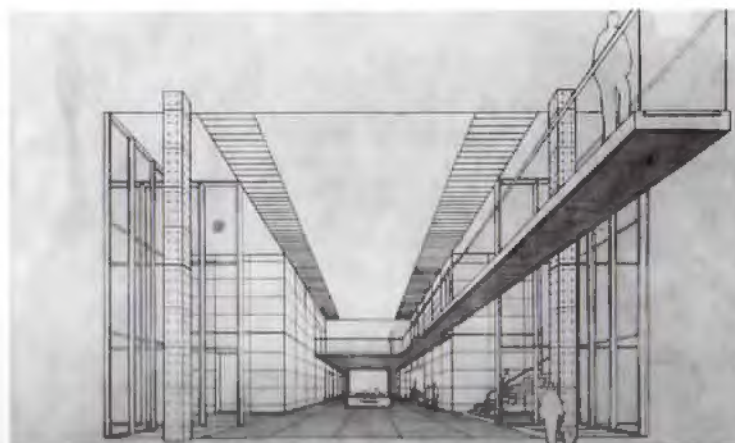
*W. Mark Gunderson is an architect practicing in Fort Worth.*



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1 Full-scale mockups of reinforced concrete wall and roof sections have been constructed on the museum site.

2 View of model shows the water garden edged by the two wings of the L-shaped museum building.

3 sketch shows main lobby of museum

W. Mark Gunderson

C. Clinton Jones

courtesy: Modern Art Museum

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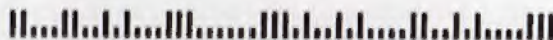
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# Honoring Fort Worth

**FORT WORTH** Six winners were selected in the 1998 design awards competition held by the American Institute of Architects, Fort Worth Chapter. The jurors for the event were Rand Elliot, FAIA, of Oklahoma City, and Joe M. McCall and Willis Cecil Winters, both of Dallas.

An honor award went to the Texas Department of Transportation's Lubbock Gateway by Gideon Toal. The two merit award recipients were Disney's Wide World of Sports, David M. Schwarz/Architectural Services, Inc.; and St. Joseph Catholic Church, Jim Bransford, Architect. Citation awards went to Joe M. Tison Junior High School, VLK Architects; St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church, Jim Bransford Architect with INAI Studio; and the Addition to Arlington High School, Carter & Burgess, Inc.

*Sarah Willis*



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Dan Foyer, used by permission from Disney Enterprises, Inc.

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1 Texas Department of Transportation/Lubbock Gateway

2 St. Joseph Catholic Church

3 St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church

4 Disney's Wide World of Sports

5 Joe M. Tison Junior High School

6 Addition to Arlington High School

## CALENDAR

### "A Gentle Rivalry"

"Matisse and Picasso: A Gentle Rivalry" is the first major exhibition devoted to the extraordinary artistic exchange between Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso and is comprised of over 100 paintings, sculptures, and drawings from collections around the world. The exhibit focuses on the interaction between the two artists in the early '30s. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth (817/332-8451) THROUGH MAY 2

### Art and Graphic Design

Artist and graphic designer Chuck Ramirez's work employs visual and conceptual techniques that are found in contemporary advertising and package design. Using typography and digital imaging technology, Ramirez isolates and recontextualizes familiar objects and texts to explore issues that are both personal and sociopolitical, and with a sense of humor. Earlier work has investigated the complexity of Latino identity and visibility and the AIDS crisis. The Hudson (Show)Room, ArtPace, San Antonio (210/212-4900) THROUGH APRIL 4

### American Art on Display

This installation offers a preview of a future permanent gallery displaying pre-1945 American art, including landscape art by Thomas Cole and Frederic Church; sketches by American impressionists such as Willard Metcalf, Childe Hassam, and William Merritt Chase; and American portraiture by John Singer Sargent, George Bellows, and Thomas Eakins. The conclusion of the installation includes early 20th-century work by such artists as Marsden Hartley, Stanton MacDonald-Wright, Morgan Russell, Patrick Henry Bruce, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Elie Nadelman. The Caroline Wiess Law Building, Houston (713/639-7540), MARCH 28-MAY 23

### AIA Convention Party

Celebrate with your friends and colleagues at the American Institute of Architects National Convention Host Chapter Party. Stroll down the Esplanada of State, experience the restored splendor of the art deco buildings that flank the 700-foot long reflecting pool, and tour the festival area and the Hall of State while sampling a wide diversity of Texas tastes. Dress comfortably and come ready to dance! Fair Park, Dallas (214/871-2788) MAY 7

## El Paso Awards Two

**EL PASO** Two winners were selected in the 1998 design awards competition sponsored by the El Paso Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Jurors for this year's competition were Frank Welch, FAIA, and Max Levy, both of Dallas.

Both of the winning projects were given honor awards. The first was the Silva Residence, a 4,500-square-foot private house in El Paso, designed by Synthesis Architecture. The second honor-award winner was the Aboud/Laster Building, a 10,000-square-foot medical office building in El Paso, by McCormick Associates Architecture, Inc. *Sarah Willis*



Ed Seltzer



Fred Golden ASMP

1 The Silva Residence by Synthesis Architecture was one of two honor-award winning projects in the 1998 El Paso chapter design-awards competition.

2 The Aboud/Laster Building by McCormick Associates Architecture, Inc., also won an honor award in the competition.

## Of Note: Honors Roundup

### Honoring Preservation

**WASHINGTON, DC** Anice Barber Read, nationally known preservationist, received preservation's highest honor, the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Louise du Pont Crown-in-shield Award in October 1998.

Read's interest in restoration and preservation began in her hometown of Fort Worth where she worked as a volunteer to save community landmarks. Texas governor John Connally selected her to be a member of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) in 1969.

During her years as a member of the THC, Read established the Texas Main Street Program, which has revived hundreds of communities nationwide with the program's innovative revitalization strategies. In Texas alone, with Read leading the way, more than 6,000 historical buildings have been restored and over \$211 million has been invested in down-

towns throughout the state.

When Read retired as deputy director of the THC in 1996, Governor George Bush declared September 27, 1996, to be "Anice Read Day." Since her retirement Read continues to do volunteer work statewide and in her community.

### Healthcare Award

**IRVING** FDS International was awarded an honorable mention in the built category for Memorial Hospital of Colorado Springs at the 13th annual design awards competition sponsored by *Modern Healthcare* and the American Institute of Architect's Academy of Architecture for Health. Of the 220 applicants in the nationally recognized competition, FDS was the only Texas firm to earn one of the eleven awards presented. Judges commented that the campus featured an unusual and interesting exterior design that reflected its Colorado setting.

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*—Gordon Yeatts, AIA*

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# Presidential Presence

**PROJECT** George Bush Presidential Library

**CLIENT** Bush Presidential Library Foundation and Texas A&M University

**ARCHITECT** Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum, Houston, (Thomas H. Robson, principle in charge; Robert B. Mease, James Wright, George Parker, Kathrin Brunner, Alan B. Colyer, project team)

**CONTRACTOR** Manhattan Construction Company

**CONSULTANTS** Walter P. Moore and Associates (structural); Burnus DeLatta & McCoy (mechanical & electrical); WSBC Civil Engineers (civil); Arcbillume Lighting Design (lighting); Boner Associates (acoustical/audio visual); Frank Clements Associates (kitchen); Dan M. Pope Irrigation Consultant (irrigation); Martensen & Associates (specifications); Sako & Associates (security); Essex Industries (hardware); Waterscape Consultants (waterscape)

**PHOTOGRAPHER** Erhard Pfeiffer

1 The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum Center, part of a complex also including the Presidential Conference Center and Bush School of Government and Public Service, is located on a 90-acre rolling meadow on the Texas A&M campus in College Station. The center's design incorporates both traditional federal influences and the historical architecture of the campus, the architects say. Exterior materials are Texas sunset beige and Texas cream limestone; supplier Acme Brick purchased a special brick cutter to achieve the unique cut for the masonry units. The reinforced concrete structural system for the three-floor library accommodates 250 pounds per square foot, or a total of 320 tons. The interior lighting and exterior



rior glazing serve as filters for ultraviolet light for preservation of archival materials.

2 The library's glass entry reveals a dramatic 50-foot-high lobby rotunda with a crowning skylight. The lobby, which serves as the center's internal gathering place, is the connecting point for the archival wing and the one-story exhibition wing.

3 The permanent and changing museum exhibit area utilizes structural steel framing with long span members, allowing for column-free spaces.

## RESOURCES

**Masonry units:** Elgin-Butler Brick, Acme Brick; **limestone:** South Texas Stone; **granite:** Cold Spring Granite; **foam roofing silicone coating:** Down Loring; **wood and plastic doors and frames:** VT Industries; **vault door:** Mosler; **entrances and storefronts:** U.S. Aluminum; **unit skylights:** Super-Sky; **glass:** Viracon; **glazed curtainwall:** U.S. Aluminum; **gypsum board framing and accessories:** U.S. Gypsum; **tile:** Dal-Tile; **acoustical ceilings, metal ceilings:** USG Interiors; **paints:** Sherwin-Williams



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# The future looks bright

**PROJECT** George Ozuna, Jr., Learning Resources and Academic Computing Center, San Antonio

**CLIENT** Alamo Community College District

**ARCHITECT** Alamo Architects/Ray Bailey Architects Joint Venture (Mike Lanford, John Focke, Jerry Lammers, Frank Whitson)

**CONTRACTOR** Spaw Glass, Inc.

**CONSULTANTS** Bain Medina Bain (civil); PTI, Inc. (structural); Barron Engineering (mechanical, electrical, & plumbing); Resource Seven (audio/visual/acoustics); John Laffoon Assoc. (landscape); RMI, Inc. (communications)

**PHOTOGRAPHER** Peter Mueller, Inc.



1 The George Ozuna, Jr., Learning Resources and Academic Computing Center marks the south campus entrance of Palo Alto College in San Antonio. The 75,000-square-foot center borrows materials used on existing campus facilities—rusticated masonry, stucco walls, and metal roofing—and contrasts them with colorful glazed masonry. The extensive use of glass admits natural light and visually opens the center, setting it apart from the more enclosed older buildings and emphasizing its important role on the campus and in future development at the college. The center is organized in two parts connected by a pyramidal entrance lobby that separates the traditional stacks, reading, and study areas on one side from high-tech computer use areas on the other.

2 The Learning Resources area, located on the west side, houses conventional library spaces with reading areas by the windows and open stacks toward the center of the library. Second-floor areas, as shown here, receive additional light from clerestories. Learning Resources seats as many as 519 and has the capacity to hold 105,000 volumes and 500 periodicals.



- FIRST FLOOR PLAN**
- 1 ENTRY
  - 2 CIRCULATION/RESERVE
  - 3 REFERENCE DESK
  - 4 OPEN STACKS
  - 5 GROUP STUDY
  - 6 CHILDREN'S LIBRARY
  - 7 TV STUDIO
  - 8 WORKSTATIONS
  - 9 MEGA-LAB
  - 10 CLASSROOMS

3 On the east side of the entry is the Academic Computing Center, with areas for CD-ROM-based interactive research and study, five computer instruction classrooms, and a mega-lab with 114 computer stations. The second-level "information concourse" is a "virtual bridge" over the first floor, lit by clerestories to minimize glare on monitor screens.

