

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Bailey County Courthouse

Other names/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 300 S. 1st Street

City or town: Muleshoe

State: Texas

County: Bailey County

Not For Publication: ☐

Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

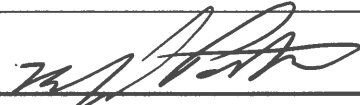
I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A B x C D

	Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer	<u>5/5/2026</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>Texas Historical Commission</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

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Name of Property

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☐

Public – Local

☒

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☒

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☐

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Object



Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: GOVERNMENT: Courthouse, Correctional Facility

Current Functions: GOVERNMENT: Courthouse, Correctional Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

Materials

BRICK, CAST STONE, REINFORCED CONCRETE, GLASS

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Bailey County Courthouse is sited at the center of a square block at 300 South 1st Street in the western Panhandle city of Muleshoe, Texas. The modest Classical Revival courthouse with West Texas regional stylistic influences was constructed in 1925 to designs by architect Milton C. Butler of Lubbock, TX, and Oklahoma City, OK. The three-story building has a rectangular plan with the longer primary elevation facing east toward the main thoroughfare of South 1st Street.¹ The building is comprised of a reinforced concrete frame and base course, light buff brick exterior, and cast stone ornamental details. The third floor is smaller in scale, setback from the primary elevation, and faced in stucco of a similar color as the brick. The corner bays of each elevation project out a few inches. Four cast stone classical pedestal entryways (or surrounds) project out slightly and feature symmetrical flying porticos with pediments. A cast stone belt course and mid-level cornice line with parapet branding run horizontally along the exterior, and a shallow, stepped, parapet with parapet cap defines the second floor roofline. Some minor repairs to the exterior brick and cast stone occurred in the late 1990s to address

¹ For convenience, this nomination refers to building elevations by the closest true cardinal direction, though the street grid is tilted approximately 35° east (clockwise) from true north.

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weathering and deterioration. Most of the original entrance doors have been replaced with non-historic aluminum frame and glass single doors. The interior floor plan of the courthouse is largely intact, though the former north entrance was sealed from the interior in about 1967 to convert the northern portion of the first floor into an office space. The third story originally operated as the county jail before being converted to a library and storage space starting in 1969. The functionally related former Law Enforcement Center (1969 contributing) is a single-story building that was constructed to the rear (northwest) of the courthouse to house the county jail. The courthouse square grounds also factor as a contributing Site and include the front lawn with mature trees and historical markers, paved parking spaces to the rear and sides of the courthouse, and a maintenance shed (1925). Despite minor alterations and repairs, the Bailey County Courthouse retains integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance.²

Setting

The Bailey County Courthouse is located at the center of the western Panhandle city of Muleshoe, Texas, in northeast Bailey County. The 827 square mile county is bordered by Parmer County to the north, Lamb County to the east, Cochran County to the south, and the Texas-New Mexico state line to the west. Bailey County forms part of the Southern High Plains region and has an altitude of 3,800 to 4,400 feet above sea level. The terrain is characterized by plains surfaced by sandy loam covered with grasses and mesquite brush. Topographic features include the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River, which drains the northern parts of the county, and a range of sand hills running from northeast to southwest approximately one mile south of Muleshoe.³

The town of Muleshoe is predominantly residential and has a rectangular grid of paved streets that is tilted approximately 35° east (clockwise) from true north. Muleshoe intersects with Texas State Highway 214, U.S. 70, and U.S. 84. The courthouse is bounded by South 1st Street (or Texas State Highway 241) to the east, West Avenue C to the north, W 2nd Street to the west, and West Avenue D to the south. The nominated property is located in a civic and commercial district and is surrounded by an insurance company and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to the east, the Bailey County Extension Office and a bank to the north, the Muleshoe Public Library and the Bailey County Attorney's Office to the west, and the Bailey County Sheriff's Office, insurance businesses, and a salon to the south. The Muleshoe City Hall is located one block to the northeast. Other notable Bailey County cultural resources include the Muleshoe Heritage Center located off U.S. Highway 84 in Muleshoe. The Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge, founded in 1935, is the oldest refuge in Texas with 5,809 acres of mostly short-grass rangeland with scattered mesquite, and is located approximately 20 miles south of Muleshoe.⁴ Though the city of Muleshoe has expanded over time since 1925, the immediate setting of the courthouse

² Courthouse master plans and documents about construction and alterations were destroyed in a flood in the courthouse basement c. 2010. This nomination utilized the unapproved Bailey County Courthouse plans housed at the Texas Historical Commission which provided some evidence about construction, alterations, and repairs.

³ "Bailey County Overview: History, Geography, and Economy," *Texas State Historical Association Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bailey-county#:~:text=Bailey%20County%20is%20a%20part,with%20grasses%20and%20mesquite%20brush>, accessed 6/2/25.

⁴ Michael T. Kingston, ed., *The Texas Almanac, 1984-1985* (Dallas Morning News), (A. H. Belo Corporation, 1983) p. 134.

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continues to represent the civic and commercial center, and the courthouse continues to stand as the focal point.

Courthouse Square (Contributing Site)

As an intentionally landscaped space designed to represent governance and progress in Bailey County, and for its role as a space of commemoration and festivity, the courthouse square site (1925) is considered a contributing resource. The square block conforms to a "Shelbyville pattern," whereby it fits into the rectangular street grid with minimal disruption to it or to adjacent land use patterns, creating a central focus for the community.⁵ A strip of gravel runs the entire perimeter of the square but only the east side of the block has a sidewalk, which faces S. 1st Street (Muleshoe's "Main Street").

The Site encompasses the entire Shelbyville square block, excluding the 1925 courthouse at center and the 1969 former Law Enforcement Center building to its rear (west) (currently referred to as the Probation Office, Sheriff's building, or the Texas Department of Public Safety). Site features include the courthouse lawn with its shrubbery, mature trees, commemoration markers, a maintenance shed, and paved parking areas. Historic concrete walkways from each surrounding street lead to the four entry surrounds at the center of each elevation. A small, corrugated metal shed (1925) with a low-pitched gable roof and maintenance equipment are located in front of the north elevation. The courthouse front lawn (east) features grass, shrubbery, and groves of mature trees, some of which date to the 1930s. The trees partially obscure the north elevation. Prior to construction of the 1969 Law Enforcement Center, the rear (west) of the square was filled with grass and trees, as is evident in a 1957 historic aerial photograph.⁶ This area was later paved to make way for the 1969 building, a narrow parking lot to the north, and an ample parking lot to the southwest. An original strip of gravel for parking around the perimeter of the courthouse square block remains intact.

The alterations to the rear of the courthouse square site occurred within the period of significance and were associated with the legal and administrative functions of the courthouse. The Law Enforcement Center was constructed in large part to house a more modern and spacious county jail, thus freeing up the third floor of the courthouse for conversion into a law library and storage area. Despite the modifications to the site, the historic front lawn (east) continues to convey its historic appearance facing Muleshoe's "Main Street." The lawn also retains its symbolic importance as a site of commemoration markers, county festivities, ceremonies, and as a scenic destination for residents and tourists. A Veteran's War Memorial made from local stone, a Texas State Historical Marker, and a Texas Highway Historical Marker, are sited near the sidewalk facing South 1st St. This intentionally landscaped space continues to symbolize governance and progress in Bailey County.

The Bailey County Courthouse

General Building Overview

The Bailey County Courthouse is a five-by-three-bay rectangular plan building with axis running north-south and primary elevation facing east. It has a basement, first and second story, and a third, smaller

⁵ Robert E. Veselka, *The Courthouse Square in Texas* (UT Austin Press, 2000) pp. 32-34.

⁶ Bailey County Courthouse 1957 Aerial Map, HistoricAerials.com.

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story that is set back approximately 10 feet from the south elevation and a few inches from the west elevation. The building has a concrete structure and frame, and its large block mass is set atop a projecting concrete base course outlined by a cast stone water table. The exterior consists of light buff brick, with cast stone ornamental detailing, though the third floor's exterior is historically faced in stucco. Windows are wooden, double-hung, two-over-two, clear glass units with wood trim. The flat roofs consist of asphalt, and the main roof has a partial slope for runoff.⁷

The Classical Revival courthouse has a number of defining features, including symmetrical fenestration, ornamental brick coursing, shallow projecting corner bays, and pedimented entrance portico surrounds. In addition to the portico and surrounds, which are reinforced with steel and anchors, cast stone is used for a belt course above the second-floor window line, a banner with parapet branding (on the primary elevation), a mid-level cornice line, and a parapet cap that is shallow and stepped, giving dimension to the roofline and façade. Shallow, flattened pediment shapes in the parapet cap define the center and corner bays and imply a temple, as do the pedimented entrances. These motifs are influenced by abstract classicism. The courthouse interior is characterized by double-loaded corridors, concrete floors and ceilings, classically derived wood cornices and beams, plastered walls with wainscoting, single and double wood doors, and a central marble staircase.

East (Primary) Elevation

The east (primary) elevation is a five-bay-wide exterior of light buff brick with cast stone ornamentation. A central entrance portico is reached by a concrete walkway from the street that is surrounded by grass and trees. The building's projecting concrete base course turns 90 degrees outward at the entrance to form low flanking walls a few feet long. The entry doors are slightly elevated by two steps and recessed under a thick cast stone portico surrounded by cast stone surrounds with linear patterns. A floral motif is etched into the recessed pediment and decorative curved corbels flank the portico, supporting the pediment above. The flanking inner walls of the entry surrounds feature carved blind arches, and rectangular panels are carved into the portico ceiling where a contemporary light fixture is installed. The entrance door is a non-historic aluminum frame and glass single door with flanking, narrow, full-length glass installments and a six-over-six rectangular transom above. Most of the cast stone elements were likely originally painted white but have since been painted dark brown.⁸ The smooth textured cast stone detailing (pedimented portico, belt course, water table, mid-level cornice, parapet cap) provide a contrast to the buff brick exterior. The water table and a few cast stone elements on the portico have been painted buff color to match the brick.

The exterior wall features ornamental brick coursing to amplify the dimension and symmetry of the design. The corner bays of the elevation project slightly, providing an allusion to a temple with flanking towers, and the corner edges of each elevation are indented by the span of one brick header. The first and second floors have symmetrical, flat-headed, double-hung, two-over-two windows of vertical configuration that are recessed slightly and appear in pairs except for the corner bays where they are singular. The wall space between the first and second-floor windows feature projecting panels or spandrels of brick outlining rectangles with inset corners.

⁷ "Historical and Architectural Development – Context," Bailey County Courthouse Binder File (Unapproved), Department of Architecture, Texas Historical Commission.

⁸ The earliest photo of the courthouse found in records was from 1984, and the cast stone elements were white. See Figure 7.

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A cast stone belt course above the second-floor windows, runs along all elevations. A rectangular cast stone banner of parapet branding sits atop the belt course and features the engraving of the year of construction and name of the property: “~19~BAILEY~COUNTY~COURT~HOUSE~25~.” A thick mid-level cornice line runs along the parapet wall just above and features the alternating of an “X” with a horizontal line through the middle and an “O.” These symbols and letters are painted a buff color to contrast with the dark brown paint of the cast stone. At the roof line, a cast stone parapet wall cap is shallow stepped, forming shallow triangles at the corner bays and a flattened shallow triangle at the center bay.

West Elevation

The west elevation is almost identical to the primary façade with a few differences. The west entrance is flush with the ground level and instead of a transom above the entry door there is an added layer of cast stone casing modeled in a rectangular shape. There is no parapet branding panel between the belt course and mid-cornice line. A tall narrow brick chimney is visible at the left (northwest corner) and the smaller third floor is more readily visible at right (southwest) end of the elevation. The third-floor elevation is setback from the northwest elevation by a few inches and is setback from the right corner (southwest) by a few feet. The third floor has a buff stucco exterior and has a cornice line with a cast stone cap.

