

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

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

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

For HCRS use only

received MAR 31 1981

date entered MAY 4 1981

1. Name

historic Webb County Courthouse

and/or common Webb County Courthouse

2. Location

street & number 1000 Houston Street _____ not for publication

city, town Laredo _____ vicinity of congressional district 23

state Texas code 048 county Webb code 479

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" 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 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 Webb County Commission

street & number 1000 Houston Street

city, town Laredo _____ vicinity of state Texas

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Webb County Courthouse

street & number 1000 Houston Street

city, town Laredo _____ state Texas

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Site Inventory has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes no

date 1976 _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town Austin, Texas state 78711

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

As constructed, the exterior of the courthouse presents a unified facade from all viewpoints and is composed of variations of the theme of the monumental arcade of the front (south) elevation. These arcades also serve to protect portions of the exterior walls from the elements. The architect, Alfred Giles, used axial and terminal accents as evidenced by the mansard-roofed terminal pavilions which serve as distinguishing features of the structure. Each pavilion features stone-carved rams head accents on the corners of the mansard curbs. Another characteristic of the courthouse is an over-all massing of elements in symmetrical fashion. Roof-lines of the building are considered quite modish for that period (1909) and include a variety of dormer windows which serve to break the broad areas of the roof surface. Original plans for the building specify a colorful structure of yellow brick with dressings of white stone and red tile mansard roofs.

Pecan and Citrus trees were planted around the Courthouse as part of the lawn and were designed to shade exterior walls of the building and provide a cool, shady area for the enjoyment of city and county residents.

The original interior of the Courthouse is characterized by colorful tile floors reminiscent of a Mediterranean villa. Victorian style wainscoting is applied throughout the interior. An impressive wrought iron trimmed staircase, produced by the Alamo Iron Works, connects the three floors of the courthouse with an ornate, oval, multicolored stained glass window dominating the first floor landing. Doors installed throughout the building are solid wood with beveled glass and brass door knobs. The first floor, designed for county offices, contains a large, open hallway through which cooling breezes can blow.

The present appearance of the Courthouse is relatively unchanged from that of its original appearance. However, time and the demand for additional space by County offices has necessitated various exterior and interior alterations to the building. These changes are identified below:

Exterior Alterations-

1. Outer Arcades on the north, east and west sides of the Courthouse have been blocked in to provide additional office space.
2. Portholes running along the east and west sides of the structure have been blocked in and painted white.
3. Red tile on roof and yellow brick have faded due to exposure and dirt.
4. Balconies surrounding third floor have begun to chip and crack.
5. Limestone base supporting arcades is deteriorating.
6. Detention center built during the late 1960's is adjacent, but not attached, to the original building.
7. Black air conditioning ducts for office use jut out approximately 10 feet from several blocked in arcades on all levels.

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Interior Alterations-

1. Carpeting has been installed over original floor in offices and courtrooms.
2. Air conditioning units have been installed throughout buildings.
3. Ceilings have been dropped in offices with florescent lights installed.
4. Courtroom on the second floor was refurbished in the 1960's including the installation of carpeting and modern courtroom furnishings, lowering of ceiling and updating of lighting.
5. Glass transoms over doors have been removed and replaced with plywood.

The County wishes to nominate the entire block surrounding the Courthouse to the National Register. This block includes two additional structures, the Webb County Jail and Juvenile Detention Center. The Jail, constructed in 1936, is enhanced by art deco details on its front entrance. However, this structure has been in a state of decline for several years because of its age and overcrowded condition. In fact, the County is currently under court order to upgrade this facility as a result of a 1976 lawsuit in which 23 Texas Penal Code violations directly attributable to the antiquated state of the building were cited.

The Juvenile Center is a white cinder block building of approximately 1000 square feet constructed in the late 1960's.

The Jail and Juvenile Center do not contribute to the historical nature of the site and demolition of these structures would not in any way be detrimental to the historical integrity of the Courthouse of its surrounding property.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Constructed 1909 **Builder/Architect** Mr. H. Sperbert/Alfred Giles

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Webb County Courthouse, designed by the noted Texas architect, Alfred Giles, represents one of the finest examples of Mr. Giles' remarkable ability to handle successfully a variety of new styles rather late in his professional career. The distinctive architectural style of the courthouse presents a combination of Mr. Giles' earlier, more ornate efforts, with his relatively modish later works after the turn of the century. The Courthouse also marks Giles' transition from Texan to Mexican projects. The building has been fairly well preserved in its original appearance and thus provides present and future scholars and citizens the opportunity to study and admire the work of this great architect.

When prosperity came to central Texas in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it stimulated a demand for fine homes and government buildings in the region. Competition for the design and construction of County courthouses during this period became keen. When the Webb County Commissioner's Court determined to erect the new courthouse on Houston Street in Laredo, the county placed advertisements in selected area newspapers announcing a contest for the best architectural design. Alfred Giles entered and won this statewide competition on February 27, 1907.

Alfred Giles, was born in London, England on May 23, 1853. Upon finishing school and his apprenticeship in England, the young architect came to the United States. Giles decided to settle in the hot, dry climate of Texas for health reasons where he learned to skillfully utilize locally available building materials, especially stone, in his projects.