## RESOURCES

**Concrete materials:** Ingram Ready Mix; **reinforced steel:** Alamo Iron Works; **masonry units:** Featherlite; **faced/glazed CMU:** Trenwyth Industries; **architectural metal work, railings and handrails:** Safety Steel; **expansion joint covers:** The C/S Group; **architectural woodwork:** Nicks

**Millwork; laminates:** Wilsonart; **membrane roofing:** GS Storm Shield; **metal roofing:** Berridge Manufacturing Co.; **joint sealers:** Tremco; **metal doors:** Door Pro Systems, Inc.; **wood and plastic doors and frames:** Total Opening Systems; **specialty doors:** Atlas Energy Products; **entrances and storefronts:** Vistawall; **glass:** GS Storm Shield; **decorative glazing:** Berridge Manf Co.; **gypsum board:** Temple Inland; **tile:** American Olean; **acoustical ceilings:** Armstrong, Inc.; **suspended acoustical panels:** Tecturn, Inc.; **VCT:** Armstrong, Inc.; **acoustical treatments:** Tectum Panels; **paints:** ICI Dulux Paints; **cement tile floor:** Mosaico De Diseno; **letters and plaques:** ASI; **signage and graphics:** ASI; **toilet accessories:** Bradley



# A C M E B R I C K

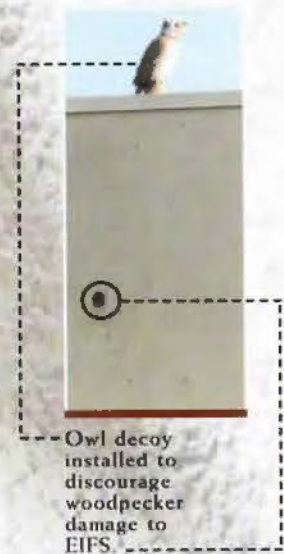
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## Recreating History

**INTERIORS** When the Hill County Courthouse in Hillsboro burned on New Year's Day 1993, its tower collapsed through the top floor, leaving the interior exposed to the elements (see story, page 33). The courthouse, designed by W.C. Dodson in 1890, is a Texas historic and archeological landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Given its importance to the community, the county commissioners quickly decided to rebuild and, in fact, to restore the courthouse to its 1890s glory.

The architectural woodwork in the courthouse that did not burn was not only at risk from the weather, but in many cases had been modified since the courthouse was built. The original wood windows had been retrofitted to hold aluminum sashes in the 1960s and door jambs modified and transoms above in-



terior doors removed when drop ceilings were installed.

Restoration architects ArchiTexas of Dallas salvaged as much woodwork as possible and used original pieces as models. Little historic documentation existed of the original casework so, architect Craig Melde says, the courtrooms in particular reflect an interpretation rather than a recreation of the original. The Hood County Courthouse in Granbury, designed by Dodson at about the same time, was used as a resource and inspiration, not only for millwork design but also for replication of door and window hardware. The architects also interviewed lawyers who had practiced in the courthouse for decades, plumbing their memories for details about the building's spaces. Those memories were helpful, Melde says, except when it came to



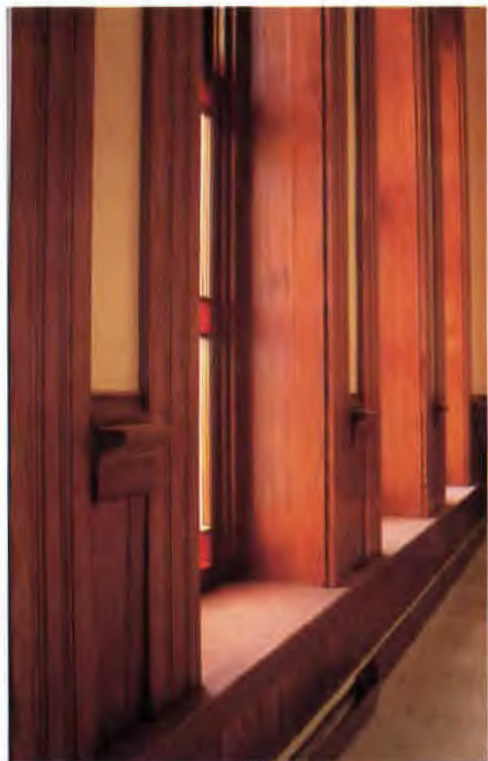
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the district courtroom's ceiling, of which there were no photographs and which no one seemed to remember. Evidently the lawyers didn't spend much time gazing heavenward.

The windows posed a particular problem since the sashes had been discarded when the metal windows were installed. Fortunately the architects found one original sash, undamaged by the fire, in the basement, as well as some historic photographs. Using those as guides, historic window preservationists Leeds Clark of Midlothian created new windows throughout, re-using and rebuilding frames where possible and constructing all new sashes.



2

1 Interior doors, as well as trim, casing, baseboards, wainscoting, and moldings, were replicated using recycled long leaf pine. No original doors were found so door designs were based upon historic photographs.

2 New and reconstructed windows were built of heartwood sinker cypress; the old growth cypress ranged in color from yellowish gold to greenish black before it was stained.

3 Much of the damage from the 1993 fire was confined to the central section of the courthouse when the tower collapsed. Examples of original windows and doors were salvaged from the two side bays.

4 Door hardware, including ornate hinges, was replicated using examples from the Hood County Courthouse, which was designed by the same architect.

The 1890 windows had been constructed of old growth bald cypress and the original plan was to use new tidewater red cypress stained to match for the replicated portions. However, cost savings elsewhere in the project allowed the use of more expensive heartwood sinker cypress: logs that sank in rivers across the south more than 100 years ago during transport to sawmills downriver. The logs are recovered from the water, quartersawn, then resawn into planks, and allowed to air dry for as long as ten years, Tom Clark says. The graining on the

*"Interiors Focus," continued on page 26*

wood is so tight that it survived decades under water virtually undamaged. That grain pattern in the existing cypress window frames made it impossible to match with newly forested wood, Clark says, no matter how carefully it was stained.

Each window was individually constructed, "built like a piece of furniture" using true mortise-and-tenon joinery, Clark says, after full working mock-ups were developed. "We had details of each type of frame used as well as detail of the profiling of the sashes." Fortunately, examples of one of the building's distinctive features—the double-height windows with full circle transom-like tops (see photo, page 33)—survived the fire. In fact, many of the windows had radius detailing—arched window tops and circular details—and all of that work was constructed in solid sections, Clark says, rather than with smaller pieces fitted together to create the whole; the process produced more waste, but many of the small scraps were used for the muntins in the true divided-lite sashes.

The original windows were operated with a rope-and-pulley system, none of which re-

mained. Leeds Clark replicated window weights—including some to operate sashes that were as tall as 22 feet—from two-inch round pieces of steel welded to chains that ran inside the frame. Each window was outfitted with zinc weatherstripping like the originals as well as hardware replicated using models from the Hood County Courthouse.

Interior doors, windows, and custom cabinetry were also recreated using recycled long leaf pine remilled from beams salvaged from old buildings. New yellow pine was not an option, Melde says, because even stained it would have stood out from the original long leaf pine, again because of the difference in graining patterns between old growth and new growth wood.

Using the recycled old growth lumber was both an opportunity and a challenge, Melde says. The results were superior, but specifying recycled wood meant rewriting standards usually used for the task. Project architect Larry Irsik says that, in most projects, specifying the wood for millwork means specifying American

Woodworking Institute standards. However, those standards do not apply to recycled wood, which is nonstandard by its very nature. In the case of Hill County, Irsik says, the architects wrote a very tight specification, indicating precisely what the ring rate should be and what size knots were acceptable. The goal was to end up with replacement wood that matched, as closely as possible, the existing woodwork in the building.

The chance to work with the old growth cypress was exciting, Clark says, but even more important was the chance to work on a project with the potential long-lasting impact of this one. "The thing I'm proud of is that those windows are going to be there for a long, long time." *Susan Williamson*

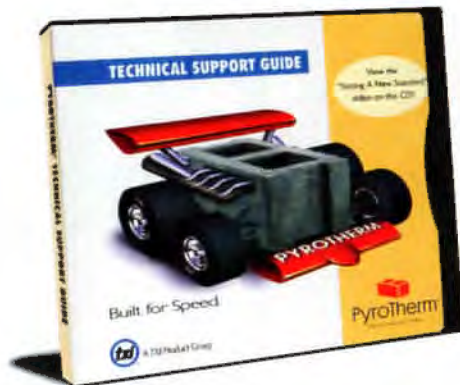
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**CUSTOM WOOD WINDOWS** Leeds Clark, Midlothian (Tom Clark)

**WOOD FOR CUSTOM WINDOWS** What Its Worth, Austin (Harold Faust III)

**FINISH CARPENTRY, DOORS, WINDOWS, AND CUSTOM CABINETS** Hull Historical Restoration, Fort Worth (Brent Hull)

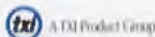
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**ARCHITECT**  
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### *Citation of Honor* *1998*

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of Architects, awarded  
to Texas Military  
Facilities Commission  
for commitment  
to design excellence

**Feature Project:** MG William Edgar Murphy  
Armed Forces Guard/Reserve Center,  
Lubbock, Texas

**Owner/Agent:** Texas Military Facilities Commission  
Jerry Malcolm - Executive Director

**Architect:** Rike Ogden Figueroa Dickson Wells PLLC  
(ROFDW)

**Associate Architect:** Joe D. McKay, AIA

**Contractor:** Carothers Constuction, Inc.

**Maintenance Challenge:** "Designing the Armed  
Forces Guard/Reserve Center in Lubbock, Texas was much  
like designing a school. The difference is everyone wears  
combat boots." While not literally true according to Bill  
Dickson, AIA Principal in Charge, the users do tend to be  
tough on interior finishes. "Generally, these buildings are  
designed and constructed for an indeterminable life, usually

in service for decades; receiving an occasional facelift and a  
new roof every twenty to thirty years."

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Mt. Vernon, VA.  
Virgin Sinker Cypress

### THE CABILDO

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### JASPER COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Jasper, TX.  
Antique Heart Pine

### HAYS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

San Marcos, TX.  
Antique Heart Pine

### GONZALES COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Gonzales, TX.  
Antique Heart Pine

### THE WINTERS HOME

Wimberly, TX.  
Antique Heart Pine

### PLAQUEMINE COURTHOUSE

Plaquemine, LA.  
Antique Heart Pine

## — PROJECTS OF NOTE —

### 'LADY BIRD' JOHNSON'S NATIONAL WILDFLOWER RESEARCH CENTER

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### ANJELICA HUSTON AND ROBERT GRAHAM RESIDENCE

Venice, CA.  
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### LOUISIANA STATE ARCHIVES BUILDING

Baton Rouge, LA.  
Virgin Sinker Cypress

### LEE TREVIÑO RESIDENCE

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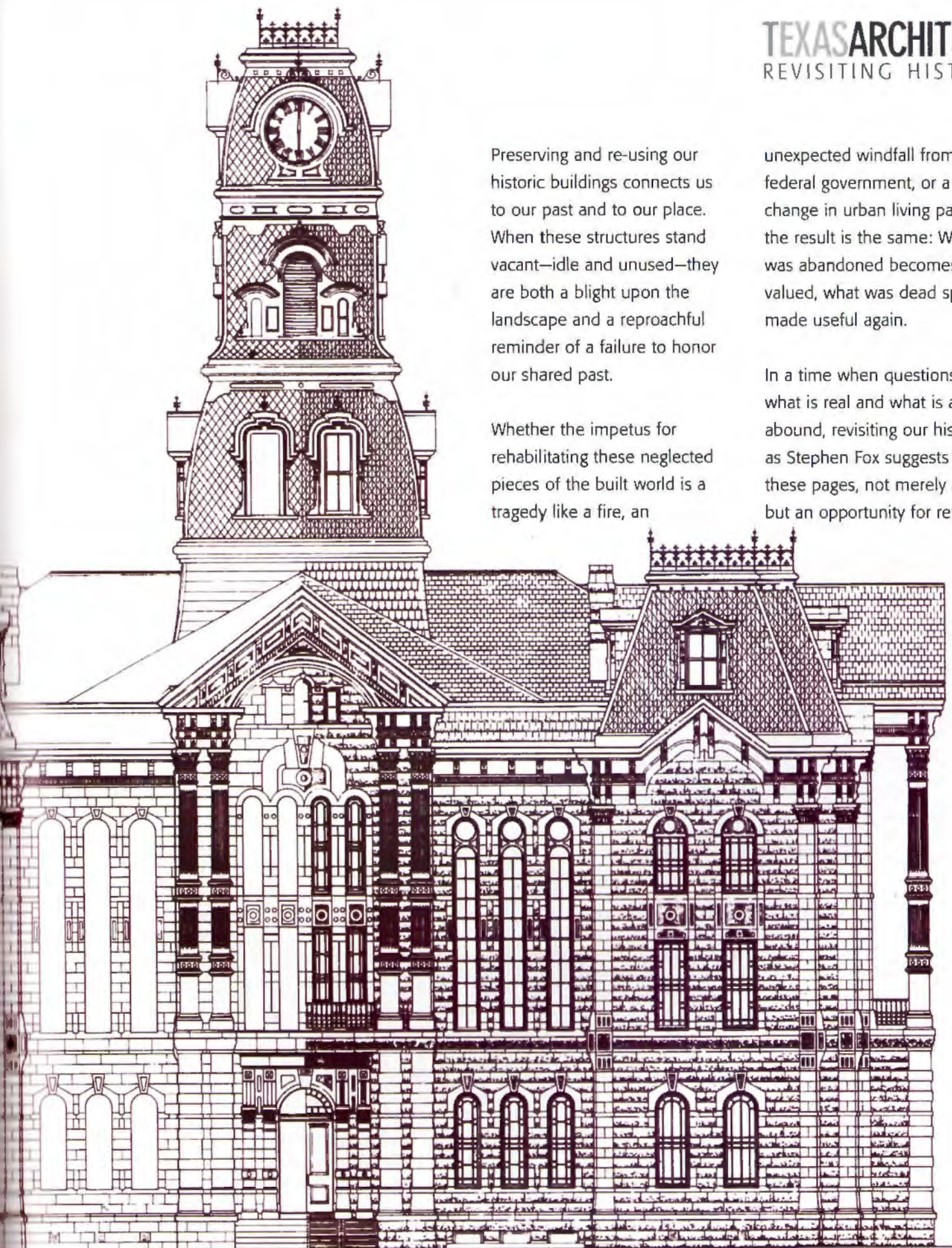


Preserving and re-using our historic buildings connects us to our past and to our place. When these structures stand vacant—idle and unused—they are both a blight upon the landscape and a reproachful reminder of a failure to honor our shared past.

