

PH0691682

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 5 1977
DATE ENTERED AUG 18 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM



SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Erath County Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Stephenville

VICINITY OF

17

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Texas

048

Erath

143

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

XPUBLIC

XOCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

XBUILDING(S)

__PRIVATE

__UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

__YES: RESTRICTED

XGOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

XYES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

County of Erath

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Stephenville

VICINITY OF

Texas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Office of the County Clerk, Erath County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Public Square

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Stephenville

Texas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Inventory

DATE

July, 1970

__FEDERAL XSTATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Texas Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Austin

STATE

Texas

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Erath County Courthouse, a vividly polychromatic structure of native white limestone and red Pecos sandstone, is three stories in height and 80 feet by 80 feet in plan dimensions. It has an extreme height of 95 feet.

The concept of the floor plan is similar to many Texas courthouses, although the perimeter, with its rhythm of recessed planes and projecting pavilions appears only in the work of J. Riely Gordon. On the first level, intersecting corridors divide the floor into four quadrants containing offices for the treasurer, county clerk, tax assessor, and county judge. Stairways at the east and west vestibules lead to the second story containing district courtroom and offices. On the third level are additional offices.

The supporting walls for the tower extend through the center of the building, necessitating some departure from the traditional Texas courthouse plan where the courtroom is usually symmetrically positioned. In the Erath temple the courtroom is located on the south side of the second floor corridor which is offset to pass around the tower walls on three sides. On the ground level, small openings allow corridor circulation to pass through the supporting tower walls.

The massing of the courthouse emphasizes appropriate components. Each facade consists of a five-part composition dominated by the central tower which was the focal point of the surrounding area. Rather than creating corner and entrance pavilions as was ordinarily done in Texas courthouse design, Gordon brought the two intermediate bays forward and crowned them with triangular pediments--a composition of masses that he also would later employ on the courthouses for Victoria County and Fayette County. The east and west entrances which open into the stair vestibule, along with the north entrance, are accented by the flanking pavilions and a modest balustrade, while the south entrance is somewhat subdued by the second-story wall which is flush with the face of the pavilions. The variation in the second story treatment on the south was necessitated by the large space required for the district courtroom. On the north side only, Syrian columns support an entrance arch, thus providing an additional variation.

The central tower with its steeply hipped roof dominates this composition. A Howard clock with four faces was installed several years after the construction was completed by in 1950, the mechanism was replaced by an electric clock.

Other subtle details contribute further to the richness of the exterior. Below the water table is a course of red sandstone; this material also was used for the water table and stringcourses the latter of which form the window sills. On the second and third stories, the center piers of the openings have rudimentary capitals. Finally, the com-

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CONTINUATION SHEET Erath County ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

position of the main mass of the building is surmounted by a cornice with red sandstone consoles; the pavilion gables also are capped with red sandstone. On the north, east and west the gables are decorated with geometrical features with contrasting colors.

The interior finishes were also noteworthy. While plaster walls were used throughout, the corridor floors were covered with marble tiles of contrasting pink and grey colors laid in checkerboard patterns. The stairs were built with prefabricated iron components.

In 1950, the courthouse was remodeled. Aluminum windows were installed, the interior was painted, exterior walls were sandblasted and a new roof of rigid asbestos was added. Otherwise the historic architectural fabric remains relatively unchanged marking the structure as being of historic and architectural significance to the county.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1891-1892

BUILDER/ARCHITECT J. Riely Gordon & D.E. Laub

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

An outstanding example of Romanesque Revival design, the structure possesses considerable architectural significance. A picturesque composition, it is among the many fine courthouses designed by J. Riely Gordon and represents the first phase in a three-step evolution of the traditional courthouse from a plan type based on a square with crossing corridors, to a plan type with a central open court, and finally to a plan in cruciform configuration with a central air shaft and masonry tower replacing the court of the second phase. As such, it has regional architectural significance and should be included among a group of county courthouses in Texas that represents Gordon's creative approach to the evolution of a unique courthouse plan.