South Elevation

The south and north elevations are consistent with the overall symmetry and composition of the primary façade, but are narrower, three-bays wide, and have a few minor differences. The concrete walkway leading to the south entrance has a parking lot to the left (west) and a low retaining wall which borders the lawn to the right (east). A two-step raised landing leads to the entry door, with an ADA ramp accessible from the parking lot to the left (west) and two steps to the right (east) leading to the lawn. Wrought iron handrails define this entrance. An identical aluminum and glass door with transom is tucked within the same elaborate classical portico entryway with cast stone pediment. The elevation features the double hung windows, but the majority are singular with only one pair of windows directly above the portico. The flanking bays project out a few inches but are narrower compared to the flanking bays of the east and west elevations. The shallow stepped parapet cap matches that of the primary elevation except for the omission of the flattened shallow pediment at center. Spandrels outlining rectangles are consistent with the primary elevation. The cast stone belt course and mid-level cornice line also mirror the primary façade, but there is no branding between the two belt courses. To the left of the entrance, a handicap accessible ramp leads to the parking lot on the southwest corner of the square. To the right (southeast) is the grass and landscaping of the yard. Wrought iron handrails extend out in each direction from the entrance.

North Elevation

The north elevation is almost identical to the south. The concrete walkway has a low retaining wall to the left (east) and additional parking to the right (west). There is no ramp or railing, and the door is raised by two small steps as with the east elevation. Rather than a glass door, the north elevation has faux-double doors with a six-light transom. These were likely added in 1967 when the north entrance

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was sealed from the inside. To the left (east) of the entrance is the landscaped and grass front lawn. A small rectangular corrugated metal maintenance shed with shallow sloped roof stands in front of the left (east) bay and mechanical equipment is set in front of the right (west) bay. To the west is a small parking lot and the Texas Department of Public Safety building.

First Floor Interior

The courthouse retains most of its original floor plan. The first-floor interior has a cruciform hallway that intersects at center. Each end of the hall leads to an entry surround except for the north hall, where a District Clerk's Office was placed in front of the sealed entrance. The concrete floors are covered in carpeting dating to the late 1990s. Interior walls are plastered. The corridor and stairway walls have historic wainscoting and the lower half of the walls are painted beige and scored to look like tile.⁹ The flat interior concrete ceiling features original, classically derived, wood cornices and beams. Original single and double wood doors with trim are located along the hallways for individual offices and feature single lower panels, glazed upper panels, and clear or glazed three-part hopper transoms for ventilation. Non-historic hanging light fixtures and historic wood furniture line the first-floor hallways.

Upon entrance from the east, immediately to the right (north) is the Tax Appraisal/Collector office. This office has original double doors with a six-part transom. Originally, the office was set up for a second courtroom and housed a judge's chamber behind the courtroom. After the Tax Assessor's office was moved in, the District Attorney occupied the previous judge's chambers but has since moved out of the courthouse entirely and into a separate building. Within this office is the old judge's chambers, which contains a historic vault and the original safe of the county, purchased in 1918 from Parmer County. The vault was constructed in 1919 as part of the master plans of the original courthouse building. It was moved into the current courthouse upon its construction. The safe and the judge's chambers are both now used for records storage. The original doors to the downstairs courtroom matched the upstairs courtroom and both sets of doors remain.

The staircase to the second floor is located at the intersection of the halls and is visible at the rear west end. The historic marble staircase turns 180 degrees before reaching the second-floor landing. The stairs, wall strings, and pointed central handrail coping are of cream marble with grey swirling. No secondary staircases exist. Behind the staircase on the first floor is access to the basement and the rear (west) exit door. The corridor floor slopes down slightly just before the rear exit door to reach the exterior ground level.

From the center of the hallway to the right (north) is the District Clerk's office. The hallway originally led to a north exit door but was sealed off and an office was added in front of it for the District Clerk's office in about 1967. From 1925 until 1967 the District Clerk's office and the County Clerk's office were a combined office located on the second floor of the courthouse. After the separation of the offices, the District Clerk moved down to the first floor of the courthouse and the County Clerk remained on the 2nd floor.

The south end hall has multiple offices. On the east side of the hall is the Commissioner's courtroom, the County Judges assistants' office, and the County Judge's office. On the west side are the Retired Judge's

⁹ It is possible that this lower wall is painted brick in some parts of the building.

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Office, the Women's Restroom, and the Community Service Office. The women's restroom has a dressing room that was historically used by brides for weddings.

Basement

The basement entrance is located at the west end of the first floor, behind the central staircase, and is accessed via a narrow concrete stairway. It is constructed on cinderblock. Originally, the basement held a coal storage room and a furnace room but is now used for storage and maintenance purposes.

Second Floor Interior

The second floor is reached via the marble stairway which turns 180 degrees halfway up and enters a smaller, single hall that runs north-south and is surrounded by rooms. The second floor retains the structural elements of the first floor, including historic wainscoting and historic door openings, however it has a drop-down acoustic tile ceiling with fluorescent lighting panels.

To the north of the hall is the 287th District Courtroom, which takes up approximately one third of the second-floor plan. It has undergone very few changes though the ceiling was lowered for sound effectiveness and to save fuel costs, and the air conditioning and heating has been upgraded. Decorative pilasters are located along the walls. The courtroom has original wood desks and furniture, including fold-down seats for public seating and the judge's bench, which were purchased in 1925 for \$22,490.00. The judges' bench is flanked by a wooden frame structure resembling a portico with a pediment which frames the double windows behind the bench. The wood structure is also flanked by pilasters.

As you exit the courtroom, immediately to the left (east) is the District Judge's quarters. The district judge serves Bailey and Parmer County. At the far south end of the second-floor corridor is the County Clerks office and public records room. The double-door entrance to this office has a six-part arched transom. Originally, this office was the District and County Clerks office, but the District Clerk's office was moved to the first floor in 1967. The records room on the west side of the County Clerk office was originally used for the County Library until 1963. A narrow, winding stairwell for third floor access is located to the left (south) of the main stairwell.

Third Story Interior

The third story was built at the same time as the rest of the courthouse to house a jail. The jail was vacated in 1970 and converted into space for storage and a law library. During that renovation, a few of the jail cells and an internal wall were removed to make space for the library. Approximately four cells on the east end were preserved and serve as storage space. The current law library is located on the west end and is a larger room with carpeted floors and plaster walls and ceiling. (Figure 7, Photos 16-17)

Former Law Enforcement Center (Contributing)

The former Law Enforcement Center building (currently referred to as the Probation Center, Texas Department of Public Safety, or Sheriff's building) is located to the rear (northwest) of the courthouse. Though it does not have architectural significance like the courthouse, the building is nevertheless significant for its association with law enforcement in Bailey County and is a functionally related

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complex which has historically shared administrative and legal functions with the courthouse. It was constructed in late 1969, and in 1970, the county jail was moved there from the third floor of the courthouse. It was built to house various functions at the time, including the Bailey County Sheriff's office, the Muleshoe City Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety Driver's License Division, two Texas Highway Patrolmen and Justice of the Peace Joe D. Vaughn.

The Law Enforcement Center is a one-story plus basement, rear-facing T-plan building with a buff brick exterior and flat roof. A concrete walkway surrounds the building, and a paved parking lot abuts it to the south. The building exterior has thick exposed structural beams and columns of metal and stucco. Windows and doors are aluminum-framed glass units. The primary entrance is on the south elevation, and additional entrances are found on the east elevation and in the west corner of the T-plan, facing north. Concrete parapet beams form an awning over the latter entrance. A non-historic gazebo surrounded by a metal fence is tucked in the corner of the T-Plan on the east elevation. The lobby has plastered walls, non-historic 'wood look' tile flooring, and acoustical tile ceiling. The building also holds the county jail block which has concrete floors and CMU walls.

Table 1. Resource Index

Property	Type	Date	Status
Courthouse	Building	1925	Contributing
Law Enforcement Center	Building	1969	Contributing
Courthouse Square Site (Including Texas Historical Landmark Plaque (1968), Veteran's Memorial, Texas Highway Department marker (1936), Maintenance shed (1925), parking lots (1969), courthouse lawn, trees, and landscaping.	Site	1925 (Site features: Various dates)	Contributing

Alterations

The Bailey County Courthouse has had few physical alterations over time. One of the most significant changes involved sealing the north entrance from the interior and creating office space in the north hall. This likely took place in 1967, when the District Clerk's office was moved from the second-floor office to the first-floor's north hall. A panel may have been added to the north faux double doors in 1999 for added weather protection. Another notable alteration was the lowering of the courthouse ceiling on the second floor. Though the date of this change is unknown, it was done to improve sound quality and save on fuel costs. Initially, Bailey County Courthouse was heated with a boiler and steam radiators, but a central air conditioning system was installed at a later (unknown) date. Minor upkeep took place in the 1980s and 1990s and included reconstructing stone castings around the entrances that posed a hazard due to disrepair, repainting and applying sealant to the exterior to combat water damage, repointing brick mortar, adding non-historic glass doors and storefront materials, and upgrading electrical power systems. The majority of these alterations likely took place in about 1999 under contractor Hugo Vasquez Construction and under guidance of Adling Associates Architects. In 1989 the grounds underwent a landscape design that included sodding with new grass, planting new trees, shrubs, and

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flowers.¹⁰ Despite these changes, the Bailey County Courthouse and its larger site retain historic integrity.

Integrity

The Bailey County Courthouse, constructed in 1925, remains in excellent condition and retains integrity to convey its historic and architectural significance. Its location and setting have not changed as it continued to stand at the center of the courthouse square, which faces S. 1st Street in Muleshoe's historic civic district. It also maintains its historic association as the center of county governance and law. The courthouse retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship, and continues to convey the feeling of a Classic Revival courthouse with West Texas regional stylistic influences. The brick and cast stone exterior have undergone upkeep to repair weather damage and structural instability, and to update the cast stone paint scheme. The building still contains the original brickwork, wood windows, and characteristic ornamental cast stone detailing. The interior retains some of the original double doors for offices, original windows, original marble staircase, and original wood furniture. Some offices and functions have changed over time. Though the north entryway was sealed with a faux-double door and most entry doors are non-historic glass units, all four entry porticos remain in good condition. The third-floor jail was vacated in 1970, and the space was converted into a library and storage area, but some of the jail cells have been retained for storage.

¹⁰ "Historical and Architectural Development – Context," Bailey County Courthouse Binder File (Unapproved), Department of Architecture, Texas Historical Commission.

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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 values, 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

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT, ARCHITECTURE (both local level of significance)

Period of Significance

1925-1976

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Butler, Milton C., architect

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Statement of Significance

The Bailey County Courthouse is located at 300 South 1st Street, in Muleshoe, Bailey County, Texas. Bailey County was organized on November 5, 1918, and the first permanent courthouse was constructed in c. 1918. The nominated courthouse was constructed as an upgrade to the former courthouse in 1925, the same year that Muleshoe was officially incorporated and designated as the county seat. Bailey County Courthouse was designed by Lubbock architect, M. C. Butler, in the Classical Revival style while incorporating regional characteristics through its ornamentation and materials. It is one of the oldest extant commercial and civic buildings in Muleshoe and Bailey County. The courthouse was previously home to the county jail, public library, district attorney's office, and the county treasurer's office. Currently the courthouse is occupied by the District Judge and Clerk, County Judge and Clerk, and Tax Assessor/Collector, District Courtroom, and the Community Services office. Bailey County Courthouse is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government for its role as the center of Bailey County government for a century. It is also nominated at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as the most prominent civic building in Bailey County and an excellent example of a Classical Revival courthouse with regional stylistic influences. The period of significance spans from its construction in 1925 to 1976, the National Register's fifty-year guideline, recognizing its continued use as the center of government of Bailey County.

