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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Brooks County Courthouse  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 100 E. Miller Street  
CITY OR TOWN: Falfurrias  
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Brooks  
 NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
 VICINITY  
CODE: 047 ZIP CODE: 78355

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer Date 2/16/12  
Signature of certifying official / Title  
Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 other, explain  
 See continuation sheet.

Edson W. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 4-10-12

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

	private
X	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY

X	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY

contributing	noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
1	2	total

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT/courthouse

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT/courthouse

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals: Classical Revival

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
 WALLS BRICK  
 ROOF STONE/Slate  
 OTHER TERRA COTTA

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-10)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

### NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION<sup>1</sup>

The 1914 Brooks County Courthouse sits prominently in downtown Falfurrias, Texas, creating a dramatic architectural landmark and a source of pride for the citizens of the county. The three-story Classical Revival courthouse, with classical details, is composed of light brown brick with cream-colored terra cotta accents and sheltered by a hipped slate roof, partially obscured behind a parapet wall. Rectangular and cross-axial in plan, significant architectural features include a heavy entablature supported by a long colonnade of two-story Corinthian columns and intricate terra cotta details. Beautifully restored and rededicated in 2010, the Brooks County Courthouse retains a high degree of integrity.

### General Setting and Site Features

The Brooks County Courthouse and grounds occupy one full block of downtown Falfurrias. The block is encompassed by St. Mary's Street on the west, Calixto Mora Drive on the east, Miller Boulevard on the north, and Allen Street on the south. Centered on the site in a north/south direction, the courthouse sits on the western third of the property, leaving a large lawn area to the east. The primary elevation is the eastern one, though entry is possible from any of the rectangular building's four sides. The 2.4-acre site is nearly flat; however, the area is generally high ground in comparison to the surrounding terrain. A U.S.G.S. geodetic benchmark, located on the west entrance, sits at 124.22 feet above sea level and reflects the finished floor elevation of the courthouse.

Sidewalks completely encircle the courthouse, and also run along each street and to each of the building's four entrances. Parking spaces line the square on all sides except the western one along St. Mary's Street. Numerous large oak trees provide the site with shade. A small granite memorial marker (erected in 1998), dedicated to fallen sheriff deputy Ramiro Perez Jr., sits just off the courthouse's northeast corner. In the northwest corner of the property stand a flagpole, a granite memorial for Brooks County World War I and II veterans (erected in 1953), and another one for the county's Vietnam veterans (erected in 1970). Situated between these two memorials and the courthouse building itself is the chiller unit of the HVAC system. A red brick wall and wooden fencing (noncontributing structure; erected in 1975, modified in 2010) partially screens this mechanical equipment on all four sides. The western face of this screening bears the name of the Brooks County Courthouse. A small cast aluminum marker identifying the route of the Chisholm Trail stands along St. Mary's Street on the western side of the property. Considering scale, only the HVAC screening structure is substantial enough to include in the official count of site resources. (See Table 1 at end of Section 7.)

The Brooks County Courthouse Annex (noncontributing building), constructed in 1960, is situated on the far southeast corner of the property. The rectangular, one-story, white brick building is small in scale and has a flat roof. Located nearly 100 feet away from the historic courthouse, it does not overly detract from the view or the setting of the courthouse. The annex currently houses the Brooks County Agricultural Extension Agency. Though constructed during the period of significance, the annex is considered a noncontributing resource. It is a secondary resource without significant architectural distinction and, as best as can be determined, never housed key functions of county government. Should a landscape restoration program ever be considered, the annex could be removed without impact to the historic courthouse.

<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted from the Brooks County Courthouse Master Plan, prepared in 2000 by the Brooks County Commissioner's Court with assistance from Mark Whitmore, AIA, for the Texas Historical Commission's Courthouse Preservation Program. On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

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The public library, an elementary school, public school administrative offices, a bank, and other municipal and county offices surround the courthouse block. The primary historic business district lies one-block to the north, along Texas Highway 285 (Rice Street).

### Exterior

The courthouse features a rectangular, cross-axial plan that places the primary elevations on the terminus of the short axis. The first floor of the courthouse sits a half-story above ground level, on a partially exposed basement. All four elevations of the Brooks County Courthouse feature light brown brick laid in running bond. Below the cornice height, joints are precisely and deeply raked; above the cornice are tooled concave joints. The small difference in joint style gives the impression that the brick is a slightly different color above the cornice, especially when the sunlight casts a shadow. First- and second-story windows are set in two-story round arches. Third-story windows are small, horizontal, rectangular openings. Cream-colored terra cotta blocks span ventilation openings at the basement level. Additional terra cotta features include horizontal banding, windowsills, copings, columns, cornice, and parapet balustrade (on the east elevation above the central block). Despite the uniform appearance of each elevation, only the north end of the building has a functional basement and third floor. Ceilings in the central and south portions of the second story extend up to third-story height.

The exterior massing consists of five horizontal bands. The first band, or base, is composed of that portion exposed below the first floor level, including a portion of the basement level, entry stairs, and the west patio with low brick wall. The second band consists of the first and second floors as defined by the height of columns on north, south, and east elevations. The third level is a narrow band, which includes third floor windows and the east elevation's entablature identifying the building. The dentil band cornice comprises the fourth band. The parapet—the fifth band—recedes just slightly from the face of the building, partially concealing the hip slate roof.

### *East Elevation*

The traditional, cross-axial floor plan—found in many historic Texas courthouses—results in four building entrances/exits. The short arm of the cross runs east and west and provides the two primary entries. The east elevation, however, with its two-story columns and “Brooks County Courthouse” prominently displayed on the frieze, makes a clear statement that it is the intended primary entrance to the building. To reach it, one must walk nearly two-thirds the length of the lawn; the entrance is framed by two symmetrically placed live oak trees on either side of the walk. The concrete stairs are forty-nine feet wide and flanked by a low brick wall topped with terra cotta coping and decorative metal light standards. Pairs of square, fluted Corinthian columns frame the elevated loggia. Between these two pairs are four additional Corinthian columns—fluted, round, and evenly spaced. These four columns, topped with ornate volutes and acanthus leaves, rest upon head-high terra cotta plinths. An ornate entablature featuring the building's name in low relief caps off the colonnade. White and maroon ceramic tiles adorn the loggia floor in a fret pattern.

Three major bays comprise the east elevation. A wide central bay sits inset between the two end bays. First-floor fenestration of the east elevation's central bay consists of paired, glazed, wood frame doors flanked by two one-over-one windows. Centered above each of these openings on the second floor is a three-over-three, double-hung window topped with an arched fanlight. The central bay features no fenestration on the third floor. Each of the outside bays feature two square, fixed windows on the exposed basement level, tripartite double-hung windows on the first floor, and a wide terra

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Brooks County Courthouse  
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cotta spandrel that terminates in a fixed arched window on the second floor. The arch is framed by several concentric rings of brick, each projecting beyond the one below. This masonry arch springs from a square terra cotta block on either side and meets a decorative terra cotta keystone in the arch's center. Taken together, the appearance is of tall, double-story arched windows. Centered above these arched windows on these outside bays—above the cornice, but below the dentil band—are three-pane, rectangular ribbon windows.

### *North and South Elevations*

The north and south elevations (anchoring the long arm of the cross-axial plan) mirror each other and have low brick walls with a terra cotta starter course and coping on either side of the concrete entrance steps. Pairs of brick pilasters frame entry, effectively dividing the elevation into three bays. The plinths, bases, and ornate capitals of these pilasters are terra cotta. While reminiscent of the columns on the east elevation, the pilasters are noticeably more subdued, suggesting subordination to the grander east entry. The central bay houses the entry, and consists of a pair of double wood framed, glass doors, topped by a glass transom; a terra cotta spandrel leads to the second-story arched window ornamented with the same masonry and terra cotta accents as those on the east elevation. The third story features three-pane, rectangular ribbon windows. The fenestration on the remaining two bays is the same pattern repeated: a first- and second-story window joined to give the appearance of a two-story arched window, with terra cotta accents, and ribbon windows on the third story. The north and south elevations are identical but for two small differences. The first is that there are two small single-hung windows (one on the first floor and one on the second) nestled between the pilasters on the right-hand side of the entry of the south elevation.<sup>2</sup> These windows provided ventilation for the original restrooms. The other difference is that the leading edge of the accessible ramp, added to the courthouse in 1992, is visible on the north elevation. It winds around the northwest corner to discharge at the entry on the west elevation.

