

(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: San Saba County Courthouse
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 500 E. Wallace
CITY OR TOWN: San Saba
STATE: Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** San Saba **CODE:** 411 **ZIP CODE:** 76877

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Feb. 21, 2003

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5/1/03

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Public

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT: county courthouse

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT: county courthouse

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

MATERIALS:

FOUNDATION	Concrete
WALLS	BRICK; STONE/sandstone
ROOF	STONE/slate; METAL
OTHER	Concrete

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-7).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Description

The San Saba County Courthouse (1911) in San Saba, Texas, is a well-preserved and intact brick, stucco and sandstone Classical Revival building. The courthouse has an area of approximately 21,000 square feet, equally distributed on the first three floors, with a smaller balcony level on the fourth floor plus an attic space. Exterior walls are pressed-face brick, with rusticated sandstone quoins, lintels and sills, and stucco belt courses and spandrel accents. Three-story classical columns are stucco over concrete. Interior materials include floor finishes of concrete, wood and ceramic tile, as well as wood doors, railings and posts. The courthouse is an intact example of the Classical Revival design applied to a small county courthouse.

Setting

San Saba, the county seat of San Saba County, is at the intersection of US Highway 190 and State Highway 16, just south of the San Saba River and nine miles west of the Colorado River in the east-central part of the county. The courthouse is located on a rise four blocks west of Mill Creek, which flows northward into the San Saba River. The courthouse square is surrounded on all sides by commercial and civic buildings, including a county annex which houses records and the tax assessor's office. The Burden Hotel, one of San Saba's oldest buildings dating from 1857, is on the west side of the courthouse square. The county jail, designed in 1884 by Jasper N. Preston, is San Saba's oldest public building and is two blocks east of the courthouse.

Wallace, Live Oak, Commerce and Cherokee Streets bound the courthouse square, in the east-central section of the original town plat of San Saba. The grade generally slopes down from the courthouse in all directions, although a sidewalk surrounding the building is at lower grade than the lawn. The courthouse square is also lined with pecan trees. The sidewalks and trees represent early landscaping, dating from 1911 to about 1929. The courthouse square is surrounded by head-in parking, and the building is accessible from all four sides. There are no other buildings on the courthouse square. Historical markers and a town marquee are on the north side of the courthouse.

Landscaping

Landscaping in the fall of 1911 included the construction of "cement walks" and the removal "from the Court House yard such trees as may be selected by the Court".¹ This may have included some or all of the honey locusts planted in 1881 by Edmond E. Risien, an agricultural pioneer who ran a water works and mill about five blocks east of the courthouse. Water tanks from the previous courthouse were also retained for a time, as the court purchased two female and one male goldfish to stock the west tank.² Another significant change with the 1911 courthouse was the extension of the courthouse yard to occupy the full block. The previous courthouse yard occupied less space to allow wider surrounding streets.

In 1922, probably in honor of the growing pecan industry, the commissioners authorized W.J. Millican to plant pecan trees on the square, at no charge to the county. Pecans continued to be a favored tree in 1929, when the square was leveled and all trees except pecans and live oaks were removed. At the same time, more pecan trees were added to the

¹ Minutes, October 11-12, 1911.

² Minutes, December 4, 1912.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 6

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

square, and sidewalks were added around the square.³ Electric street lamps were installed at each sidewalk entrance to the courthouse in 1930. An early iron fence was removed by 1921.

Exterior

The building is symmetrical about both axes, and is longer along the east-west axis. The north and south elevations each feature a central section that is four stories high and five bays across, with articulated three-story wings with three bays each. Both north and south entrances are fronted with pedimented entry porticos accessed by paired staircases. The pediments are adorned with lone stars and wreaths, the name of the county, and the motto, "From the People to the People" in the friezes. A broken arch pediment with decorative urn tops each entry door. The east and west elevations feature a central section with four engaged stucco columns flanked by three-bay sections on either side. Pressed metal awnings shelter the east and west entrance doors.

Another prominent building feature is the dominant clock tower. The wood-framed tower is easily one of the tallest points in the area and exhibits one of its working clock faces in each of the four cardinal directions.⁴ The porticos originally featured four Ionic columns extending from the stairs to the pediment on the fourth level. The columns were changed to Doric style by the 1930s for unknown reasons, but are scheduled to be restored as part of the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program of the Texas Historical Commission. Missing cupola elements such as parapet, finials, and columns are also scheduled to be restored through this program.

The exterior is faced with red pressed-face brick, described as "Press Face, Grade No. 1, shade 3" from the Coffeyville Brick and Tile Company of Coffeyville, Kansas.⁵ Ground floor and corner quoins are rusticated soft sandstone, which is a locally quarried product. Belt courses, columns and spandrel accents are buff-colored stucco. Most double-hung hollow metal windows remain intact, although a few aluminum replacements were installed. Original wooden entry doors were replaced with aluminum storefront types in 1973.

Interior

The ground floor interior of the courthouse is organized along long and short axes. The short axis is the main entry corridor and extends north and south. The original stairways are located on the south side at both ends of the east-west axis. Originally, as today, both axes terminated in doorways so that all four facades contained an entry. The second floor is organized in much the same manner as the ground floor. The difference is that the only entry points are located on the north and south. As a result, the ends of the long, east-west axis terminate in office spaces.

The District Courtroom dominates the third floor. Located directly in the center of the courthouse, the courtroom divides the building in half. Short north-south corridors run beside the courtroom on the east and west sides. At this level, the staircase becomes part of the courtroom, allowing access to the balcony level above. The District Courtroom, courtroom balcony and anterooms, and the County Historic Commission room retain the original wood flooring. The second and third floor corridors are finished with a hexagonal ceramic tile. Much of the original millwork, doors, hardware, light

³ Minutes, February-March, 1929.

⁴ Master Plan, 50.

⁵ Minutes, September 15, 1910.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

fixtures, furniture, and stairway railings and posts have survived. Missing elements are scheduled to be replaced during an upcoming restoration.

Changes since 1911

Original San Saba Courthouse materials have remained in a good state of preservation for many years. The masonry and mortar is in a good state of repair, and the exterior retains its essential character-defining features. Significant exterior changes include conversion of the Ionic pediment columns to Doric, and removal of columns and pediment from the clock tower, with these changes taking place before 1940. There were also relatively frequent repairs to the roof and clock. Some windows on the east and west elevations were covered as larger spaces were subdivided for offices.

