# National Register of Historic Places

## Inventory -- Nomination Form

**See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms**

**Type all entries -- Complete applicable sections**

### 1. Name

**Historic**

Comal County Courthouse

**And/or common**

### 2. Location

**Street & number**

North Seguin Avenue, near East San Antonio Street

**City, town**

New Braunfels

**State**

Texas

** Vicinity of**

21

**Congressional district**

Not for publication

### 3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>X Public</td>
<td>X Occupied</td>
<td>X Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building(s)</td>
<td>X Private</td>
<td></td>
<td>X Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>BOTH</td>
<td></td>
<td>X Educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</td>
<td>ACCESSIBLE</td>
<td>X Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>IN PROCESS</td>
<td></td>
<td>X Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>X YES: UNRESTRICTED</td>
<td>X Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X OTHER:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Owner of Property

**Name**

County of Comal

**Street & number**

North Seguin Avenue, near East San Antonio Street

**City, town**

New Braunfels

**State**

Texas

**Vicinity of**

Texas

### 5. Location of Legal Description

**Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc.**

Office of the County Clerk, Comal County Courthouse

**Street & number**

North Seguin Avenue, near East San Antonio Street

**City, town**

New Braunfels

**State**

Texas

### 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

**Title**

Historic Sites Inventory

**Date**

1970

**Federal**

X State

**County**

Local

**Depository for survey records**

Texas Historical Commission

**City, town**

Austin

**State**

Texas
Located across from the northeast corner of the public square, the Comal County Courthouse is an excellent example of Romanesque Revival design, as interpreted by architect J. Riely Gordon. Although the roofing has been replaced and an addition has been made on the east, the courthouse retains most of its original exterior fabric. While modernized, the interior spaces still reveal the original concept of the plan. The main entrance is on the southeast reentrant angle of the Greek-cross plan. On the ground floor within the arms of the cross are located the offices of the treasurer, county attorney and county clerk, and the courts of the commissioners and the county. On the second floor, expressed by a curved mass, is the district courtroom which originally had a two-story ceiling height. All these spaces radiated from a central core containing an open stairwell which facilitated natural ventilation by allowing hot air to rise and vent through the tower—thus the tower not only unified the courthouse massing but also served a functional purpose. The iron stairway, the woodwork, and much of the flooring is original.

The exterior walls are native limestone in a handsome light gold color. The texture of pitch-faced ashlar was subtly accented by cut-stone lintels and delicate stringcourse moldings. Common features on Romanesque architecture, the dormers, incorporating carved engaged columns, add to the picturesqueness of the building and relieve the austerity of the roof forms. The stone tower, with its gentle batter, is noteworthy for simplicity and originality. At the cornice of the tower as well as the main walls, a dentil course provides a delicate accent.

The entrance porches are also noteworthy. Supporting the entrance balcony are polished Syrian columns of pink granite; overhead, slender columns support capitals with handsomely carved Sullivanesque details. However, the entrances on the northwest, northeast, and southeast have been modified; the southwest (main) entrance is largely original, although an aluminum and glass door has replaced the original paneled wooden door. Similar in design to many of Gordon's Texas courthouses, the Comal County Courthouse contains two two-story quarter-circular entrance galleries set into the front ells (southwest and northwest), while the rear ells contain two three-story quarter-circular bays. A brick parapet with punched brick detail crowns each bay. The entrance and open second floor gallery of the northwest bay have been enclosed.
In 1930 A. C. Moeller was awarded the contract for a jail which was to be annexed to the courthouse—an unusual arrangement in Texas. Architect Jeremiah Schmidt designed the addition and the Southern Prison Company provided the jail equipment which is still in use. Through the use of limestone and compatible details the addition harmonizes with the courthouse.

