United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  

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  Hays County Courthouse  

and/or common  

2. Location  

street & number  Public Square  

not for publication  

city, town  San Marcos  

vicinity of  congressional district 10  

state  Texas  

code 048  

county  Hays  

code 209  

3. Classification  

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<td>occupied</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
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<tr>
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<td>private</td>
<td>unoccupied</td>
<td>museum</td>
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<tr>
<td>X structure</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>work in progress</td>
<td>park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>in process</td>
<td>private residence</td>
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<tr>
<td>object</td>
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<td>religious</td>
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4. Owner of Property  

name  County of Hays  

street & number  Public Square  

city, town  San Marcos  

vicinity of  state Texas  

5. Location of Legal Description  

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.  Hays County Courthouse  

street & number  Public Square  

city, town  San Marcos  

state Texas  

6. Representation in Existing Surveys  

title  Recorded Texas Historic Landmark; Historic Sites Inventory  

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  X no  

date  1974; 1979  

federal  X  state  county  local  

depository for survey records  Texas Historical Commission  

city, town  Austin  

state Texas
7. Description

Condition  Check one  Check one
excellent deteriorated unaltered original site
good ruins altered moved date
fair unexposed

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

A dominant landmark in San Marcos, Texas, the fourth Hays County Courthouse, built in 1909, reflects early settlement here, when the public square was the nucleus of the 19th century Texas town and the center for its social, commercial, and governmental life. Designed by C.H. Page and Brothers of Austin, this impressive Classical revival structure in the Corinthian order is arranged in a symmetrical cruciform plan and exhibits fine workmanship, especially in the Greek details of the monumental entrances and design of the interior.

Aligned with a north to south and east to west orientation, the corridors cross to form a three story domed rotunda on the interior. The narrow arms of the cruciform plan project to the north and south, while the wide arms project to the east and west. Corridors extending through both arms of the cross are flanked by offices and originally provided access from all four sides of the building. Entry to the courthouse is now gained only through the south facade which faces San Antonio Street and the north rear entrance which opens onto Hopkins Street.

The structure of the courthouse consists of masonry bearing walls with wood and iron beams. Lath work and plaster cover and protect the ironwork throughout the building. The exterior walls are constructed with Elgin brick of gray and buff tones, while the basement and foundation are stone and cement. Exterior trim, such as the window and door facings, and the continuous moulded stringcourse between the first and second floors, are white limestone. The dominant feature of the courthouse is the monumental, slightly projecting tetrastyyle portico of the south facade, with its tall white stone columns topped with Corinthian capitals supporting a full entablature. Large stone pedestals support the four columns which are complimented by two pairs of identical pedestaled columns on either side of the rear north entrance. The entablature of the portico, comprised of a triple fasciaed frieze and cornice with dentils and modillions, continues around the roof line of the structure. A low pitched pediment with dentils, modillions, and a circular window crowns the entablatures above the north and south entrances. Terminating the east and west wings are domed corner projections with rounded pediments with modillions.