Water, sewer, and electricity connections were made in June and July of 1911.⁶ After the county commissioners accepted the courthouse in August 1911, they proceeded to order furniture, including 24 sets of bedding for cots to be used in the petit jury room.⁷ Other early furnishings included wood furniture by C.H. Meyers & Company, lighting fixtures by Brown-Woods Electric Company, and one dozen cheap cuspidors.⁸ Just five years after construction, the commissioners accepted the proposal of S.S. Park to remove the courthouse tile and replace it with "like or similar to the tile just place in the Corner Drug Store, all for the sum of \$1000."⁹

A fire escape was added to the south wall of the courthouse in 1924.¹⁰ In 1929, the commissioners contracted with J.W. Patterson to place a brick cornice on the roof for \$760, and also received bids to install a sprinkling system on the Court House lawn.¹¹

Alterations to original materials and spaces were more extensive. As original offices were subdivided and changed, floor materials were also changed at times, such as in the Farm Security Administration Office in 1943 and in the surveyor's office and ladies' lounge in 1947.¹² The courthouse was rewired for electricity in 1952.¹³ Suspended ceilings were added in 1971.¹⁴ The exterior doors were changed to aluminum in 1973.¹⁵ That same year, the ground floor hallway and both stairways were carpeted.¹⁶ An elevator and removal of architectural barriers were addressed in 1986.¹⁷ One corner of the county courtroom was partitioned for storage in 1988.¹⁸

⁶ Minutes, June 7, July 13, 1911.

⁷ Ibid, August 14, 1911.

⁸ Ibid, August 25, 26, 1911.

⁹ Ibid, April 26, 1916.

¹⁰ Ibid, December 12, 1923, August 24, 1924.

¹¹ Ibid, March 16, April 9, 1929.

¹² Ibid, July 16, 1943, December 8, 16, 1947.

¹³ Ibid, February 1952.

¹⁴ Ibid, October 1971.

¹⁵ Ibid, September 10, 1973.

¹⁶ Ibid, November 16, 1973.

¹⁷ Ibid, October 16, November 5, 1986.

¹⁸ Ibid, January 18, 1988.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Government, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1911-1952

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1911

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Walter W. Chamberlain (also Chamberlin), architect; Walter R. Smith, builder

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-15).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-16 through 9-17).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Statement of Significance

County courthouses are the preeminent building type associated with local government in Texas, and are often the most prominent and architecturally sophisticated buildings of the counties in which they stand. The San Saba County Courthouse (1911) in San Saba, Texas, stands as both an outstanding architectural achievement and the seat of county government. The building meets criterion A, in the area of Government at the local level of significance, as the continued center of county government since 1911. The courthouse also qualifies under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, at the local level, as an excellent example of a Classical Revival public building by Walter W. Chamberlin, a designer of more than two dozen extant courthouses in the southern United States.

San Saba County and the Establishment of San Saba

San Saba County is located in West Central Texas, surrounded by Brown, Mills, Lampasas, Burnet, Llano, Mason and McCulloch Counties. San Saba, the largest town and county seat, is 90 miles northwest of Austin. San Saba County was created in 1856 as one of several new counties carved from the giant Bexar Land District. Its earliest historic-era inhabitants were nomadic Native Americans, specifically Tonkawas, Apaches, Lipan Apaches, and Comanches. Although a portion of the county was included in one of Stephen F. Austin's colonization grants, permanent settlement did not occur until about 1854 when the Harkey and Matsler families settled along several area creeks. The population grew sufficiently to establish the county in February 1856. The county's boundaries were set at that time and have not changed. The county was named for the San Saba River that runs through the county from southwest to northeast.¹⁹

An election for county seat and officers was held in May of 1856, and voters selected "Rowe's land on the hill near J.C. Rainey's old home place" by a large margin.²⁰ That election, however, was set aside, and another poll was taken in July. On the ballot at that time were Rowe's land, Simpson Creek, and a site at today's San Saba. Receiving 63 votes, San Saba took the election, and the town was laid out on 100 acres donated by R.D. McAnelly and Commissioner Shorty Brown.²¹

The first commissioners' courts met in various homes in the county until a courthouse could be constructed. Convening on October 10, 1856, the court authorized the construction of a courthouse to be completed by April. Commissioners also named several committees to examine the various roads in the county. Money for the operation of county government, road construction and maintenance, and the new courthouse was to come from the county tax (half of the state levy) and the sale of San Saba town lots. By October, 68 lots had been sold for a total of \$2114.05.

First Courthouse, 1857

In October the new county commissioners' court contracted with local resident Matthew Hubbert to construct a courthouse for \$850. Construction was to be completed by April 1, 1857, and funds for the building were the first to be appropriated from the county treasury.²²

¹⁹ Gournay 71-72; Murphy 877.

²⁰ Hamrick 37.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid 38.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Hubbert, identified by San Saba historian Alma Ward Hamrick as "trail-blazing...venturesome and dependable," left Williamson County in 1855 to find better opportunities on the Texas frontier.²³ A native of Alabama, he and his family had lived in Mississippi before relocating to Texas. A freighter, Hubbert settled on Simpson Creek and built a home just east of today's San Saba. Known to the commissioners' court because he had helped survey the new county seat, Hubbert was selected to build the new courthouse. Hubbert hauled lumber from Bastrop and perhaps Brenham in 1856 and 1857 for the building.²⁴

Hubbert continued his freighting business after building the courthouse and was not a major builder in San Saba County. His sons followed him in the business, traveling to Bastrop, Austin, Brenham and Port Lavaca. After the Civil War, Hubbert and one son took a herd of cattle across the Pecos River into New Mexico, where they established a ranch. His wife and young children joined him there in the early 1870s, and the family later moved to California. While in San Saba County, the Hubbert home was noted for its hospitality, hosting district judges on the circuit, as well as camp meetings.²⁵

This first courthouse was a frame structure completed in August 1857, almost five months after the contracted completion date. The second floor of the building was given to the Free Masons, and the building was also used as a school.²⁶ Little else is known about the building, except that it evidently sat in the center of today's courthouse square.²⁷

