

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCERS use only

received **SEP 19 1979**

date entered **NOV 19 1979**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Old Frio County Jail

and/or common Frio Pioneer Jail Museum

**2. Location**

street & number E. Medina Street <sup>and</sup> at S. Pecan <sup>Sts</sup> not for publication

city, town Pearsall vicinity of congressional district 23

state Texas code 048 county Frio code 163

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Frio County

street & number Frio County Courthouse

city, town Pearsall vicinity of state Texas 78061

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Frio County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Pearsall state Texas 78061

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Recorded Texas Historic Landmark has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1970  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town Austin state Texas 78711

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input 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 two-story Victorian Old Frio County Jail, with its elaborately moulded brickwork and functional thick plastered brick walls, was constructed during the late 19th century, a period when the railroad companies were bringing prosperity to small towns in southern Texas, including Pearsall. An excellent and well-preserved example of public Victorian architecture in rural Texas, the old 1884 Pearsall Jail also exhibits Classicist and Italianate influences in the construction of the pedimented gables, elaborate cornices, and segmentally arched lintels.

According to specifications the plan of the jail was to be rectangular, but slightly T-shaped with a long and short arm. The long arm is oriented east and west with the short arm located at the west end of the building. The facade of the front or west wing measures 30 feet in length and contains five full-length windows, two placed on each side of the central door, with three on the second floor. The total length of the jail measures 48 feet and the width of the east end 28 feet.

Condition of the original native plastered brick on the exterior is fairly good, although portions of the brick face on the south wall are visible where the plaster has worn away. Intricate brickwork designs, such as the hooded mouldings above the windows and the corbelled brick table show Italianate influence. Stilted segmentally arched lintels crown every window and door of the jail. Extending around the perimeter of the building, excluding the rear, a brick stringcourse is interrupted only by pilasters on the north and south sides of the long wing. These pilasters project slightly from the wall and are evenly spaced between the windows, while larger pilasters with corbelled crowns are located at the east rear corners of the jail and at the intersections of the two wings.

The low pitched roof is the tin standing seam type with three tall chimneys crowned with corbelled caps. Another higher pitched gabled roof on the short west arm forms two pedimented end gables with a smaller gable over the central bay of the facade. In the center of the tympanums are located open circular moulded ornaments. The symmetrical placement of the windows on all three sides of the west wing, together with the corner pilasters, ornamented pediments, and the corbelled cornice reminiscent of a Greek dentil course, all reflect the use of Greek designs to create a stately appearance. The corbelled cornice on the west facade is interrupted by a small gable over the central bay which is composed of a slightly raised second story window and central door.

Fenestration of the north and south sides of the long arm is also symmetrical and includes twelve windows and four doors. All windows in the jail are barred, and the main west door on the ground floor has a barred steel door as well as a regular wooden one. The ceilings on both floors are metal, as well as the stairway which connects the two floors.

The interior spatial arrangement of the jail consisted of first and second story prisoners' cells and living quarters for public employees associated with the jail. The entire west end of the building on both first and second floors was used for jail

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

NOV 19 1979

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

purposes. A brick wall and a steel door with a barred window separated the east and west ends of the second floor. The center of this east end contained cells for prisoners and was surrounded by a large area where the trustees cooked the food and were allowed to sleep on cots. This area also served as an exercise room for confined prisoners. The east end of the first floor, which was divided into four rooms, served as a residence for the sheriff and his jailer. Another room was later added on the south side.

Various improvements and repairs have been necessary over the years, but, for the most part, the Old Frio County Jail remains the same as when constructed in 1884. With the modernization of the city, sewers were installed and also electric lights, water, and gas for heating and cooking. The first major addition to the jail took place in 1885 when two additional cells were installed at the head of the stairs outside the main cell area. These were used to confine female and juvenile prisoners and, occasionally, the insane.

