

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>TEXAS</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Shelby</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER <b>71348.0024</b>	DATE <b>3/3/71</b>

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Shelby County Courthouse**

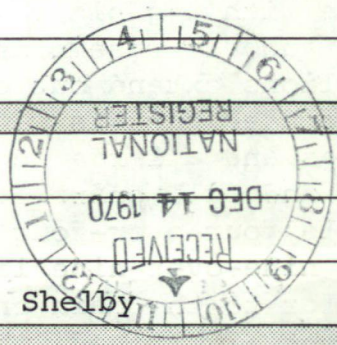
AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Courthouse Square**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Center**

STATE: **Texas** CODE: **75935** COUNTY: **Shelby** CODE: **419**



**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious		
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**Shelby County**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Shelby County Courthouse**

CITY OR TOWN: **Center** STATE: **Texas** CODE: **048**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Shelby County Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Courthouse Square**

CITY OR TOWN: **Center** STATE: **Texas** CODE: **048**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Texas State Historical Survey**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1969**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Texas State Historical Survey Committee**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**108 W. 15th Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Austin** STATE: **Texas** CODE: **048**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
 COUNTY:  
 ENTRY NUMBER  
 DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
**71348.0024**  
**3/3/71**

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

A small two-story red brick Victorian courthouse of the Early Romanesque Revival style. The building is rectangular in shape with a gable roof and twelve wall turrets with rounded ends and all resembling chimney stacks. Two-story entrance pavilions extend out on the north and south sides, each flanked by rounded turrets with buttressing. The pavilions have small gables and a large segmentally arched opening with a Tudor hood mold and full enframing at the entrance. Above this is a double four-over-four light window with a segmentally arched hood mold. The ends of the courthouse have one-story porches similar to the main entrances. The first-story windows are segmentally arched with nine-over-nine lights. The second story is treated as a piano nobile with tall six-over-six above six-over-six windows in arched openings with hood molds, and separated by buttresses. The east end has a central bay window with the judge's bench in a semi-circular apse. There is a small frame cupola at the center of the roof with bracketed gables with a relatively low pitch and surmounted by a weathervane. Brick string courses and dentilated tables mark the wall divisions horizontally and continue around the towers.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**B. SIGNIFICANCE**

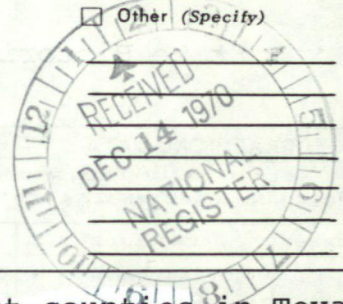
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1883-85

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |   |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Shelby County is one of the easternmost counties in Texas. In the early 1800s, it was in the path of emigrants into Texas, many of whom settled temporarily in the county, and then proceeded westward. Under Mexican government, Shelby County was part of the municipality of Tenaha ; when Texas achieved independence, in 1836, the Congress of the Republic created Shelby County and named it for Isaac Shelby, United States Revolutionary soldier from Tennessee.

The most important town in Shelby County, and the first county seat, was Shelbyville. In 1866, however, the citizens of the county voted to move the county seat to Center. J.B. Sanders has noted that the election was engineered by proponents of Center, who placed the election notice in a secluded spot accessible primarily to Center citizens. There may be some truth to the tale, for the residents of Shelbyville carefully guarded their courthouse after the election, and Center residents Sam Parker and R.L. Weaver were forced to abscond with the records at night by hauling them away in a wagon.

Center built a wooden building to house the Shelby County records, but June 1, 1882, the building burned, and all the records were lost. November 11, 1883, the Shelby County Commissioners met in Center, Texas, and adopted a plan of construction for a new courthouse. The County Judge issued bonds, and April 7, 1884, the court gave the terms of acceptance for construction. Jesse Amason and J.C. Wilson donated land for the building.

