

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 23 1977

DATE ENTERED DEC 22 1977

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

Robertson County Courthouse and Jail

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Public Square

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Franklin

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Texas

CODE

048

COUNTY

Robertson

CODE

395

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

County of Robertson

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Franklin

VICINITY OF

STATE

Texas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

Franklin

STATE

Texas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Inventory

DATE

1970

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Texas Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Austin

STATE  
Texas

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The present Robertson County Courthouse was designed on a classic Texas plan in Second Empire style by architect F.E. Ruffini, who employed this mode in numerous other courthouses.

The exterior dimensions of the building are 81 feet, 11 inches by 66 feet, 5 inches. Specifications called for the first story to be 13 feet high; the second to be 11 feet with a courtroom height of 20 feet; and the third story was to be 12 feet in the clear.

In rectangular form, the plan was zoned for offices on the ground level and district courtroom on the second. Two corridors intersecting in the center provided circulation to the offices. The courtroom was a two-story space centered on the second floor. Offices located in the pavilions occupied the third level space not in the upper section of the courtroom. Remodeling has changed the locations of several of the interior walls.

When completed, the courthouse was an outstanding example of Second Empire style. The south (main) facade is a five-part composition with corner pavilions, center pavilion, and connecting components all crowned with Mansardic roofs, relieved with dormers made of galvanized iron. Rising above the center was a triangular pediment surmounted by a Mansardic roof with convex curvature, containing clocks. The east and west fronts are comprised of three part compositions, also originally crowned with Mansardic roofs. The north facade consists of one prominent mass flanked by pavilions.

*MOST OF THIS HAS BEEN REMOVED.*

The exterior masonry work is noteworthy. Above a foundation of rubble stone set with lime mortar all the rock work, except the trim, was pitched-faced in ashlar pattern. Door and window jambs were smooth cut stone with one and one-fourth inch margins.

The Renaissance stylistic vocabulary was fully exploited in the details. On the ground story cut stone pilasters enframe the walls of the pavilions. On this level windows containing double-hung sashes are spanned with stilted arches with pronounced keystones. The south entrance is marked by a Roman arch with cut stone voussoirs. This was originally flanked by pilasters with Corinthianesque capitals which are now gone. These supported an entablature and balcony which also have been removed. Other doorways were spanned with stilted arches. A cut stone stringcourse separated the base-story walls from the upper level walls.

Designed as compositional units, the exterior walls of the courtroom and the flanking two levels of offices continued the Renaissance theme. Pronounced cut-stone quoins contrasted with the pitched-faced ashlar masonry -- as below. Openings on this level are spanned with Roman arches of cut stone comprised of four voussoirs and a pronounced keystone. Windows originally rising uninterrupted for two stories in the center three openings of the south side expressed the courtroom space while spandrels in the openings of the pavilions express the multilevel arrangement of offices.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Robertson County ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Sheet metal was used extensively on the exterior, both functionally and decoratively. A heavy galvanized-iron cornice featuring prominent modillions terminated the walls. Two pediments were also fabricated from this material as were the dormer windows. Galvanized iron also was employed for the chimney caps and six down spouts. Stamped zinc was specified for several other ornamental features. The flat decks of the roofs and the roofs of the pediments were all covered with tin. However, for the steep sides of the Mansard roofs, dark colored slate from Vermont or Virginia was specified.

Although none of the several Robertson County Courthouses was ever damaged by flames, Ruffini was familiar with losses from fire in other counties and provided secure storage for record. The vaults are built entirely of bricks. Double walls with an airspace between provide insulation against intense heat. Each masonry vault record is covered with a barrel vault of semicircular cross-sectional profile, and the floors were finished with hard paving bricks.

Other interior details are also noteworthy. Hung on iron acorn-tipped butts, the doors are pine with four panels and bronze knobs. Ventilation of the interior spaces was facilitated by transoms located above these doors.

The wooden trim of the interior was typical of the period. For the stairways, specifications called for octagonal newel posts, balusters, and handrails to be black walnut. Pine was used throughout for other interior millwork. The courtroom and halls were wainscoted to a height of three feet with narrow matched and beaded "ceiling stuff" capped with a molding.

Changes in the exterior include the removal of all the original roofs and cornices. These have been replaced by parapets and overhangs covered with tile, all suggesting Spanish Renaissance character. On the south the entrance has been simplified in design and a porch has been added on the east. An annex with random ashlar masonry walls has been made on the north and west. This should be excluded from National Register status.