Subsequent alterations were made after 1975 by the Frio Pioneer Jail Museum Association, when this organization converted the jail into a museum. A side porch on the south, which was not part of the original structure, has been removed. All interior plumbing, wiring, and other fixtures were removed from the living quarters on the east end of the first floor, and air conditioning has been installed in all the downstairs rooms. Some of the interior walls needed plastering and repainting, while the metal ceilings were also repainted after having been sandblasted to remove old paint and rust. The entire building has also been rewired for electricity and new lighting installed for the Museum's display areas.

In order to secure the museum from vandalism all of the first story windows and two south doors have been sealed up from the inside, leaving the outside portion recessed and the bars intact. Bars are going to be placed over two other doors that will serve as emergency exits and entrances to storage and display areas.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1884 **Builder/Architect** P.J. Pauly & Bro., St. Louis, Mo.

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Old Frio County Jail, an outstanding example of a 19th century Victorian public structure in Texas, is architecturally distinguished and important historically. The 1884 plastered brick jail, with its pedimented gables and delicately corbelled cornices, exhibits a stately symmetrical design and a high level of craftsmanship. In addition to the excellent quality of architectural detail, it is significant that the sturdy and functional design of this jail permitted its continuous use by the County for eighty-three years, with only minor repairs. The oldest building in Pearsall, the Old Frio County Jail is located on the original town square and is closely bound to the early pioneer history and railroad settlement of the town.

With the advent of the railroad in Frio County in 1881, the new town of Pearsall was laid out and named for the vice-president of the International and Great Northern Railroad, Thomas W. Pearsall. A four-block area east of the tracks, currently designated as Courthouse Square, was donated to the county of Frio by the Railroad Company. By popular vote the county seat was moved from Frio Town to the railroad center of Pearsall in 1883 and immediate plans were made for the construction of a new escape-proof jail. Numerous prisoners had escaped from the county jail at Frio Town and it was abandoned after the removal of the county seat, while construction of the Pearsall jail was in progress. During this interim period all prisoners were transferred to the Bexar County Jail at San Antonio and later moved to the La Salle County Jail at Cotulla.

On January 7, 1884, the Commissioners' Court met with J.J. Ligon, representing the firm of P.J. Pauly & Bro. of St. Louis, Missouri, and approved the construction of a jail to be located as near as possible to the center of the original donated four block area. For the sum of \$11,000 the new jail was built on the site where the temporary courthouse had been built the previous autumn.

One of the oldest buildings in Frio County, the County jail at Pearsall functioned continuously as a public jail from the period of its construction in 1884 through 1967, when a new jail was completed. During the Prohibition Era cells were used for storing seized liquor, and in 1969 the jail served as a distribution center for commodities under a Federal Aid Program. Since 1975 the interior of the Old Frio County Jail has been renovated by the County and the Frio Pioneer Jail Museum Association for use as a public museum.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Frio County Centennial Corporation, Historic Frio County, 1871-1971, Pearsall, Texas, 1971.

Texas Historical Commission Marker Files, "Old Frio County Jail," Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas, 1970.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Pearsall North, Texas

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	4
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4	9	1	1	1	9
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3	1	9	5	3	1	5
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The building occupies the southeast corner of E. Medina and S. Pecan Streets and faces west. It is situated on Lot 1 of the Old Town Site. No block number is available since the County has never made this designation for the original four block square of the OTS.

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara C. Nagel

organization Texas Historical Commission date August 23, 1979

street & number P.O. Box 12276 telephone 512/475-3094

city or town Austin state Texas 78711

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

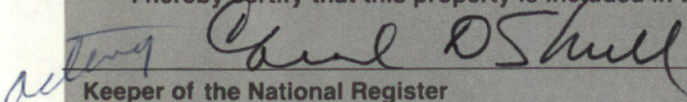
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

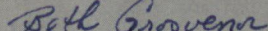
title State Historic Preservation Officer date August 29, 1979

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

date 11-19-79

Attest:   
Chief of Registration

date 11/19/79

Property

Old Tarrant County Jail

79002941

State

TX (Tarrant)