Early San Saba was a primitive place. W. Irving Hubbert, son of the 1857 courthouse builder, remembered that when he first saw it "only three or four wooden shacks composed the town; stakes ran in each direction."²⁸ By 1857 a post office had been established, and in 1860 the town had 111 inhabitants. San Saba County had grown to 913 people, 89 of whom were slaves. During the short antebellum period the economy was based on cattle raising and subsistence agriculture.²⁹

San Saba County citizens supported states' rights and the Confederacy, although there were relatively few slaves in the jurisdiction. Native son Col. James E. McCord's Confederate Regiment was headquartered at Camp San Saba in adjoining McCulloch County and primarily saw frontier duty during the war.³⁰

After the Civil War, San Saba County continued to grow, increasing to more than 1,400 inhabitants in 1870, 168 of them living in the county seat. San Saba was the only town listed in San Saba County in the census of 1870.³¹ During the 1870s, county population increased almost fourfold to more than 5,300.³² Agriculture continued to be the mainstay of the economy with cattle, sheep, goats, and cotton being major commodities.

The town of San Saba continued to grow during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, serving the surrounding agricultural community. In 1873 the *San Saba News* was established, said to be the first newspaper in western Texas. By

²³ Hamrick 202.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid 202-203.

²⁶ Ibid 38, 204.

²⁷ Ibid 39-40.

²⁸ Ibid 203.

²⁹ Souvenir 14; Walker 64, 66.

³⁰ Murphy 877.

³¹ Walker 64, 274.

³² Compendium 41.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

1880 the town had more than 1,200 inhabitants, a bank, two newspapers, and several grain mills and cotton gins.³³

Second Courthouse, 1878

After a storm damaged the first courthouse, the remains of the structure were sold to James F. Brown for demolition and the second courthouse was built.³⁴ The new two-story stone building, situated in the center of the courthouse square, was square with slightly protruding entrances on all four sides. A central frame cupola surmounted the metal roof.³⁵ The court accepted the new building about February 1878. In early 1879 the county passed a "special Court house and jail Tax of one fourth of one per cent" in order to pay for the new building and to repair the jail.³⁶

The court wanted the new courthouse to help pay for itself and authorized the sheriff to rent it "to shows at the rate of ten dollars per night, other performances at the rate of five dollars per night, [and] for religious or charitable purposes free." County officers were also authorized to rent their offices and pay any fees collected into the courthouse fund.³⁷ The building was plagued with bats soon after construction, and the court authorized the county judge "to make a contract with some party to get the bats out of the Court house." In addition, the court accepted the proposal of Cole Bros. and Johnston to install platinum-tipped lighting rods on the new building.³⁸ At the end of August 1880 the court solicited bids for "putting up a fence around the court house; and having cisterns made." In January 1881 the fence was finished, and the local newspaper proclaimed it "ugly enough to repel anything."³⁹

Like the first courthouse, the second also served as the headquarters for the town's social life. The commissioners gave the San Saba Brass Band permission to practice and give concerts in the courtroom, in exchange for the band installing and maintaining "basket lights." In May of 1881 "teachers of vocal music and their class" were given permission to practice and hold concerts in the courtroom, if proceeds went "to benevolent purposes."⁴⁰ A "social hop" at the courthouse at the end of November, however, dissolved into a general melee.⁴¹

By August 1881, the cupola and roof needed painting, and R. G. Blakeney applied two coats of paint for four dollars.⁴² Just a year later, the court looked at the roof and cupola again and contracted with James May of Llano County "to paint the roof of Court house and cupola... with a composition ... that said composition will stop up all cracks in the tin on said roof and guarantee that it will stop all leaks in said roof and cupola for a period of five years."⁴³

The disposition of the cisterns is unclear. On August 9 the court voted "to substitute a wooden trough on the east side of the court house square in lieu of the stone one contracted for."⁴⁴ The Sanborn maps for 1885, 1889, and 1894 all show

³³ Greene 877.

³⁴ Minutes February 1878; Star March 4, 1910.

³⁵ Sanborn 1885; History 479.

³⁶ Minutes February 1878, February 14, 1879; History 478.

³⁷ Ibid February 14, 1879, August 10, 1880.

³⁸ Ibid March 13, August 13, 1879

³⁹ Ibid August 12, 1880, May 13, 1881.

⁴⁰ Ibid February 14, 1879, August 12, 1880, May 1881.

⁴¹ History 478-479.

⁴² Minutes August 26, 1881.

⁴³ Ibid August 15, 1882.

⁴⁴ Ibid August 9, 1881.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

cisterns at the edge of the courthouse square, appearing to function as troughs and certainly not fed with water from the courthouse (or any other) roof. A public well on the south side of the courthouse probably served the troughs as well as the courthouse proper. At the same meeting, the commissioners accepted a courthouse square landscaping proposal by E. E. Risien, founder of Texas' pecan industry. For the sum of \$16, Risien would plant sixteen honey locust trees on the grounds: "on in each corner or angle of the Fence, that is 2 on the North East corner -- 2 on the North West corner -- 2 on the south East corner, and two (2) on the South West corner -- and 1 on each side of the four steps of the Court house fence."⁴⁵

Third Courthouse, 1911

During the 1880s and 1890s San Saba County was a lawless place, and several factions within the county fought in open mob warfare. After dozens of men were killed, the Texas Rangers were dispatched to restore order by 1893. Early railroad building in West Texas bypassed San Saba County, perhaps due in part to its notoriety. However, by 1906 the Santa Fe Railroad decided to extend their tracks into San Saba County. Construction was delayed by the national panic of 1907, and the track was not started until March 1910.⁴⁶

After a false start in May 1909, the commissioners considered building a new courthouse in the late winter of 1909.⁴⁷ In January 1910, no doubt spurred by the coming rail line, the San Saba Chamber of Commerce put out a large mailing to 1,200 voters in the county asking their opinions about a new courthouse. According to the *San Saba Star*, "The returns are coming in and so far a large majority are in favor of the proposition."⁴⁸ At their meeting on February 19, the commissioners set an election for April 9 to consider \$75,000 worth of bonds to build a new courthouse. Voters approved the bonds by a count of 653 to 526.⁴⁹