Whether the impetus for rehabilitating these neglected pieces of the built world is a tragedy like a fire, an

unexpected windfall from the federal government, or a change in urban living patterns, the result is the same: What was abandoned becomes valued, what was dead space is made useful again.

In a time when questions about what is real and what is artifice abound, revisiting our history is, as Stephen Fox suggests in these pages, not merely revival but an opportunity for renewal.



# TEA-Time in Texas

by David G. Woodcock, FAIA

Not since tax legislation that provided positive incentives for the re-use of historic property had the federal government opened the door to such an exciting opportunity for financial support of historic preservation projects.



David Woodcock, FAIA

The Grimes County Courthouse in Anderson received a \$215,000 ISTEA grant for exterior restoration. Architects were the Mathes Group, New Orleans and Houston; and

David Woodcock, FAIA, consultant. The project, which was completed in November 1998, included reconstruction of the metal shingle roof based on a 1912 photograph.

PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH SIGNED the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in Texas in December 1991; the act allowed federal transportation funds, largely derived from gas taxes, to be applied beyond the previous limitations of highway construction and maintenance. The new policy not only placed an increased emphasis on mass transit, but also added a whole range of activities under the broad category of "transportation enhancement." In the preamble to this section of the act, transportation is defined as "pertaining to the purposeful movement of people between their places of residence, employment, commerce, education, recreation, and entertainment; or of goods between places of manufacture, storage, sale, maintenance, repair, salvage, and disposition"—a wide-ranging scope. However, the "enhancement" portion of the act aroused greatest interest from a broad cross-section of the public.

"Purposeful movement" for recreation and entertainment opened the door to use of federal funds for pedestrian and cycle paths, conversion of abandoned rail and canal rights of way into hike and bike trails, the creation of scenic and historic highways by improving existing systems and acquiring land for new ones, and controlling the impact of outdoor advertising in selected corridors. The act embodied the idea that local interests and visions of what was important to the community would guide the specific definition of enhancement.

For the preservation community, the most exciting section of the act was the opportunity to access highway funds for "the rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities including historic railroad facilities and canals," as well as the inclusion of an eligible activity that was simply labeled "historic preservation." Not since tax legislation that provided positive incentives for the re-use of historic property had the federal government opened the door to such an exciting opportunity for financial support of projects that might add to the quality of life through the physical improvement of the natural and built environment. Even though these activities represented a small fraction of the \$155 billion authorized by ISTEA, the excitement was felt across the nation.

Since the funds were designated within transportation appropriations, the responsibility for their use and management was assigned to those state agencies normally addressing transportation. In Texas this was the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT). As might have been expected, the addition of ISTEA to TXDOT produced more than just an odd combination of acronyms.

## TXDOT Sets the Rules

TXDOT IS RIGHTLY RECOGNIZED for the excellence of the road system in the state with the largest geographical area in the contiguous United States. With the passage of ISTEA, the agency found itself responsible for organizing and administering a vastly expanded range of project types. It was not until the Texas Register of July 16, 1993, that the agency published the rules under which Texas would expend approximately \$180 million in enhancement funds before the act expired in October 1997. The program was administered by TXDOT's 25 district offices and the environmental section of the Austin office. The scoring of applications was undertaken by a six-person committee, composed of representatives from TXDOT, the General Land Office, the Texas Department of

"TEA-Time," continued on page 32



2



3

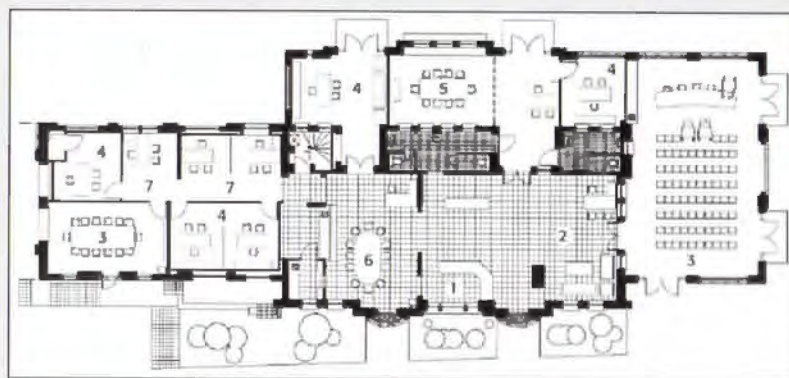
## Community Catalyst

ONE OF THE COROLLARY BENEFITS OF ISTE A funding, particularly for projects in smaller towns, has been the catalyzing effect on community involvement. In Edinburg, the rehabilitation of the long vacant Southern Pacific Railroad Station had just that effect. The project received \$400,000 from ISTE A and the community raised an additional \$200,000, far more than the 20-percent matching funds required by ISTE A.

The project involved conversion of the station into headquarters for the Edinburg Chamber of Commerce; Morales-Best Hinojosa Architects of McAllen designed the restoration. The 5,600-square-foot building had been modified over the years; in some cases modifications like suspended ceilings and wood paneling actually protected original finishes, while in other cases structural and decorative elements—a stained glass window depicting the logo of Southern Pacific, an exterior lighting system, and the ticket counter—had been removed. With the help of original construction documents obtained from Southern Pacific, these elements were recreated and other damage was assessed and repaired.

ISTE A saved the first station built by Southern Pacific in the Valley and returned an abandoned building to useful function, says Martha Noel, former chamber official. Even more important, she says, was the way the project brought the community together. "We were a volunteer organization that had no idea it could do something like this. What really made it happen was the enthusiasm and involvement of the community."

*Susan Williamson*



**PLAN KEY**  
 1 RECEPTION  
 2 WAITING  
 3 MEETING ROOM  
 4 OFFICE  
 5 CONFERENCE  
 6 LOUNGE/WORK ROOM  
 7 WORK STATION



4

**PROJECT** Southern Pacific Railroad Station Adaptive Re-use, Edinburg

**CLIENT** City of Edinburg, Edinburg Chamber of Commerce, Texas Department of Transportation

**ARCHITECT** Morales-Best Hinojosa Architects, Inc., McAllen (Teresa Morales-Best; Albert Timmreck III, project manager)

**CONTRACTOR** Imperial Construction

**CONSULTANTS** Melden & Hunt, Inc. (civil); Hinojosa Engineering (structural); Genesis Engineering Group, Inc. (mechanical, electrical, & plumbing)

**PHOTOGRAPHER** William Rios

2 The original mission revival station was built in 1927; its ISTE A-funded restoration was the first enhancement project completed in the state.

3 Ornate stucco moldings and other exterior finishes that had sustained damage from termites and weather exposure were repaired.

4 The lobby was returned to its original state, including reconstruction of the ticket counter. Because the project was considered an adaptive re-use, the Texas Historical Commission allowed retention of some later modifications, including an enclosed veranda.



Photograph courtesy Law Engineering

1 The Faust Street Bridge in New Braunfels received \$360,000 in ISTEA funds; the bridge, built in 1887, is a rare example in Texas of a wrought-iron bridge; its center span is 220 feet long. The project was undertaken by Law Engineering of Austin.

Commerce, the Texas Historical Commission (THC), the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the Texas Water Commission. The scoring system evaluated benefits in three categories: economic, environmental, and social, with each further examined in terms of function of the project, proximity to some element of the transportation infrastructure, such as a highway, and local impact.

Project nominators were required to be metropolitan planning organizations, city or county governments, or a state agency. Within multiple jurisdictions the nomination could be made by any combination or by a local transit operator. The nominators were required to assume all nomination costs; in addition, the nominating entity was responsible for providing 20 percent of the total project cost.

In a memorandum issued in April 1994, TXDOT reported the scores for the 292 eligible projects submitted for the first round of funding. There were 82 projects recommended for adoption, with further evaluation required to ensure compliance with the federal environmental review process, the department's established public involvement procedures, and environmental clearance by the Federal Highway Administration. It was clear that it might be some time before the funds authorized late in 1991 would be applied to actual project work in Texas.

Of the 82 projects, over half were trails, bike paths, or other transportation route enhancements, but 48 were preservation-related, including the restoration of five historic bridges. The 1887 Faust Street Bridge, which spans the Colorado River at New Braunfels, is one of the state's rare examples of a wrought-iron bridge. Thanks to innovative use of ultrasonic testing, the engineers were able to identify and repair damage in this beautiful structure and allow its continued use as a pedestrian bridge.

Other projects favored with ISTEA support included the south grounds of the State Capitol, the last phase of the brilliant restoration of the 1888 Capitol structure, and a Texas Historical Commission proposal to develop digital documentation of the most significant of the state's historic court-

houses, a project whose urgency was sadly demonstrated by the disastrous fire at the undocumented Hill County Courthouse in Hillsboro in 1991.

#### Help for Historic Courthouses

GIVEN THE SIGNIFICANCE of the county courthouse in Texas and the prominence of these structures as landmarks for travelers and sources of inspiration for the public, they featured prominently in the applications for ISTEA funds. Seven, including the fire-damaged Hill County Courthouse, were supported in the first group, and a further 16 in the second round. Many, like the Grimes County Courthouse in Anderson, were approved for exterior restoration only. Apparently the review panel supported enhancing the visual experience of travel, but such decisions sometimes confused county officials, who could not see how "intermodal efficiency" was maximized when a courthouse looked beautiful, but was inaccessible under terms of the Americans with Disabilities Act. In fact, there was considerable inconsistency in the application of the standards, both in determination of eligibility and in level of funding approved. The key to success seemed to rest on a well-prepared application, strong political support locally, and an established relationship between the requesting entity and the local TXDOT office. The Carnegie Library in Bryan, for example, received funds for both exterior and interior restoration, even though its significance for the three tests (function, proximity, and impact) seems no greater than Grimes County's courthouse.

The selection of historic structures with a direct connection to transportation systems was less controversial, and while a wide variety of other building types received support, no fewer than 32 historic railroad depots were coaxed into new life by this funding. The impact of the re-use of these important community landmarks represented a major social benefit, as well as providing significant work for professionals in less-populated areas of the state.

The selection and approval process, involving multiple agencies, was inevitably cumbersome, and the problems of introducing TXDOT to the process of architectural, as opposed to highway-related, project management were often frustrating to all parties. The district highway engineers and their staffs found themselves dealing with projects with indeterminate work elements and bidding procedures outside their normal practices. The initial insistence that bid packages identify quantities for all materials, rather than the standard architectural drawings and specifications, was the source of delay in many projects. The publication of a list of projects seeking bids that included "one court-



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## From the Ashes

THE HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE has become the emblem of the ISTEIA enhancement program in Texas. According to architect Craig Melde of Dallas-based ArchiTexas, the near destruction of the courthouse by fire in January 1993 was the spur that pushed the Texas Department of Transportation into allocating the first enhancement funds.