Criterion A: Politics/Government

Bailey County, Texas

Bailey County is named after lawyer and Texas War of Independence veteran, Peter James Bailey.¹¹ Born in Kentucky in 1912, Bailey is remembered by Texans as a heroic figure in the battle of the Alamo. He came to Texas in company with Daniel W. Cloud, took the oath of allegiance in Nacogdoches on January 14, 1836, and was enlisted in the Texas Army. He was ranked a Garrison Member and became a member of the Tennessee Mounted Volunteers who perished with David Crockett in the battle of the Alamo on March 6, 1836. For his service to Texas, his heirs received land parcels, and the county was named after him.¹²

Bailey County was part of the 54 counties created in the "great paper survey" of August 21, 1876. Though attempts to organize this territory were delayed for 33 years thereafter, the rise of the automobile incentivized organization, as these counties had no power to build or finance roads otherwise.¹³ Historical records state that the 832 sq. mi. territory of Bailey County was originally part of Bexar Territory and Young Territory prior to its founding by the Texas Legislature on November 19, 1876.¹⁴ On the day of its founding in 1876, Bailey and 22 other counties were attached to Jack County

¹¹ Michael T. Kingston, ed., *The Texas Almanac, 1984-1985* (Dallas Morning News), (A. H. Belo Corporation, 1983), p. 174; Zachary T. Fulmore, *The History and Geography of Texas: As Told in Names*, Revised Edition (S. R. Fulmore, Publisher, Austin, TX, 1926) p. 100.

¹² Ronald G. Bailey, "Bailey, Peter James III," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed October 07, 2025, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bailey-peter-james-iii>.

¹³ June Rayfield Welch, *The Texas Courthouse Revisited* (Dallas: GLA Press, 1984), p. 9.

¹⁴ "Details for The Founding of Bailey County," Recorded Texas Historical Marker, *Texas Historical Commission*,

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"for judicial, surveying and all other purposes." On February 25, 1881, Bailey was attached to Baylor County "for judicial purposes." On June 30, 1887, it was attached to Crosby County. On February 18, 1889, it was attached to Hale County. On September 1, 1892, it was attached to Castro County. Just prior to its organization, on November 5, 1918, Bailey was under the umbrella of Hockley County.¹⁵ By March 17, 1919, Bailey County was fully organized and detached from other counties. On May 27, 1931, the western extent of Bailey County was explicitly extended to the Texas-New Mexico boundary (103d meridian) as established by John H. Clark in 1859.¹⁶

One of the main incentives for organizing Bailey County in 1918 was that at the time, cars were becoming more popular, and people felt that they needed better roads. However, they could not organize around the creation of new roads legally until they had their own county. Another reason for organization was to help facilitate the settlement of legal problems in the new territory. Before the county was organized in 1918, it was part of large governmental territory, and if pioneers had legal problems, they would have to travel great distances to reach other courthouses and law enforcement in counties such as Dimmit, Castro, or Jack County.¹⁷

Initial attempts to organize Bailey County since 1909 were stunted by financial and legal obstacles, such as a lack of sufficient voters; the county only had 90 of the required 150 voters. A total of 127 people representing themselves signed a petition to reorganize under their own county, but some eager members used fake signatures, thus an injunction came in 1909 prohibiting the election of a county seat and local officials. In 1917, citizens raised \$1,500 and sent representative W. G. Kennedy and E. D. King to Austin seeking a reduction of the legal limit of voters from 150 people to 75. They were successful. Finally, in 1918, the county was organized as an alternative to the choice to join Parmer County. The first district court meeting occurred in December 1918, whereupon the county was finally able to elect officials.¹⁸ Large non-resident ranch owners fearing increased taxes sought the support of Castro County commissioners to prevent Bailey's organization. Newly voted Bailey County officials moved quickly to retrieve their records for safekeeping in a designated room in the relatively new Blackwater Valley State Bank, a 1914 brick building at the southwest corner of Main and Avenue D in Muleshoe. They met one morning in January of 1918 to declare the county organized, naming the seat Muleshoe, and designating Blackwater Bank as the first capitol.¹⁹

accessed October 7, 2025, <https://atlas.thc.texas.gov/Details?atlasnumber=5017005337>.

Family Search, "Texas County Creation Dates and Parent Counties," date accessed Oct 14, 2025, https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Texas_County_Creation_Dates_and_Parent_Counties.

¹⁵ LaVonne McKillip, Muleshoe Junior High Historical Society, *Early Bailey County History: Paleo-Man to Plow-Man, 12,000 B.C. to 1930 A.D.* (Muleshoe: Bob Stovall Printing, 1978), p. 24.

¹⁶ William R. Hunt and John Leffler, "Bailey County," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed October 09, 2025, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bailey-county>. The Newberry Library: Texas Atlas of Historical County Boundaries, "Texas: Individual County Chronologies," accessed Oct. 14, 2025, https://publications.newberry.org/ahcb/documents/TX_Individual_County_Chronologies.htm#. The following Texas Law citations are listed in the Texas Atlas of Historical County Boundaries in order of mention: Texas Laws 1876, 15th leg., ch. 144/pp. 237, 242; Texas Laws 1881, 17th leg., reg. sess., ch. 18, sec. 2/p. 12; Texas Laws 1887, 20th leg., reg. sess., ch. 98, sec. 4/p. 80; Texas Laws 1889, 21st leg., ch. 138, sec. 10/p. 163; Texas Laws 1892, 22d leg., called sess., ch. 24, sec. 2/p. 59; Kennedy, 61; Texas Laws 1919, 36th leg., reg. sess., ch. 82, sec. 2/p. 132; (Texas Laws 1931, 42d leg., reg. sess., ch. 358/p. 850.

¹⁷ McKillip, *Early Bailey County History*, p. 24-26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁹ June Rayfield Welch, *The Texas Courthouse Revisited* (Dallas: GLA Press, 1984), p. 9.

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By 1925, Bailey County was fully established as a self-governing county. That same year, a vote was placed to determine if the town of Muleshoe wanted to incorporate their city under a commission for government and most agreed. The first mayor was R. L. Faulkner, who was followed by A. V. McCarthy, Sr., L.S. Barron, C. C. Mardis, and A. P. Stone. The first commissioners were paid only \$3 a day and served one day each month. Salaries increased thereafter. In 1924, Muleshoe received its first edition of the *Muleshoe Journal*.²⁰ Bailey County has 18 historical markers.

Settlement and Development of Bailey County

The territory of Bailey County and the broader Texas Panhandle was home to prehistoric Plains villagers who lived in semi-settled and small-scale societies some 800-900 years ago.²¹ Prior to European settlement, horse-based High Plains Indians occupied the area. In the 1700s, the Apache tribe lived in the territory, but in the early 1800s, the Apache were displaced by the Comanche tribe, who lived nomadic lifestyles and relied on bison for food and trade. White settlers began to migrate into West Texas in the late 19th century and early 20th century, but often entered into violent clashes with the Comanche, who engaged in raids to expel unwanted settlers. Many pioneers turned to killing bison as a trade, and a way of undermining the Comanche, forcing them off desirable lands.²² The wholesale slaughter of millions of buffalo also attracted hundreds of settlers to the territory. But after the buffalo had dissipated, some people turned to “rustling” cattle, which caused cattle herders to take action by developing legislation with the help of Texas Rangers to stop this “rustling.”²³

In addition to early violent clashes, Bailey County settlement came late compared to other counties because the XIT Ranch controlled most of the land from approximately 1882 to 1901. Founded in 1879 by the Sixteenth Texas Legislature, XIT was a historic cattle ranch encompassing three million acres of land in the Texas Panhandle. The purpose of its founding was to finance a new state Capitol building.²⁴ While settlers of Bailey County had little resources to begin with, the division of XIT lands in 1901 encouraged quick settlement. Bailey County had just 4 residents as late as 1900.²⁵ By 1910, 312 pioneers had arrived in the area, and by 1920, the population had reached 517. In the ensuing decades, increased production in farming and cotton boosted development and population numbers. Bailey County counted 5,186 residents in 1930, 6,318 in 1940, and 7,592 in 1950. Though many West Texas counties declined immediately after World War II, Bailey continued to grow in population until about 1960 when it reached an approximate apex of over 9,000 residents. Thereafter, the population steadily declined,

²⁰ McKillip, *Early Bailey County History*, p. 29, 95-97.

²¹ Texas Beyond History, “Plains Villagers of the Texas Panhandle,” accessed Oct 15, 2025, <https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/villagers/>.

²² “Panhandle Plains History,” *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, Accessed Oct 7, 2025, <https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/resources/texas-junior-naturalists/regions/panhandle-plains/panhandle-plains-history>.

²³ McKillip, *Early Bailey County History*, p. 27.

²⁴ Hugh Allen Anderson, “XIT Ranch,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed October 14, 2025, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/xit-ranch>.

²⁵ The U.S. census recorded four people living in Bailey County in 1900. William R. Hunt and John Leffler, “Bailey County,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed October 09, 2025, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bailey-county>.

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and in 2014, the census recorded approximately 7,000 residents.²⁶ While early settlers comprised mostly white families, Bailey County today encompasses a diverse population. While early sources reveal little about Hispanic families, oral histories confirm that, at least by the 1950s, Hispanic families represented a growing demographic in Bailey County.²⁷

Though the earliest settlers formed ranches, farming defined much of Bailey County's initial growth, especially between 1900 and 1930. Income from farming represented a large portion of the county's income, and farmers grew sorghums, corn, cotton, wheat, alfalfa, and vegetables. Livestock included cattle, hogs, and sheep.²⁸ From the outset, land companies like the Farm Land Development Company (formerly XIT Ranch) and the Coldren Land Company boosted settlement and agriculture by developing irrigation, buying large tracts of land, and selling parcels to land hungry farmers from the north and northeast. The abundance of shallow water, irrigation development, cheap school lands, and low rates (from \$2.50 to \$6 per acre) helped attract poor farmers. These companies also implemented initiatives to educate new settlers in plains farming methods.²⁹

Financing and land development was not without controversy, as land companies were sometimes accused of land speculation. Real estate agents took advantage of population expansion to offer loans, abstracts, and conveyances, promising lands:

[W]here you will find rich productive soil, abundance of water, healthful climate, sufficient rainfall, superior railway shipping facilities, the very best school advantages, church and moral atmosphere, and a rapidly developing country. Prices are right and terms are easy to meet. No boll weevil [weevil] here. A safe cotton country where one may diversify their crops.³⁰

Speculations notwithstanding, land companies played a pivotal role in the growth of Bailey County through the development of irrigation north of the sandhills, experimentation with farming, construction of homes, loans, and promotion, all of which opened the door to thriving settlement.³¹

Railroads also played a key role in the development of the rural and isolated county. They allowed materials to be transported for the construction of homes for settlers. During the 1920s, most houses were "shacks" or "box car houses" with oval tops. In about 1929, homes began to incorporate gable roofs. In the first years of Muleshoe's existence, settlers built most houses on blocks so that they were moveable in case the town died, and most houses were brought in from other towns. Muleshoe's first official courthouse was also mobile and was moved when the current courthouse was built in 1925. As the town of Muleshoe grew, so did buildings and businesses. Farmers and ranchers turned to banks, mercantile stores, cafes, hotels, and grocery stores, and many residents found success in these trades. Pioneers introduced churches of different denominations in the area. The first school was erected in the

²⁶ William R. Hunt and John Leffler, "Bailey County," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed October 09, 2025, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/bailey-county>.