Rising above the low hipped roof of the structure is a huge central copper plated dome supported by an iron and wood frame. A round clock tower located directly above the dome supports a 9 ft. statue of the goddess of Justice with the sword and scales in her hands. It was decided by the Commissioners' Court that their weight would damage the roof and the clocks were never installed in the tower. Fenestration of the building consists of numerous double-hung sash type windows which are arched and accentuated with limestone archivolt trim on the first level. The taller first floor windows located in the rear northern wing are not arched, however, and some facade windows contain louvered shutters. Exterior wall decoration between the floors consists of a moulded limestone stringcourse and a series of squared receding brickwork patterns located between the second and third level windows. Entrances to the central rotunda on the south facade and the north rear consist of arched openings with modern glass office doors. Original heavy double entrance doors with beveled glass panels contain large brass hinges, locks, and knobs, and are still in good repair.
The interior spatial arrangement of the courthouse is centered around the open rotunda on all three floors with offices located in each of the quadrants formed by the corridors. The entire east side of the first floor houses the County Judge's office, the Commissioners' Court, and a receptionist's office, while the County Clerk's office occupies the whole west side. On the first level the arched doorways with the egg-and-dart mouldings open onto the rotunda and terrazo floor containing a central Lone Star mosaic. The circular 14 ft. high wall surrounding the rotunda, with its original brick wainscoting and walnut panelling, contains a marble and iron stairway leading to the second floor balcony. This elaborate stairway displays its original finial topped iron newel posts and intricate grillwork with oak handrails. The balcony is supported by hidden brackets extending from the originally white plastered walls below. Panelling is not employed on the walls of the second level and the aging plaster is in need of repair. Noteworthy decorative features of the second level balcony include the colorful tile flooring with mosaic designs, the wrought iron balustrade with iron posts and finials, and an oak handrail. Some of the offices on the second level include the Sheriff's Department, Justice of the Peace, and Criminal District Attorney. The main courtroom with double doors opens onto the third floor balcony bounded by an iron balustrade similar to the one on the second level. Adjoining rooms to the courtroom include various offices, a jury room, and a law library.

Although alterations and additions to the Hays County Courthouse have been necessary since 1909 to increase office space for a growing county government, the architectural integrity of the structure is virtually intact. The original architect, C.H. Page and Brothers, returned in 1965 to replace the second floor courtroom with additional offices. Extensive remodelling of the east and west offices on the first floor was done throughout the 1970's, and a new vault and basement were added to house court documents. General maintenance has included repairs to the roof and flooring. Aluminum paint now protects the statue and all the domes of the roof. Additions in 1962 included the installation of an elevator, new restrooms, and an air conditioning system. Original furnishings, such as large oak tables, and oak chairs and desks are still in use throughout the Courthouse. Future plans include partial restoration of the interior and repair of the plaster work.
8. Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
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Specific dates 1908-1909  Builder/Architect C.H. Page and Brothers

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Constructed to replace the limestone courthouse destroyed in 1908, the present Hays County Courthouse in San Marcos, Texas, has been the focus of governmental and law enforcement activities throughout the county for three quarters of a century. One of the most significant extant examples of monumental Classical Revival architecture in the state, the Hays County Courthouse, although remodelled, still retains most of its original fine workmanship and many handsome details. The manner in which the mass of the domed courthouse dominates the surrounding town and countryside is impressive, and clearly reflects the impact this governmental center had on the daily activities of the early community. The early history of the courthouse is bound to the increased prosperity and population in the county at the end of the 19th century, a result of the establishment of the International-Great Northern Railroad line.

Hays County, which was created on May 1, 1848, by a bill introduced to the Legislature by General Edward Burleson, was named for John Coffee Hays, a prominent Texas ranger, pioneer, and politician. The area which now occupies Hays County was known to the early Spanish explorers and lay at the edge of one of the main travel routes from San Antonio to East Texas. While small Spanish settlements were abandoned in the County in 1812, early Anglo-American settlers were granted land by the governments of Coahuila and Texas as early as 1831. Some of the original settlers, who received Mexican land grants in 1835 were members of John Coffee Hays' Texas Rangers.

Hays came to Texas from Mississippi in 1837 and settled in San Antonio. He was commissioned by the Republic of Texas to conduct surveys on the frontier. A reputable Indian fighter, he became captain of a Texas Ranger Company in 1840, and also served in the War with Mexico. Hays later became a prominent politician and in 1848 he served on a commission to settle a territorial dispute between Texas and the U. S. over New Mexico territory. With the onset of the Gold Rush, Hays moved to California where he served as sheriff of San Francisco County and was appointed surveyor general of California by President Franklin Pierce.