Working Number

9-19-79 2226

79002941

**TECHNICAL**

**CONTROL**

Photos 3

Maps 1

**HISTORIAN**

Excellent example of late 19<sup>th</sup> C. public structure in TX, illustrating both  
classical and stationer elements; linked with the progress of the RR across  
the state, and illustrating the prosperity it often brought to towns along its route.

accept  
B. Grosvenor  
11/19/79

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

**ARCHEOLOGIST**

**OTHER**

**HAER**

Inventory \_\_\_\_\_

Review \_\_\_\_\_

**REVIEW UNIT CHIEF**

accept  
B. Grosvenor  
11/19/79

**BRANCH CHIEF**

**KEEPER**

National Register Write-up

2-5-80

Send-back \_\_\_\_\_

Federal Register Entry

Re-submit \_\_\_\_\_

Entered **NOV 19 1979**



Old Frio County Jail SEP 19 1979  
E. Medina Street at S. Pecan  
Pearsall, Frio County, Texas  
Photo by Mike Yancey,  
Texas Historical Commission, 1976  
Northwest oblique  
Photo #1 *YB*

*DOE*  
NOV 19 1979



SEP 19 1979

Old Frio County Jail  
E. Medina Street at S. Pecan  
Pearsall, Frio County, Texas  
Photo by Mike Yancey,  
Texas Historical Commission, 1976  
North facade  
Photo #243