After the fire, all that remained of the courthouse, designed by W. C. Dodson in 1890, was a limestone shell. Despite the extent of the damage, the county commissioners quickly decided to rebuild. Insurance proceeds would not have paid for a full-scale exterior and interior restoration, but the receipt of \$3 million in ISTEIA funds made it possible to do both. Working with very little documentation of the original, ArchiTexas developed a plan for the exterior that included replication of the original tower and roof and of all exterior windows and doors (see story, page 25), basement waterproofing, stone restoration, exterior lighting, and site utilities. The balance of the insurance settlement plus some bond funds, for a total of \$4.9 million, was used for the interior work: restoration and replication of tile floors and wrought iron, plaster walls, and finish woodwork, as well as mechanical and electrical improvements, installed as unintrusively as possible.

Architect Melde describes a range of frustrations concerning TXDOT's administration of the ISTEIA enhancement funds, both at Hill County and elsewhere, but he does acknowledge that without ISTEIA, the Hill County Courthouse might still be a burned-out shell.

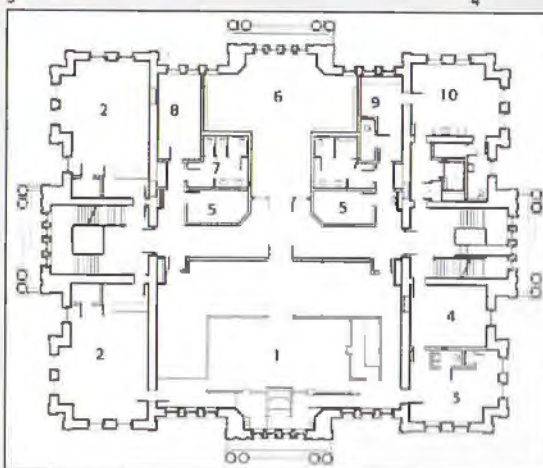
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6

- SECOND FLOOR PLAN KEY**
- 1 DISTRICT COURTROOM
  - 2 DISTRICT CLERK
  - 3 DISTRICT JUDGE
  - 4 COURT COORDINATOR
  - 5 CONFERENCE
  - 6 LAW LIBRARY
  - 7 RESTROOM
  - 8 COMPUTER COORDINATOR
  - 9 BAILIFF
  - 10 JURY ROOM

2 The architects searched the rubble following the fire and assembled pieces "like a giant jigsaw puzzle" on the courthouse lawn as the starting point for the exterior renovation.

3 detail of reconstructed tower; a contractor who had reroofed the building in the early 1980s saved several of the original shingles, which the architects used to produce replicas.

4 Side view shows the 22-foot-tall windows with full-radius transom-like tops.

5 second-floor plan; district courtroom is double height, open to the third floor.

6 after the fire

**PROJECT** Hill County Courthouse Rehabilitation, Hillsboro  
**CLIENT** Hill County  
**ARCHITECT** ArchiTexas, Dallas  
**CONTRACTOR** Bryan Construction Co. (exterior restoration); R.J. King Construction LTD. (interior rehabilitation)  
**CONSULTANTS** L.A. Fuess Partners Engineers (structural); Basharkhab Engineering, Inc. (mechanical, electrical, & plumbing); Introspec (building envelope/specifications); Mary Peyton Lighting Design (lighting)  
**PHOTOGRAPHER** Gary Skotnicki



1

1 The Port Isabel Lighthouse is currently being restored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The lantern and watchroom at the top of the structure have been removed and will be recast; plaster, both exterior and interior, is being replaced.



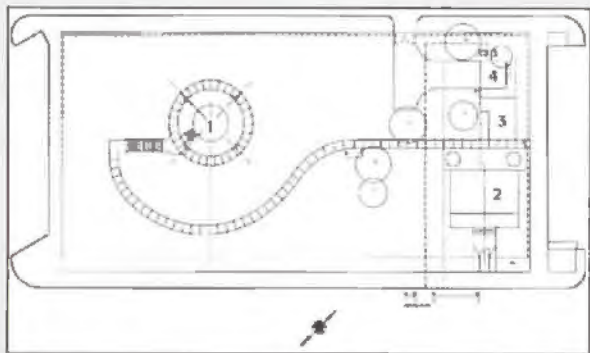
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2 The first phase of the Port Isabel project involved reconstruction of the lighthouse keeper's cabin; the new structure, designed by Ashley Humphries & Sanchez of McAllen with Andrew Perez Associates of San Antonio, is used as a visitors center.

3 The lighthouse, shown here sometime after the turn of the century, was constructed in 1853, one of a group of lighthouses built along the Gulf coast shortly after Texas became a state.



3



**SITE PLAN KEY**  
 1 LIGHTHOUSE  
 2 VISITORS CENTER  
 3 RESTROOMS  
 4 MAINTENANCE BUILDING

## Lighthouse Leverage

ONE IMPORTANT SIDE EFFECT of the availability of ISTEA funds for preservation projects has been the leverage they have often provided to undertake a larger-scale project than otherwise might have been possible. In the case of the Port Isabel Lighthouse, the owner—the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)—had earlier allocated funds to build a visitors center. The city of Port Isabel was to contribute to that project, which would have also included a cosmetic restoration of the 135-year-old lighthouse. When ISTEA funds became available, TPWD decided to use the city money as the required matching 20 percent, and to use the ISTEA funds to undertake a much more comprehensive restoration of the lighthouse.

Using historic photographs provided by TPWD, Ashley Humphries & Sanchez of McAllen designed the visitors center to replicate as closely as possible a lighthouse keeper's cabin that was demolished in 1928. The new building provides space for exhibits, restrooms, and storage. TPWD is using its own crews to do a complete overhaul of the lighthouse; work is scheduled for completion this summer. The lantern and watchroom at the top of the brick tower were removed and will be recast, according to TPWD project architect Jim Bigger. In addition, exterior plaster is being removed and replaced by more historically accurate material and the interior spiral stair is being rebuilt.

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**PROJECT** Port Isabel Lighthouse Visitors Center, Port Isabel  
**CLIENT** Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
**ARCHITECT** Ashley Humphries & Sanchez, McAllen, in association with Andrew Perez Associates, San Antonio  
**CONTRACTOR** Peacock Construction Company  
**CONSULTANTS** Schuchart & Associates (mechanical, electrical & plumbing); W.S.C., Inc. (structural)  
**PHOTOGRAPHER** J. Thomas Ashley III

photograph here and above left courtesy Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

house” may be apocryphal, but it demonstrates the language and procedural difficulties faced by applicants and their professional team. Educating TXDOT staffs about the significance of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for building preservation practice added hours of professional time in many instances, even with the strong support of the THC and a TXDOT staff member in the Austin office with specific knowledge in the field.

#### The Process Moves Forward

AFTER A PAINFULLY SLOW START, and with project funds frozen, TXDOT officials recognized that preservation and highway construction were very different activities. Projects were gradually approved and sometimes released from day-to-day oversight by TXDOT and managed in a more traditional way, with architects and contractors having the normal legal relationships to the client entities. The retention of “management” funds by TXDOT and delays between the applications in 1994 and the actual start of work created some friction, as did belated recognition that the TXDOT management fees were to be deducted from project awards, resulting in shortfalls that required unexpected additional local funds. However, as projects got under way, the visible evidence of the value of the ISTEA funding began to outweigh the difficulties of the process.

An additional 73 preservation-related projects were approved during subsequent rounds of applications in 1995 and 1997, including three of statewide significance. The State Cemetery in Austin (see *TA*, May/June and September/October 1997) received \$3.7 million in support, with a similar sum going to Fair Park in Dallas. The second phase of the restoration of the San Jacinto Monument, a major tourist destination, was awarded \$1.5 million. The monument was the only building approved in the last round with no direct transportation connection. In the early rounds, many projects selected were transportation-related only in the sense that they enhanced the experience of those traveling Texas’ highways; later selections tended to emphasize a more concrete transportation connection, although some of these projects were unusual in their own right: restoration of a World War II aircraft hanger in Jones County and funds to restore a steam engine in Brownswood, a trolley in Fort Worth, street cars in Houston, and a 1925 GMC double decker bus in Grayson County.

#### Looking to the Future

THE RECOGNITION that ISTEA-authorized enhancement funding would end in 1997 led to a national effort to pass highway legislation that would continue support for enhancement projects as a man-



Craig Blackmon, MA

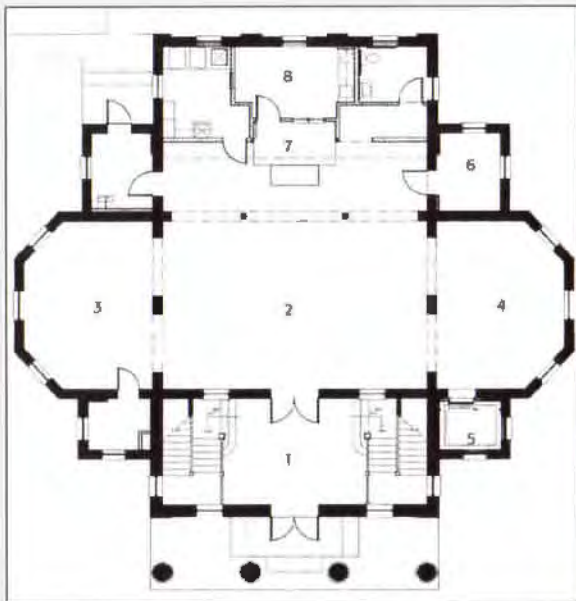
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dated part of federal transportation funding. A 1998 report by the National Transportation Clearinghouse on the national impact of ISTEA indicated that the total expenditure for such projects was \$2 billion in federal funds, with \$821 million in local matching funds. While 43 percent of the projects were bike and pedestrian facilities, there was a total of 1,335 historic transportation facility and historic preservation projects, nearly 10 percent of which were in Texas.

Congress was faced with considerable pressure from highway user groups who characterized enhancement funding as a luxury at a time of a rapidly deteriorating highway infrastructure and urged its removal from future transportation legislation. The American Institute of Architects joined the National Trust for Historic Preservation and other conservation groups in lobbying for increased funding and—concerned that some states would not willingly devote highway funds to enhancement projects—especially for retention of the federal mandate to include preservation as one of the eligible enhancement categories.

As late as August 1997, the Transport Construction Coalition was continuing pressure to allow states to make their own decisions, and Congress was considering a variety of bills, including the Highway Only Transportation Efficiency Act (HOTEA) that would have provided some funding for road-based mass transit, but no enhancement funds. The final passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in June 1998 was a triumph for the preservation lobby. It provides for a further six years of support for a variety of transportation-related historic preservation activities in the amount of \$3.8 billion. However, the legislation, in keeping with the new national spirit, keeps federal rules and regulations to a minimum, leaving states with a great deal of leeway for

4 An example of an ISTEA-funded project with a direct relation to transportation, and one that emphasized intermodal connection, was Dallas-based Corgan Associates’ restoration and adaptive use of the Monroe Shops in Dallas—a 1914 building originally used as workshops for the trolleys in the city’s interurban system. The shops are now a transportation museum and Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) transit police station; the project, which received \$2.13 million from ISTEA, is adjacent to a DART light-rail station.



- PLAN KEY**  
 1 LOBBY  
 2 ARCHIVES  
 3 READING ROOM  
 4 CHILDREN'S ROOM  
 5 ELEVATOR  
 6 HISTORY LAB  
 7 CIRCULATION DESK  
 8 WORKROOM

1 first-floor plan

2 The ISTEA-funded restoration and adaptive reuse of the Bryan Carnegie Library did not include many changes to the exterior of the building, which looks much as it did when it was built in 1903.

3 section, from east

4 historic photo of library, circa 1950

**PROJECT** Bryan Carnegie Library, Bryan  
**CLIENT** City of Bryan  
**ARCHITECT** Wagner & Klein, Inc., Architects & Preservation Consultants, Fredericksburg  
**CONTRACTOR** Madison Construction Corp.  
**CONSULTANTS** Barron Engineering (mechanical, electric, & plumbing); Vordenbaum Engineering, Inc. (structural)  
**PHOTOGRAPHER** Wagner & Klein, Inc.