### *West Elevation*

The west elevation shares just enough characteristics with the other three to lend a sense of continuity, yet demonstrates just enough difference to illustrate the true eclectic nature of the architect's design. The fenestration is identical to that of the east (primary) elevation, down to the terra cotta details, and is inset from the outside bays. Like the other three entrances, the one on the west features a concrete stair flanked on each side by a low brick wall with terra cotta coping. The scale of the entry steps, similar in width to those on the north and south, defer prominence to the much wider east entry. The stairs rise to a large porch area, originally designated as a gallery, which is delineated by a short brick wall with terra cotta coping. This west entry porch is somewhat protected by a second story balcony above. A decorative metal railing edges the balcony. The most noticeable difference on the west elevation is not limited to the presence of a second story balcony, but also by its lack of columns and pilasters—very prominent features of the other elevations.

### *Other Exterior Features*

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<sup>2</sup> These windows do not appear on the elevation drawings in the continuation pages at the end of this document. The drawings, created for the 2000 Preservation Master Plan, were based upon 1950s drawings since original drawings were never found. The windows were an inadvertent omission. Project architects for the restoration confirm that the windows date to the original construction.

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The courthouse bears two corner markers. A local Masonic lodge laid one that bears the lodge name and number and the date October 29, 1914. The other identifies the architect Alfred Giles and builders Westlake & Mizzell, as well as the name of the county judge and four county commissioners at the time of the building's dedication in 1914. The Brooks County Courthouse is also a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, a designation it earned in 1977. The medallion is affixed to the west exterior wall near the entrance.

Aluminum windows replaced the original wood ones in the 1950s. However, the restoration completed in 2010 returned wood windows to the courthouse. Aside from the addition of the accessible ramp to the west elevation, the historic exterior of the Brooks County Courthouse is remarkably intact (and had been, even prior to the restoration), and it retains a high degree of integrity.

### **Interior**

As the courthouse aged, the interior fell victim to a variety of low-cost repairs and attempts at modernization. As a result, original floorings were covered, original lighting was replaced with strip fluorescents, an acoustic ceiling was suspended from the district courtroom ceiling and in other offices, a pass-through was constructed in the wall of the first-floor tax office, and offices were reconfigured on all levels. The 2010 restoration, however, returned much of the original finishes, fixtures, and configurations to the courthouse, while also providing much-needed upgrades. Though some historic fabric was lost due to the installation of new mechanical equipment, an elevator, and accessible restrooms, the changes were made sensitively and the interior retains a very good degree of historic integrity.

#### *First Floor*

Due to the rectangular, cross-axial design, all four of the Brooks County Courthouse entrances provide entry to the first floor. The two corridors meet in a nineteen-foot intersection; chamfer corners create an octagonal space. Corridor floors are finished in a combination of white and maroon 1" hexagonal and 1" square ceramic mosaic tiles laid in the same fret pattern used on the east and west entry loggias. High marble bases lead to painted plaster walls, oak chair rails, crown molding and painted plaster ceilings. Solid wood paneled and glazed doors separate offices from the corridors. Offices have original wood floors, painted plaster walls and ceilings, decorative crown molding, and oak chair rails. The first floor houses the district clerk office in three rooms in the northwest quadrant; the county clerk office in two rooms in the northeast quadrant; the county judge office in three rooms in the southwest quadrant; and the county courtroom and a conference room in the southeast quadrant. Original metal wall safes are located in two of the southwest offices (originally offices designated for the county treasurer and surveyor) and have been restored. A single unisex, accessible restroom is located near the south entry.

One can access the second floor in one of three ways: a quarter-turn "monumental" stair located in the northwest quadrant, an elevator located in the southeast quadrant (across the corridor from the monumental stair), or a secondary quarter-turn stair in the southwest quadrant. Featuring decorative steel stringers and balusters, and white and gray marble treads atop painted steel risers, the monumental stair extends to both the second and third floors. Painted newel posts support oak handrails. The elevator—introduced in the 2010 restoration—provides access to all levels of the courthouse. The elevator entry is set back from the corridor and foyer walls so as not to imply original wall construction. The secondary stair is narrower than the monumental one and extends only to the second floor. With the exception of an oak handrail, the stair is painted steel construction.

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### *Second Floor*

The cross-axial circulation pattern does not repeat on the second floor. The monumental stair and the elevator exit to the north foyer, while the secondary stair exits to the south foyer. Finishes in these foyers are identical to those of the first-floor corridors—ceramic floor tile, marble base, painted plaster walls, oak chair rail, crown molding, and painted plaster ceiling. From the north foyer, solid wood paneled and glazed doors open to the assistant district attorney's office (northwest corner) and the district attorney staff's office (northeast corner). Doors of the same style lead from the south foyer to the jury room (southwest corner) and the district judge's office (southeast corner).

The large district courtroom dominates the entire central section of the building. Paired solid wood paneled and glazed doors lead to the spectator's area of the courtroom. Fixed, theater-style seating<sup>3</sup> accommodates eighty-four persons in wood veneer seats on each side of the wide center aisle. A balcony, accessible only by the monumental stair, provides additional seating (see third floor description below). Spectators face south while seated. A low oak railing stretches across the entire width of the courtroom, separating the spectator's area from that of the courtroom officials; a double swinging gate allows passage between the two areas. Beyond the plaintiff and defendant tables stands the raised judge's bench. The judge faces north when seated. Witnesses sit to the west of the judge, while the stenographer sits to the east, on a raised platform slightly lower than that of the judge. Three colorful stained glass windows accentuate the grand pilaster-and-pediment oak paneling behind them. Jurors sit behind an oak railing, facing east, on a two-level raised platform.<sup>4</sup> Six high-back, swivel oak chairs sit atop painted metal bases on the first level; six more sit on the top riser. A solid wood panel door leads from the jury box into the jury room. An identical door on the opposite side of the judge's bench leads to the district judge's office. (Both of these rooms are also accessible from the south foyer.) Doors in the jury room (on the south) and the assistant district attorney's office (on the north) provide access to the west exterior balcony.

Finishes in the district courtroom include wood floors, painted plaster walls, oak chair rail, highly decorative crown molding, and painted plaster ceilings. Brass lighting fixtures with white glass shields (not original) supplement the natural lighting provided by the large, arched windows. The ceiling level of the courtroom is high, extending up through the third floor level. The south foyer, along with the jury room and judge's office share this same high ceiling height.

### *Third Floor*

Because of the ceiling height of the district courtroom and south offices on the second floor, the third story is limited to just a foyer and two rooms on the north side of the building. Though originally dedicated as office space, the northwest and northeast corners now house accessible public restrooms. The balcony is accessible from the foyer through the double wood and glazed doors. Approximately 12 feet deep, the balcony stretches the entire width of the courtroom below, and terminates in an oak railing. Installed for safety purposes during the 2010 restoration, a steel and glass barrier of the same

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<sup>3</sup> This seating was likely installed in 1951. Because there was no evidence as to the type of original seating, preservation specialist chose to keep and restore the 1951 seats during the 2010 restoration.

<sup>4</sup> The jury platform is not original to the space. It was recreated during the 2010 restoration based upon "ghost lines" revealed during removal of the existing platform. Additionally, the seats are not original. No evidence remains to indicate the style of the original seating. The current seats, installed in 2010, came from the Wharton County, Texas, courthouse and are typical of the period.

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height supplements this original railing. The need for additional offices led officials to enclose the balcony in the early 1990s, but it returned to its original configuration in 2010.

### *Basement*

Due to varying depths, functional basement space exists only in the northern third of the courthouse. The remainder of the basement level is essentially crawl space. The northwest corner of the basement houses mechanical equipment; the northwest corner house county records storage and the elevator machine room. A small break room lies between the two areas. The elevator provides access to the basement, as does a straight-run stair composed of exposed steel stringers and pipe handrails. Located beneath the monumental stair, the basement stair's lack of ornament reflects its utilitarian purpose. An original wall safe (unrestored) now houses HVAC ducting.