Located on the northwest corner of the square, the jail was on a T-shaped plan. The main section (bar of the T) of the jail is 49 feet wide and 20 feet deep. The groundfloor story height is 12 feet in the clear. On the ground floor a central hall provides circulation to the kitchen, a large room (parlor?), and the cell rooms. Containing cells, the second story of this section is 11 feet clear. Facilitating segregation of prisoners a rear extension (stem of the T) is 27 feet wide and 36 feet deep with 18 feet clear from floor to ceiling. Cells 7 feet by 8 by 7 are of hardened iron and steel, "saw and file proof," manufactured by the P.J. Pauly Jail Building and Manufacturing Company of St. Louis, Missouri. These were moved from an old jail in Calvert. In addition, the other miscellaneous iron work was reused.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Robertson County ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

As in the courthouse, the walls of the jail were pitched-faced ashlar. While the design of the building is relatively straightforward subtle details enhance the work. On the second floor of the main section openings are spanned by lintels; on the ground story stilted arches span the openings. Simple lintels also span openings of the rear extension.

Other decorative details enhance the main building. Pilasters of cut stone emphasize the corners. These terminated under a cornice with heavy brackets.

Several additions have been made to the jail. These include a porch on the south and a new brick wing located on the west. These additions should be excluded from National Register status.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

---

SPECIFIC DATES CH- 1881 *REMODELLED 1904.* BUILDER/ARCHITECTCH: F.E. Ruffini  
 Jail - 1880 Jail: F.E. Ruffini

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Robertson County Courthouse and Jail possess both architectural and historical significance. Although remodeled, the courthouse still displays much of the original detail work of a fine Second Empire style building. Situated on a public square in the center of the community, these structures historically have served the governmental functions of the county throughout the twentieth century.

Located in East Central Texas, Robertson County was organized in 1838, during the period in which Texas was a republic. It was named for Sterling C. Robertson, an impresario and signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, and originally included a considerable amount of land that is now a part of surrounding counties. The present county boundaries were established in 1846.

As often happened in Texas, the location of the Robertson county seat was changed several times. The original location was Old Franklin, but the county seat was moved to the town of Wheelock in 1850, after the present boundaries were established. However, since this community was near the southern county line, it was not favorably located to serve county government. Following an election in 1854, wherein residents voted upon the county seat question, the site of government was transferred to Owensville and in 1870, by an act of legislature, it was moved to Calvert. Then in 1879, county government was moved to Morgan, a town that had been established in 1871, adjacent to the International-Great Northern Railroad and the town name was changed to Franklin. The seat of government has remained permanently in this community which is near the geographical center of the county. Today the population of Franklin is over 1,000.

In 1855, while continuing to hold their meetings in Wheelock, a new courthouse in Owensville was contracted with A.L. Brigance, who, at the time, was also the chief justice. The work on this building was completed the following year. In 1856, a lot in Owensville was set aside for a jail and the old courthouse in Wheelock was sold, after which county government was officially transferred to the new courthouse in Owensville. A jail which also had been contracted with James B. Grant and Alexander Calvert in 1855 was also completed in 1856. During the following year, an oak fence evidently was placed around the public square and several contracts were awarded for repairs to both the courthouse and jail. In 1869, money was set aside to purchase shingles and lumber to repair the courthouse and bids were requested for a new jail, but these were laid aside since the seat of government was moved to Calvert.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Robertson County ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

After moving to the new location, a house was rented for \$50.00 per month to house the clerk's offices. In 1879, Court was held in an unidentified building with floors covered with sawdust. Meanwhile, new construction on both a courthouse and a jail was delayed. In 1876, the county rented the second story of a brick building (evidently a commercial structure) for governmental purposes. Finally, during that year a new brick jail was commenced. Geo. V. McClintick, M.D. McGee, D.R. Coleman, and W.H. McGee were the contractors of the building costing \$11,000, which was destined to be used as a jail only for a short time.

Shortly after the 1879 election determined that the county offices would be moved to Franklin (Morgan), where temporary quarters were again occupied, county commissioners began considerations for new buildings and within two months had accepted plans prepared by F.E. Ruffini of Austin for a new jail and sheriff's office. After advertising for bids in the Galveston Daily News, the contract to build the new jail was awarded to James P. Smith for \$11,485. It was built on the "jail square" (public square). The jail was completed and accepted by the county that same year and the old jail in Calvert was sold.

Meanwhile, the county offices were again located in the second story of a rented building. Evidently satisfied with architect Ruffini's services on the new jail, in 1881, the commissioners' court authorized F.E. Ruffini to develop plans for a new courthouse with walls of Austin limestone for a cost of \$30,000 or less. J.B. Smith was awarded the contract to complete the building within ten months.