In 1966 the courthouse was remodeled according to plans by Jeremiah Schmidt. Although the interior was modernized, much of the original interior character is yet apparent.
SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD
- PREHISTORIC
- 1400-1499
- 1500-1599
- 1600-1699
- 1700-1799
- 1800-1899
- 1900-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW
- ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
- ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC
- AGRICULTURE
- ARCHITECTURE
- ART
- COMMERCE
- COMMUNICATIONS
- COMMUNITY PLANNING
- CONSERVATION
- ECONOMICS
- EDUCATION
- ENGINEERING
- EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
- INDUSTRY
- INVENTION
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- LAW
- LITERATURE
- MILITARY
- MUSIC
- PHILOSOPHY
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- RELIGION
- SCIENCE
- SCULPTURE
- SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
- THEATER
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES 1897-1898

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Comal County Courthouse is noteworthy for its beauty, style, and association with one of the most talented nineteenth-century architects to practice in Texas. A work of limestone, handsome proportions and details distinguish this temple of justice. In addition, it is an outstanding example of the Romanesque Revival Style that was prominent nationally, yet the materials of construction reflect the region—it unifies with other limestone buildings in the community.

A German settlement founded in 1845 by Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels, New Braunfels was laid out around a public square which was reserved for a market place rather than a public building, as was the Anglo-American custom. Named for the Comal River, the county was organized the following year and three years later a frame courthouse was contracted. In 1857, through a competition, plans for a new stone courthouse were selected and a new courthouse was built.

The German tradition of incorporating a markt platz into the town plan was responsible for locating the courthouses, including the present building, off the square. Although many citizens advocated placement of the present courthouse on the square, German custom prevailed and it was sited on a corner site across from the public space. Today only a bandstand and landscaping occupy the square.

Late in 1897, because their courthouse was in a "very dilapidated condition; and considered unsafe by many citizens," the commissioners' court deemed it their duty to provide a new safe and substantial building. Subsequently Albert F. Beckmann of San Antonio was invited to meet with county commissioners but J. Riely Gordon, also from San Antonio, wrote the commissioners and requested the opportunity for an interview. Both architects submitted designs. Following a visit to the Gonzales County Courthouse, also the work of Gordon, and after considering competition drawings—although both architects advised the court not to sponsor a competition—by a vote of three to one Gordon was awarded the commission for a 5% fee.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES
Comal County Commissioners' Court Minutes, Office of the County Clerk, Comal County Courthouse, Vols. A, B, H, and N.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY about one acre
UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
A 1.4 58.4 6.8 3.2 18.6 10.5
B
C
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
The courthouse is located across from the northeast corner of the public square on North Seguin Avenue, near East San Antonio Street, and at the intersection of farm to market road 453 and state highway spur 3.

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

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

FORM PREPARED BY
NAME / TITLE
Willard B. Robinson, Professor of Architecture
ORGANIZATION
Texas Tech University
STREET & NUMBER
P. O. Box 4499
CITY OR TOWN
Lubbock,
STATE
Texas

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION
THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL
STATE
LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE
Texas State Historic Preservation Officer
DATE
Oct. 21, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
In February, 1898, bids were received for construction and the contract was awarded to Fischer and Lambie of Austin for $36,900. In May the cornerstone was levelled and in December, 1898, the court extended appreciation to the contractors for their excellent workmanship on the structure, just recently completed.

The courthouse plan based upon the Greek cross had been used by Gordon for several other Texas courthouses and the architect claimed a copyright on the arrangement. However, each courthouse on the same plan incorporated different materials and the detailing varied considerably, making each a unique building.