**Table 1: Inventory of Property Resources**

Resource	Contributing Status, Type
1. 1914 Courthouse	Contributing, Building
2. 1960 Annex	Noncontributing, Building
3. HVAC chiller screen/housing	Noncontributing, Structure
<i>Site Features Not Counted:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Memorial Marker, World War I and II veterans</li> <li>▪ Memorial Marker, Vietnam veterans</li> <li>▪ Memorial Marker, fallen sheriff deputy</li> <li>▪ Historical Marker, Chisholm Trail</li> </ul>	

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

Property:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>C</b>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>D</b>	has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Government, Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1914 – 1962

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1914

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT / BUILDER:** Giles, Alfred, Architect  
Westlake & Mizell, Builder/Contractor

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-11 through 8-15)

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheet 9-16)

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- 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 #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office                      Texas Historical Commission, Austin
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:                                      Brooks County Courthouse, Falfurrias, Texas

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1914 Brooks County Courthouse, designed by noted Texas architect Alfred Giles, is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A for Government and Criterion C for Architecture. It sits on a large and prominent square in the heart of Falfurrias. The three-story brick and terra cotta courthouse is a significant example of the Classical Revival style frequently utilized throughout Texas for civic buildings during the first two decades of the 20th century, and the only building of this style in Falfurrias. The most prominent building in this rural town, it has served continuously as the seat of county government since its construction.

### Brooks County, Texas<sup>5</sup>

Brooks County, 942 square miles large, lies in the deep South Texas Plains, less than 90 miles from the U.S.—Mexico border. Dominant vegetation includes live oaks, mesquite, brush, weeds, cacti, and grasses, and the terrain is relatively flat, with elevations reaching no higher than 400 feet above sea level. Formally organized in 1911, the county was carved from Webb and Starr counties. However, it achieved its current boundaries in 1913 when Jim Hogg County was formed from lands in western Brooks County. Falfurrias, located in northeastern Brooks County, is the county's largest town and county seat.

The Spanish explored the area as early as the sixteenth century, but it remained unsettled due to its remoteness and harsh terrain. The Spanish government (and later the Mexican government) began issuing land grants in the area as early as 1797, but because the region was so isolated, many families chose instead to locate along the Rio Grande. Most of these inhabitants fled even further south into Mexico during the nineteenth century period between the Texas Revolution and the end of the Mexican War, a chaotic and dangerous time in which Mexico and Texas both claimed the land between the Rio Grande and Nueces River. Once the Treaty of Hidalgo firmly set the southern international boundary at the Rio Grande and the hostilities slowly decreased, some families began to return. Frequent droughts and lack of transportation discouraged large-scale settlement, however, until after the Civil War.

Until that point in time, the region's social and economic character—based largely on ranching culture—was decidedly Hispanic and the original rancho families were able to hold on to much of their land and dominate local politics. This was true even as the number of Anglo settlers began to increase after the Civil War. For the most part, these newcomers married into prominent Hispanic families and adopted the existing culture, a situation that remained true until the last decade of the nineteenth century.

The circumstances began to change in the area with the arrival of reliable means of transportation and with it Anglo entrepreneurs. Edward C. Lasater, a successful rancher from the San Antonio area, began purchasing ranchland in south Texas in 1895. Within a decade, his holdings there measured 350,000 acres, including much of what would later become Brooks County. The expanding San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railway finally reached Lasater's ranch in 1904, at which

<sup>5</sup> This section is adapted from Alicia A. Garza, "Brooks County," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hcb16> (accessed September 15, 2011) and Dale Lasater, "Falfurrias, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hff01> (accessed September 15, 2011).

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point he founded the town of Falfurrias and subdivided a large portion of his surrounding ranchland for sale to farmers, a move that sparked rapid change to the character of the economy and paved the way for Anglo-dominated local politics.<sup>6</sup>

In these early years, Falfurrias was located in Starr County. The county seat, Rio Grande City, was 90 miles away—a journey of several days. This inconvenience, coupled with Lasater's feud with Starr County's political boss, Manuel Guerra, led Falfurrias-area residents to petition for the organization of a new county.<sup>7</sup> After an effort of several years and with the help of State Representative John A. Brooks, for whom the county is named, Lasater succeeded in organizing Brooks County in 1911. Falfurrias was designated the county seat, and John Brooks became the county judge—a position he held until 1939.<sup>8</sup>

Almost immediately upon its organization, Brooks County experienced upheaval. A group of ranchers in Precinct 4 in the western part of the county—some of Lasater's greatest political rivals—lobbied to create a separate county. The legislature granted the petition in 1913, creating Jim Hogg County, and leaving Brooks County with its present dimensions.

By 1920 the county's population was 4,560. The number doubled by 1950, but then began a slow and steady decline. The 2010 census counted 7,223 residents in Brooks County. The county's economy has always centered on agriculture. Cattle raising remains the dominant industry, though dairying played a significant role eventually, and truck farming began to gain prominence in the 1960s. The county is one of the leading watermelon producers in the state.

### Building the Seat of County Government

Lasater donated to the county the land upon which the courthouse now sits. Officials of the newly formed county utilized two buildings temporarily until a courthouse could be built. They conducted county business in Garcia Hall from March to September of 1911, and then moved to the Donahue Building, a two-story wooden building that sat on the 100 block of today's North Railroad Street, adjacent to the San Antonio and Aransas Pass Railroad. The Donahue Building served as the temporary courthouse until the community dedicated the current courthouse in November 1914.<sup>9</sup> Neither of these two temporary structures still stands.

Brooks County held a bond election for the courthouse and new roads in November 1912. The bonds passed by a vote of 344 to 9. An article in the December 26, 1912, issue of the *Falfurrias Facts* revealed that the county commissioners chose San Antonio architect Atlee B. Ayres to design the courthouse. Ayres was an up and coming young architect who had designed numerous influential residences in San Antonio. However, because the voters in Precinct 4 were actively lobbying for separation from Brooks County at the time, the Attorney General did not approve the bond issue. Therefore, after its reorganization, Brooks County voted again on the bond issue in February 1914, and again it passed.

<sup>6</sup> Dale Lasater, *Falfurrias: Ed C. Lasater and the Development of South Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985), 70-93.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-119.

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Brooks' son, John Morgan Brooks, was subsequently elected to the office of county judge and held the position until 1971.

<sup>9</sup> Brooks County Historical Commission, *Application for Recorded Texas Historical Marker for the Brooks County Courthouse* (1977). On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

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Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

At their March 1914 meeting, county commissioners announced they had chosen Alfred Giles as the architect for the new courthouse. County commissioner's court meeting minutes do not reveal why the men chose Giles to replace Ayres. However, the reason might be that Ayres' schedule no longer aligned with the new timeline for the project. By the time the second bond election passed, he had three other active courthouse projects in the region—Cameron County (1912), Jim Wells County (1912), and Kleberg County (1914). In addition, Ayres and his family left for a six-month tour around the world in January of 1914, a trip that he likely planned many months in advance.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, for reasons left unstated, Brooks County officials chose noted Texas architect Alfred Giles to design the courthouse for their newly formed county. Giles was familiar with the community, as he had just completed Falfurrias' Central Ward School (1911; demolished in the early 1980s) one block south of the courthouse square.<sup>11</sup>

Although the date on the two cornerstones reads October 29, 1914, inclement weather delayed the dedication ceremony until November 5. It was a community-wide event; the schools even closed for the day so that students could participate. A Kingsville band provided music, and the county's first tax assessor Ed Rachal served as Master of Ceremonies. Rachal also led the traditional ceremony for laying the Masonic cornerstone. The county cornerstone contains copies of the local student publication, *El Burro*, and a selection of U.S. and Mexican coins. A Dr. Sykes of Corpus Christi addressed the crowd before adjourning for the celebratory dinner.<sup>12</sup>

### Alfred Giles, Architect

Alfred Giles was born in London, England on May 23, 1853, and trained there as an architect. He immigrated to the United States in 1873. Still trying to regain his vigor after an episode of rheumatic fever suffered as a child, Giles eventually chose to settle in San Antonio, believing that the hot dry climate would be good for his health.<sup>13</sup>

Though Giles quickly established his own practice, he worked for contractor John H. Kampmann during his first few years in San Antonio, which allowed him to learn about local building materials. He launched his private practice in 1876 and within a decade became San Antonio's leading architect, designing numerous residential, commercial, and public buildings.<sup>14</sup> His rise to prominence coincided with the return of wealth to Texas after Reconstruction's end. This was a prosperous era in central and south Texas as the ranching industry saw profits soar. In time, this brought the railroad, which in turn brought even grander prosperity to the region, as well as greater stylistic influence and a wider range of building materials.<sup>15</sup>

Giles' nineteenth century work was very much a product of the Victorian era, "characterized by rapid changes of style as a consequence of aesthetic and philosophical controversy, technological innovations, and a growing awareness of the art of earlier periods and distant places."<sup>16</sup> However, he never seemed to specialize in a particular building style or adopt a

<sup>10</sup> Robert James Coote, *The Eclectic Odyssey of Atlee B. Ayres, Architect* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 19-21.