Several architects and builders responded to the county's solicitation to design the new courthouse, and on June 29 the commissioners looked in detail at two finalists: the firms of Churchill & White of Fort Worth, and Chamberlain and Company of Birmingham, Alabama. On the advice of local architect and builder Walter R. Smith, the court selected Walter Chamberlain's design. Chamberlain and Company had recently designed the Deaf Smith County courthouse in Hereford in 1910, and the commissioners may have been familiar with that Classical Revival structure. According to the *San Saba Star* the Chamberlain Company "makes a specialty of court houses, having designed over 60 of them and have [*sic*] done work in ten states."⁵⁰ Chamberlain worked quickly, and on July 25 the commissioners accepted his plans and authorized solicitation for bids.⁵¹

January 6, 1911 saw the cornerstone set on the northeast corner of the building "under the directions of San Saba Lodge No. 612, A. F. and A. M." The Masons placed various fraternal symbols in an iron box that went inside the stone, and the commissioners and county officers also offered memorabilia, including "pecans, coins, key rings and family records."⁵²

⁴⁵ Minutes August 9, 1881; Murphy 878.

⁴⁶ Star March 11, 1910.

⁴⁷ Minutes May 14, 1909.

⁴⁸ Star February 4, 1910.

⁴⁹ Ibid February 25, April 15, 1910.

⁵⁰ Ibid August 2, 1910.

⁵¹ Minutes June 29, 30, July 25, 1910.

⁵² Star January 13, 1911.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

San Saba is one of the 100 extant Texas courthouses built between 1900 and 1940 grounded in classical styles. Domes, grand columns, and pediments evoked a classical era rooted in interpretations of Roman classical styles. The Texas rendition of the style has been dubbed "Texas Renaissance" by Willard B. Robinson (1983) and "Academic Eclecticism" by Jay Henry (1993).

Like other courthouses of the day, the San Saba building reflects this move toward classical elements with its domed clock tower, ionic capitals, two-story columns and dentate cornices. The rusticated ground floor and corner quoins, however, are a local detail not apparent on the earlier Deaf Smith building. The elevated entrances with broken pediments over the doors are another hallmark of the era, as is the more rectangular floor plan. While Chamberlain may have used some elements of a stock plan for the building as a whole, the finished product was tailored to San Saba County. Under a large star are the words "San Saba" and on the frieze beneath is the motto "From the People to the People."

The historic building finishes were considered modern and technologically advanced at the time. The pressed brick exterior cladding followed the courthouse trend even though locally quarried stone and wood were the materials of choice in the rest of the town, due probably to the lack of rail transport up to that time.⁵³ Painted and scored plaster and woodwork defined interior finishes, and plaster and pressed metal were the ceiling materials.

The county's great pride in the plans for the new building was reflected in a long newspaper article about the structure that included a rendering.⁵⁴ The new courthouse was designed in "concrete stone and brick... [with an] \$800 bell and with a clock of fine movement which will have four skeleton dials which will be 7 feet in diameter each.... [The building will be] fireproof and absolutely up-to-date." It featured a "vacuum cleaning system" and a fire line with fifty feet of fire hose, as well as modern plumbing and steam heating. Among the most advanced elements was the internal communication system: "each office will be provided with an inter phone, so that an official can talk to any room in the house."⁵⁵

The article also elaborated on the offices:

"The basement is entered from four sides and in the center of the basement will be found a large Exhibition Hall or Farmers Rest Room, which will be about 50 x 50 feet, so that our farmers will have comfortable quarters in which to congregate. In the basement will also be found a Ladies Rest Room with toilet attached. A Justice of the peace office and also the toilets for the male whites and colored. The first or principal floor will contain on one end, the County Court room with the County Judge adjoining on one side and the County Clerk on the other, each provided with private offices and vaults. On the other end of the first floor will be the Tax Collector, Tax Assessor, Sheriff, Treasurer and Superintendent of Education, all of which are provided with vaults. On the second floor will be found the District Court Room, which is 50 x 50 feet provided with a gallery for the use of ladies attending court."⁵⁶

The second floor also included offices for the district clerk (with vault) and the county attorney, as well as rooms for the petit and grand juries, a consultation room and toilets for men and women.

The commissioners awarded the building contract to Falls City Construction Company of Louisville, Kentucky on August

⁵³ Robinson 218; Sanborn 1912.

⁵⁴ San Saba Star August 12, 1910.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

17, 1910. County offices moved to the Murray Building at Wallace Street fronting the square in mid-September, and removal of the old courthouse began.⁵⁷

The court sited the structure on September 14:

“... the new County Court House Building shall be located on the present Court House site ... as follows: the house will be set on the center of the Lot, axes [*sic*] lines of which are located by stakes driven this day, one on the North, South, East and West sides of the Lot. The front elevation of the Building to face the north.... [The] grade line marked on the plans for the said Court House building shall coincide with a line marked on the meridian stone located near the North-west corner of the Lot. The line on this stone designating this grade line is on the North face of said stone, and identified by cross marks approximately 2 inches above, and said line is approximately 21 inches below the top of said stone.”

The next day the commissioners approved the pressed-face brick for the exterior: the brick manufactured by the Coffeyville Vitrified Brick and Tile Company of Coffeyville, Kansas, and described as being “Press Face, Grade No. 1, shade 3.”⁵⁸

Excavation for the foundation of the new building began on September 29 when C. H. Austin, foreman for Falls City Construction, mobilized his work force. On that day, “the centre [*sic*] stake of the square was found.... The ravages of time having rotted the stake, but a knot of the original pin was found in an excavation of a few inches square.”⁵⁹ The cornerstone was laid in January 1911, and by summer the building was almost finished. The commissioners contracted with local builder Walter R. Smith to connect the courthouse to the city water main and also to make a connection with the sewer system. The following month the court rejected the bid of R. E. Davidson “to install a light plant for the purpose of lighting the new Court [house],” and instead contracted “to pay said San Saba Light Co. 15 cents per one thousand watts for lighting the Court House and jail.”⁶⁰

In February 1911 the commissioners addressed furnishings for the new building and decided “to make a visit to some modern courthouses to be better able to select the necessary furniture and inside equipments and fixtures.”⁶¹ While the local paper did not divulge where these “modern” courthouses were, the group selected the C. H. Meyers Company of Houston to supply wood furniture, and Mr. C. A. People of Dallas, “the Steel furniture man,” to equip the building with his specialty.⁶² Texas Sealing Company provided wood blinds, and Brown-Woods Electric Company supplied light fixtures.⁶³

On August 1, 1911, the commissioners’ court convened in its new home for the first time. The momentous occasion seems to have been overshadowed by the approaching county fair. The fair, which began August 7, was highly publicized as an opportunity for San Saba, both town and county, to show off its resources. The first passenger train to arrive in the

⁵⁷ Minutes August 17, 1910; Star September 16, 1910.