Late in 1881, the county officials commended both the architect and contractor for their fine work and accepted the courthouse. An iron fence installed two years later completed the nineteenth century work.

After serving county functions for over four decades, county officials determined to remodel the building. Hix McCanleiss was the architect and the contractor was Babe Wilson. It was evidently during this work that the annex was made and the roof lines altered. Nonetheless the building retains much of its historic character and it should be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Robertson County Commissioners' Court Minutes, Office of the County Clerk, Franklin, vols. A, 1, 2, 3.  
 Forth Worth Daily Gazette, March 24, 1883.  
 Walter Prescott Webb, (ed), The Handbook of Texas, Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1952, 2 vols.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 3 acres  
 UTM REFERENCES

A	14	739875	3435100	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The public square containing the courthouse, courthouse annex, and jail is bounded on the north and south respectively by Morgan Street and Deckerd Street; the streets on the both the east and west are named Center.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Willard B. Robinson, Professor of Architecture

3/14/77

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Division of Architecture-Texas Tech University

806/742-2464

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

P.O. Box 4499

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Lubbock

Texas

# 12 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

*[Signature]* 5-18-77

TITLE Texas State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*  
*[Signature]*

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/22/77  
12-21-77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

77001472

Property Robertson County Courthouse and Jail

State Texas

Working Number 5.23.77.816

Robertson

**TECHNICAL**

Photos 2  
Maps 1

**CONTROL**

OK pl  
5.24.77

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

ALTHOUGH THE ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURAL FABRIC HAS BEEN GROSSLY ALTERED, THE BLDG. RETAINS ENOUGH OF ITS SIGNIFICANT DESIGN AND THE ELEMENTS OF THE ORIGINAL DESIGN CAN BE RESTORED.

ACCEPT  
R. Brito 11/22/77

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

Accept  
Lebovich  
6/27/77

**ARCHEOLOGIST**

**OTHER**  
Accept  
Franklin  
12.14.77

**HAER**

Inventory \_\_\_\_\_  
Review \_\_\_\_\_

**REVIEW UNIT CHIEF**

Accept  
Lebovich  
12/21/77

**BRANCH CHIEF**

Hummel  
12-21-77

**KEEPER**

Wm  
12/22/77

National Register Write-up \_\_\_\_\_  
Federal Register Entry 2.7.78

Send-back \_\_\_\_\_  
Re-submit \_\_\_\_\_

Entered DEC 22 1977

INT:2106-74





PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Robertson County Courthouse & Jail  
Franklin, Texas

Will Robinson, 1977  
Filed at Texas Historical Commission

Southeast oblique of the courthouse

Photo #1 *82*

MAY 23 1977

DEC 22 1977



PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  
PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Robertson County Courthouse & Jail  
Franklin, Texas