<sup>11</sup> Brooks County Survey Files, 1976 and 2003. On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

<sup>12</sup> *Brooks County Courthouse Master Plan*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Carolyn Hollers George, *Alfred Giles: An English Architect in Texas and Mexico* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1972), 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

signature style. Instead, his work exhibits a wide variety of styles based on past forms, and his personal means of expression almost always overcame trendy novelty. His designs demonstrate simplicity and, at least by Victorian standards, a reserved use of ornament. His success was predicated on his remarkable ability to adapt traditional forms rather than innovatively departing from them.<sup>17</sup>

A slower economy in Texas meant fewer local commissions for Giles at the turn of the century, and he turned his attention to the stronger economy in Mexico. He opened an office in Monterrey in 1900, but continued to work on both sides of the border until the Mexican Revolution forced him to return to Texas in 1910. Because his Mexican clients preferred a grander and formal style, Giles relied heavily on elements of Beaux-Arts Classicism.<sup>18</sup> In general, his twentieth century work in Texas also reflects this Beaux-Arts influence, though in a more simplified expression. The Brooks County Courthouse is an example of Giles' eclectic mix of styles. The combination of paired round columns with paired square pilasters, each with ornate Corinthian capitals, embodies Beaux-Arts influence in its formality and symmetry. That formality is tempered, however, by the informality of the villa-inspired rear elevation with its intricate metalwork on the exterior balcony and relative lack of Classical ornamentation.

In total, Giles designed 24 buildings in northern Mexico and 135 in Texas, including a dozen county courthouses (see Table 2, below).<sup>19</sup> He completed most of these courthouses in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, before he concentrated his work in Mexico. These earlier courthouses are firmly rooted in late-Victorian traditions, specifically Italianate and Second Empire modes of design, which were popular forms for courthouses throughout Texas at the time. However, fifteen years separate his final nineteenth century county courthouse and his first of the twentieth century, and the 1909 Webb County Courthouse's (NR, 1981) Renaissance Revival style with Beaux-Arts detailing marks a stylistic change from his earlier courthouses. His final two courthouses—Brooks County (1914) and Live Oak County (1919), both in the Classical Revival style—demonstrate Giles' commitment to adapting to revivalist modes of design that were popular at the time. Alfred Giles died in 1920.

## The Community and Its Courthouse

Throughout Texas, county courthouses are among the most impressive buildings in their communities. They generally sit prominently on public squares, symbolizing the principals of self-government. The Brooks County Courthouse is no different. It is easily the most architecturally significant building in Falfurrias, and in a community that has lost most of its founding-era historic resources to demolition and radical alterations, its presence is perhaps even more meaningful.<sup>20</sup>

Like those in every other county, Brooks County citizens depend on this building to provide for essential public business functions, the delivery of justice, and proper care of vital public records. However, in smaller, rural communities such as Falfurrias, courthouses often serve as more than just the official governmental capacity, playing host to a variety of local activities. In Brooks County, the courthouse served as a dancehall for local celebrations; as a community meeting place for the school board, city council, the federal Farm Board, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and others; as

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 20-21, 24.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Carolyn Hollers George, *The Architectural Legacy of Alfred Giles: Selected Restorations*, (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2006), 19.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix B in George's *The Architectural Legacy of Alfred Giles: Selected Restorations*.

<sup>20</sup> See Brooks County Survey Files, 1976 and 2003. On file at the Texas Historical Commission.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 15

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

the platform for political debates and elections; as well as a work center for groups such as the home demonstration club and local chapters of the American Red Cross, and the American Cancer Society.<sup>21</sup> The courthouse grounds even hosted Audie Murphy in 1961 when he was the guest of honor at Pioneer Days, a community-wide celebration of the county's fiftieth anniversary.<sup>22</sup> The county's decision to support restoration efforts demonstrates its commitment recognize and preserve the significant role this building played in the county's past and that it will continue to play in the county's future.

### Conclusion

The Brooks County Courthouse was built during the Golden Age of courthouse construction in Texas. Stretching from the 1880s to the 1920s, this golden age coincided with a period of tremendous economic and cultural development in the state. The increase in wealth led to an increase in new public buildings, buildings which often served a symbolic function in addition to the pragmatic functions of business. Courthouses embody the stability and permanence of a democratic government, and the Classical Revival style in particular represents the ideals of democracy in a rapidly growing state.<sup>23</sup>

For serving Brooks County citizens as the seat of county government continuously since 1914, and as a significant example of Classical Revival architecture designed by a master, the Brooks County Courthouse is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Government and Criterion C for Architecture, both at the local level of significance.

**Table 2: Alfred Giles' Texas County Courthouses**

County	Year	Style	2012 Status	NR Listing Status
Gillespie	1882	Italianate	Used as library	1971, individually
Wilson	1884	Italianate	Active	1978, individually
Llano	1885	Italianate	Destroyed by fire	None
Kerr	1886	Italianate	Destroyed by fire	None
Presidio	1886	Second Empire	Active	1977, individually
El Paso	1888	Second Empire	Demolished	None
Goliad*	1894	Second Empire	Active	1976, as part of district
Caldwell*	1894	Second Empire	Active	1978, as part of district
Kendall (addition only)	1909	Italianate	Active	1980, individually
Webb	1909	Renaissance Revival	Active	1981, individually
Brooks	1914	Classical Revival	Active	None (nominated, 2012)
Live Oak	1919	Classical Revival	Active	None

\*These two courthouses are identical, and many attribute the design to Giles. However, there is some evidence to suggest that they may be the work of Henri E. M. Guidon, who at one time worked for Giles' firm. See Mary Carolyn Hollers George's texts on Giles.

<sup>21</sup> As recorded in oral history interviews cited in the 1977 *Application for Recorded Texas Historical Marker*.

<sup>22</sup> *Brooks County Courthouse Master Plan*, 12.

<sup>23</sup> Willard B. Robinson, *The People's Architecture: Texas Courthouses, Jails, and Municipal Buildings* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983), 195-260. See also Michael C. Andrews, *Historic Texas Courthouses* (Houston: Bright Sky Press, 2006).

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 16

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

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Lasater, Dale. *Falfurrias: Ed C. Lasater and the Development of South Texas*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985.