²⁷ Hispanic Oral History Project, Texas Tech University, "Oral History Interview of Juan Manuel Chavez," by Daniel Sanchez, Muleshoe, Texas, Jan 25, 2013.

²⁸ Michael T. Kingston, ed., *The Texas Almanac, 1984-1985* (Dallas Morning News), (A. H. Belo Corporation, 1983), p. 174.

²⁹ McKillip, *Early Bailey County History*, p. 44.

³⁰ "Bailey County Lands," *Muleshoe Journal*, Feb 13, 2025.

³¹ McKillip, *Early Bailey County History*, p. 47.

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nearby town of New Hurley in 1913.³² Valley Motor Company and White Front Grage helped promote car growth and the sale of agricultural vehicles like tractors increased. Lumber companies simultaneously increased services in the bustling young town of Muleshoe in the 1920s. In 1925, the Muleshoe Chamber of Commerce was established, uniting efforts to service and develop Muleshoe. T. Taylor White was elected president; RB Boyle as vice-president; board of directors was Levi Pressly, LS Barron, sr., and MP Smith.³³

Named after a ranch of the same name, the town of Muleshoe was plotted in 1912 but was not incorporated until 1925, when it was designated the county seat. The first train came through Muleshoe in 1913, and the first railway freight, in 1914. Muleshoe was advantageously located on the main line of the Santa Fe Railroad, running from Galveston to California. Despite its positioning, it experienced no sudden boom, and its population, size, and capital remained relatively low through the 1910s. By 1917 the town boasted two stores, a bank, a lumber yard, a Magnolia Oil Station, a garage, and a large hotel. Its first brick building, the Blackwater Valley State Bank, held the county's records and served as the first county capitol. In 1923, Muleshoe had acquired a café, grocery, meat market, laundry, and bakery. In 1925, Muleshoe had a population estimated between 400-600. The first electricity was introduced in 1926, and the first gas service was introduced in 1930. By 1930, Bailey County had a network of county roads.³⁴

Muleshoe had competed with nearby towns such as New Hurley for matters such as Railroad concessions and the distinction of county seat. New Hurley lost the election for county seat and had lost the fight a few years earlier for a railway station. It had a smaller population than Muleshoe, which contributed to its loss. Other towns included Old Hurley, Janes, and Virginia City. Over time, these towns faded away mainly because the railroad passed through Muleshoe at their expense.³⁵

Construction and Maintenance of the Bailey County Courthouse

Before the establishment of the present courthouse, Bailey County records were kept in the Blackwater Valley State Bank, a small brick building constructed in 1914 which served as the predecessor to the courthouse (Figure 13). In about 1918, plans were drawn by H.E. Wilterding for a frame courthouse to be built on the corner of Second and Avenue C for \$2,450. This was the predecessor to the 1925 courthouse.³⁶ The first official courthouse was replaced in 1925 by the present courthouse and relegated to a variety of purposes: the American Legion and Masonic Lodge owned it first, then in the 1930s it served as a lunchroom, then it was used for government offices, and in the 1950s it was moved to a farm and became unrecognizable.³⁷

In late 1924, an election was held to determine the issuance of a bond amounting to \$60,000.00 for the erection of a new courthouse. The bond was approved with a 55-vote majority, with 179 voting for, and 124 voting against. *The Muleshoe Journal* reported that despite determined opposition, once the election was carried out,

³² Ibid., p. 77-79.

³³ McKillip, *Early Bailey County History*, p. 97-103.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 80, 97-98.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 29, 46.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 80, 95.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

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[T]hose who opposed the issuance of the bonds are joining in with the majority and are anxious for the time to arrive when the new, modern structure will begin, which ought to be a pride to Bailey County. To many citizens who had occasion to attend District Court this week the great need of a court house was manifest...This is another evidence that our county is progressing, and it will not be long until Muleshoe will be known as one of the coming towns of the plains.³⁸

The Bailey County Courthouse was completed in 1925 to designs by Milton C. Butler of Butler Company, Architects, based in Oklahoma City, OK and Lubbock, TX. Bids for construction were received in April of 1925 for a Courthouse complete with heating, plumbing, and wiring, as per the plan specifications by the Butler Company, Architects.³⁹ The corner stone laying for the courthouse took place on September 7, 1925 with a program planned for the Labor Day event, and residents of nearby communities were invited. The *Muleshoe Journal* praised the event by stating that “[i]t will require close inspection to appreciate the vast amount of labor it has required to build Bailey County’s beautiful Courthouse,” and encouraging citizens to come out and witness “the laying of the corner stone of Bailey County’s ‘Temple of Justice.’”⁴⁰

In October of 1925, workers built concrete sidewalks on all four sides of the courthouse. The sidewalks were specifically set in from the old curb by about 12 feet to make room for parking spaces in the future.⁴¹ The Rice Construction Company began plastering work in the new courthouse in October 1925.⁴²

The courthouse square for Bailey County conforms to a “Shelbyville square” model. According to historian Robert Veselka, the Shelbyville square is one in which a square block fits into a rectangular grid pattern, reducing disruption to the grid plan and adjacent land use while making the courthouse a central focus for the community. Veselka classified Bailey County as a “modified Shelbyville” likely owing to deviations or incomplete aspects of the prototype, though he explained that this was more typical in small rural towns. The Shelbyville model is the most common among courthouse squares in Texas, often chosen for its simplicity and stability. The model was introduced into the state as Anglo-Americans settled the area, moving from east to west, and the first occurrences date to the 1830s.⁴³

The inviting appearance of the courthouse site also figures prominently into its significance for the county. Many of its trees were planted early in the courthouse’s history to aid in beautifying the space for residents, visitors, and for holiday festivities. Some of the trees that grace the front lawn were planted circa 1915 by Mr. Roy Elrod. In Spring of 1926, the local Civic Club met to discuss plans for setting grass and shrubs, and for planting flowers on the courthouse lawn. Bailey County citizens were

³⁸ “Fifty-Five Majority Given at the Election,” *The Muleshoe Journal*, Jan 3, 1925.

³⁹ “Notice to Contractors,” *The Muleshoe Journal*, April 3, 1925.

⁴⁰ “The County Court House Corner Stone to Be Laid on Labor Day,” *The Muleshoe Journal*, Aug 21, 1925.

⁴¹ “Building Sidewalks Around Courthouse,” *The Muleshoe Journal*, Oct 4, 1925.

⁴² “Items of Interest from Court House,” *The Muleshoe Journal*, Oct 16, 1925.

⁴³ Robert E. Veselka, *The Courthouse Square in Texas* (UT Austin Press, 2000) pp. 32-37. According to Veselka, the Shelbyville is prevalent in all three Upper South cultural groups (67 to 80%), in Mixed cultural groups (68 %), and among the Midwest cultural group in the Panhandle area (50%).

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invited to participate, and a lunch was served at the meeting.⁴⁴ In April of 1933, new pine trees from near Pecos, New Mexico were planted and incorporated into the courthouse lawn to beautify it.⁴⁵

Courthouse authorities also took pains to protect the site from vandalization throughout the years. In October of 1933, a custodian of the courthouse complained to the Commissioners Court that children and teenagers of the town were destroying the flowers and shrubbery, breaking limbs of trees, and digging holes in the lawn. The *Muleshoe Journal* published a statement on behalf of courthouse authorities beckoning parents to stop their children from vandalizing the space further.

The court realizes the fact that the property belongs to all the people of Bailey County. They also realize there has been considerable amount of money spent in trying to keep the property in repairs and in beautifying the grounds. The court also believes that the people of the town and county are interested to such an extent that they do not want this property destroyed or damaged. Therefore the children are asked to discontinue the practice of playing on the courthouse lawn.⁴⁶

Bailey County Courthouse continued to improve its appearance through mid-century. In December 1949, a new light system was installed in Muleshoe to cover the entire town, ensuring brighter lights. On Main Street, "steel standards" would replace the older lighting systems. A row of light fixtures was installed to encircle the entirety of the courthouse.⁴⁷

The combination of functions within a relatively modest sized courthouse have sometimes led to issues such as cramped conditions. The *Muleshoe Journal* published a series of articles in the 1950s addressing crowded and antiquated conditions of certain parts of the courthouse and arguing the need for proposed additions. One article pointed out that the main courtroom was too small and was being used for multiple purposes such as private and public meetings, drivers license exams, and public voting. It noted the poor acoustics in the courtroom due to its high ceiling. Finally, it noted the antiquated and crowded conditions of the third-floor jail.⁴⁸

Over the years, the courthouse interior was modified both in terms of layout and occasional physical alterations in order to improve its functioning. From 1925 until 1967 the District Clerk's office and the County Clerk's office were a combined office located on the second floor of the courthouse. In 1967, the two offices were separated and the District Clerk's office moved down to the first floor while the County clerk remained on the second floor. The main change to the courthouse's interior floor plans occurred when the north entrance was sealed and an office was situated at the north end for the District Clerk. In the early 1970s, the courtroom's ceiling on the second floor was also lowered to improve sound quality.

In 1970, due to increasing penal standards and ongoing cramped conditions, the old county jail on the third floor of the courthouse was vacated. The county jail was moved to a new Law Enforcement Center constructed at the rear (west) of the courthouse. The center was approved by voters of Bailey County by a margin of almost six to one, and a \$121,485 bid from Lampe Construction Co. of Lubbock was

⁴⁴ *Muleshoe Journal*, March 19, 1926; *Muleshoe Journal*, April 16, 1926.

⁴⁵ *Muleshoe Journal*, April 13, 1933.

⁴⁶ "Com. Court Wants Damage to Court House Lawn Stopped," *The Muleshoe Journal*, Oct 5, 1933.

⁴⁷ "Splendid New System to Provide Finer Street Lighting in Muleshoe." *The Muleshoe Journal*. Dec 15, 1949.

⁴⁸ "Need for Proposed Addition to Courthouse," *Muleshoe Journal*, Feb 20, 1958.

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accepted by the Commissioners Court for the construction, which was completed in late November of 1969. About the same time, the rear (west) of the courthouse square was paved to provide space for parking. Concurrent with the new law building, a new City Hall and Chamber of Commerce were constructed nearby for a total of \$89,000. At the opening ceremony, Lieutenant Governor Ben Barnes declared that the new Law Enforcement Center was the only one in the state of Texas that housed the city, county, and state law enforcement agencies in one building. It boasted a more modern and spacious jail that conformed with penal standards. At the time, it housed the Bailey County Sheriff's office, the Muleshoe City Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety Driver's License Division, two Texas Highway Patrolmen and Justice of the Peace Joe D. Vaughn.⁴⁹ At present, the building is referred to as the Probation Office or Texas Department of Public Safety. As the law center took on new functions, such as the county jail, it alleviated the burden of cramped conditions that the courthouse experienced. During the 1970 renovation to vacate the courthouse jail, approximately four of the jail cells were preserved for use as storage rooms. An internal wall on the third floor was also removed to make space for a law library on the west end of the third floor and the large room was plastered (Figure 7, Photos 16-17). In the late 1990s, new carpet was added to the floors throughout the courthouse. These changes demonstrate how Bailey County authorities continually sought to improve their courthouse's facilities and functions through alterations and adaptations.

In the late 1990s, courthouse plans attest to planned work to repair brick and cast stone elements on the exterior of the courthouse. This work mostly involved repointing mortar joints, adding weather sealant, and repairing some of the cast stone details on elements such as the pediments where some of these structures had become unstable. Repairs also included adding a new electrical system.⁵⁰

Functions of the Courthouse throughout the 20th Century

Throughout its history, the Bailey County Courthouse has served various roles which are typical of courthouses generally, including judicial, administrative, financial, and legal functions. The courthouse was previously home to the county jail, public library, district attorney's office, and the county treasurer's office. Currently the courthouse is occupied by the District Judge and Clerk, County Judge and Clerk, and Tax Assessor/Collector, District Courtroom, and the Community Services office. Throughout its tenure, the courthouse has also performed various functions to improve the lives of Bailey County residents.