Earth County was settled in the 1850's by John M. and William F. Stephen who established Stephenville which with the organization of the county in 1856 became the county seat.

The first courthouse in Erath County was a frame building built at the time the county was organized. This structure burned in 1866, destroying all county records. Following the fire, the Commissioners' Court leased a commercial building until the second courthouse was completed in 1867. A two story structure of rock, it cost \$11,876.00 and served the county for 24 years.

On June 14, 1891, the Fort Worth Daily Gazette reported that the Erath County Commissioners' Court was prepared to receive bids for the construction of a new courthouse. In the meantime, however, action on the matter was delayed pending the outcome of an election on the question of moving the county seat to Dublin. When the vote determined that the county seat would remain in Stephenville the Commissioners awarded the contract for construction of the county seat to architects J. Riely Gordon and D.E. Laub and contractor S.A. Tomlinson of Fort Worth. The contract cost was set at \$59,173.00. Tomlinson was to raze the old courthouse at a cost of \$350.00 making the total cost of the project \$58,823.00.

On December 3, 1891, the cornerstone was laid with full Masonic ritual by the Stephenville Lodge Number 267. Inside the hollow cornerstone, "hewn out of our white limestone, with appropriate carvings and inscription"-were local newspapers, a pint of whiskey and several pieces of jewelry.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Erath County ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The building was received by the county in 1892 and continues to serve its original function.

Property Erath County Courthouse

Erath

State Texas

Working Number 4.5.77.547

77001441

TECHNICAL

Photos 3

Maps 1

CONTROL

OK pl
4.6.77

HISTORIAN

accept

B. Brown

5/16/77

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Accept
M. Hurley
5-12-77

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____

Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

accept
Cole
6-21-77

BRANCH CHIEF

Hung
8-16-77

KEEPER

Wing
8/18/77

National Register Write-up _____

Send-back _____

Entered AUG 18 1977

Federal Register Entry 9.4.77

Re-submit _____

INT:2106-74



RCA RODEO
THURS FRI SAT
8 THURS 5PM

NO
RIGHT
TURN

STYRE FOR MEN

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Erath County Courthouse
Stephenville, Texas

Texas Historical Commission, July 1970
Texas Historical Commission

Northwest oblique

Photo #1 of 3

APR 5 1977

AUG 18 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Erath County Courthouse
Stephenville, Texas

Texas Historical Commission, July 1970
Texas Historical Commission

North elevation

Photo #2 *f3* APR 5 1977

AUG 18 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Erath County Courthouse
Stephenville, Texas