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Robinson, Willard B. *The People's Architecture: Texas Courthouses, Jails, and Municipal Buildings*. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: 2.4 acres

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	14	584758	3011700

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: City block bounded by St. Mary's Street, Calixto Mora Drive, Miller Boulevard, and Allen Street.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: Nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE: Carlyn Hammons, based on the Master Plan prepared by Brooks County Commissioners and Mark Whitmore, AIA, et al

ORGANIZATION: Texas Historical Commission

DATE: September 30, 2011

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 12276

TELEPHONE: 512.463.5853

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78711

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-17 through Map-19)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-28 through Photo-29)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-20 through Figure-27)

**PROPERTY OWNER**

NAME: Brooks County, Texas (Raul Ramirez, County Judge)

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 515

TELEPHONE: 361.325.5604

CITY OR TOWN: Falfurrias

STATE: Texas

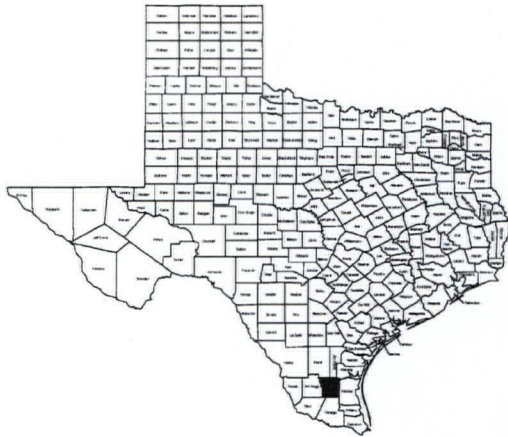
ZIP CODE: 78355

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 17

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas



**Map 1:** Brooks County, shaded, is located in South Texas.

**Map 2:** Falfurrias is located in northeast Brooks County.



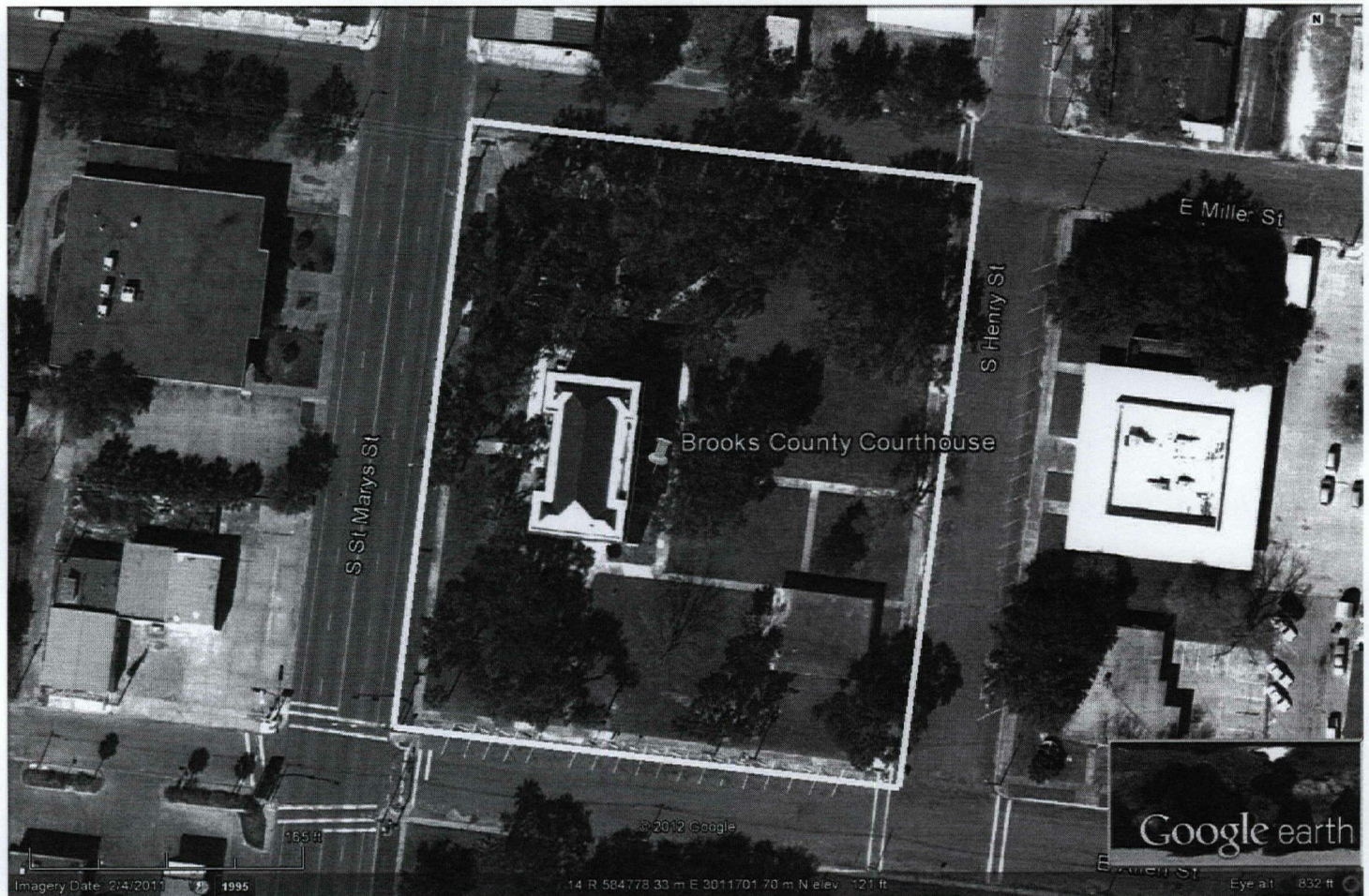
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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 18

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

**Map 3:** Brooks County Courthouse grounds encompass a full city block. Top edge of image is north.







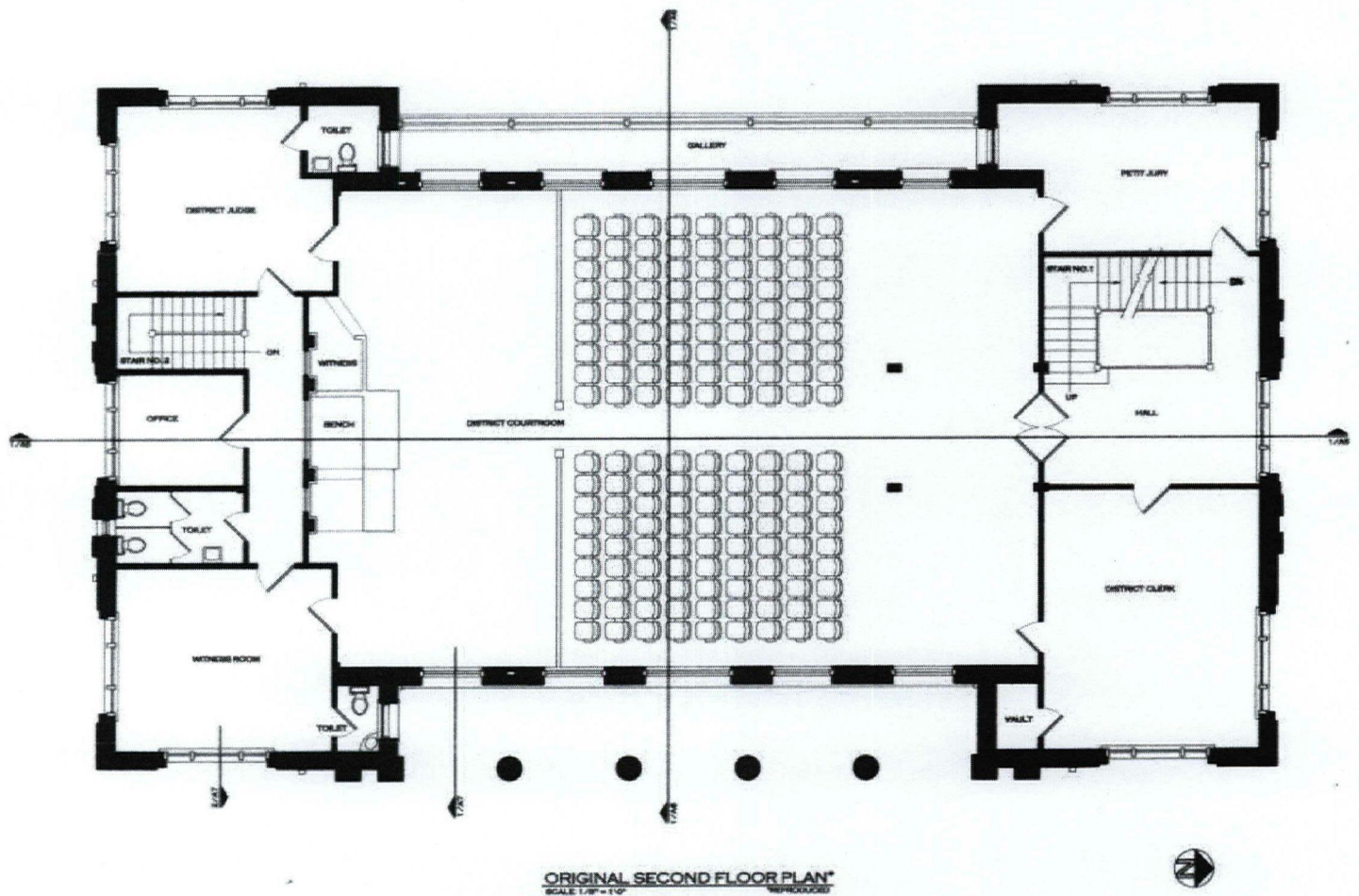
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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 21

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

Figure 2: Second floor plan, as reproduced in the Brooks County Courthouse Preservation Master Plan.