In 1899 the grounds around the courthouse were finished. Louis Moeller provided clay for the surfacing.
Comal County Courthouse
New Braunfels, Texas

Texas Historical Commission, 1970
Texas Historical Commission

Southwest oblique of south facade
Photo #1 of 4

OCT 26 1976

DEC 12 1976
Comal County Courthouse
New Braunfels, Texas

Texas Historical Commission, 1970
Texas Historical Commission

Detail of southwest (main) entrance.
Photo #2

OCT 26 1976
CORAL COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Dallas County Courthouse
Dallas, Texas
NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS
Texas Historical Commission, 1970
Texas Historical Commission

Northwest oblique  OCT 26 1976
Photo #3  DEC 12 1976
NPS Number 12/12/76
Title: Comal County Courthouse
Comal County, Texas
Loc. ____________________________

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
Texas Historical Commission,  
Box 12276, Capitol Station,  
Austin, Texas 78711

Gentlemen:  

We consider our courthouse to be of historical significance and have no plans to violate its historical or architectural integrity. There are some changes in process, but they are functional and not structural. They are reported below for your information.

We have remodeled a former commercial building next door and converted it into a courthouse annex office building. Several departments and offices presently located in the courthouse building itself are moving into the annex. The remaining offices and personnel will expand and move around to provide more efficient working space in the courthouse building.

There will be no demolition or destruction, nor structural changes, in the existing courthouse building. We shall move around some temporary partitions to conform to our new space allocation plan, but no permanent walls will be removed or constructed. In short, we do not believe we are doing anything that falls within the purview of Sec. 14, Art. 6145 VTCS.

Thank you for the referenced letter which provides useful information in succinct form. If you have any question about the work we are doing, please accept our invitation to write, call, or visit with us.

Sincerely,

Max R. Wommack

copy to: County Historical Society.
### NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

**NAME as it appears on federal register:** Comal County Courthouse

**LOCATION**
- **N. Seguin Ave., Near E. San Antonio St., New Braunfels**
- **City/town:**
- **State:** TX
- **County:** Comal

**EXISTING SURVEYS, HABS, HAER, HALS, FUNDED:** Yes

**CONSTRUCTION:**
- **Year of construction:** 1897-1906
- **Significant architectural style(s):** Richardsonian Romanesque

**Architect:** J. Riely Gordon
**Master builder:**
**Builder/contractor:** A.C. Moeller (Jr.)
**Landscape architect/garden designer:**
**Interior decorator:**
**Artist:**
**Artisan:**

**NAMES give role & date**

**FUNCTIONS**
- **Archaeology:** prehistoric-1
- **Commerce:** sales-6
- **Archeology:** historic-1
- **Communications:**-7
- **Engineering:** civil-11
- **Exploration:**-12
- **Landscape architect:**-15
- **Literature:**-17
- **Military:**-18
- **Music:**-19
- **Philosophy:**-20
- **Philology:**-21
- **Religion:**-22
- **Science:**-23
- **Social/humanitarian:**-24
- **Social/cultural:**-30
- **Transportation:**-35

**CONDITION**
- **Condition:** altered
- **Original site:** moved

**ACCESS**
- **Access:** Yes-Unrestricted

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE**
- **Archaeology:** prehistoric-1
- **Commerce:** sales-6
- **Archeology:** historic-1
- **Communications:**-7
- **Engineering:** civil-11
- **Exploration:**-12
- **Landscape architect:**-15
- **Literature:**-17
- **Military:**-18
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- **Social/cultural:**-30
- **Transportation:**-35

**FEATURES**
- **Architectural style:** Richardsonian Romanesque

**NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP**
- **ROCK-FACED LIMESTONE, 3 1/2 STORIES, MODIFIED GREEK CROSS, STANDING SEAM TIN HIPPED ROOF WITH GABLED DORMERS AND CENTRAL ARCaded BELL TOWER, REENTRANT CORNER ENTRANCE WITH SEGMENTAL-ARCHED TRANSOM AND SIDE LIGHTS ARTICULATED BY 2-STORY BALUSTRATED BOWED PORCH, SMOOTHLY DRESSED BELT COURSES, DENTICULATED CORNICE; 1-STORY REAR JAIL ADDITION, 1930; INTERIOR ALTERATIONS, 1966. RICHARDSONIAN Romanesque. EXAMPLE OF THE WORK OF PROMINENT ARCHITECT J. RIELY GORDON.
JEREMIAH SCHMIDT - JAIL