Early in the development of Muleshoe and Bailey County, the courthouse assisted settlers and farmers in taking advantage of the productive soil of their lands. Agriculture and dairy farming made up a large part of the economic makeup of the county throughout the 20th century. Agricultural produce in Bailey County returned a large proportion of profits for the county. In 1985, *The Texas Almanac* recorded \$68 million of agricultural profits annually, with 60% of returns from crops, and 40% from livestock. In addition, the county boasted 155,000 acres of irrigated land.⁵¹ From its inception, the courthouse hosted various functions and business transactions to support farmers and promote agriculture. The *Muleshoe Journal* newspaper often invited residents to the courthouse to attend bids for land parcels, farming

⁴⁹ *Muleshoe Journal*, Nov 6, 1969; Feb 12, 1970.

⁵⁰ "Historical and Architectural Development – Context," Bailey County Courthouse Binder File (Unapproved), Department of Architecture, Texas Historical Commission.

⁵¹ Michael T. Kingston, ed., *The Texas Almanac, 1984-1985* (Dallas Morning News), (A. H. Belo Corporation, 1983), 174.

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tools, and other agricultural equipment like tractors. The courthouse also organized informational sessions to discuss loans and debt relief for farmers, inviting representatives of the Farm Credit Administration to discuss opportunities.⁵² Water conservation methods also appeared on the courthouse's public meetings agenda.⁵³

In addition to agricultural development, the health and safety of citizens figured prominently in the courthouse's meeting and events. The relief for farmers was especially important in times of ecological disasters such as "dustbowls." The courthouse hosted occasional meetings to discuss preparations for potential disasters, such as tornadoes and bombing campaigns, and the distribution of relief.⁵⁴ The *Muleshoe Journal* also announced that the courthouse would host health inspections to address sick children, free testing for diseases, and nursing instructions for new mothers.⁵⁵

The courthouse also supported children's education in the county. From 1925 to 1963 the public library was housed at the courthouse. At first, the library was located on the second story in a tiny room that eventually changed to the juvenile probation office (now used for storage). Later, the library was moved to the basement of the courthouse. The library was an important part of the community because the school did not house a library at that time. Students could walk one block from the school to the courthouse and check out a book after school. Often this was the only outside reading a student would have access to.

The appearance of the courthouse and square has also served as a symbol of progress, development, and pride for Bailey County residents. From its inception, courthouse authorities took pains to make sure the site was presentable as a source of beauty for their county. The lawn was a frequent setting for family photos. Holiday decorations would often complement the beauty of the courthouse lawn. The 4th of July celebration has historically been held on the courthouse lawn, drawing several thousands of people each year. An annual Easter egg hunt for children has also been held on the courthouse site.⁵⁶

Judicial History of the Bailey County Courthouse

Law related matters in Bailey County were relatively stable through mid-century. Bailey County had just two sheriffs between 1919-1932, but law enforcement remained active as there was a regular number of prisoners in the jail at any given time. The first county jail was moved in from Parmer County and later used by the sheriff as a garage.⁵⁷ From 1925 to 1969 the city and county inmates were confined in the third-floor jail of the courthouse. This jail was state-of-the-art for its time but the winding stairway to the third floor was so narrow that the officers and prisoners had to proceed in a single file. Obstreperous and intoxicated people often constituted a serious problem for law enforcement. There were only two jail breaks within that period. Both escaped through the windows and onto the roof. One inmate was able to shimmy down the drainpipe during the first escape. During the second escape, the

⁵² "Funds Available for Planting of Fall Cover Crops." *The Muleshoe Journal*, Oct 15, 1942; "Farm Foreclosure Organization May be Made in County," *The Muleshoe Journal*, Jan 26, 1933; "For Sale or Trade." *The Muleshoe Journal*. June 30, 1949.

⁵³ "Large Crowd Attends Meeting of Water Conservation Tuesday Night," *Muleshoe Journal*, Sep 28, 1950.

⁵⁴ "Disaster Plans are Mapped at Bailey County Meetings," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche*, Oct 20, 1953.

⁵⁵ *Muleshoe Journal*, Sep 24, 1931; *Muleshoe Journal*, April 16, 1926.

⁵⁶ *Bailey County Journal*, April 10, 1966.

⁵⁷ McKillip, *Early Bailey County History*, p. 29.

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prisoners decided that it was better to remain inside rather than on the roof and made their way back into the cell.

Throughout the years, Bailey County has had its share of notable events related to judicial proceedings and law enforcement. One infamous case in the Bailey County District Court was the 1936 trial of John Teal of Pendleton, Oregon. On April 7, 1918, Teal shot and killed a young schoolteacher, Evelyn Monts. Teal fled the scene and was not seen for 18 years. Bailey County Sheriff Jim Cook and Lubbock Sheriff Tom Abel worked diligently for years and finally brought the suspect to trial in 1936. Once detained, Teal denied knowledge of killing the young woman. Instead, he claimed he “went blank after Miss Monts slapped him because of something he said when she told him that she was in love with another man, and was having an affair with him.”⁵⁸ When he came to, Teal claimed only to recall “standing there with the gun in his hand.” Teal did not provide proof to support his story. Instead, numerous witnesses testified to the good reputation of Evelyn Monts and testimony suggested that Monts simply did not want to see him anymore. The Teal case exemplified the newly established judicial system in Bailey County working to try a high-profile local crime with the help of authorities from nearby counties.⁵⁹

On March 29, 1951, the *Muleshoe Journal* reported that burglars had broken into the courthouse from the south door. The burglars “blew” the vaults open in the county clerk’s office and the county treasurer’s office. Fortunately, on this occasion there was no money in these vaults and there was minimal damage found the next morning. The sheriff’s office in the courthouse had a vault with \$4,000 stored at the time, but fortunately it was untouched.⁶⁰

Juan Manuel Chavez, a former County Commissioner, and City Council member who grew up in Bailey County in the 1950s, provided an oral history in which he elaborated on the relationship between local government, law enforcement, and the county’s diverse population. He recalled an occasion in the early 1970s in which his nephew and a couple of friends went shooting at a popular local shooting range out on “Rabbit Road 2.” Someone had reported this activity to the sheriff, who subsequently picked the kids up and confiscated the firearm. The county judge sent the kids home and told one of the parents to report to the courthouse in order to retrieve the firearm. However, the sheriff had confiscated the gun and did not initially intend to return it. According to Chavez, the judge confronted the sheriff to ask for his cooperation in following through on his promise. For Chavez, this county judge, who presided in his role for around three decades, was honest and more amenable to Hispanic residents like himself. In the context of discrimination against Hispanic communities, “we had one (judge) here that I think, that most of the time he was on our side even though he couldn’t come out and say it.” This judge would also approve of the installation of a food stamps office for lower income residents.⁶¹

Chavez also spoke of his role in local Bailey County politics in the 1970s. As a member of *Chicanos Unidos-Campesinos* (a Hispanic organization for social and political activism), County Commissioner, and City Council member, he advocated for social policies in favor of Hispanic and lower income residents and encouraged mobilization and voting about key issues. His oral history attests to his optimism about

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 24-30.

⁵⁹ *Muleshoe Journal*, December 10, 1936.

⁶⁰ “Courthouse Burglarized,” *Muleshoe Journal*, March 29, 1951.

⁶¹ Hispanic Oral History Project, Texas Tech University, “Oral History Interview of Juan Manuel Chavez,” by Daniel Sanchez, Muleshoe, Texas, Jan 25, 2013.

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the relationship between local government, law enforcement, and residents seeking just legal, administrative, and social policies in Bailey County.⁶²

Criterion C: Architecture

Architectural Significance of the Bailey County Courthouse

The Bailey County Courthouse is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance as an excellent example of a modest, early 20th century Classical Revival courthouse with regional stylistic influences of the West Texas Panhandle. The Bailey County Courthouse belongs to the “Golden Age” of Texas courthouses, from the 1880s to the 1920s, when many counties saw tremendous economic and cultural development, leading to an increased investment in new public buildings.⁶³ This period saw a resurgence of classicism, evident in the various stylistic choices of regional architects. According to architectural historian Jay C. Henry, of the 254 courthouses in Texas, 100 were designed in Classical styles between 1900 and 1940. Of those, two thirds were built before World War I. After 1920, the majority of courthouses omitted a “dome,” building plans became less centralized and cross-axial, and courthouses tended to be larger.⁶⁴ Despite its modest scale and ornamentation, the Bailey County Courthouse is the most important architecturally important building in its community.

Bailey County Courthouse belongs to a cohort of modestly scaled and designed Texas Panhandle courthouses from this period that include Parmer County (1916), Dallam County (1922), and Lynn County (1916). Bailey County Courthouse is best compared to the nearby Parmer County Courthouse, in the city of Farwell, TX. Built in 1916, the latter was designed by architect William C. Townes and is an example of Academic Eclecticism, blending Classical, Mission Revival, and Renaissance Revival styles. The three-story tan brick building has a T-shaped plan and fronts a partially wooded lot to the west. Its central architectural features include a two-story inset entrance bay (porch on the primary level and gallery above) with three arches set on a pair of stone Tuscan columns and brick pilasters, and elegant brick and terra cotta stringcourses. The regionalism of the Parmer County Courthouse is highlighted by its curved *Alamo-esque* or semicircular parapet wall which displays a “P” for Parmer at the center of a decorative terracotta medallion. Compared to Bailey County Courthouse, the Parmer County Courthouse’s ornamental detailing is more elaborate, though its overall design and scale are similarly modest, which is a characteristic of Texas Panhandle courthouses of the early 20th century.

As with Parmer County, Bailey County Courthouse does not adhere strictly to Classical Revival elements but instead combines them with regional stylistic influences in an overall harmonious and balanced manner. Classical features include symmetrical fenestration, temple-like porticos and pediments, and an emphasis on horizontal lines with a string course, mid-cornice line, and parapet cap. The design incorporates allusions to a temple through elements like projecting corner bays, shallow stepped parapets, and various pediments, though the pediments on the parapet caps are flattened. The courthouse also conveys a sense of monumentality of a building sitting atop a projecting concrete base

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Willard B. Robinson, *The People’s Architecture: Texas Courthouses, Jails, and Municipal Buildings* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983), 195-260; Gregory Smith and Gladys Spring, *Parmer County Courthouse, Parmer County, Texas*, National Register of Historical Places (NRHP) Nomination, 2019.

⁶⁴ Jay C. Henry, *Architecture in Texas, 1895-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. 77.

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course. Unlike Parmer County Courthouse, the subject nomination's portico entryway lacks features like columns, wide inset entrances, or medallions.

Parmer County Courthouse exemplifies Eclecticism more than the subject nomination by incorporating clear stylistic elements from Renaissance Revival and Mission Revival, like curvilinear and irregular parapet walls. While Bailey County Courthouse lacks these other eclectic schools of design, it shares the stylistic influence of the Texas Panhandle region through its use of parapet branding, which includes the name of the courthouse, year of construction, and cattle branding of "X" and "O" symbols. Bailey County Courthouse thus belongs to the "Golden Age" of courthouses that paid homage to Classical designs while bringing forth eclectic and regional contemporary influences. Though modest in design and scale, Bailey County Courthouse nevertheless figures as the most prominent civic building in a relatively younger county that counted on limited resources to represent their progress and regional identity.