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## Making History

THE CITY OF BRYAN used an ISTEA grant of nearly \$500,000 to transform its historic library into the Carnegie Center of Brazos Valley History. The 6,400-square-foot, two-story classical revival building was designed by F.E. Giesecke in 1903; it was one of 32 libraries in the state funded by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The building, abandoned as a library in the late 1960s, had in years since been occupied by various city and county agencies.

Wagner & Klein, Inc., of Fredericksburg was hired in the early '90s to undertake a master plan for the proposed re-use, several years before ISTEA funds became available. Once an ISTEA grant was approved, a comprehensive rehabilitation was planned. "The idea was to try to save historic fabric where it still existed and replace it where needed," architect Barry Wagner says. Historically inaccurate modifications like drop ceilings and vinyl composition tile were removed, original pressed metal ceilings were restored, and mechanical and electrical systems were rerouted to be less intrusive. Some modifications were made for accessibility and safety reasons: an elevator inserted into space previously used for storage, and glass enclosures of the stairwell at the second level to provide smoke protection during a fire. The exterior had remained basically unchanged, so the restoration focused on repairing those areas that had deteriorated, including recasting of the ornate column capitals.

The library is one of several ISTEA projects approved early in the process that had no real connection with transportation. In later rounds, such projects were rarely included, a trend that is expected to continue with the recently approved ISTEA follow-on legislation.

SW



interpretation. The categories eligible for support are similar to those for ISTEAs and retain the general category of historic preservation, but the act strengthens the requirement to make a connection between transportation systems and projects funded.

Towards the end of 1998, TXDOT held a public hearing on its proposed rules for TEA-21 funding. The Texas Historical Commission, Preservation Texas, the Trans-Texas Alliance, and the Texas Society of Architects were active in encouraging the TXDOT commissioners to maintain funding for preservation projects and to allow local conditions and interests to impact funding allocations. The National Trust for Historic Preservation notes that enhancement funding represents only ten percent of the TEA-21 Surface Transportation Program, and only two percent of the total federal transportation funds received by the state of Texas. Even so, TXDOT is proceeding quickly; the TXDOT commissioners were scheduled to meet on February 25 to adopt the regulations and implementation procedures for TEA-21 enhancement projects in the state, even before the federal guidelines for TEA-21 have been issued.

Indications are that the preservation community's written and verbal testimony has had some influence on retaining historic sites as eligible for TEA-21 enhancement funding, but with more restrictive

conditions on function and impact, and removing proximity as a criterion. County courthouses are unlikely to receive any funding under these rules, making Governor George W. Bush's initiative to provide state funding for courthouse restoration even more critical (see story, page 13).

The spirit of transportation enhancements embodied in the federal legislation has, in spite of the early problems with administration of ISTEAs and the uncertainty of TEA-21, had a profound impact on communities throughout the state. Many of those involved believe that the ISTEAs enhancement funds were "the best thing that ever happened to preservation in Texas." Indeed, the value of the improvements to local buildings, sites, and transportation corridors, the encouragement of private investment in the community, the increased revenues from heritage and eco-tourism, and the sense of pride in cultural and historical conservation, should bring every Texan to the support of TEA-21 enhancements. TEA-time in Texas must be a celebration worthy of our past and fit for the new millennium. **TA**

*David G. Woodcock is professor of architecture at Texas A&M University and coordinates the College of Architecture's Certificate in Historic Preservation program. He is a TA contributing editor.*

A total of 121 preservation-related projects in Texas were approved to receive slightly more than \$71 million in ISTEAs grants; more than \$14 million in local funds was raised to meet ISTEAs matching-fund guidelines.

## RESOURCES

### EDINBURG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, PAGE 25

Reproduction of column capitals: Richard Hyslin; reproduction of millwork (ticket counter): Baez Construction; reproduction of stained glass: McAllen Stained Glass & Supplies; glass consultant: Risica & Sons; historic resource/museum exhibits: Hidalgo County Historical Museum; design of light fixture reproduction: Albert Timmreck III; landscaping and irrigation: Sombra Azul; engraving on tiles: Expressions in Glass; wrought iron fence: Posada's Steel Erection

### HILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE, PAGE 27

Waterproofing and dampproofing: Beutonite Waterproofing; metal roofing: Cunningham Construction Co.; custom window millwork: Leeds Clark; heartwood sinker cypress for custom windows: What Its Worth; custom casework and finish carpentry: Hull Historical Restoration; metal doors and frames: Cumes/Essex; finish hardware: Civecast, Stauley, Period Brass, Vou Duprin, LCN Closers, Quality Hardware, National Guard Products; gypsum board framing: Deitrich Industries, Inc.; gypsum fabrications: Temple-Inland; vinyl composition tile: Armstrong; quarry tile: Quarry Tile Co.; acoustical ceilings: Armstrong; metal ceilings: W.F. Norman Co.; wall coverings: Fabri-Trak Fabric Wall System; concrete stain: L.N. Schofield Co.; joint sealants: Sonueborn Building Products; veneer and gypsum plaster: Gold Bond; paints:

Sherwin-Williams; acoustical sealant: U.S. Gypsum Co.; access panels: Cesco; toilet compartments: Metpar Steel Products; bullet-resistant protection: Armortex Bullet Resistant Products; hydraulic elevator: Dover Elevator Co.

### PORT ISABEL LIGHTHOUSE VISITOR CENTER, PAGE 28

Fences, gates and hardware: CF&I Ornamental Fence; concrete materials: Varmicon Industries, Inc.; masonry units: Valley Block & Brick; railings and handrails: Steel Erectors, Inc.; wood treatments: Hoover Treated Wood Prod., Inc.; architectural woodwork: Peacock Construction, Inc.; building insulation: Mac's Insulation Company; wood and plastic doors and frames: Roddis Lumber & Veneer Company, Inc.; wood windows: Weather Shield Mfg., Inc.; acoustical ceilings: Armstrong; acoustical treatments: Armstrong

### BRYAN CARNEGIE LIBRARY, PAGE 30

Concrete materials: Transit Mix; column capitals: Thomas Ashworth Associates; masonry restoration: Madison Construction; structural steel: Fabco Industries; building insulation: Owens Corning; metal roofing: MBCI; entrances and store-fronts: Vistawall; tile: Dal Tile; acoustical ceilings: U.S.G. Interiors; paints: Pittsburgh Paint; thorocoat: Harris Specialty Chem.; manufactured casework: Keystone Millwork; hydraulic elevator: Dover Elevator; light fixtures: Visa Lighting



# The Rice Reborn

by Gerald Moorhead, FAIA

WHEN JESSE JONES, Houston timber magnate, real estate tycoon, and philanthropist, built the Rice Hotel in 1913, the \$3-million structure was the largest hotel south of the Mason-Dixon line and the second-tallest building in Texas. The hotel, designed by architects Mauran, Russell & Crowell of St. Louis, eventually had 1,000 rooms and suites, two huge ballrooms, five restaurants, a beauty shop, a barber shop (with 17 barbers), and additional retail space.

The site on Texas Avenue between Main and Travis streets had a significant place in history. In 1837, the Allen brothers built a two-story structure of wood imported from Maine to serve as the first capital of the fledgling Republic of Texas. When the capital moved to Austin in 1839, the building became a hotel and was replaced in 1883 by the Capitol Hotel, a five-story pile of Victorian masonry. William Marsh Rice bought the site and hotel in 1886, renaming it the Rice Hotel. From its earliest days, the corner of Main and Texas was the "hub of Houston," gathering place and watering hole for businessmen, politicians, socialites, dignitaries, and celebrities.

Jones's 17-story, 650-room, brick and terra cotta hotel (enlarged to three wings in 1925 by architect Alfred C. Finn) was the keystone in his campaign to reshape the low-scaled Victorian downtown in his image of eastern and European cities, which led him eventually to build over 30 structures downtown on and near Main Street. The Rice was one of the first two cast iron-framed high rises in Houston and the Rice Cafeteria, which opened in 1922, was the first air-conditioned public space in the city.

After Jones's death in 1956, the Rice Hotel became the property of the Houston Endowment, Inc., Jones's philanthropic foundation, which donated the building to Rice University in 1971 (Rice had continued to own the land since its purchase by William Rice in 1886). The university closed the hotel in 1975 rather than bring it up to the new city fire code. Purchase and renovation by the Rittenhouse Corporation saved the Rice from immediate demolition but the aging structure in a derelict part of downtown couldn't compete in the increasingly suburbanized market and was finally closed in 1977.

The Rice Hotel was boarded up for nearly two decades until Houston developer Randall Davis took on the task of resurrecting it as a premier downtown residential property. The \$33-million renovation, known as The Rice, was a joint venture by Randall Davis Companies, Atlanta-based Post Properties, and the Houston Housing Finance Corporation, a municipal entity supporting historic preservation. Davis began the redevelopment process in 1995, bringing in Post in 1996. That year the city bought the property from absentee owners for \$3 million and offered a 40-year lease to the Davis-Post team in return for its renovation. Tax abatements and grants of \$6 million from the city finally made the deal a reality. By restoring much of the interior and exterior fabric to its original condition, an additional \$4.5-million federal tax credit was received. Former Mayor Bob Lanier and his ombudsman Michael Stevens were instrumental in maintaining the project's momentum. The cooperative partnership among the developers, city code officials, contractors, architects, and designers was unusual for Houston but essential to the success of the project.

Having endured frequent remodeling, very little of the original interior fabric of the 1913/1925 hotel remained. The guest-room floors were completely

*"Rice Reborn," continued on page 41*

**PROJECT** *The Rice, Houston*  
**CLIENT** *Houston Housing Finance Corporation (owner); Randall Davis Company (developer)*  
**ARCHITECT** *Page Southerland Page, Houston*  
**CONTRACTOR** *Tribble & Stephens*  
**CONSULTANTS** *CBM Engineers (structural); Dabney Engineering (mechanical, electrical, & plumbing); Cynthia Stone (interior decorator; model apartments)*  
**PHOTOGRAPHER** *Aker/Zvonkovic Photography*

1 Despite its long dereliction, the exterior of the Rice was in remarkably good condition. Little cleaning was needed on the brick and terra cotta and the cedar windows required only scraping and painting. Most of the changes to the exterior over

time occurred on the first and second floors. Windows and storefronts were redesigned by architects Page Southerland Page working from Alfred C. Finn's original ink-on-linen drawings of 1925, as none remained from the 1912 construction.

## On the (Down)Town

THE RENOVATION of the Rice Hotel (see story at left) is proving to be the cornerstone in the diversification of development in downtown Houston. Before 1990, 541 residential units (in only three buildings) were available within the loop of freeways ringing downtown. From 1990 to 1998, 174 loft units and 187 single-room-occupancy units were added. Including The Rice, 689 units are now completed or underway in seven old buildings. If the adjacent area is taken into account, another 2,850 units are in place and 3,096 underway or planned within a 1.5-mile radius of downtown. Clearly, the resettlement of the center city is well underway.

The obvious question is "Who wants to live downtown and why?" A survey by CDS Research commissioned for The Rice revealed a potential resident base that was professional, well-paid, open to non-traditional living, interested in art, and lacking a need or desire to be in suburbia anymore. Bill Franks of SPIRE Realty, which is currently developing the Bayou Lofts in the 1921 Humble Building, adds that downtown buyers are mostly without children, half may work downtown, are evenly split single versus married, and come in all age groups. These types of buyers, he says, are interested in living where there is more to do than in the suburbs. In recent years, downtown Houston is becoming that place. In addition to the Performing Arts District, a greater mix of entertainment and dining venues—including the new Bayou Place in the old Albert Thomas Convention Center and the Ballpark at Union Station, which will be completed next year—is quickly changing the 9-to-5 image of downtown: People want to be near the action.