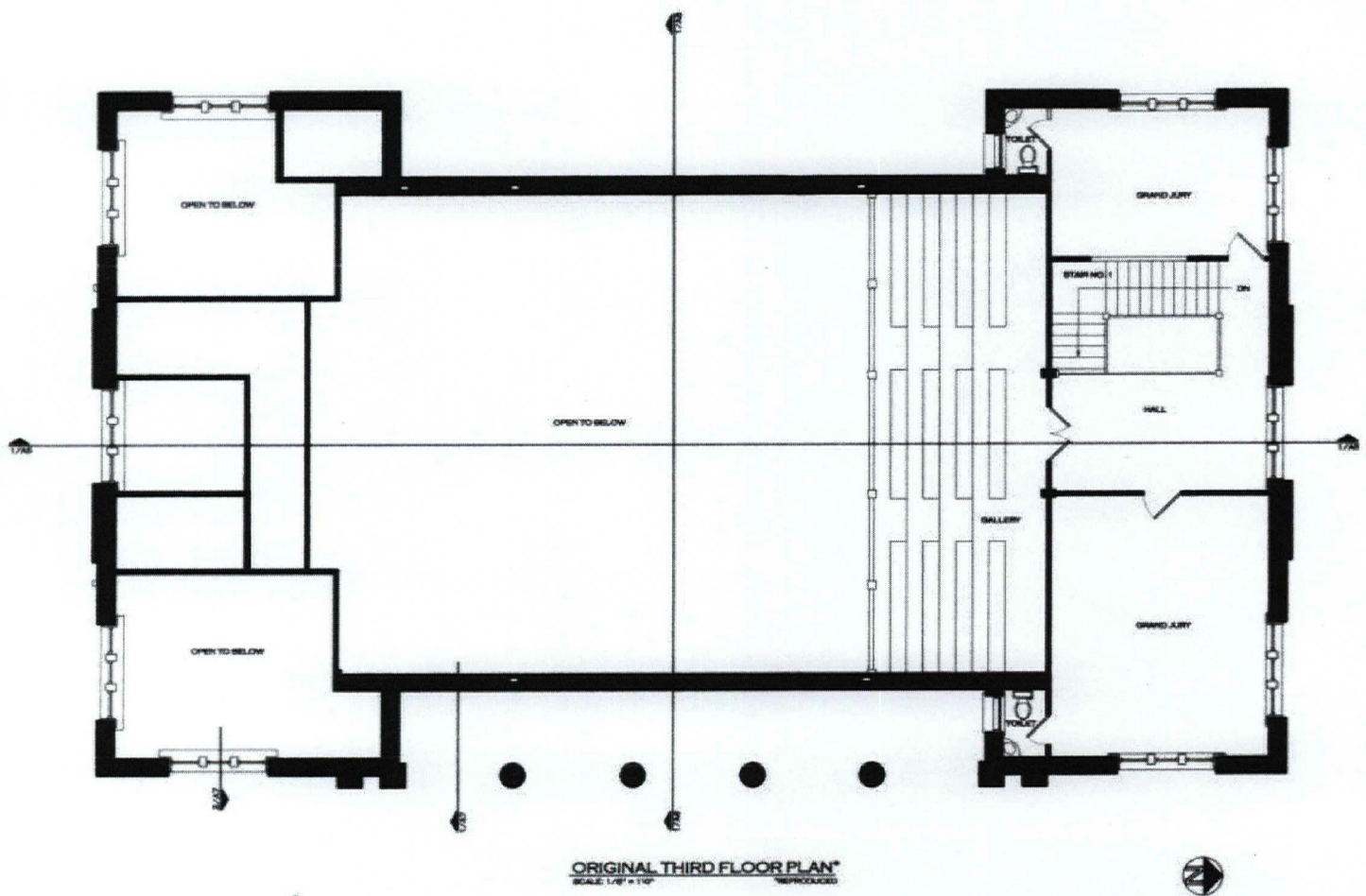
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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 22

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

Figure 3: Third floor plan, as reproduced in the Brooks County Courthouse Preservation Master Plan.



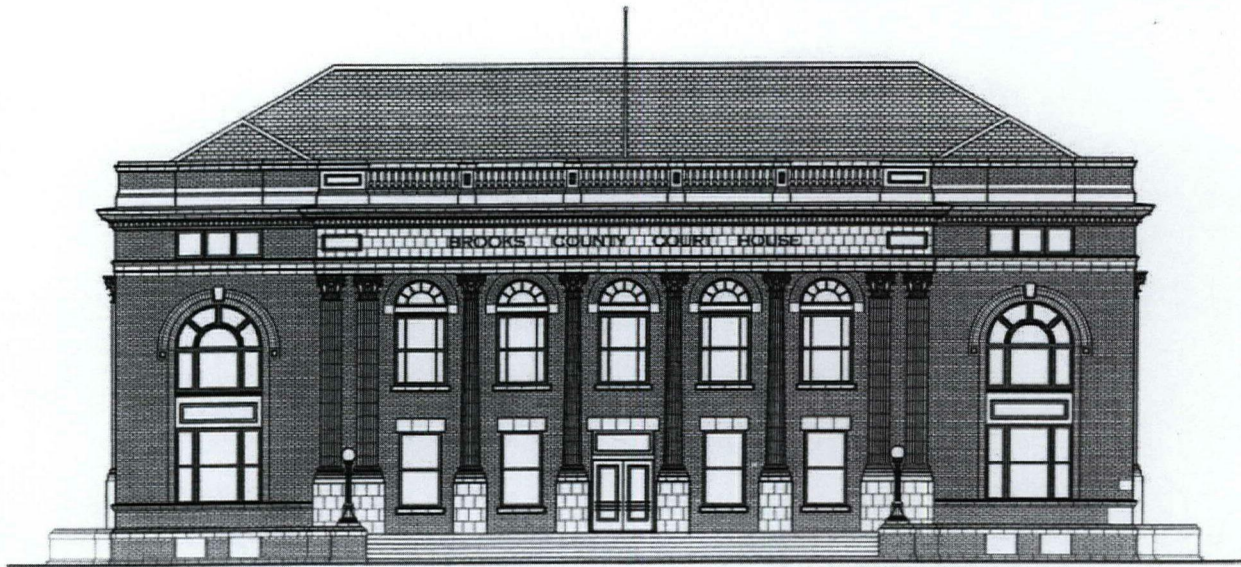
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

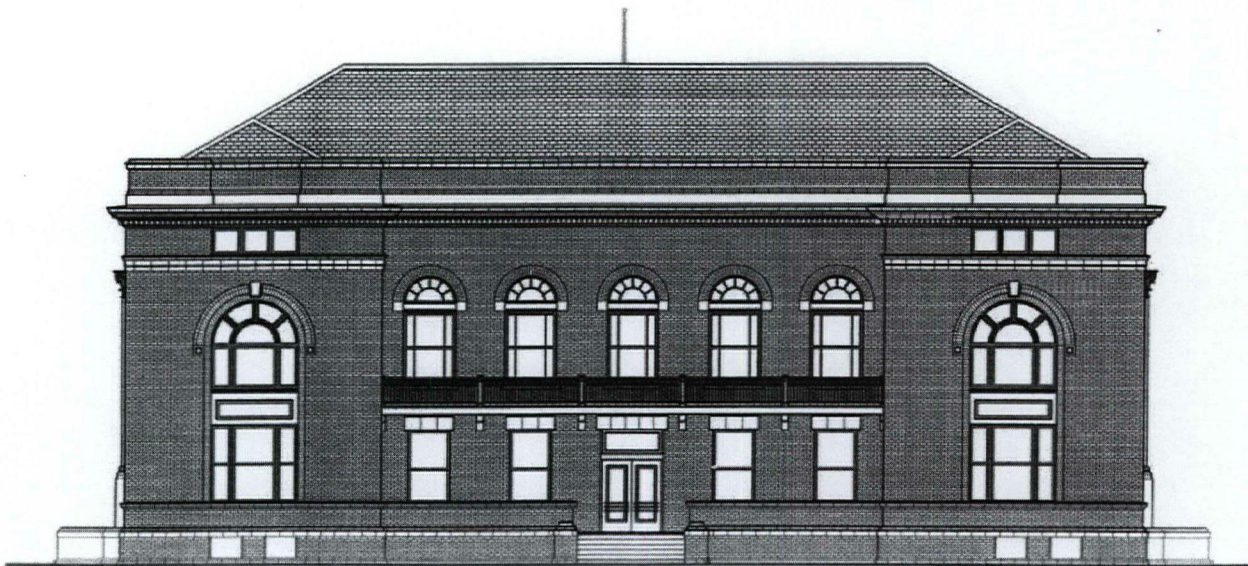
Section FIGURE Page 23

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

Figures 4 and 5: East and West elevations, as reproduced in the Brooks County Courthouse Preservation Master Plan.