Texas Historical Commission, July 1970
Texas Historical Commission

West detail

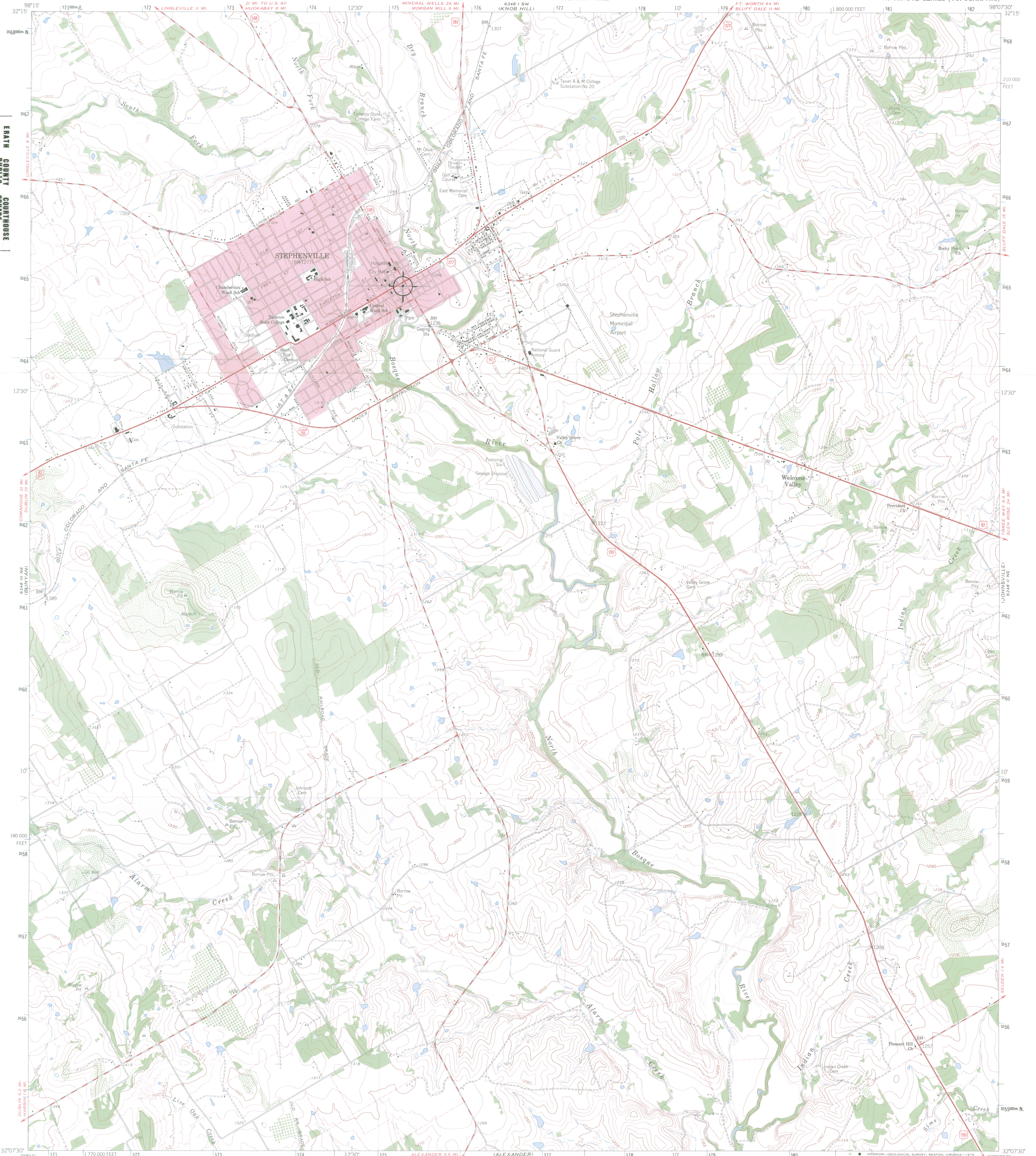
Photo #3 of 3

APR 5 1977

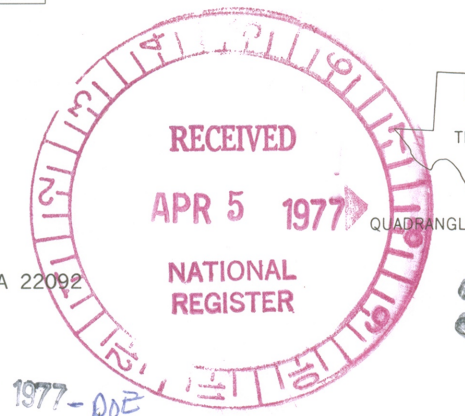
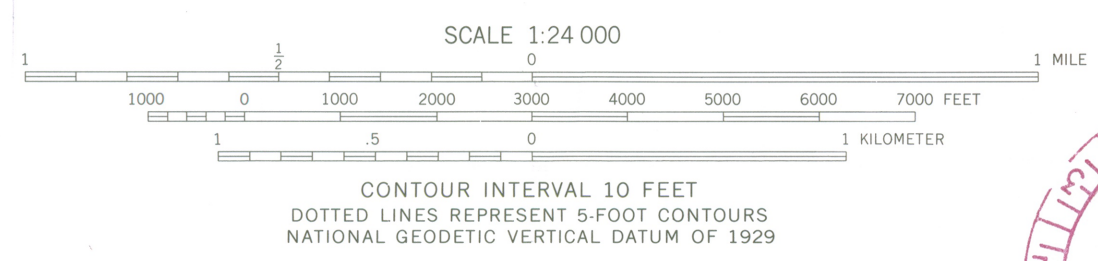
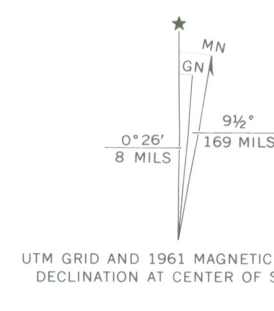
AUG 18 1977