Milton C. Butler, Architect (1888-1968)

Architect Milton C. Butler of The Butler Company was based in Oklahoma City, OK and Lubbock, TX. Butler designed courthouses in both states. In Oklahoma, he designed courthouses for Pontotoc County (1926) in Ada, and Beaver County Courthouse (1926) in Beaver. In Texas, he designed the Yoakum County Courthouse (1927) in Plains and the Hockley County Courthouse (1928) in Levelland. Butler also designed various school buildings like the Wink School (1929) in Wink, TX, and the Brownfield School (1942) in Brownfield, TX. Though there is not much information available about M. C. Butler, it is clear that he belonged to a cohort of architects that mastered Eclectic design and took influence from the popular Classical Revival style of the early twentieth century while also incorporating other styles and regional elements, including Mission style and Art Deco.

Butler's designs display a clean emphasis on horizontal lines and symmetrical massing and fenestration. The main entrances of buildings like the Wink School featured a portico entrance with the entry doors recessed under the portico. His buildings also frequently featured elaborate parapet walls with rectilinear stepped patterns with occasional curves. The Bailey County Courthouse features minimal curves in the flattened triangle of the pedimented parapet while the Wink school features a curved, *Alamo-esque* parapet wall. While Butler employed brick for the exterior, he contrasted an often light-buff brick with brick fenestration, belt courses and mid-cornice lines, and the use of additional materials like cast stone and terracotta shingles. This is evident in the Mission Style influences of the Wink School. Butler also employed regional elements such as branding onto the exterior façade of buildings.

Conclusion

The Bailey County Courthouse has served as the center of politics and government in Bailey County for one hundred years. In 1968, the courthouse was designated as a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark. The courthouse is a symbol of the county's prosperity and development from a sparsely settled cattle country area to a populous and agriculturally significant county in the West Texas Panhandle region. In October 2025, the county celebrated its 100th anniversary of the courthouse. The Bailey County Courthouse continues to play an important role in the administrative and political life of the county and meets Criterion A in the area of Politics and Government at the local level. The nominated property is also an excellent example of a Classical Revival courthouse with regional stylistic influences and thus meets Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level. The period of significance spans from its

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construction in 1925 to 1976, recognizing its continued use as the center of government of Bailey County.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ 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 # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office (Texas Historical Commission, Austin)
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☒ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

1. Latitude: 34.224498° Longitude: -102.726273°

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary includes the entire city block identified in Bailey County Appraisal District as ALL BLOCK 22 (Property ID 10191) and is bounded by West Avenue C, South 1st Street, West Avenue D, and West 2nd Street. The nominated property includes the courthouse square site with parking lot, the courthouse, and the Texas Department of Public Safety building to the west (Map 1).

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all property currently and historically associated with the Bailey County Courthouse.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Rebecca Beall, Bailey County Historic Preservation Officer, Bailey County Judge Assistant;
with assistance from Dr. Vasken Markarian, Texas Historical Commission
organization: Bailey County
street & number: 300 S. 1st St.
city or town: Muleshoe state: Texas zip code: 79347
e-mail: rbeall@co.bailey.tx.us
telephone: 806-272-3077
date: 11/06/2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photo Log

Name of Property: Bailey County Courthouse

City or Vicinity: Muleshoe

County: Bailey County State: TX

Photographer: Rebecca Beall, Bailey County Historic Preservation Officer, Bailey County Judge Assistant, Kelly Little, CLG Coordinator, Texas Historical Commission

Date Photographed: 05/06/2025, 05/15/2025, 2/10/2026

(Dates and authors specified below)

Photo 1. Site view, view north.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 2. East (primary) elevation. View northwest.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 3. East (primary) elevation. View northwest.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 4. East entrance portico, close-up. View northwest.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 5. South elevation. View northeast.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 6. West elevation. View east.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 7. Southwest oblique. View northeast.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 8. North elevation with maintenance shed (left).
View southwest.
(05/06/2025, Rebecca Beall)

Photo 9. First floor, looking west.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 10. First floor, looking east.
(05/15/2025, Kelly Little)

Photo 11. First floor, looking north.
(05/06/2025, Rebecca Beall)

Photo 12. First floor, looking south.
(05/06/2025, Rebecca Beall)

Photo 13. Second floor staircase from first floor. View east.
(05/06/2025, Rebecca Beall)

Photo 14. County Clerk's office, second floor, looking south.
(05/06/2025, Rebecca Beall)

Photo 15. Photo 15. District 287 Courtroom. (Note the wooden pediment and pilasters behind judge's bench at the far center.)
(05/06/2025, Rebecca Beall)

Photo 16. Former jail cells are now used for storage, third floor.
(05/06/2025, Rebecca Beall)

Photo 17. Law library, third floor.
(05/06/2025, Rebecca Beal)

Photo 18. Law Enforcement Center, south (primary) elevation, view northeast.
(02/10/2026, Rebecca Beal)

Photo 19. Law Enforcement Center, entrance hall, view southwest.
(02/10/2026, Rebecca Beal)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460

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et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1 – 60-100 hours

Tier 2 – 120 hours

Tier 3 – 230 hours

Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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Maps

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Map 1. Parcel and Boundary Map (Bailey County CAD, Property ID: 10191)



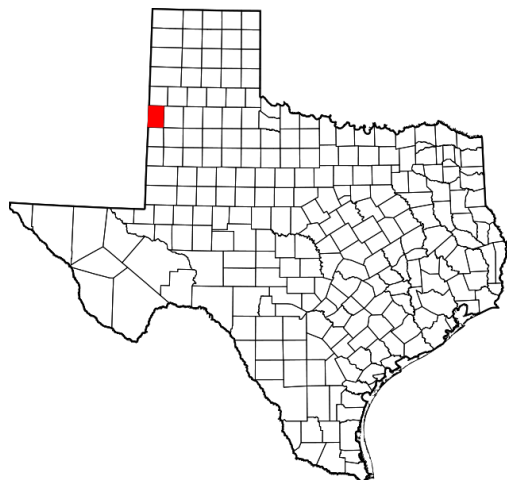
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Map 2. Bailey County location on Texas map



Map 3. Bailey County Courthouse, 300 South 1st Street, Muleshoe, TX.



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Map 4. Muleshoe, Bailey County Courthouse 34.224498° -102.726273°