ORIGINAL EAST ELEVATION  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



ORIGINAL WEST ELEVATION  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

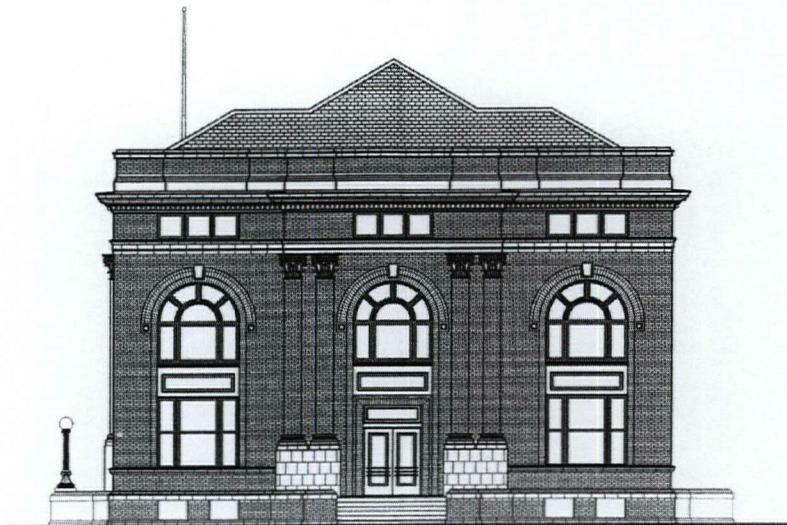
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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

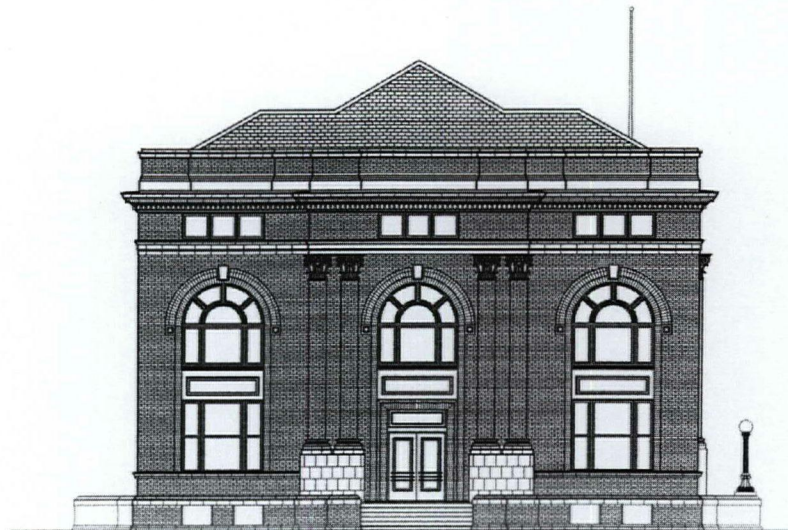
Section FIGURE Page 24

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

**Figures 6 and 7:** North and South elevations, as reproduced in the Brooks County Courthouse Preservation Master Plan. Note: The south elevation drawing inadvertently omitted the small windows between the pilasters to the right of the door. Restoration project architects confirm that the windows were part of the original construction.



ORIGINAL NORTH ELEVATION  
SCALE 1/4"=1'-0"



ORIGINAL SOUTH ELEVATION  
SCALE 1/4"=1'-0"

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 25

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

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**Figure 8:** Undated historic photograph. Camera is facing northeast. From the Brooks County Courthouse RTHL file.



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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 26

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

**Figure 9:** Undated historic photograph. Camera is facing northwest. From the Brooks County Courthouse RTHL file.



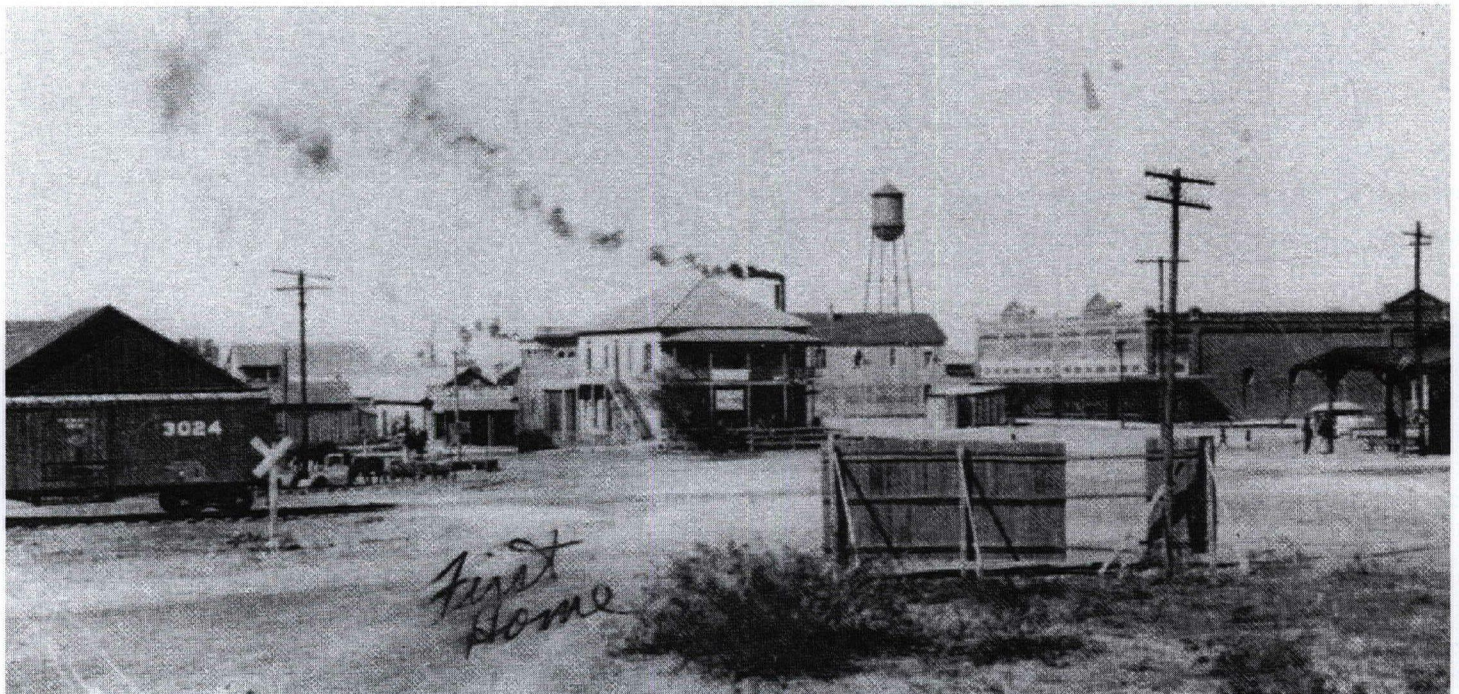
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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 27

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

**Figure 10:** Falfurrias in 1910, looking west across the railroad tracks. The two-story structure in the center is the Donahoe Building, which served as the temporary courthouse from September 1911 until the completion of the current courthouse in 1914. Image taken from Dale Lasater's *Falfurrias: Ed C. Lasater and the Development of South Texas*.