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ERATH COUNTY COURTHOUSE
PUBLIC SQUARE
STEPHENVILLE TEXAS
UTM REFERENCES
14 575200 3564910



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1961. Field checked 1961
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, north central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



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, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

3298-113
3298-113

STEPHENVILLE, TEX.
N3207 5 - W9807 5, 7, 5
1961
AMS 6348 II NW - SERIES V882

AUG 12 1977 - DPE

51

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE TEXAS

Date Entered AUG 18 1977

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Coryell County Courthouse	Gatesville Coryell County
Erath County Courthouse	Stephenville Erath County
Old Victoria County Courthouse	Victoria Victoria County
Point Bolivar Lighthouse	Port Bolivar vicinity Galveston County
Val Verde County Courthouse and Jail	Del Rio Val Verde County
Galveston Seawall	Galveston Galveston County
Oliphant House	Milam vicinity Sabine County

Also Notified

Hon. John G. Tower
Hon. Lloyd Bentsen
Hon. W. R. Poaga
Hon. Omar Burleson
Hon. John Young
Hon. Jack Brooks
Hon. Robert C. Krueger
Hon. Charles Wilson

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

Regional Director, Southwest Region

880 / 8/18/77

Mott

NATIONAL REGISTER DATA SHEET

① NAME as it appears on federal register: Erath County Courthouse
 ② OTHER NAMES:
 ③ date of entry: AUG 18 1977
 ④ county code: 17

⑤ LOCATION street & number: Public Square
 city / town: Stephenville
 vicinity of: TX
 state: Erath
 county: Erath
 ⑥ NPS REGION: SW

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

⑨ EXISTING SURVEYS HABS HAER NHL
 ⑩ FUNDED? YES NO
 ⑪ CONGRESS. DISTRICT: 17th
 ⑫ SOURCE of NOMINATION: STATE FEDERAL
 if state who prepared form?

⑬ WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES, NAME: NO
 ⑭ WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? YES, NAME: NO
 ⑮ ACREAGE: LOCAL PRIVATE ORGANIZATION

⑯ CONDITION deteriorated altered original site
 excellent ruins unaltered moved
 good unexposed reconstructed unknown
 fair unexcavated excavated
 ⑰ features: SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-1
 INTERIOR NOT INTACT-0
 UNKNOWN-4
 NOT APPLICABLE-7
 SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-2
 EXTERIOR NOT INTACT-0
 UNKNOWN-5
 NOT APPLICABLE-8
 SUBSTANTIALLY INTACT-3
 ENVIRON NOT INTACT-0
 UNKNOWN-6
 NOT APPLICABLE-9

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

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

㉓ functions
 WHEN HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT: county courthouse
 CURRENTLY: same
 ㉔ dates of initial construction: 1891-2
 major alterations: 1950-remodeled
 historic events:
 ㉕ ETHNIC GROUP ASSOCIATION

㉖ architectural style(s): Richardsonian Romanesque elements
 ㉗ architect: J. Raily Gordon + D.E. Leub
 ㉘ master builder:
 ㉙ engineer:

㉚ landscape architect / garden designer:
 ㉛ interior decorator:
 ㉜ artist:
 ㉝ artisan:
 ㉞ builder/contractor:

㉟ NAMES give role & date
 PERSONAL:
 EVENTS:
 INSTITUTIONAL:

㊱ NATIONAL REGISTER WRITE-UP
 Example of courthouse type designed by Gordon as part of his evolution of a courthouse plan for Texas.