⁵⁸ Minutes September 15, 1910.

⁵⁹ Star September 30, 1910.

⁶⁰ Minutes June 7, July 12, 13, 1911.

⁶¹ Star February 25, 1911.

⁶² Ibid July 28, 1911.

⁶³ Minutes August 25, 26, 1911.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

county rolled in on August 8 bringing in "a cargo of eager expectant visitors."⁶⁴

On August 11, 1911, the county accepted the new courthouse after a personal inspection led by the contractor and W. R. Smith, who was the supervising architect at the time. The contractor warranted portions of his work, including three months for cement work and a year for the roof. He guaranteed that the radiators "will develop sufficient heat to produce 70 degrees Fahrenheit in the several rooms where placed when the outside temperature is at 10 degrees above zero."⁶⁵ The heating system, however, developed problems long before the one-year warranty expired. A report to the court in January 1912 noted that the furnace in the courthouse "is not giving satisfaction, said furnace failing to produce heat sufficient to properly heat said Court House." In addition, the boiler was leaking, and the grating was "practically burned out." The court ordered the county judge to contact Falls City Construction Company about the warranty and repairs.⁶⁶

The railroad provided the impetus for the town of San Saba to incorporate in 1910, and the new government was inaugurated on October 2, just days after ground was broken for the new courthouse.⁶⁷ The first train arrived at 10:40 am on August 8, 1911. Local businesses shut down for the day, and approximately 6,000 people witnessed the iron horse arrive at the new depot the same week that the courthouse was ready for occupation.⁶⁸ During this period, according to Hamrick, "San Saba County in general and the town of San Saba in particular grew in wealth and population."⁶⁹

The third courthouse has functioned less as a county social center than its predecessors. The San Saba Brass Band continued to practice in the building, for a while at least, moving from the ladies rest room to the basement in 1913. In 1956, however, the square and courthouse were the center of many San Saba County Centennial activities, including Homecoming Day. On Agricultural and Youth Day "...implements and livestock displays will be placed on the courthouse lawn and home demonstration club display will be on the ground floor in the court house."⁷⁰

During the twentieth century, San Saba County's economy has continued to be based on its agricultural productions. Cattle, sheep, and goats are important commodities, joined by grains and pecans. The horticultural work of Edmund E. Risien, who moved to San Saba County in 1874, established pecan culture as a significant crop. Promotion of the product has led the county to dub itself the "Pecan Capital of the World." Stone quarrying, recreation, and tourism are also significant elements in the county's economy today.⁷¹

Walter W. Chamberlain, Architect

Walter W. Chamberlain (also Chamberlin), active 1890-1913, was a prolific courthouse designer throughout the southern United States. He was a member of the Southern Chapter of the American Institute of Architects as early as 1892. Chamberlin is associated with several architectural firms early in his career, including Chamberlin & McGeoy at 297 Second Street, Memphis, Tennessee; and Chamberlain & Buford (1890) and Chamberlain & Company (1893-1902), both

⁶⁴ San Saba Star August 11, 1911.

⁶⁵ Minutes August 11, 1911.

⁶⁶ Ibid January 11, 1912.

⁶⁷ San Saba Star September 30, 1910.

⁶⁸ Ibid August 14, 1911.

⁶⁹ Hamrick 258.

⁷⁰ Austin American-Statesman, May 6, 1956.

⁷¹ Murphy 878.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 15

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

of Knoxville, Tennessee. During 1902-13, Chamberlain's office was in Birmingham, Alabama. His specialty was county courthouse design, with more than two dozen extant county courthouses attributed to him in several southern states. Chamberlain's courthouse projects include the following:⁷²

1890	Anderson Co.	Clinton	Tennessee	
1891	Rhea Co.	Dayton	Tennessee	(National Historic Landmark 1976; Scopes Trial 1925)
1893	Johnson Co.	Mountain City	Tennessee	
1894	Holmes Co.	Lexington	Mississippi	
1895	Knox Co.	Knoxville	Tennessee	(alterations to 1875 courthouse; NR listed 1973)
1895	Pulaski Co.	Pulaski	Virginia	
1896	Yalobusha Co.	Water Valley	Mississippi	
1898	Berrien Co.	Nashville	Georgia	(NR listed 1977)
1899	Gibson Co.	Trenton	Tennessee	
1900	Noxubee Co.	Macon	Mississippi	
1900	Tallahatchie Co.	Charleston	Mississippi	
1903	Trousdale Co.	Hartsville	Mississippi	
1903	Morgan Co.	Wartburg	Tennessee	
1905	Cumberland Co.	Crossville	Tennessee	
1905	Fentress Co.	Jamestown	Tennessee	
1905	Wayne Co.	Waynesboro	Tennessee	
1905	Lawrence Co.	Lawrenceburg	Tennessee	
1906	Franklin Co.	Carnesville	Georgia	
1906	Jeff Davis Co.	Hazelhurst	Georgia	
1907	Bledsoe Co.	Pikeville	Georgia	
1907	Scotland Co.	Memphis	Missouri	
1909	Warren Co.	Warrenton	Georgia	
1910	Deaf Smith Co.	Hereford	Texas	
1910	Crittenden Co.	Marion	Arkansas	(NR listed 1977)
1910	Quitman Co.	Marks	Mississippi	
1911	San Saba Co.	San Saba	Texas	

Conclusion

The San Saba County Courthouse meets Criterion A, in the area of Government, for its role as the center of local government in San Saba County since 1911. The courthouse also meets Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, as an excellent and well-preserved regional example of a Classical Revival style public building. Architectural features including columns, porticos, pediments, quoins, and façade symmetry are elements of the Classical Revival style. The courthouse retains integrity of location, setting, workmanship, materials, design, feeling and association to a high degree.