April 8, 1884, the Court opened the sealed bids. The best bid was made by John Joseph Emmett Gibson, well-known in the county for his work on the Shelby County Clerk's office building, the old jail, the Tenaha School (since destroyed), and the Panola County Courthouse. Gibson was a native of Bally Moore, Eustice County, Clare, Ireland. He came to the United States at the age of seventeen, and moved soon after to Shelby County. He designed the courthouse, and began construction in November of 1883. The work was concluded March 22, 1885. Total cost was \$26,725, and the County Court formally accepted the building

(See continuation sheet #1)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Coursey, Clark. Texas Courthouses.  
 Dellinger, Mattie. "Shelby County Courthouse"  
 Webb, Walter Prescott. Handbook of Texas. Austin, 1952.  
 Texas State Historical Survey Committee marker files.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 . "	0 . "		31° 47' 42"	94° 10' 53"	
NE	0 . "	0 . "				
SE	0 . "	0 . "				
SW	0 . "	0 . "				

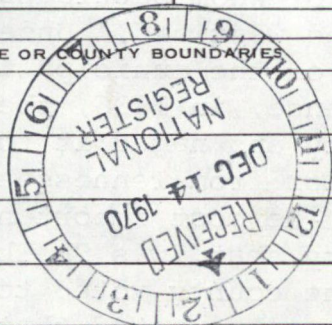
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

UTM  
 15/388160  
 3518100  
 HL

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Wayne Bell, Project Director  
 Roxanne Williamson, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: Texas State Historical Survey Committee DATE: 11-13-70

STREET AND NUMBER: 108 W. 15th Street

CITY OR TOWN: Austin STATE: TEXAS CODE: 048

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Luett Salime  
 Title: State Liaison Officer  
 Date: 12-10-70

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Ewert A. Connelly  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
 MAR 31 1971  
 Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:  
William J. McCreight  
 Keeper of The National Register  
 Date: MAR 12 1971

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) #1

STATE		TEXAS
COUNTY		Shelby
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
71,348,0024	3/3/71	

(Number all entries)

8. (cont'd)

February 12, 1886.

Today, the Shelby County Courthouse is one of the five oldest courthouses in Texas, and one of the few which retain an almost unchanged appearance and condition. Materials which Gibson used included red and grey brick, Rosendale cement, lime mortar, and yellow pine. There are eight rooms on the first floor; the second story includes a courtroom and jury rooms.

Although built in the 1880s the courthouse has a naive early Victorian quality, related to the Romanesque Revival of the 1850s in the East. Twelve prominent wall turrets with rounded caps are reminiscent of chimney stacks. The simple gable roof boasts a small frame cupola with bracketted gables and a weathervane. The building was carefully designed and has much charm.

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark - 1969







1  
NPS Number 71-3-48-0024

Title: Shelby County Courthouse

Loc. Shelby Co., Texas (5)  
Side elevation from the  
west

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES





NPS Number 71-3-48-0024

Title: Shelby County Courthouse

Loc. Shelby Co, Texas

Side elevation from  
the east



3

NPS Number 71-3-48-0024

Title: Shelby County Courthouse

Loc. Shelby County, Tex. (3)

Great elevation from the  
north

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



NPS Number 71-3-48-0024

Title: Shelby County Courthouse

Loc. Shelby County, Texas  
Interior of bay window

①

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

*(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)*

STATE	
TEXAS	
COUNTY	
Shelby	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
71.3.48.0024	3/31/71

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**1. NAME**

COMMON: Shelby County Courthouse  
AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: Courthouse Square

CITY OR TOWN: Center

STATE: TEXAS	CODE: 048	COUNTY: Shelby	CODE: 419
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**3. MAP REFERENCE**