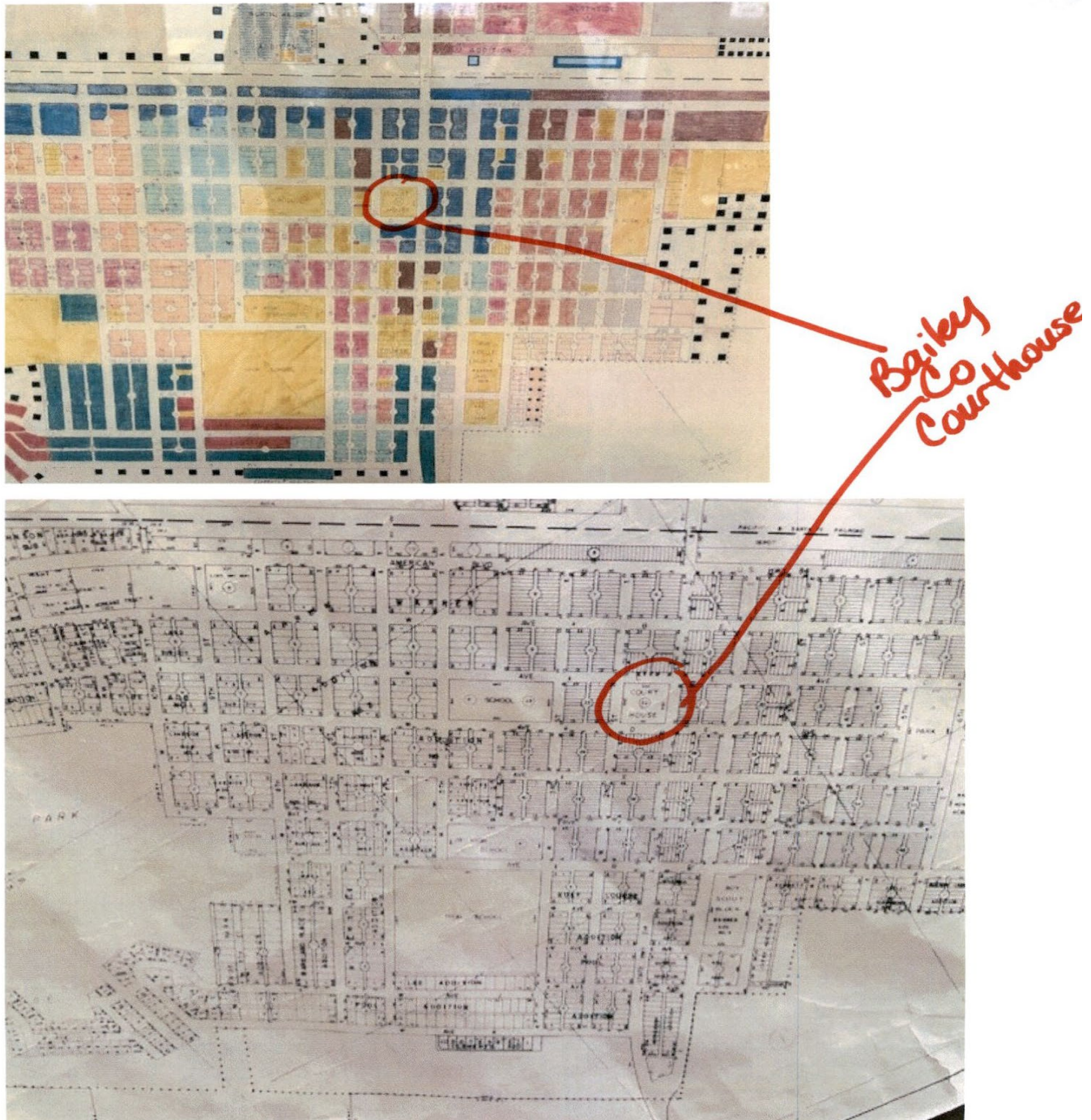


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Figures

Figure 1. Location block of Bailey County Courthouse



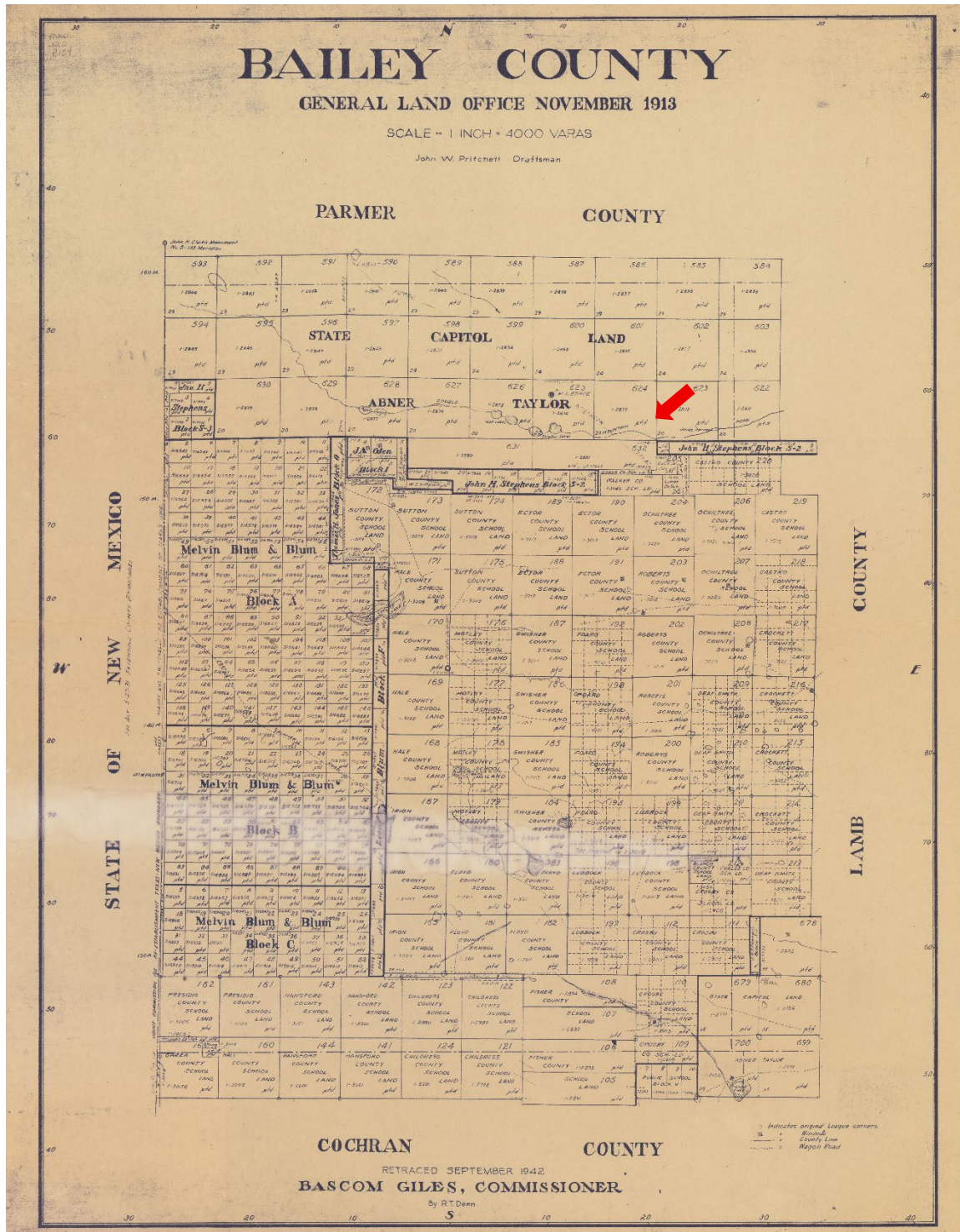
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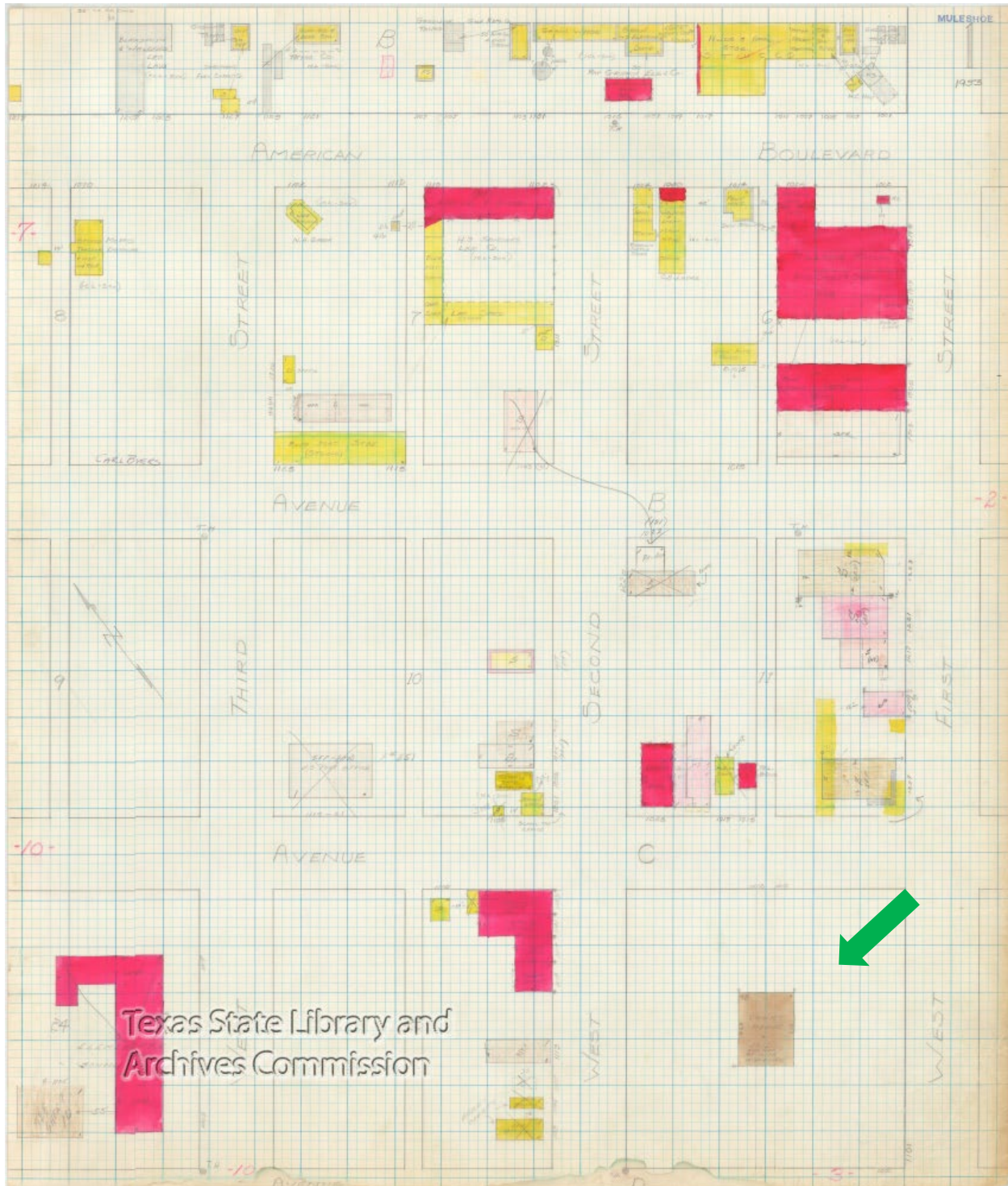
Figure 2. Map of Bailey County. (General Land Office) (Approximate location of Muleshoe marked by arrow).



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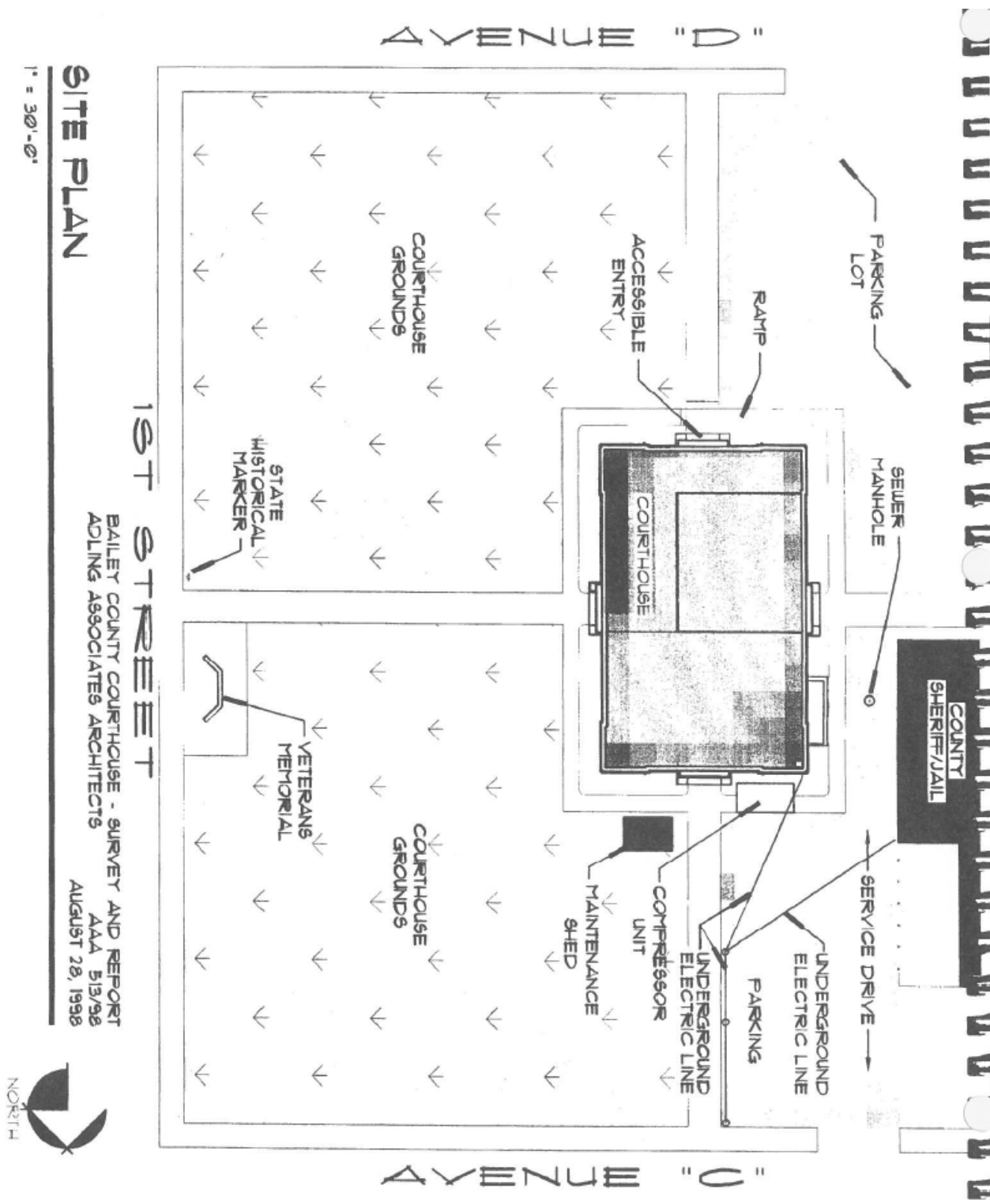
Figure 3. 1953 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. Bailey County Courthouse indicated with green arrow.
(Source: Texas State Library and Archives Commission)