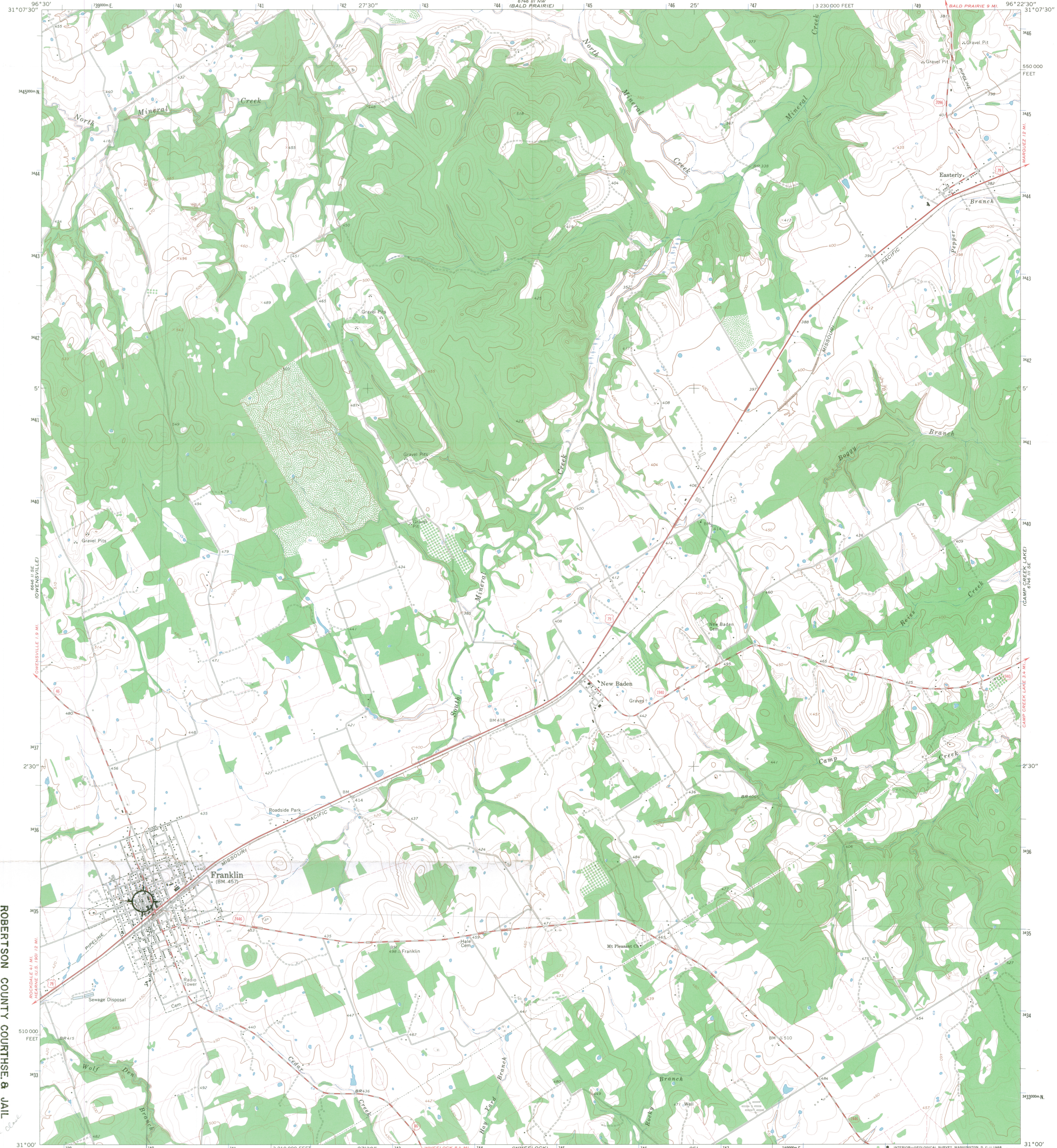
Will Robinson, 1977  
Filed at Texas Historical Commission

Northeast oblique of the jail

Photo #2 72

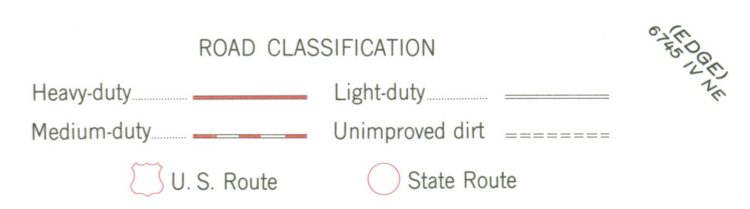
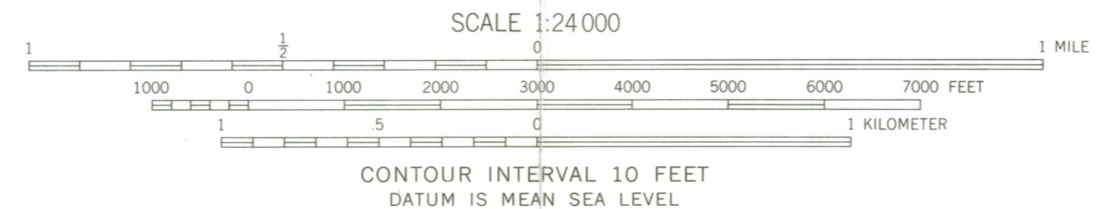
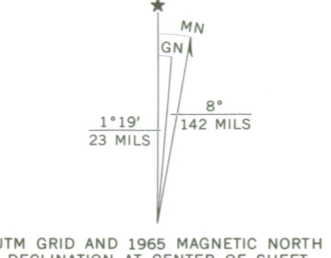
MAY 23 1977

DEC 22 1977



ROBERTSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE & JAIL  
PUBLIC SQUARE  
FRANKLIN, TEXAS  
14 / 739875 / 3435100

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1964. Field checked 1965  
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  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