SOURCE: United States Department of the Interior Geological Survey

SCALE: 1:62500

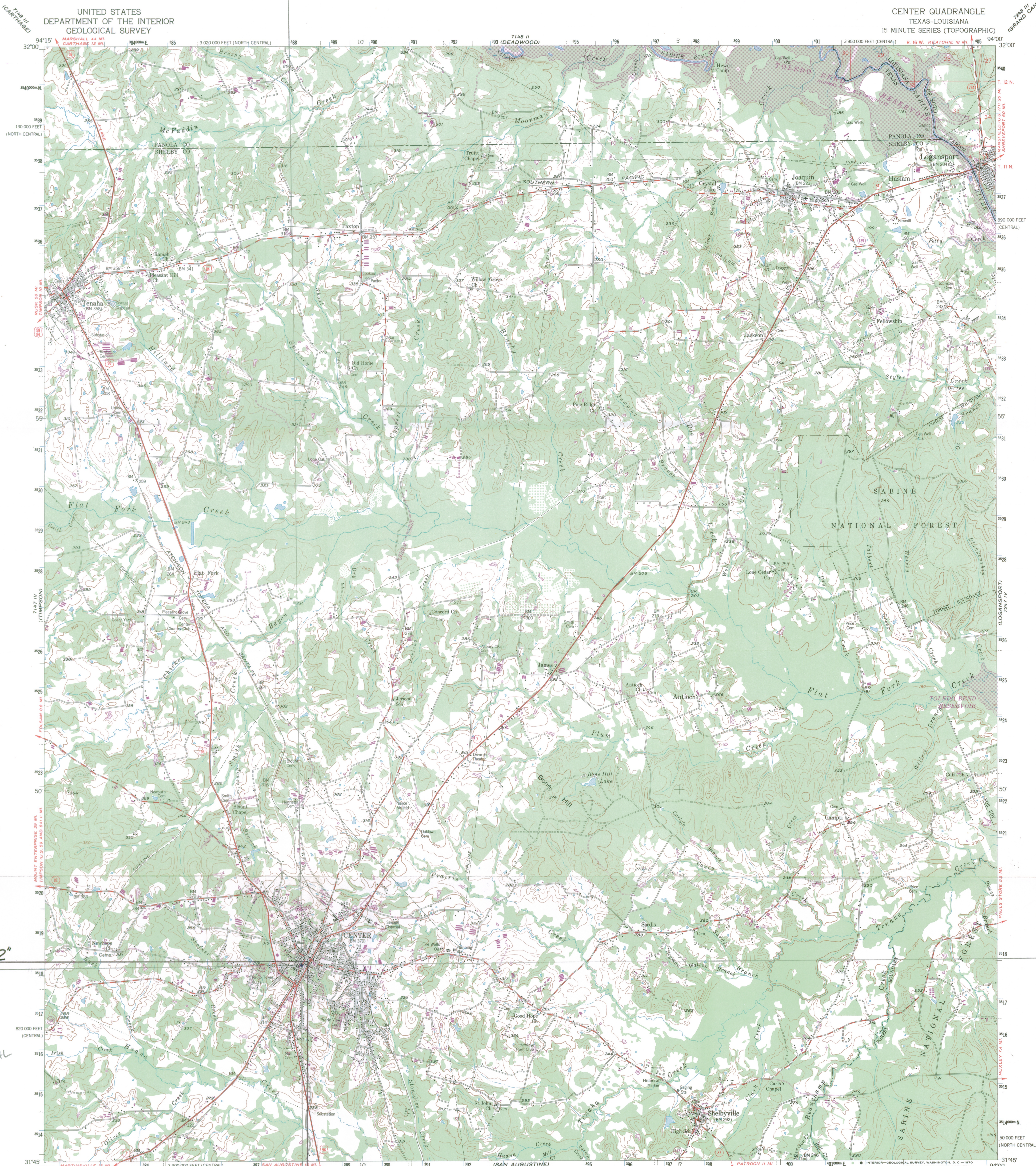
DATE: 1956, 1958 (photo-revised 1969)

**4. REQUIREMENTS**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

- Property boundaries where required.
- North arrow.
- Latitude and longitude reference.

Texas Map Reference #3194-440

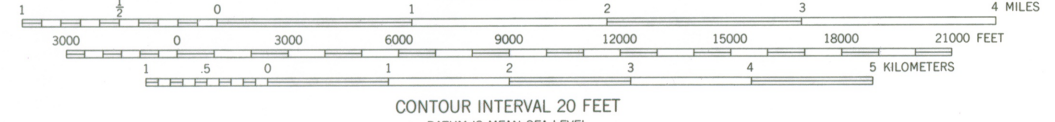
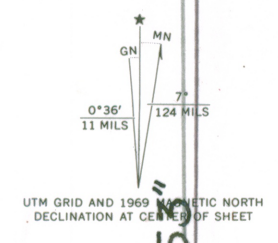


SHELBY COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
BOUNDED BY AUSTIN, SAN AUGUSTINE,  
NACOGDOCHES, AND SHELBYVILLE  
CENTER, TEXAS, 048-419

31°47'42"

UTM  
15/388160  
3518100  
HL

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods  
Aerial photographs taken 1956. Field check 1958  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system,  
central and north central zones  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 15, shown in blue  
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs  
taken 1969. Louisiana portion in cooperation with Louisiana  
Department of Public Works. This information not field checked  
Woodland revised within Toledo Bend Reservoir



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

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



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
AND BY THE STATE OF LOUISIANA, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

CENTER, TEX.-LA.  
N3145-W9400/15  
1958  
PHOTO REVISED 4-1989  
AMS 7147 I-SERIES V785

94°10'5"