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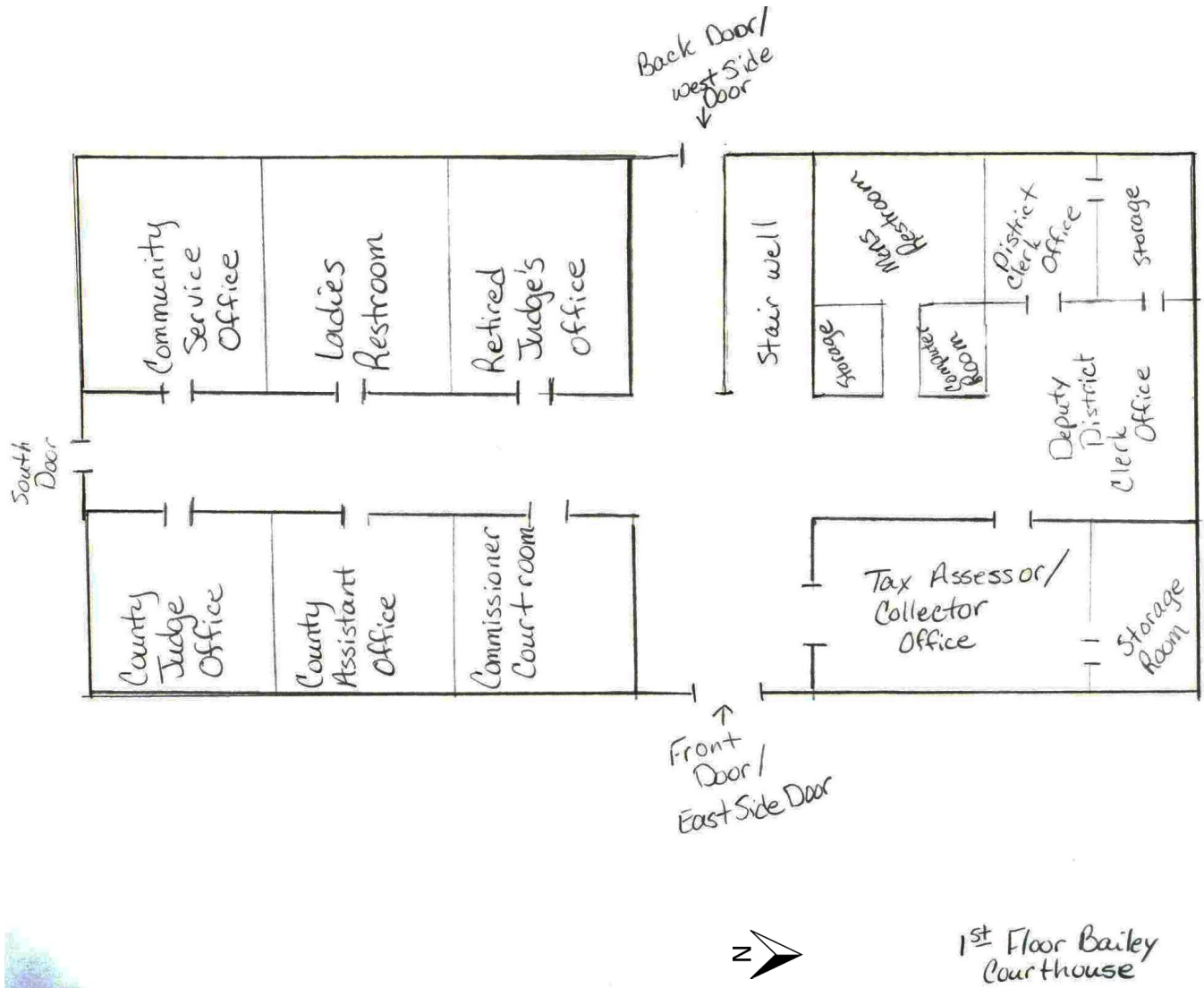
Figure 4. Bailey County Courthouse Site Plan



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Figure 5. Building Floor Plans, Floor 1



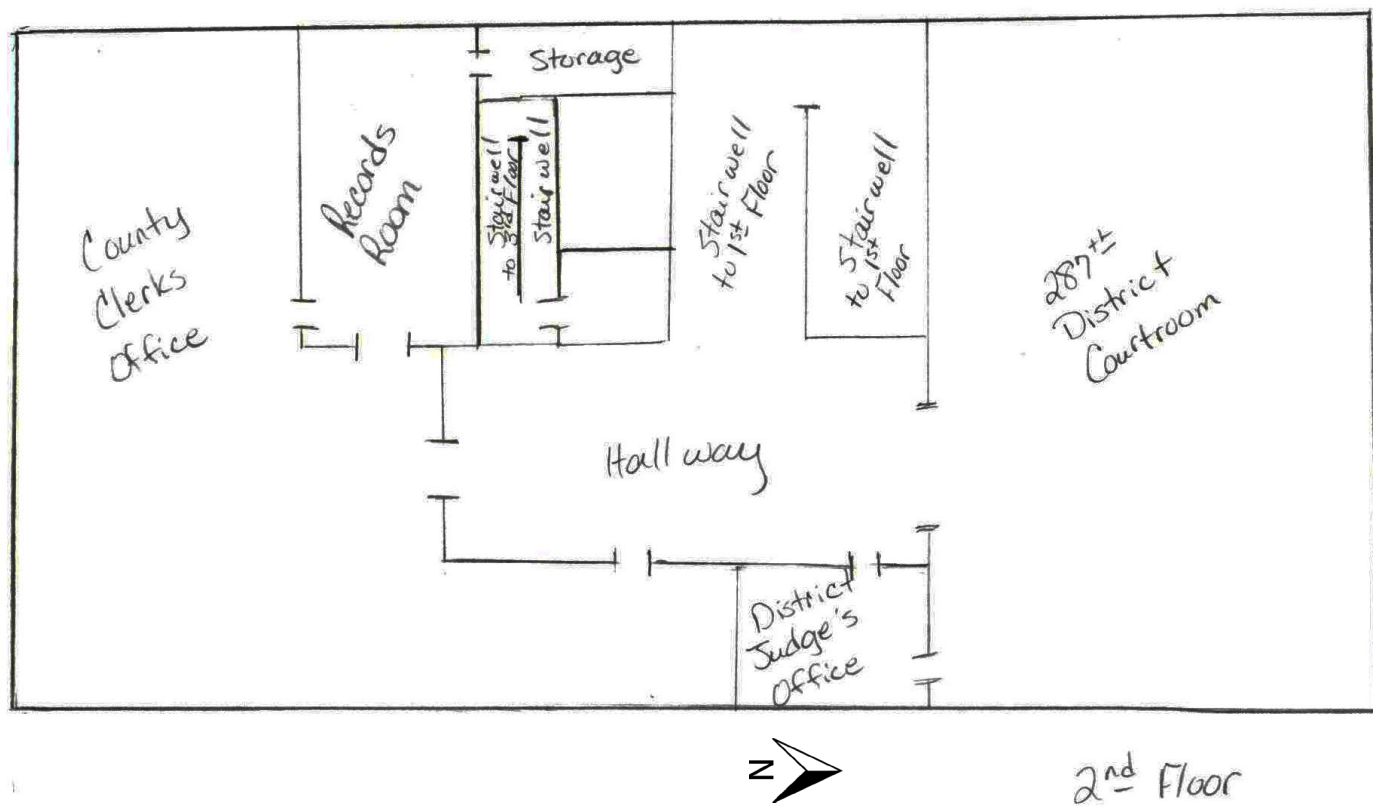
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Figure 6. Building Floor Plan. Floor 2



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Figure 7. Building Floor Plan. Floor 3.

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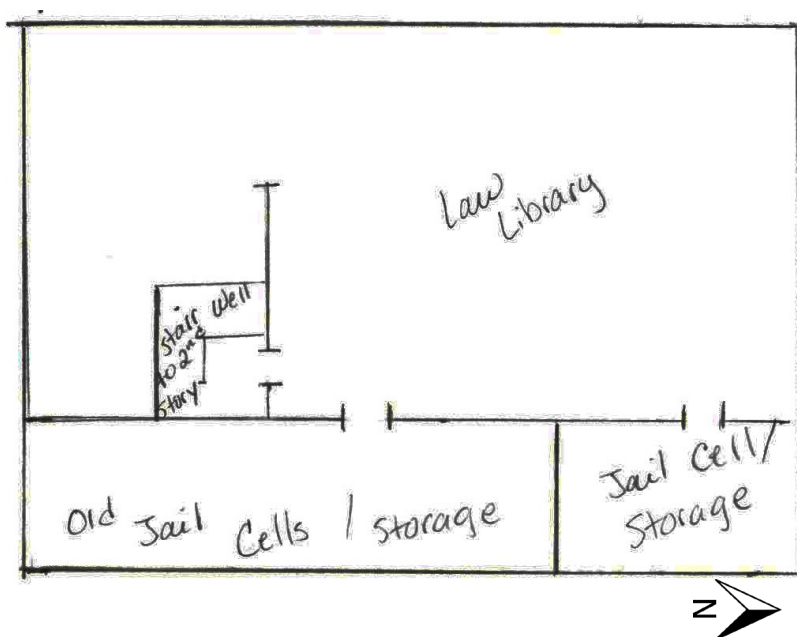
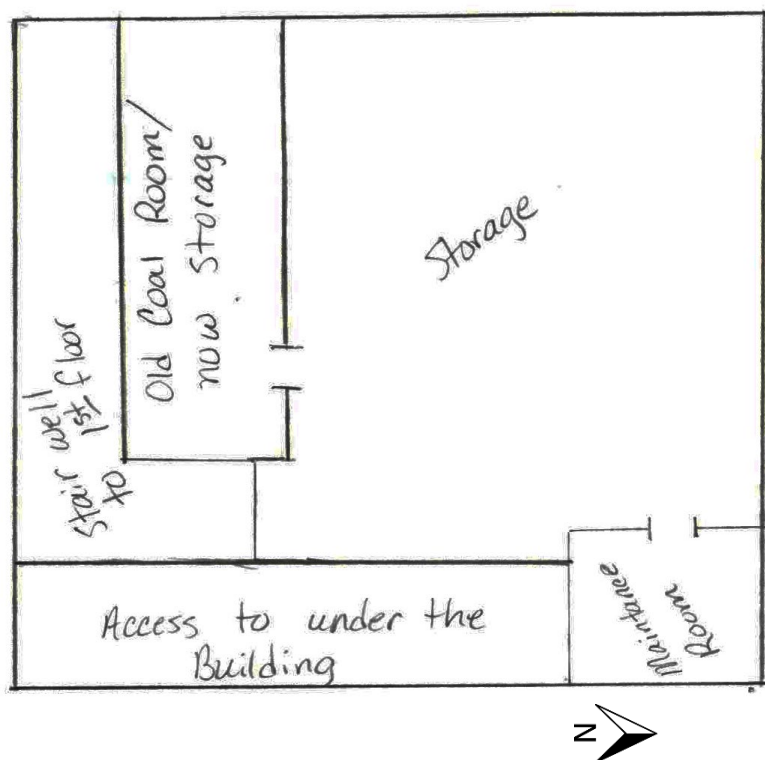


Figure 8. Building Floor Plan. Basement.



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Figure 9. Bailey County Courthouse, c. 1984.

(Source: June Rayfield Welch, *The Texas Courthouse Revisited* (Dallas: GLA Press, 1984), p. 9)



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Figure 10. Parmer County Courthouse in Farwell, Texas, built in 1916.



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Figure 11. Beaver County Courthouse (1926) in Beaver, OK. Designed by The Butler Corporation.



Figure 12. Pontotoc County Courthouse (1926) in Ada, OK. Designed by The Butler Corporation.



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Figure 13. Blackwater Valley State Bank. Located on the southwest corner of Main and Avenue D. (Date of photograph 1914. Source: LaVonne McKillip, Muleshoe Junior High Historical Society, *Early Bailey County History: Paleo-Man to Plow-Man, 12,000 B.C. to 1930 A.D.* (Muleshoe: Bob Stovall Printing, 1978), p. 104)



Blackwater Valley State Bank. First brick building constructed in Muleshoe. Established in 1914. Photograph: Courtesy R. L. Matthiesen.

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Photo 1. Site view, view north.



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Photo 2. East (primary) elevation. View northwest. (Markers from left to right: Texas Highway Department Marker (1936), Recorded Texas Historical Landmark Marker (1968), Bailey County Veterans Memorial).



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Photo 3. East (primary) elevation. View northwest.

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Photo 4. East entrance portico, close-up. View northwest.



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Photo 5. South elevation. View northeast.

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Photo 6. West elevation. View east.

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Photo 7. Southwest oblique. View northeast.

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Photo 8. North elevation with maintenance shed (left). View southwest.



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Photo 9. First floor, looking west.



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Photo 10. First floor, looking east.

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Photo 11. First floor, looking north.



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Photo 12. First floor, looking south.



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Photo 13. Second floor staircase from first floor. View east.



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Photo 14. County Clerk's office, second floor, looking south.



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Photo 15. District 287 Courtroom. (Note the wooden pediment and pilasters behind judge's bench at the far center.)



Bailey County Courthouse

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Photo 16. Former jail cells used for storage, third floor.

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Photo 17. Law library, third floor.

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Photo 18. Law Enforcement Center, south (primary) elevation, view northeast



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Photo 19. Law Enforcement Center, entrance hall, view southwest.