3196 - 122

FRANKLIN, TEX.  
SW/4 MARQUEZ 15' QUADRANGLE  
N3100—W9622.5/7.5  
1965  
AMS 6746 III SW—SERIES V882

DEC 22 1977  
30

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE    **TEXAS**

Date Entered    **DEC 22 1977**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
<b>Robertson County Courthouse and Jail</b>	<b>Franklin Robertson County</b>

Also Notified

Hon. Lloyd M. Bentsen  
Hon. John G. Tower  
Hon. Olin E. Teague  
Regional Director, Southwest Region

880    Mott/js    12/28/77

State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mr. Truett Latimer  
Executive Director  
Texas Historical Commission  
P.O. Box 12276, Capitol Station  
Austin, Texas 78711

# NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

① NAME as it appears on federal register: Robertson County Courthouse and Jail  
 ② OTHER NAMES:  
 ③ date of entry: DEC 22 1977  
 ④ county code: 395

⑤ LOCATION street & number: Public Sq.  
 city / town: Franklin  
 vicinity of:  
 state: TX  
 county: Robertson  
 ⑥ NPS REGION: SW

⑦ OWNER  PRIVATE  STATE  MUNICIPAL  COUNTY  MULTIPLE  FEDERAL (agency name)  
 ⑧ ADMINISTRATOR:

⑨ EXISTING SURVEYS  HABS  HAER  NHL  
 ⑩ FUNDED?  YES  NO  
 ⑪ CONGRESS. DISTRICT  
 ⑫ SOURCE of NOMINATION  STATE  FEDERAL  
 if state who prepared form?  
 ⑬ WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT?  YES, NAME  NO  
 ⑭ WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK?  YES, NAME  NO  
 ⑮ ACREAGE  
 LOCAL  PRIVATE ORGANIZATION

⑯ CONDITION  
 deteriorated  altered  original site  
 excellent  ruins  unaltered  moved  
 good  unexposed  reconstructed  unknown  
 fair  unexcavated  excavated  
 ⑰ features:  
 INTERIOR  SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1  SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2  SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3  
 NOT INTACT-0  NOT INTACT-0  
 UNKNOWN-4  UNKNOWN-5  
 NOT APPLICABLE-7  NOT APPLICABLE-8  
 EXTERIOR  NOT APPLICABLE-9  
 ENVIRON  NOT APPLICABLE-9

⑱ ACCESS  YES-Restricted  YES-Unrestricted  No Access  Unknown  
 ⑲ ADAPTIVE USE  YES  NO  
 ⑳ SAVED?  YES  
 ㉑ IS PROPERTY A HISTORIC DISTRICT?  yes  no

㉒ AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:  
 ARCHEOLOGY-prehistoric-2  COMMERCE-6  ENGINEERING-11  LANDSCAPE ARCH.-15  POLITICS / GOVT.-21  RECREATION-28  
 ARCHEOLOGY-historic-1  COMMUNICATIONS-7  ENTERTAINMENT-26  LAW-16  RELIGION-22  SETTLEMENT-29  
 AGRICULTURE-3  CONSERVATION-8  EXPLORATION-12  LITERATURE-17  SCIENCE-23  URBAN PLANNING-31  
 ARCHITECTURE-4  ECONOMICS-9  HEALTH-27  MILITARY-18  SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN-24  OTHER (SPECIFY)  
 ART-5  EDUCATION-10  INDUSTRY-13  MUSIC-19  SOCIAL / CULTURAL-30  
 INVENTION-14  PHILOSOPHY-20  TRANSPORTATION-25  
 ㉓ CLAIMS: explain  
 'first'   
 'oldest'   
 'only'

㉔ functions  
 WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT:  
 CURRENTLY:  
 ㉕ dates of initial construction: 1880, 1881  
 major alterations:  
 historic events:  
 ㉖ ETHNIC GROUP ASSOCIATION

㉗ architectural style(s):  
 ㉘ architect: F.E. RUFFINI  
 ㉙ master builder:  
 ㉚ engineer:

㉛ landscape architect / garden designer:  
 ㉜ interior decorator:  
 ㉝ artist:  
 ㉞ artisan:  
 ㉟ builder/contractor:

㊱ NAMES give role & date  
 PERSONAL:  
 EVENTS:  
 INSTITUTIONAL:

㊲ NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP  
 Courthouse: SANDSTONE, RECTANGULAR, 3 STORY, CENTRAL TWO ENO PAVILIONS, DRIP MOLING, GVOINS, ALTERED CORNICE/PARAPET  
 JAIL: Sandstone, 2 STORY RECTANGULAR WITH 1 1/2 STORY EU, BRACKETED CORNICE  
 example of 19THC civic architecture