The urban pioneer in the residential resurgence of downtown has been Randall Davis, whose Dakota Lofts (1993) and Hogg Palace (1995; see *TA*, March/April 1996) projects broke the ice and revealed the possibilities of a strong market for downtown living. The entry of Atlanta, Ga.-based Post Properties (also very active in Dallas) into the developer mix as a partner in



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photographs this page by Gerald Moorhead, FAIA

The Rice brings a player with national standing and experience in adaptive re-use. Post's 1997 Annual Report describes adaptive re-use for residential development as "an arena for profitable growth in the coming years." Since the deal was made on The Rice, however, land and building prices have escalated to the point where rental is no longer viable; current projects offer condominiums for sale from \$50 per square foot up to \$200. In addition, The Rice appears to be the only project to date to receive tax breaks and special treatment from the city.

To date, most of the downtown residential developments have been undertaken in historic, or at least older, buildings. An open question remains whether historic buildings themselves are part of the attraction to downtown. For the moment, the economics favor renovation of existing structures over new high-rise construction. The old building stock in Houston is very limited, however, so new buildings, certainly including mixed uses, will soon be needed if residential development downtown is to continue and to mature.

**GM**

New residential redos in historically significant buildings downtown include:

- 2 32 loft condominiums at The Keystone (1926 Post-Dispatch Building, 1120 Texas Avenue, developed by G.O.Y.A. Enterprises)
- 3 8 condos in the Old Cotton Exchange (1884, 202 Travis Street, McCutchen Development Corp.)
- 4 Bayou Lofts (1911, Southern Pacific Building, 913 Franklin; SPIRE Realty)
- 5 90 apartments in the Humble Building (1921, 1212 Main Street; HRI)



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guttled, exposing brick outer walls, concrete floor structures, and riveted steel columns, which became features in the "loft" image of the new apartments. The double-loaded corridor of the hotel plan was changed to an arrangement that made more efficient use of the floor plate. One of the code concessions permitted use of the existing stairs. Analysis of the strength of the steel columns revealed extra capacity, permitting them to be exposed without fireproofing. Although not required, the building was outfitted with fire sprinklers throughout. The Rice now contains 312 rental units with 56 models ranging from a \$750 per month efficiency to a large three-bedroom unit for \$3,800.

Most of the once grand interior spaces have been restored to their 1925 appearance. The Rice Roof dance pavilion will reopen as a recreation center; the Empire Room is a meeting facility with a 25-foot-long bar and 14-foot-high hand-carved wood mantle from Europe; the Capitol Club, once the bar for the city's rich and powerful, will return as a paneled, upholstered salon with a terrace overlooking Main Street; the 7,000-square-foot Crystal Ballroom has had a million-dollar restoration; the lobby has been restored to its two-story height with restored murals and a new 20-foot skylight matching the original; and in the basement the swimming pool, long filled with concrete, is reopened with tile mosaics and a health club. In addition to all of this will be 25,000 square feet of retail space for restaurants and shops along the sidewalk beneath the great cast-iron canopy. A 1958 addition behind the Rice was replaced by a 500-car garage.

The adaptive re-use of the Rice Hotel and its reincarnation as The Rice, owned by the city of Houston and operated by Post Properties, has been unique for Houston, perhaps in keeping with the unique history of this site that is as old as Texas. **TA**

*Gerald Moorhead, FAIA, is a TA contributing editor; he works as an architect in Houston.*

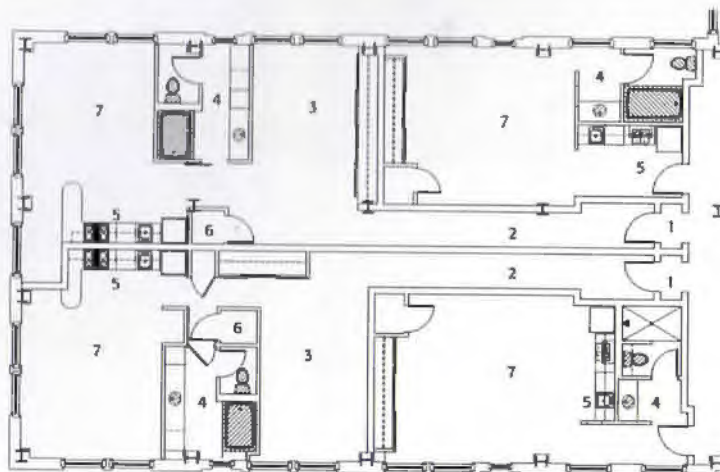
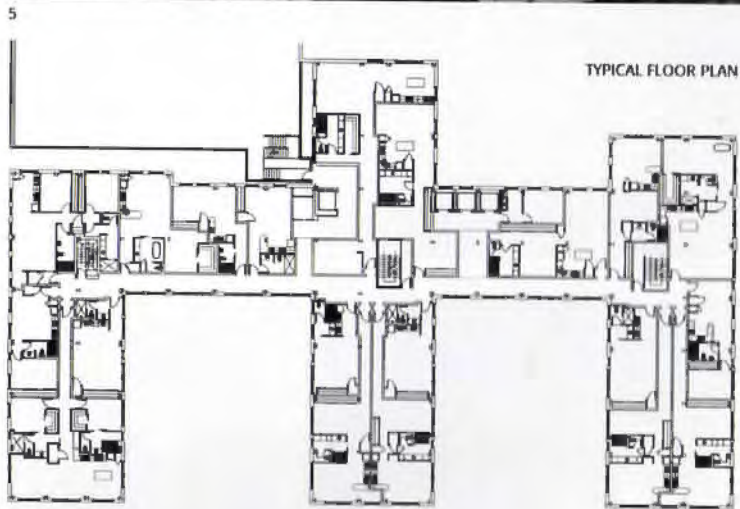
1 Only fragments existed of the lobby finishes and virtually nothing remained in the Crystal Ballroom. Working from old photos, like this from a circa 1971 brochure, interior designers Cynthia Stone and Pamela Kuhl-Linscomb researched marble flooring, murals, draperies, carpet, iron work, and skylights in the lobby and ballroom areas.

2 lobby, converted back to its original two-story height, with restored skylight

3 typical two-story loft apartment with exposed brick outer walls

4 exterior detail with cast-iron canopy

5 Crystal Ballroom, with restored mural



**TYPICAL WING LIVING SPACES**

1 VESTIBULE  
2 GALLERY SPACE  
3 BEDROOM/STUDY  
4 BATH  
5 KITCHEN  
6 HVAC  
7 LIVING SPACE



# Keeping the Faith

by Stephen Fox

IN 1992, IMMACULATE CONCEPTION Catholic Church in Jefferson, which had been built in 1867, was destroyed by fire. The loss stunned Jefferson's small Catholic community. Immaculate Conception was the oldest Catholic church building in East Texas and the oldest house of worship in Jefferson, the most intact 19th-century town in East Texas. The church occupied a key location on the edge of downtown, flanking a city park on Lafayette Street. Its destruction left a significant void in the small town's urban fabric and raised the question of how this might be filled. The parishioners were in no doubt; they wanted to reconstruct the church. This plan did not meet with approval from officials of the Diocese of Tyler, which holds title to the property and, because it is a mission, controls its finances. The new church and parish house designed by Curtis & Windham Architects of Houston took shape amid conflicted understandings of Immaculate Conception's relationship and responsibility to its community.

The point of conflict between parish and diocese involved the spatial implications of the liturgical renewal mandated by the second Vatican Council. These were at variance with the 19th-century organization of Immaculate Conception. Although the Vatican Council's directives permitted existing churches to retain their historic configurations, new churches are to emphasize community with a single, freestanding altar, flanked by a president's chair and an ambo for lections and homilies. Worshippers are to gather around the altar, arrayed so that all can have eye contact. There are to be no hierarchical distinctions between clergy, lay ministers (including musicians), and congregation. The baptismal font is to be near the entrance to the church. The spatial compartmentalization of pre-Vatican II churches—the implied rectangle with entry narthex below a second-story choir loft, congregational seating in the nave, and





a railed-off chancel and sanctuary, where priests celebrated the Eucharist with their backs to the congregation—gave way to churches that are often square-shaped or amphitheatrical, with pews arrayed around a freestanding altar.

Proposals for such a church were presented to Immaculate Conception's building committee and emphatically rejected. After the parish building committee had interviewed ten other architects, Curtis & Windham was hired because partners William Curtis and Russell Windham expressed sympathy for the parishioners' desire to reconstruct their old church and confidence in their ability to design a new church based on the old model. Diocesan officials proved to be just as determined as parishioners, however. William Curtis explains that the architects had to serve as advocates for the parishioners while demonstrating that every requirement of the diocese could be met and every objection satisfied, a process he describes as hard but ultimately satisfying.

The new Immaculate Conception, dedicated in 1996 by the Bishop of Tyler, is an enlarged version of the 1867 church. The original church had been documented in drawings and photographs as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1937. These records were a valuable source of guidance for Curtis & Windham. In the 1950s the church's original steeple was replaced after being struck by lightning and a bulky entrance vestibule was added to the front of the church. These alterations modified the appearance of the church, which had exem-

- 1 The cross was salvaged from the ashes of the fire that destroyed the original 1867 church.
- 2 Flush boarding in the tympanum of the front gable and in the upper stage of the tower repeats a material detail of the original church.
- 3 The new church is one bay longer than the original building but otherwise similar in dimension.
- 4 detail of windows with their pointed arched heads
- 5 The new interior was modified from the original to meet Vatican II requirements: Altar is freestanding in the nave, framed by president's chair and ambo; pews are rotated slightly to facilitate eye contact between worshippers; and organ is integrated with pews.



**PROJECT** *Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Jefferson*  
**CLIENT** *Most Reverend, Bishop Edmond Carmody, Diocese of Tyler*  
**ARCHITECT** *Curtis & Windham Architects, Houston (William Curtis and Russell Windham, partners in charge; David Bucek, project architect)*  
**CONTRACTOR** *Cordova Construction*  
**CONSULTANTS** *Structural Consulting Co. (Jon Monteith)*  
**PHOTOGRAPHER** *Hester + Hardaway*

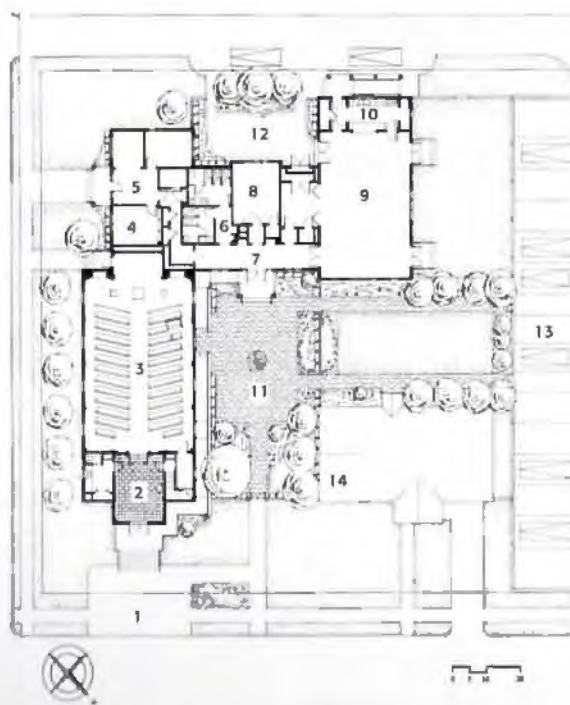


plified the vernacular, Anglo-American, southern church type.

Curtis & Windham modeled their new church on Immaculate Conception as it had existed in 1992. The building was expanded in length by one bay but is only slightly wider than the original church's 31 feet, 3 inches. A last-minute reduction of the budget by ten percent led to elimination of the steeple and a redesign of the entrance doors to eliminate a pointed-arched overdoor window. Curtis & Windham took inspiration from HABS photographs of a no-longer extant rectory behind the church when they designed the new parish house. The stepped profile of ascending gable shapes visible along Lafayette Street evokes earlier stages of the parish complex's development. Curtis & Windham carefully shaped the parish house so that its bays would complement the scale of the residential neighborhood adjoining the church. The steeple cross and bell were salvaged from the ruins of the 1867 church.