The site for the present Courthouse and its three predecessors was donated to the county in 1851 by General Edward Burleson, Dr. Eli T. Merriman, and William Lindsey. They had purchased 340 acres of the Juan Veramendi Grant and laid out the town of San Marcos, specifying public use for this block. The county borders have been modified four times since 1848, but the county seat and courthouse has remained in San Marcos. The original 1861 courthouse was a pine structure which burned in 1868. Replacing this structure was a soft stone courthouse built in 1871, and condemned as hazardous by the County Commissioner in 1881. After it was torn down, a new limestone structure designed by architect F.E. Ruffini was completed in 1883, but also destroyed by fire in 1908. Although Hezekiah Williams planned for the next county seat to be located in Hays City, 11 miles to the northwest, he was unsuccessful in attracting new settlers here, and San Marcos remained the county center. The fourth and present Courthouse is currently in good condition, but the interior, in particular the second and third floor, is in need of restoration and redecoration.
9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.4 acres

Quadrangle name San Marcos North, Texas

UTM References

Zone Easting Northing

A 1 4 6 0 1 2 3 2 4 3 3 0 6 0 4 0

Zone Easting Northing

B

C

D

E

F

G

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

Verbal boundary description and justification
The Hays County Courthouse occupies the Courthouse Square and is bounded on the north by Hopkins Street, on the west by Guadalupe Street, on the east by Lyndon B. Johnson Drive, and on the south by San Antonio Street.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara C. Nagel
organization Texas Historical Commission
street & number P.O. Box 12276
city or town Austin state Texas
date February 13, 1980
telephone (512) 453-8873

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national X 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

For HCRS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register
Attent: Chiefof Registration
Property: Hays County Courthouse
State: TX - Hays
Working Number: 3-26-80 980

TECHNICAL
Photos: 5
Maps: 1

CONTROL

HISTORIAN

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory
Review

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

accept

BRANCH CHIEF

accept

KEEPER

National Register Write-up
Federal Register Entry: 2.3.81
Send-back
Re-submit

Entered: MAY 23 1980

United States Department of the Interior - Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

A major ex of monumental Classical Revival architecture in TX, the courthouse sits on the original courthouse square and has served as the seat of govt since 1909. Subsequent alterations and remodeling have been primarily to the interior - the exterior remains essentially intact.

Groovera 5/19/80
Hays County Courthouse
Public Square
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas

Photo by Carol Kennedy, 1979.
Negative on file at Texas Historical Commission.

South facade, camera facing north.

Photo 1 of 5.

MAR 26 1980

MAY 23 1980
Hays County Courthouse
Public Square
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas

Photo by Carol Kennedy, 1979.
Negative on file at Texas Historical Commission

West facade, camera facing east.

Photo 2 of 5.

MAY 23 1980
Hays County Courthouse
Public Square
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas

Photo by Carol Kennedy, 1979
Negative on file at Texas Historical Commission

East facade, camera facing west.

Photo 3 of 5.
Hays County Courthouse
Public Square
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas

Photo by Carol Kennedy, 1979.
Negative on file at Texas Historical Commission

Northeast oblique, camera facing southwest.

Photo 4 of 5.

MAY 23 1980  MAR 26 1980
Hays County Courthouse
Public Square
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas

Photo by Carol Kennedy, 1979.
Negative on file at Texas Historical Commission.

North facade, camera facing south.

Photo 5 of 5.
## Entries in the National Register

**State** Texas  
**Date Entered** May 23, 1980

<table>
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<td>Warren-Crowell House</td>
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<td>Whaley House</td>
<td>Longview, Gregg County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Park Hotel</td>
<td>Seguin, Guadalupe County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taylor National Bank</td>
<td>Taylor, Williamson County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hays County Courthouse</td>
<td>San Marcos, Hays County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scanlan Building</td>
<td>Houston, Harris County</td>
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### Also Notified

- Honorable Lloyd Bentsen  
- Honorable John G. Tower  
- Honorable James M. Collins  
- Honorable Ray Roberts  
- Honorable Abraham Kazen, Jr.  
- Honorable James M. Leath  
- Honorable J. J. (Jake) Pickle  
- Honorable Mickey Leland

**Byers/bjr** 6/2/80

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.