⁷² Information supplied by several State Historic Preservation Offices including: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia, especially the database of active architects in the South before 1955 compiled by John E. Wells of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, who cites the sources listed in the Bibliography.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 16

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Bibliography

Austin-American Statesman, May 6, 1956.

Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890: Part I: Population, Dwellings and Families. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1894.

Gournay, Luke. *Texas Boundaries: Evolution of the State's Counties*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995.

Greene, Daniel P. "San Saba, Texas," in Ron Tyler, et al, eds., *The New Handbook of Texas*. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, six volumes, 1996.

Hamrick, Alma Ward. *The Call of the San Saba: A History of San Saba County*. Austin: San Felipe Press, 1969.

Henry, Jay C. *Architecture in Texas, 1895-1945*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Murphy, Virginia S. "San Saba County," in Ron Tyler, et al, eds., *The New Handbook of Texas*. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, six volumes, 1996.

Ramos, Mary G., editor. *Texas Almanac 1996-1997*. Dallas: The Dallas Morning News, 1995.

Robinson, Willard B. *The People's Architecture: Texas Courthouses, Jails, and Municipal Buildings*. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983.

San Saba County Centennial Souvenir Program, 1956. Available at Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

San Saba County Commissioner's Court Minutes, various dates (footnoted as "Minutes").

San Saba County Courthouse: Historic Courthouse Master Plan. Austin: The Williams Company, 2000 (footnoted as "Master Plan").

San Saba County Historical Commission. *San Saba County History 1856-1983*. San Saba: San Saba County Historical Commission, 1983 (footnoted as "History").

San Saba Star newspaper, various dates.

Sanborn Map and Publishing Company. Maps of San Saba 1885, 1889, 1894, 1902, 1907, 1912, 1925. Available at Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 17

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Walker, Francis A. *The Statistics of the Population of the United States...Ninth Census Volume I*. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1872.

Bibliography for Walter W. Chamberlin

The Architects' Directory and Specifications Index, 1905-1906. New York: William T. Comstock, 1905, p. 23.

The Architects' Directory and Specifications Index, 1909. New York: William T. Comstock, 1909, p. 33.

The Architects' Directory and Specifications Index, 1913-1914. New York: William T. Comstock, 1913, p. 33.

Crane, Sophie and Paul Crane. *Tennessee Taproots*. Old Hickory, Tennessee: Earle-Shields Publishers, 1976.

Gurney, Bill. *Mississippi Courthouses Then and Now*. Fulton, Mississippi: Old Timer Press, 1987.

Herndon, Joseph Lucian. *Architects in Tennessee until 1930: A Dictionary*. Master's thesis, Columbia University, New York, 1970, p. 41.

Manufacturers' Record, various citations.

Noffsiger, James Philip. *The Influence of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts on the Architects of the United States*. Doctoral dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1955, pp. 106, 112.

Wells, John E. and Robert E. Dalton. *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary*. Richmond, Virginia: New South Architectural Press, 1997, p. 81.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	14	527000	3451080

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: County owned tract within the town of San Saba, Texas, and recorded on Sep. 10, 1872, San Saba County Deed Records, Volume C, pages 397-8, which corner is identified by a stone set in the ground with a cross on top; Thence on a course S. 20 E. at 756.98 varas, the original S.E. corner of the Town tract was reached. Thence running west 758.36 varas to stake for NW corner.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Bob Brinkman, Texas Historical Commission)

NAME/TITLE: Dora C. Miller

ORGANIZATION: San Saba County

DATE: September 10, 2000

STREET & NUMBER: 500 E. Wallace

TELEPHONE: (915) 372-3635

CITY OR TOWN: San Saba

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 76877

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS (see continuation sheets FIGURE-18 through FIGURE-20)

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet PHOTO-21)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: San Saba County, Judge

STREET & NUMBER: County Courthouse, 500 E. Wallace

TELEPHONE: (915) 372-3635

CITY OR TOWN: San Saba

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 76877

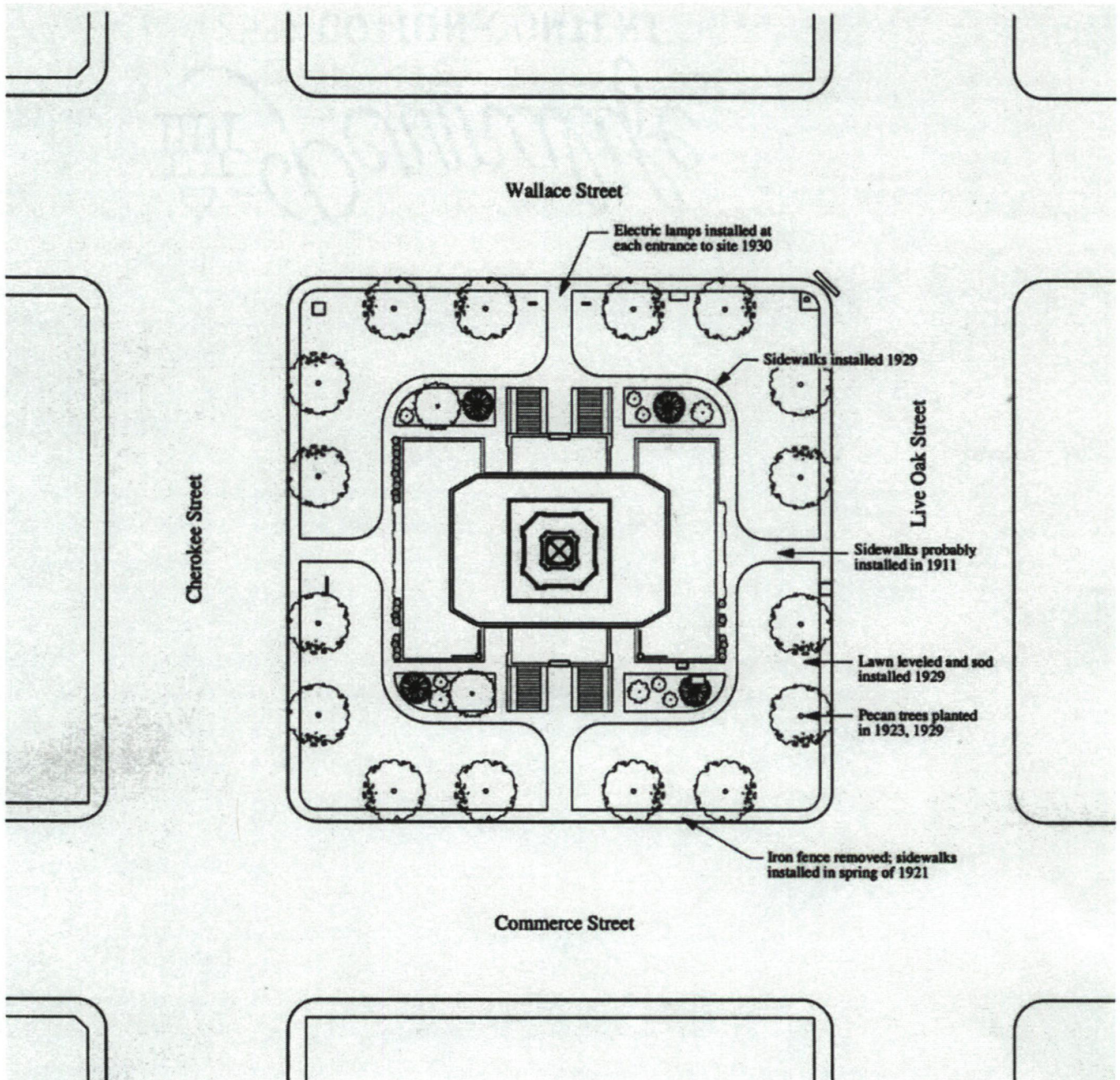
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 18