The greatest changes occur inside the church. In place of the deep chancel flanked by arched niches, there is now a flat-headed alcove flanked by shallow recesses. The altar is freestanding in the nave, framed by the president's chair and ambo. Pews are rotated slightly to facilitate eye contact between worshippers, and the organ is integrated with the pews, since the diocese discouraged reconstruction of the choir loft. The church seats 150 worshippers. The narthex, expanded to contain the baptis-

- FLOOR PLAN**  
 1 EXTERIOR GATHERING  
 2 GATHERING VESTIBULE  
 3 NAVE  
 4 LIBRARY  
 5 CHURCH OFFICES  
 6 TOILETS  
 7 HALL  
 8 CLASSROOM  
 9 PARISH HALL  
 10 KITCHEN  
 11 COURTYARD  
 12 GARDEN  
 13 PARKING  
 14 RECTORY



photograph courtesy Diocese of Tyler



mal font, is flanked by a priests' sacristy and a chapel of reconciliation. These occupy the added fifth bay. The reduction of the budget led to replacement of the vaulted ceiling above the nave, as in the original church, with a coved ceiling. As Curtis observes, this cutback was responsible for the most visible formal departure from the church as it had existed before 1992. It gave the 1996 building its own identity. This identity was enhanced by Curtis & Windham's commitment to classical architecture. They applied consistent proportions to the interior and exterior surfaces of the church and detailed its component parts with tectonic rigor. They used classical architecture to elevate and refine the vernacular southern church type without divorcing it from its roots in the 19th-century vernacular building culture of Jefferson.

Curtis & Windham could not afford custom-designed molding, so the architects found stock Doric moldings that imbue the interior with a quiet sense of proportioned dignity. The church is carpeted, but the narthex is floored with tiles in a checkerboard pattern of white and Marian blue, as the old chancel had been. Walls are surfaced with gypsum board. Light fixtures hanging in the nave reproduce historic fixtures.

Immaculate Conception Catholic Church is not precisely a historic reconstruction. It is a new building modeled on its historic predecessor in order to maintain continuity for parishioners and for the community. It expresses, as do Catholic liturgi-

cal reappraisals of the 1960s, a commitment to renewal rather than revival: to critically examining past practices to ascertain their continuing relevance rather than reviving something historic merely to satisfy antiquarian impulses. As such, Immaculate Conception is charged with a certain tension that belies the calmness and precision of its classical proportioning and detailing. Curtis & Windham brought not only its enthusiasm and skill for designing classical architecture to this commission, but a strong sense of professional responsibility. They assisted their clients in articulating a vision of community tied to maintaining a historic Catholic presence in the heart of an East Texas town. This vision could not have been accommodated just as easily in a pre-engineered steel building next to a parking lot on the highway, which was one of the parish's alternatives. Curtis & Windham demonstrated that liturgical conformity fulfills its purpose by spatializing community, not in the mechanical application of spatial formulas. In almost all Texas towns and cities today, box-like churches, schools, hospitals, banks, and shopping centers attest to the triumph of such spatial formulas over architecture. Immaculate Conception Catholic Church demonstrates that where clients and their architects are committed to building civil architecture, they can do so.

TA

*Stephen Fox is a fellow of the Anchorage Foundation of Texas and a TA contributing editor.*

1 The architects roofed the parish's buildings in green shingles to coordinate with a 1950s rectory on the property and surrounded the site with white picket fences to complement elements of the landscape they observed as characteristic of Jefferson.

2 The historic church as it appeared in 1992, before the fire. The corners of the church and of the two-stage tower supporting the steeple were framed with narrow strips which culminated in classical caps and comices.

3 The church occupies an important spot at the edge of Jefferson's downtown business district.

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Texas Architect 3/4 1999

# Survey

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**JOURNEY** The Ralph Sr. and Sunny Wilson Historic House Museum in Temple is a monument to the mid-century use of plastic laminate; the house has recently been restored by Wilsonart International.

## Reinventing the Museum

**SYMPOSIUM** The Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) was the site of a symposium in mid-January on the topic of museums and museum architecture. Organized by Howard Rachofsky and Deedie Rose of the DMA Board of Directors (and owners of well-known residences in Dallas by Richard Meier and Antoine Predock, respectively) the panel discussion was intended to address the current state of this typology including the apparently insatiable need for new museums by the requisite signature architect.

Panelists included 1999 AIA Gold Medalist Frank Gehry; Aaron Betsky, curator of design and digital projects at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (Betsky replaced architect Zaha Hadid who was involved in a competition and did not attend); Michael Auping, chief curator of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, and Lawrence Speck, FAIA, dean of the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture. Moderating the discussion was Dorothy Kosinski, DMA project director for the Nasher Gardens and Sculpture Center; Kosinski was originally scheduled to

be a panelist but replaced critic David Dillon as moderator when he was unable to attend at the last moment.

The symposium attendance of about 600 required video broadcast to a second room for the overflow crowd, which included the DMA's director-elect Jack Lane (also from the San Francisco MOMA), other museum directors, curators, architects, and such notable collectors and patrons as Stanley Marcus and Ray Nasher.

Opening comments established positions and philosophies related to the topic at hand. Betsky stated his belief, in Marxian terms, that architecture's role was that of a frame or armature for society, providing moments of investment and stasis in the flow of money and ideas. His thoughts regarding the indeterminacy of art, and therefore any container for art, were predicated on recent examples and his hopes for

a more open, plural engagement with society. Betsky described the museum analogically as "shopping mall and church."

Auping provided a brief history of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and presented slides of the new Fort Worth museum being designed by Tadao Ando (see story, page 12). Speck utilized a single slide of a plan of Austin to show the city as a "crucible" for a mix of diverse art-related activities. Austin historically has deliberately avoided consolidation of such projects in any single location, Speck said, and he detailed the numerous new projects underway in the city.



Frank Gehry, right, 1999 recipient of the American Institute of Architect's Gold Medal, sat with new Dallas Museum of Art director Jack Lane following the museum symposium.

Finally, Frank Gehry presented his Bilbao Guggenheim project, describing the working relationships with Thomas Krens, director of the Guggenheim, and others involved in the work. His structure conceptually discriminates between "dead" artists whose work is displayed in "classical" rectangular volumes; and "living" artists who can have a "dialogue" with more complex spaces. Gehry later admitted that he had "been unable to contact the dead" to see if they were happy with this arrangement.

Following these initial presentations the panel assembled and attempted to delineate the role of a museum in the display of cultural arti-

facts, in particular the relationship between art and architecture, at one point disassembling into the distinction between an artist and architect. It is interesting to note that this same thing happened last year during the Art and Architecture symposium at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa (see *TA*, May/June 1998).

Betsky stated that "the best architecture in the United States in the past five years" (thus eliminating Bilbao) was in fact sculpture—Richard Serra's show of "Torqued Ellipses," which featured intricate engineering performed by Rick Smith, Gehry's structural consultant from the aerospace industry. When Auping observed

that, with the possible exception of Frank Stella, artists are almost never hired to design museums, Gehry retorted "Why don't you hire one?" but then acknowledged the inherent difficulties.

Both Gehry and Auping were in agreement that the "best" spaces for art were not submissive white boxes, but rather a diverse set of volumes with their own integrity for a given artwork to either accept or reject. This discussion had evolved from the contribution that context makes to the perception of art.

Following a reception at the museum restaurant, a small group of panel patrons had dinner at the Rachofsky residence where his newly re-

installed collection, including pieces by Richter, deKooning, Judd, Martin, Serra, Irwin, and Baselitz, was showcased and the discussion turned to the house as a form of "working" collection.

Perhaps the most poetic moment of the day came when Betsky described his sense of the paradox of money being vested in a place—that is, the museum—as well as in the art itself, both of which might lift us towards values that could transcend money.

*W. Mark Gunderson*

*W. Mark Gunderson is an architect practicing in Fort Worth.*

## Herzog on Texas

**ARCHITECTURE** "Jessie, where are your boots?" asks Jacques Herzog, of Jessie Hite, director of the University of Texas' Blanton Museum (formerly the Archer M. Huntington) in Austin. It is October, the competition for the prestigious Blanton commission has wound down, and Hite, together with her selection committee, has sent the name of the Swiss firm Herzog and de Meuron over to the UT tower where the president and chancellor will have the final say. In town to meet these gentleman and with full knowledge that he and his partner Pierre de Meuron are very close to the prize, Herzog is jovial. "I've always loved boots and cowboy belts," he muses. "I used to buy boots but they hurt my feet. I couldn't walk in them."

Not to worry. No one knows better than Herzog that the myths of Texas and the clichés he loves—like boots and belts—are about as important to the Blanton commission as cuckoo clocks or cow bells to his buildings back home in Basel. Indeed, the selection of his firm, which was approved by UT and announced by Hite in December, heralds the coming of a truly international building for Austin. The young firm of Herzog and de Meuron (both partners are 48) has become one of the most celebrated in the world. And, aside from their Dominus Winery in California, which was met with widespread acclaim when finished in 1997, the Blanton is

the firm's first major commission in this country. It is sure to mark Austin as a pilgrimage stop for the firm's ardent followers.

Early on in the selection process the Blanton committee made a decision to avoid an architect with a signature style—a Richard Meier or Frank Gehry, for instance—in favor of a talented architect whose approach and subsequent style could not be predicted. Such a position meant that interested Austinites had the pleasure of hearing lectures by an impressive assortment of finalists: Besides Herzog and de Meuron, the list included Steven Holl Architects of New York; Antoine Predock of Albuquerque, N.M.; Snohetta of Oslo, Norway; Thompson and Rose Architects of Cambridge, Mass.; Rafael Vinoly Architects, and Tod Williams/Billie Tsien Associates, both of New York. Predock and Holl made it into the final round before losing out to the Swiss firm.

But if Herzog did not present a signature style when he lectured publicly and privately for the committee, he nevertheless spoke of clear architectural values in his presentation. And those values are suggestive of the type of building Austin may get. "If architecture doesn't respond to all the senses then we're no better off because of it," said Herzog during his Austin lecture. And, at another point: "Whatever comes down on this earth we want to use in architecture, to use these elements as the main actors." What Herzog calls the firm's "strategy" is to work with changes of light and seasons, the temporal qualities of a place, so that "we have different buildings," he says, "with one building."

At the base of these sentiments is the firm's sensuous conception of architecture and its in-

*"Herzog," continued on page 50*



photographs courtesy Blanton Museum of Art



- 1 Jacques Herzog at the building site for the Blanton Museum at UT Austin
- 2 Dominus Winery
- 3 Goetz Collection, an art gallery in Munich

"Herzog," continued from page 49

sistent striving for the mercurial in built projects. Texture and light are seen negating the heft of structure, and materials are valued for their ability to be immaterial. For example, the firm's production and storage building in France for Ricola is a rectangle sheathed in masonry that has been glazed with images of leaves. A picture of solidity by day, the building lights up like a lamp by night when the walls take on the nature of a diaphanous, patterned fabric. Similarly, the Dominus Winery makes use of gabion walls, a technique in which loose stones are held together inside wire mesh. Because light easily finds its way around the stones, Herzog and de Meuron can undermine the rugged strength of their structure by giving full play to its permeability. The idea that buildings can change as the day changes says Herzog "is something we like a lot; something we work hard at."

The Ricola building and the Dominus Winery glorified their roles as buildings for work and storage, but Herzog and de Meuron have taken their fondness for the mercurial into their most prestigious commissions. In 1997 when they were one of three finalists for the Museum of Modern Art competition, they presented a sculptural glass monolith that appeared at once

closed and open; their recent conversion of a power plant on the Thames into an addition for London's Tate Museum has turned an industrial building into an airy, light-filled public space.

As it happens, the Swiss firm (which will collaborate with Bill Booziotis & Co. of Dallas on the \$40-million museum) makes its entrance into Austin at precisely the same moment that Gluckman Mayner Architects of New York begins work on the Austin Museum of Art. While the Gluckman building takes shape in the moldering parking lot of its downtown location, the Herzog and de Meuron museum will occupy the moldering parking lot just south of Jester Center. Thus Gluckman has the opportunity to bring great life and animation to urban Austin and Herzog takes on the inspired task of providing a gateway to the University. Both museums are scheduled to be completed in 2002.

As the cultural life of the state capital becomes richer with these two additions, the architectural community will have the pleasure of watching two major architectural firms ply their trade. Each is renowned for their skill at work-

ing with artists, each claims to have learned more from Donald Judd and his minimalist cohorts than any particular architect, and both firms are clearly the grandchildren of the early great modernists—Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, Mies van der Rohe—though Herzog denies the connection. They're both opting for an expression that is free of the rigidity of any style.