14



Shelby Co. Courthouse  
Shelby, Tx

Went  
3/31/71

MAR 31 1971

H30-HR

Mr. Truett Latimer  
Executive Director  
Texas State Historical Survey Committee  
Post Office Box 12276  
Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Mr. Latimer:

We are pleased to inform you that the historic properties listed on the enclosure have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Senators Lloyd Bentsen and John G. Tower and the appropriate Representatives are being informed. A leaflet explaining the National Register is enclosed for each of the property owners. Please withhold any publicity on this until you have received a carbon copy of the Congressional correspondence.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

Director

Enclosures

MAR 31 1971

Entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

cc:  
HR

PDHerrick:mmm

3/30/71

BASIC FILE RETAINED IN HR

Properties added to the National Register of Historic Places

TEXAS

The Magnolias	Marion County Jefferson, Texas
Jefferson Historic District	Marion County Jefferson, Texas
Fort St. Louis	Victoria County Inez, Texas
The Flatiron Building	Tarrant County Fort Worth, Texas
Shelby County Courthouse	Shelby County Center, Texas
The Magoffin Homestead	El Paso County El Paso, Texas
Monroe-Crook House	Houston County Crockett, Texas

Plumlee  
3/31/71

MAR 31 1971

H30-HR

BASIC FILE RETAINED IN HR

Hon. Lloyd Bentsen  
United States Senate  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Bentsen:

We are pleased to inform you that the historic properties listed on the enclosure have been nominated by the State Liaison Officer appointed by the Governor for the implementation of the National Historic Preservation Program in Texas and have been entered into the National Register of Historic Places. Senator John G. Tower and the appropriate Representatives have also been provided with this information. By copy of this letter, the State Liaison Officer, Mr. Truett Latimer, Executive Director, Texas State Historical Survey Committee, Post Office Box 12276, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711, has likewise been notified. A leaflet explaining the National Register is enclosed.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed)

Director

Enclosures

MAR 31 1971

Entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

cc: Mr. Truett Latimer, Executive Director, Texas State Historical Survey Committee, P. O. Box 12276, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711

Also notified: Hon. John G. Tower    Hon. Wright Patman  
                  United States Senate    Hon. John Young  
  Hon. James C. Wright, Jr.  
  Hon. Richard C. White  
  Hon. John Dowdy

cc: Director, Southwest Region

HR

3/30/71

PDHerrick:mm

Properties added to the National Register of Historic Places

TEXAS

The Magnolias	Marion County Jefferson, Texas
Jefferson Historic District	Marion County Jefferson, Texas
Fort St. Louis	Victoria County Inez, Texas
The Flatiron Building	Tarrant County Fort Worth, Texas
Shelby County Courthouse	Shelby County Center, Texas
The Magoffin Homestead	El Paso County El Paso, Texas
Monroe-Crook House	Houston County Crockett, Texas



Texas State Historical Survey Committee  
Box 12276, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711  
Truett Latimer  
Executive Director

property file  
RECEIVED  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
WASHINGTON OFFICE  
JAN 21 9 47 PM '74

TR

December 18, 1973

Judge V.V. Pate  
Shelby County Judge  
Center, Texas 75935

Dear Judge Pate:

The Texas Historical Commission is deeply alarmed and shocked by the wanton destruction of the historically and architecturally significant Shelby County Courthouse.

The remodellings which are presently being carried out on this magnificent 1883-1885 National Register property are plainly not ordinary maintenance and repairs and you are clearly in violation of article 6145, section 9c, for this work damages the historical and architectural integrity of the courthouse.

This agency has not been given prior notice of this work, as required by law and we hereby give you formal notice that we are consulting the Attorney General's office to determine what legal action should be undertaken in this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary L. Hume".

Gary L. Hume, Director  
National Register Programs  
for Texas

GLH/dra

cc: Kay Sanders  
J.B. Sanders



THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
OF TEXAS

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

JOHN L. HILL  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

January 15, 1974

Mr. Leon B. Sanders  
419 Nacogdoches Street  
Center, Texas 75935

Re: Changes in Shelby County Courthouse

Dear Leon:

Thank you for your recent letter and the enclosed letter from the Texas State Historical Survey Committee. I have referred both letters to Judge J.C. Davis, Chief of our State and County Affairs Division, for his recommendation.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention, and I look forward to seeing you soon.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe".

Joe K. Longley  
Chief, Antitrust and  
Consumer Protection

cc: Judge J.C. Davis