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 28

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

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## PHOTOGRAPH LOG

All photographs are credited as follows:

Name of Property:	Brooks County Courthouse
City:	Falfurrias
County:	Brooks County
State:	Texas
Photographer:	Gregory Smith
Date:	June 24, 2011
Location of digital files:	Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Printed on HP Premium Plus Photo Paper with HP Vivera ink

**Photo 1** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0001.tif)  
East elevation  
Camera facing: West

**Photo 2** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0002.tif)  
South (left) and East (right) elevations  
Camera facing: Northwest

**Photo 3** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0003.tif)  
South (right) and West (left) elevations  
Camera facing: Northeast

**Photo 4** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0004.tif)  
West elevation  
Camera facing: East

**Photo 5** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0005.tif)  
North (left) and West (right) elevations  
Camera facing: Southeast

**Photo 6** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0006.tif)  
Brooks County Courthouse Annex, East elevation  
Camera facing: West

**Photo 7** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0007.tif)  
North elevation detail  
Camera facing: South

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section PHOTO Page 29

Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Texas

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**Photo 8** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0008.tif)

East elevation, detail

Camera facing: Northwest

**Photo 9** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0009.tif)

First floor interior hallway

Camera facing: North

**Photo 10** (TX\_Brooks County\_Brooks County Courthouse\_0010.tif)

Second floor district courtroom

Camera facing: Southeast

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Brooks County Courthouse

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Brooks

DATE RECEIVED: 2/24/12      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/19/12  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/03/12      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/11/12  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000193

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    4-10-12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.





Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, TX  
Photo 1 of 10





Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, TX  
Photo 2 of 10





Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, TX  
Photo 3 of 10





Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, TX  
Photo 4 of 10





Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, TX  
Photo 5 of 10



BROOKS  
COUNTY  
COURT  
HOUSE  
ANNEX





Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, TX  
Photo 6 of 10



HP Premium Plus

HP Premium Plus

HP Premium Plus



HP Premium Plus

HP Premium Plus

HP Premium Plus



Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County,  
Photo 7 of 10 TX





BROOKS COUNTY COURT HOUSE



Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County,  
Photo 8 of 10 TX

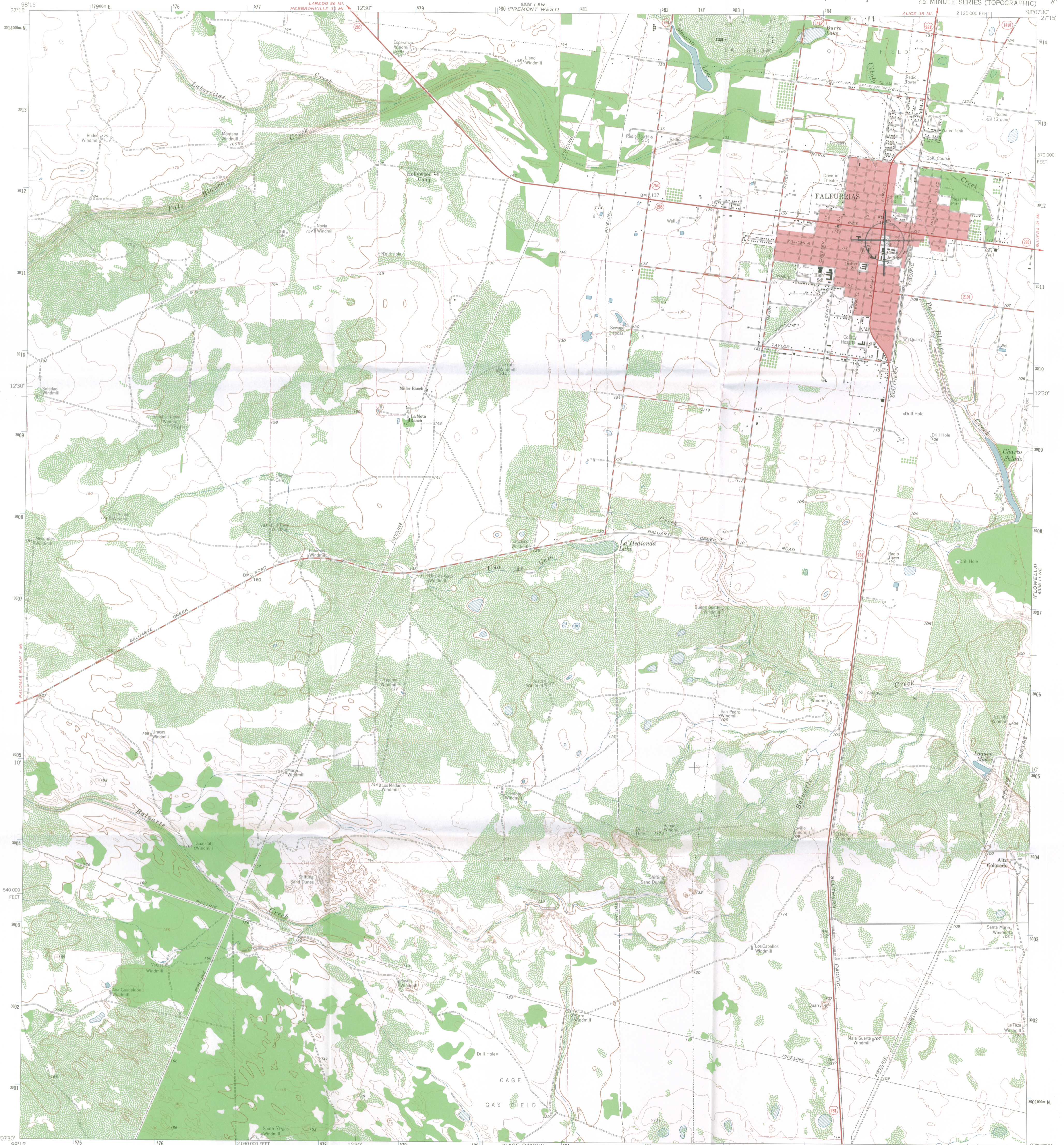


Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, Tx  
Photo 9 of 10





Brooks County Courthouse  
Falfurrias, Brooks County, TX  
Photo 10 of 10

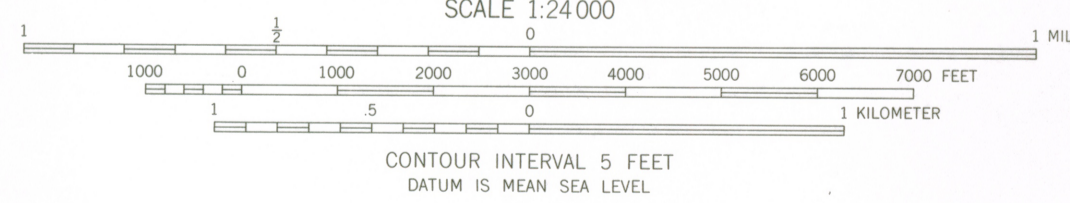
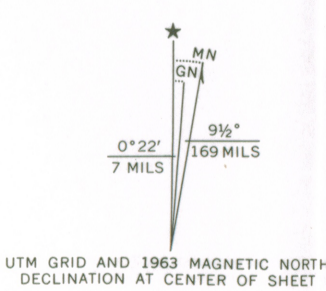


Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1961 and planetable surveys 1963

Polyconic projection, 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, south zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

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

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER 25, COLORADO OR WASHINGTON 25, D.C.  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

FALFURRIAS, TEX.  
N2707 5-W9807 5/7 5

1963

AMS 6338 11 NW-SERIES V882

2798-113

**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*



TO: Edson Beall  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)  
Washington , DC 20005

FROM: Carlyn Hammons  
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Brooks County Courthouse, Brooks County, Texas

DATE: February 21, 2012

- The following materials regarding the Brooks County Courthouse are submitted:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form
<input type="checkbox"/>	Resubmitted nomination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Property Documentation form
<input type="checkbox"/>	_ Resubmitted form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs printed from digital files
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gold CD with TIFF photograph files
<input type="checkbox"/>	Photographs printed from negatives
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS map
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence – Notification of federal property owner (USPS)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review (cover letter from SHPO attached)
- The enclosed owner objections (do ) (do not ) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