It's too early to guess what forms the two museums might take, but one thing seems clear already: They'll be heard as well as seen. Gluckman talks of the sound of water. And Herzog? The noise that interests him is as romantically western as cowboy boots. "The cicadas," he says, "are important." *Lisa Germany*

*Lisa Germany writes often about architecture; she is based in Austin.*



The site for the Blanton Museum is on the south edge of the UT campus near Jester Center.

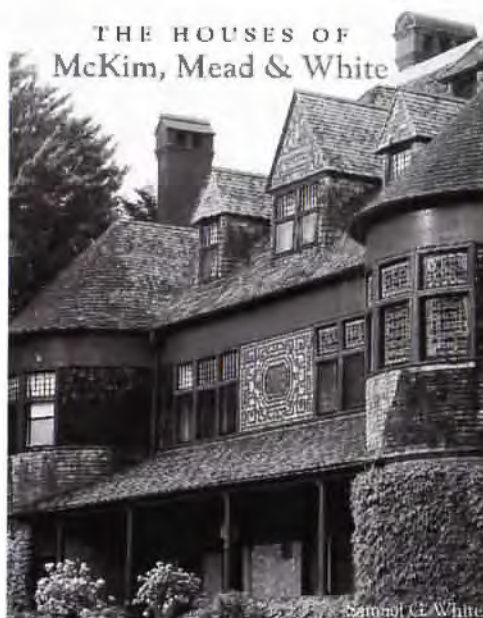
## A House Sampler

*The Houses of McKim, Mead & White*

by Samuel G. White, photographs by Jonathan Wallen

Rizzoli International Publications, Inc. (1998)  
252 pages, \$70.00

**BOOKS** The architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White was established in 1879 and became widely known for its numerous civic structures such as New York's Pennsylvania Station, Madison Square Garden, and the Boston Public Library. Just as important as these large commercial commissions were the firm's houses. During the period from 1879 to 1912, the firm became the largest architectural firm in America and fully 40 percent of its work was residential. This work included more than 300 single-family residences; nearly 100 of these houses survive. This lavishly photographed book documents 35 of these houses. It also demonstrates the transition that the firm made from early "cottages" to their participation in the development of



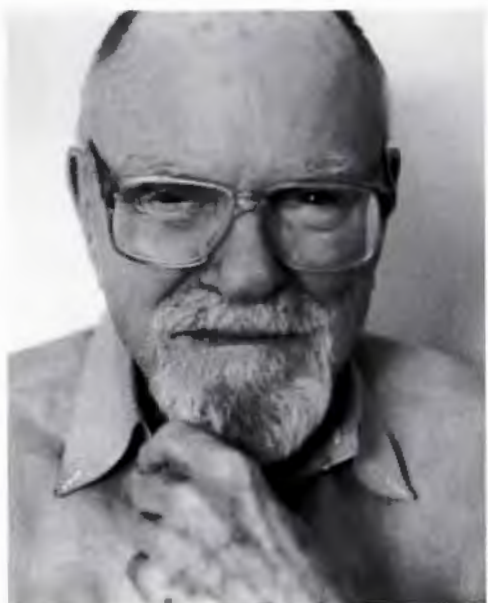
the shingle style (both McKim and White had previously held prominent positions with Henry Hobson Richardson) and ultimately to an opulent classical style. The houses are each given several pages of individual attention and are presented chronologically.

Most of the houses are in New York, on Long Island, or in the resort city of Newport, Rhode Island. The architects accomplished many of these houses for wealthy clients such as the Vanderbilts and Pulitzers. The six Villard Houses in New York City became one of their signature works, with restrained classic Italian renaissance façades. The restraint with which the firm imbued these rowhouses became a signature mannerism in the development of the firm's work.

In addition to abundant photographs, the book contains floor plans of all the houses. Many drawings and photographs also document the exquisite and meticulous wood detailing that dominates many of the interiors of these houses. This is a great resource book. Those who are looking for more salacious details of Stanford White's scandalous life (or death) will be disappointed because this book deals only with architecture and the high-quality residential designs that emanated from this highly respected firm.

*Dennis Stacy, FALA*

*Dennis Stacy, FALA, is an architect practicing in Dallas.*



Nan Coulter

## Arch Swank Remembered

*Arch B. Swank, FAIA, of Dallas, died on January 15. Swank, who early in his career was a partner of O'Neil Ford and who continued an illustrious practice in Dallas until the early 1990s, is remembered here by Frank Welch, FAIA, with words Welch spoke at Swank's funeral. Also speaking at the funeral, which was held at the Kalita Humphreys Theater in the Dallas Theater Center on January 22, were Jane A. Wetzel; James Pratt, FAIA; and Bill Boziotis, FAIA.*

**MEMORY** Arch Swank, the architect and champion of human rights, was born in Wills Point, Texas, in 1913, the same year his parents built a two-story house reminiscent of the houses Frank Lloyd Wright was noted for, with low hipped roofs and deep overhangs that hovered above the yard. A long-time resident recalls that the "floating-on-the-prairie" house was unusual for Wills Point and conceivably affected young Archie B. as he was known. Two other formative factors connected to Wills Point were more important to Arch's future as a professional and a man. Jack Finney was an architect and a Wills Point cousin, some 20 years older, who became role model for young Arch and later introduced him to modernism.

Another figure in Wills Point was its leading and wealthiest citizen, W.H. Wingo. When Arch was a teenager in attendance at Sunday morning services in the Methodist Church, the

pastor suddenly announced that he had invited the local Ku Klux Klan to the service and in they marched, hooded and menacing. Mr. Wingo got up from his rear pew and walked the length of the sanctuary and out the front door, never to return. It had a riveting effect on Arch.

Arch attended Texas A&M, where his cousin Jack Finney taught, and after graduating in 1936, took a bicycle tour of Europe that his grandmother paid for. On the boat trip home, he met an attractive young Dallas woman who later introduced him to O'Neil Ford, who at the time was trying to start an architectural practice in Dallas. Ford and Swank were soon partners and before the decade was finished had produced their ranking work, the famous Little Chapel in the Woods in Denton [on the Texas Women's University campus], which was dedicated by Eleanor Roosevelt. This period also produced the Bromberg house. Attorney Allen Bromberg was ten at the time and fascinated by the process of designing his parents' house. Arch became a hero of his, "the big, handsome, thoughtful guy of the team," who spent more time on the house than his mercurial partner.

The war intervened and, following a long European tour of duty, Arch returned to Dallas to practice architecture. Neil had married Wanda Ford and moved to San Antonio. A few years later Arch married Patsy Peck, art critic for the *Dallas Morning News*.

Arch partnered with Roscoe Dewitt and produced many distinguished buildings like Neiman Marcus's first suburban store in Preston Center. He also undertook more modest commissions like the house on Amherst for artist Ed Bearden and his wife Fran. She has never changed a thing and still loves the house to this day. The art consultant Murray Smither recalls walking into the living room of the 1948 Oak Cliff house that he bought in 1980 and falling in love with it and the way it treated its wooded hillside site. When the realtor asked if Smither wanted to see more of the house, he replied that he didn't have to; only later did he discover that Arch had been the architect.

Arch found time to be a strong advocate for human rights and environmental integrity in the postwar decades, running against Dallas's establishment wall. It cost him professionally, but he did what he believed in.

Bill Gilliland managed the Swank-designed Doubleday bookstore on the ground floor of the Magnolia Building in the late 1950s and re-

calls, "The Doubleday people in New York just fell in love with Arch's design and asked him to design stores at Northpark in Dallas, in Fort Worth, and New York. Arch let the books speak louder than the architecture and they liked that!"

The architecture of Arch Swank is like the man: handsome, quiet, self-effacing, and without "boastful attitude." Patsy Swank's familiar and humorous remark about his "pathological modesty" is a key to his design sensibility: His carefully rendered buildings are free of cant and remarkable for their integrity of means.

When Arch's name came up last week at the small Monday evening drinking group of architects that I am happy to be a part of, Reagan George's expression grew serious when he said, "he was the most *ethical* architect."

*Frank Welch, FAIA*

*Frank Welch, FAIA, is an architect practicing in Dallas and a TA contributing editor.*

## Coming next issue . . .

The May/June *Texas Architect* will be a special issue focused on **Dallas**: the city and its architecture. The issue will be published in conjunction with the American Institute of Architects annual **convention**, to be held in Dallas May 5 through 9.

Three of the state's best architecture writers will be featured: Joel Warren Barna will examine the city's **urban form** and plans for its future; David Dillon will write about the resurgence of **downtown**; and Willis Winters will explore the restoration of **Fair Park**.

Look for the special Dallas issue of *Texas Architect* in your mailbox or at the newsstand in **May**.

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## A Future in Plastics

**JOURNEY** The idea of the plastic house is again in vogue, with the *Wall Street Journal* recently touting plastics as viable materials for domestic architecture. Current experiments, which range from visionary inflatables to straightforward wall-panel systems, owe something to economic motives. The price of oil, the major raw material for synthetics, is at its lowest level in decades, and wood products continue to climb in price. But style is just as important. An inexhaustible appetite for retro and neo—one looking back to the comforts of kitsch, the other forward into past futures—has provoked an aesthetic reevaluation of the plastic surfaces and artifacts that made American suburban houses of the 1950s and '60s seem so bright, so clean, so colorful, and ultimately so artificial. Now, owing to the corporate pride and historical awareness of a leading manufacturer of plastic laminate, Wilsonart International in Temple, a noteworthy architectural expression of that cul-



2 tural moment has been restored to its "populuxe" glory.

On the outside, nothing distinguishes the Ralph Sr. and Sunny Wilson House from other ranch-style dwellings in a quiet upper-middle-class Temple suburb. Long and low, receding under the horizontal sweep of a single overhanging eave, the Wilson House stands on a large lot, overshadowed by mature live oaks. Inside, however, this neutral image dissolves as a visitor discovers that every horizontal and vertical surface of the house, except for floors, ceilings, and limestone fireplace, is covered with



1 The continuous backsplash and curving edge of the kitchen countertop mark one of the earliest examples of post-forming of plastic laminate.

2 The living room mural was created by placing resin-impregnated colored-paper cutouts over a white finish layer before each panel was pressed and cured.

3 The unremarkable exterior of the ranch-style house is Texas limestone masonry, cut long and narrow.

Photographs by Paul Bardagly



3 plastic laminate so colorfully bright, so clean and smooth, it looks like it might have been installed the day before yesterday—if not for the fact that it expresses the popular informal modernism of 40 years ago. In 1959, at a time when Wilsonart laminate and its competitors Micarta and Formica were used mostly for kitchen counter tops, dinette tables, and school desks, Ralph Wilson Sr. built this unique house to test and display the decorative potential of his company's products.

Visually most compelling is a "high-populuxe" kitchen with vertical surfaces (on cabinets, drawers, and island counter) covered with contrasting Wilsonart panels in aqua, lemon yellow, black, and white—all integrated by pumpkin orange countertops. Laminate walls are hung directly from the studs—thereby eliminating any need for drywall work. Another impressive feature of the house is a whimsical abstract mural extending across four laminate panels to fill a living room wall. Reminiscent of mid-cult modern graphics (the cover of a corporate re-

port or an album of easy-listening jazz), its abstract shapes are not inlaid but integral to the white panels in which they appear to be embedded. Also remarkable are the two bathrooms, each with a shower enclosure in a different shade of faux-marble. That these installations have lasted 40 years is testament to plastic laminate's durability—in an application still not generally recommended.

The Wilson House has been restored by curator Grace Jeffers, a Manhattan art historian and expert on plastic laminate. Unable to locate examples of the generic modern furniture that was originally installed, she has wisely chosen a sparse arrangement of classic pieces. Their familiarity renders them neutral and enables a visitor to focus directly on the Wilson House itself—a unique early example of plastic imaginatively applied to interior design. **Jeff Meikle**

*Jeff Meikle is chair of the Department of American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin and author of American Plastic: A Cultural History.*

*To arrange a tour of the Ralph Sr. and Sunny Wilson Historic House Museum call 254.773.9898. The house is in Temple, about 60 miles north of Austin.*

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