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Figure 1. Site plan of San Saba County Courthouse. North at top. Source: San Saba County Courthouse: Historic Courthouse Master Plan (Austin: The Williams Company, 2000).



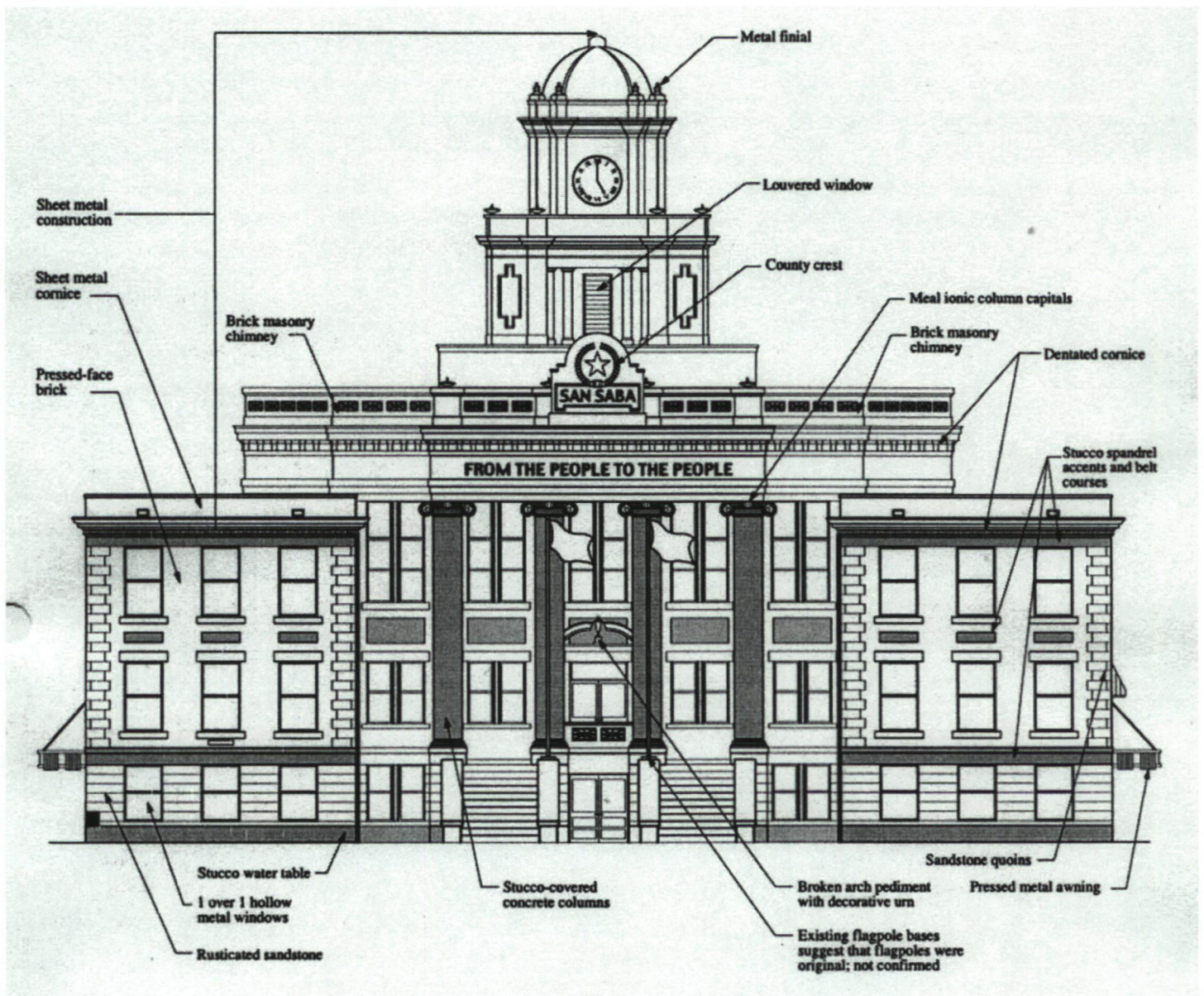
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 19

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Figure 2. North elevation drawing of San Saba County Courthouse. Source: San Saba County Courthouse: Historic Courthouse Master Plan (Austin: The Williams Company, 2000).



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 20

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Figure 3. 1912 photo of San Saba County Courthouse. Source: Richland Springs Country: Pride of San Saba County. (Richland Springs: Richland Springs Commercial Club, 1973 (reprint of 1912 edition)).