*DOE*  
NOV 19 1979

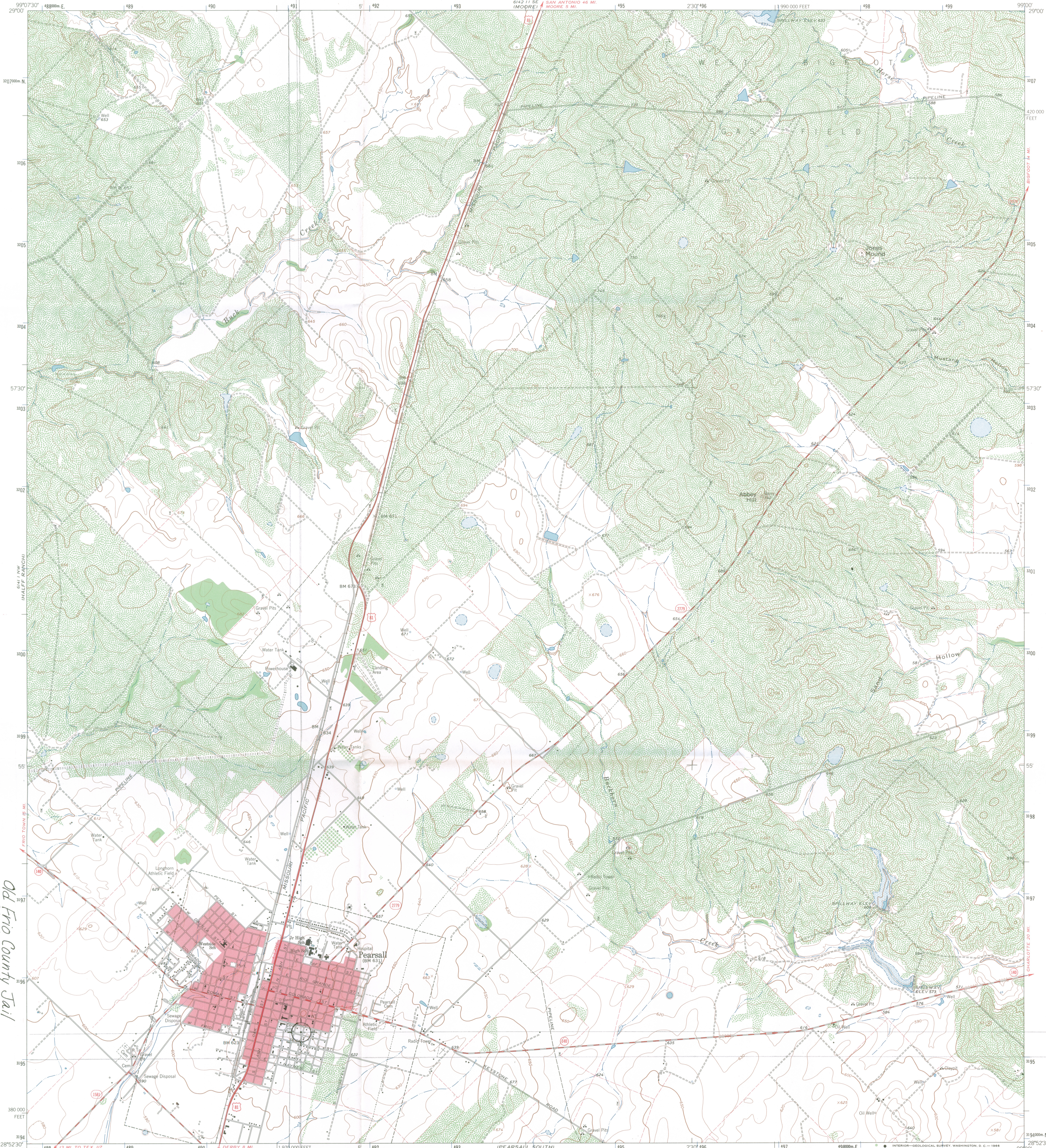


SEP 19 1979

Old Frio County Jail  
E. Medina Street at S. Pecan  
Pearsall, Frio County, Texas  
Photo by Mike Yancey,  
Texas Historical Commission, 1976  
Southeast oblique

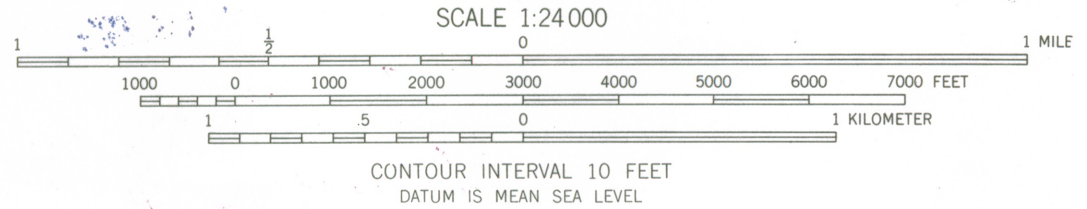
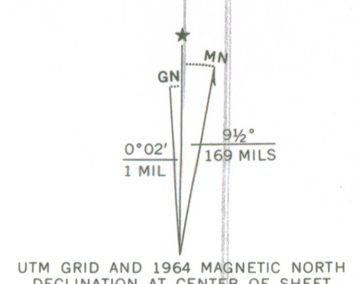
Photo #313

NOV 19 1979



Old Frio County Jail  
E. Medina Street at S. Pecan  
Pearsall, Frio County, Texas  
UTM Reference: 14/491119 /3195315

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1963. Field checked 1964  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, south central zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 14, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines  
Areas covered by dashed light-blue pattern are subject  
to controlled inundation



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



2899-444

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———  
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———  
U.S. Route  
State Route RECEIVED  
SEP 19 1979  
PEARSALL NORTH, TEX.  
NE/4 PEARSALE 15 QUADRANGLE  
N2852.5 W9900.7 7.5  
NATIONAL REGISTER  
1964  
AMS 6141 1 NE-SERIES-V892

NOV 19 1979

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

TEXAS

STATE

Date Entered

NOV 19 1979

Name

Location

Chambersea

Anahuac  
Chambers County

Old Frio County Jail

Pearsall  
Frio County

Stillman, Charles, House

Brownsville  
Cameron County

Also Notified

Honorable Lloyd M. Bentsen

Honorable John G. Tower  
Honorable Jack Brooks  
Honorable Abraham Kazen, Jr.  
Honorable E. (Kika) de la Garza

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

NR Byers/bjr 11/28/79

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