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section PHOTO Page 21

San Saba County Courthouse
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas

Photographs

**San Saba County Courthouse – 500 E. Wallace
San Saba, San Saba County, Texas
Photographs by Dora Miller, September 2000
Negatives on file at Texas Historical Commission**

South elevation
Camera facing north
Photograph 1 of 2

West elevation
Camera facing east
Photograph 2 of 2

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: San Saba County Courthouse

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, San Saba

DATE RECEIVED: 3/19/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/02/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/18/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/03/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000328

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5/1/03 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



SAN SABA

FROM THE PEOPLE TO THE PEOPLE

DODGE



SAN SABA COUNTY COURTHOUSE

500 EAST WALLACE

SAN SABA, SAN SABA CO., TEXAS

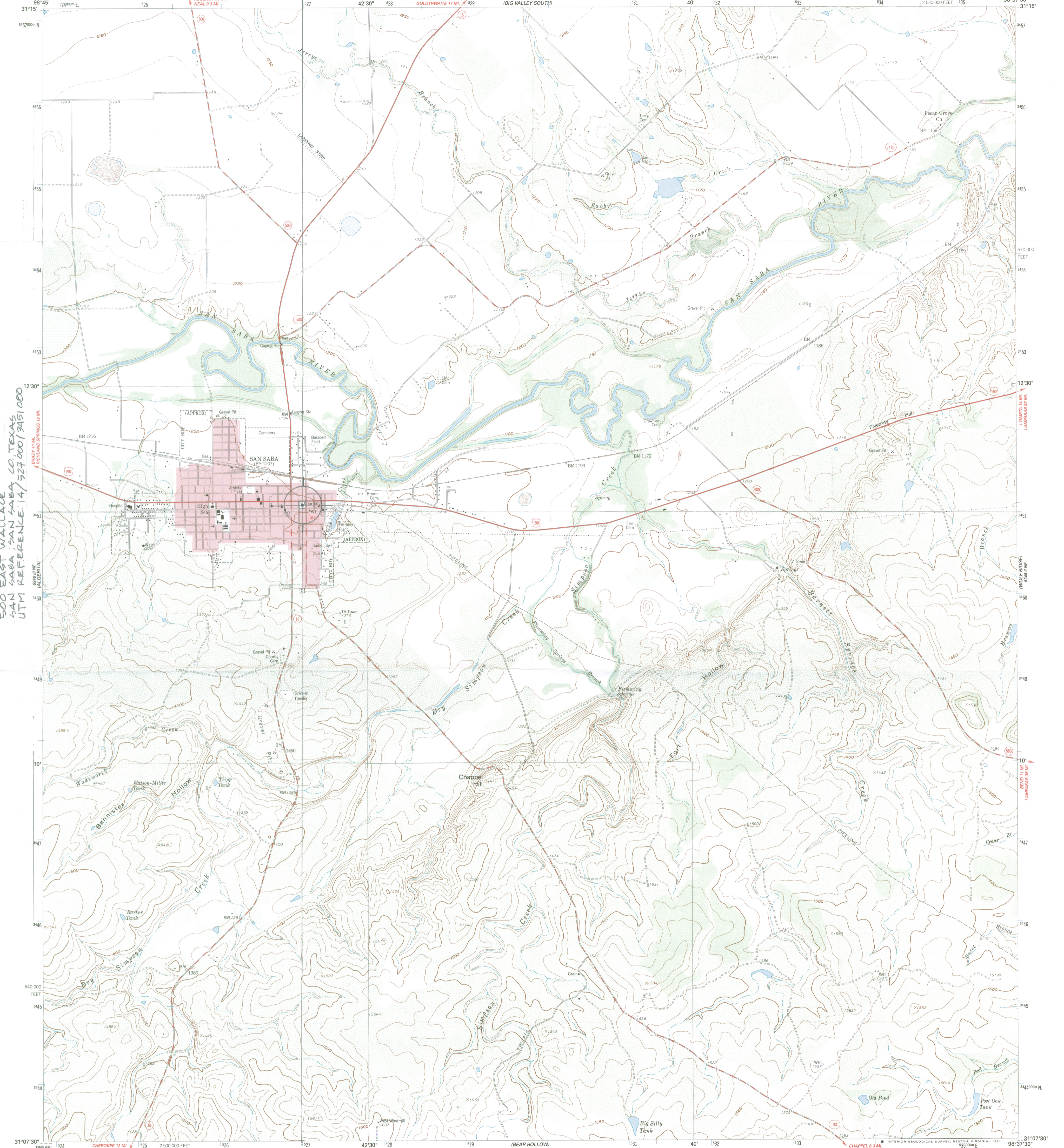
PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 2



SAN SABA COUNTY COURTHOUSE
500 EAST WALLACE
SAN SABA, SAN SABA CO., TEXAS
PHOTOGRAPH 2 of 2

89° 45' 30" W
31° 15' 00" N

89° 45' 30" W
31° 15' 00" N



SAN SABA COUNTY COURTHOUSE
500 EAST WALLACE
SAN SABA, TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14 / 527 000 / 3451 000

89° 45' 30" W
31° 15' 00" N

89° 45' 30" W
31° 15' 00" N

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1957. Field checked 1959

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American Datum

10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, central zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue

The difference between 1927 North American Datum and North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5 minute intersections is given in USGS Bulletin 1875. The NAD 83 is shown by dashed corner ticks

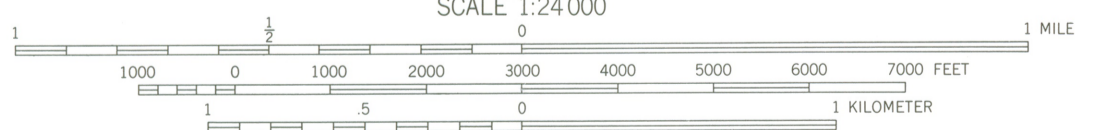
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown

Unchecked elevations are shown in brown



UTM GRID AND 1959 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

Map photoinspected 1976
No major culture or drainage changes observed



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 10-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

3198-213

ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route

SAN SABA, TEX.

31098-BF-T024

1959

PHOTOINSPECTED 1976

DMA 6246 II NW-SERIES V882