In 1876 Giles established his own architectural firm and by the late seventies had become a leading architect in the region. By 1885, Giles projects had an aggregate value of over \$2,000,000 while employing three assistants. His commissions included numerous domestic and public buildings in San Antonio and he aggressively entered competitions, like the one sponsored by Webb County, inviting designs for county courthouses and jails. Giles completed over one dozen such projects.

The pace for architectural commissions in central Texas slackened in the first decade of the twentieth century for Giles. At this time he turned his attention to Northern Mexico which was experiencing a period of growth and prosperity. Between 1900 and 1910 he designed eight major buildings within four blocks in the heart of Monterrey's downtown area. In addition, the construction of the Arch of Independence followed his plans as did that of a new tower for the Cathedral, El Roble. He designed buildings in Saltillo, Durango and Puebla during this period, as well as eleven buildings in the state of Chihuahua for General Luis Terrazas.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Regional Historic Sites Survey (Revised) 1979,
"A Master's Work and a Beauty in Her Time", Laredo News, June 8, 1980, Sydney Rubin
Alfredo Giles by Blake Alexander

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1 acre

Quadrangle name Laredo West, Tex.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	4	4	5	0	0	7	0	3	0	4	2	5	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification The site is located on block number 65 within the city limits of Laredo, Texas. The block is bounded on the north by Victoria Street, on the south by Houston Street, on the east by San Augustin Street and on the west by Flores Street.

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 Alfredo Sanchez

organization Webb County Commission

date September 22, 1980

street & number 1000 Houston Street

telephone (512) 727-7272

city or town Laredo

state Texas, 78040

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 March 16, 1981

For HCRS use only

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

for
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 5/4/81

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Returning to the Webb County Courthouse project, Giles was faced with the challenge of designing a courthouse that was symbolic as well as practical. The County charged him with creating a monument to the bonding optimism and spirit infusing Texas during that period. The character of Giles' work, evident in his solidly constructed domestic examples, his attention to detail, sensitivity to native materials and his respect for the culture of South Texas, was well suited to this challenge.

After its construction in 1909 at a cost of \$46,918, the courthouse became the social, political and financial heart of the rapidly growing Webb County Community. During this period, county governments were the states most vital form of government. The Webb County Courthouse became the central point for community activity in the area. It was here that residents could watch the wheels of justice turn, attend to business, and swap opinions. It also housed the records of important occurrences in county residents' lives such as registers of births, marriages, deaths, trial records and deeds to land.

In response to the continuing growth of administrative and judicial needs of area residents, the County plans to move into a new courthouse within the next 24 months with the older building to be retained for County and community use. Plans for the new courthouse, which is to be located directly across the street from the Giles' courthouse, are being closely tied to restoration efforts planned for the older Courthouse in such areas as form, materials, design and design appearance.

Property Webb County Courthouse

State TX, Webb

Working Number 3/31/81/97

DUE
4/29/81 - 5/15/81
81000635

TECHNICAL

CONTROL

Photos 7
Maps 1

HISTORIAN

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____
Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up _____
Federal Register Entry 2.2.82

Send-back _____
Re-submit _____

Entered MAY 4 1981

WEBB COUNTY COURT HOUSE

HOUSTON
SAN ANTONIO

ONE WAY

HOUSTON
SAN ANTONIO

HOUSTON
SAN ANTONIO



CODE: We 65
L all
VIEW: SE oblique
NEG. BY: C. Kennedy
DATE: _____

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT PERMISSION
TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL SURVEY COMMITTEE
P.O. BOX 12276
CAPITOL STATION
AUSTIN, TX 78711

Webb County Courthouse
1000 Houston Street
Laredo, Webb County, Texas

MAR 31 1981
MAY 4 1981

Photo by Craig Kennedy, 1975.
Negative on file at Texas Historical Commission.

Southeast oblique, camera facing northwest.

Photo 1 of 7.



Webb County Courthouse
1000 Houston Street
Laredo, Webb County, Texas

Photo courtesy of Webb County Historical Commission,
1980.

Negative property of Webb County Historical Commission.

South elevation, camera facing north.

Photo 2 of 7.

MAR 31 1981

MAY 4 1981



Webb County Courthouse
1000 Houston Street
Laredo, Webb County, Texas

Photo courtesy of Webb Co. Historical Commission, 1980.
Negative property of Webb Co. Hist. Commission.

East elevation, camera facing west.

Photo 3 of 7.

MAR 31 1981

MAY 4 1981



Webb County Courthouse
1000 Houston Street
Laredo, Webb County, Texas

Photo courtesy of Webb County Historical Com., 1980.
Negative property of Webb Co. Hist. Com.

North elevation, camera facing south.

Photo 4 of 7.

MAR 31 1981

MAY 4 1981



Webb County Courthouse
1000 Houston Street
Laredo, Webb County, Texas

Photo courtesy of Webb County Historical Com., 1980.
Negative property of Webb County Historical Com.

West facade, camera facing south.

Photo 5 of 7.

MAR 8 1981

MAY 4 1981



Webb County Courthouse
1000 Houston Street
Laredo, Webb County, Texas

Photo courtesy of Webb Co. Historical Commission, 1980.
Negative property of Webb Co. Historical Commission.

Detail of north facade, camera facing south.

Photo 6 of 7.

MAR 31 1981
MAY 4 1981



Webb County Courthouse
1000 Houston Street
Laredo, Webb County, Texas

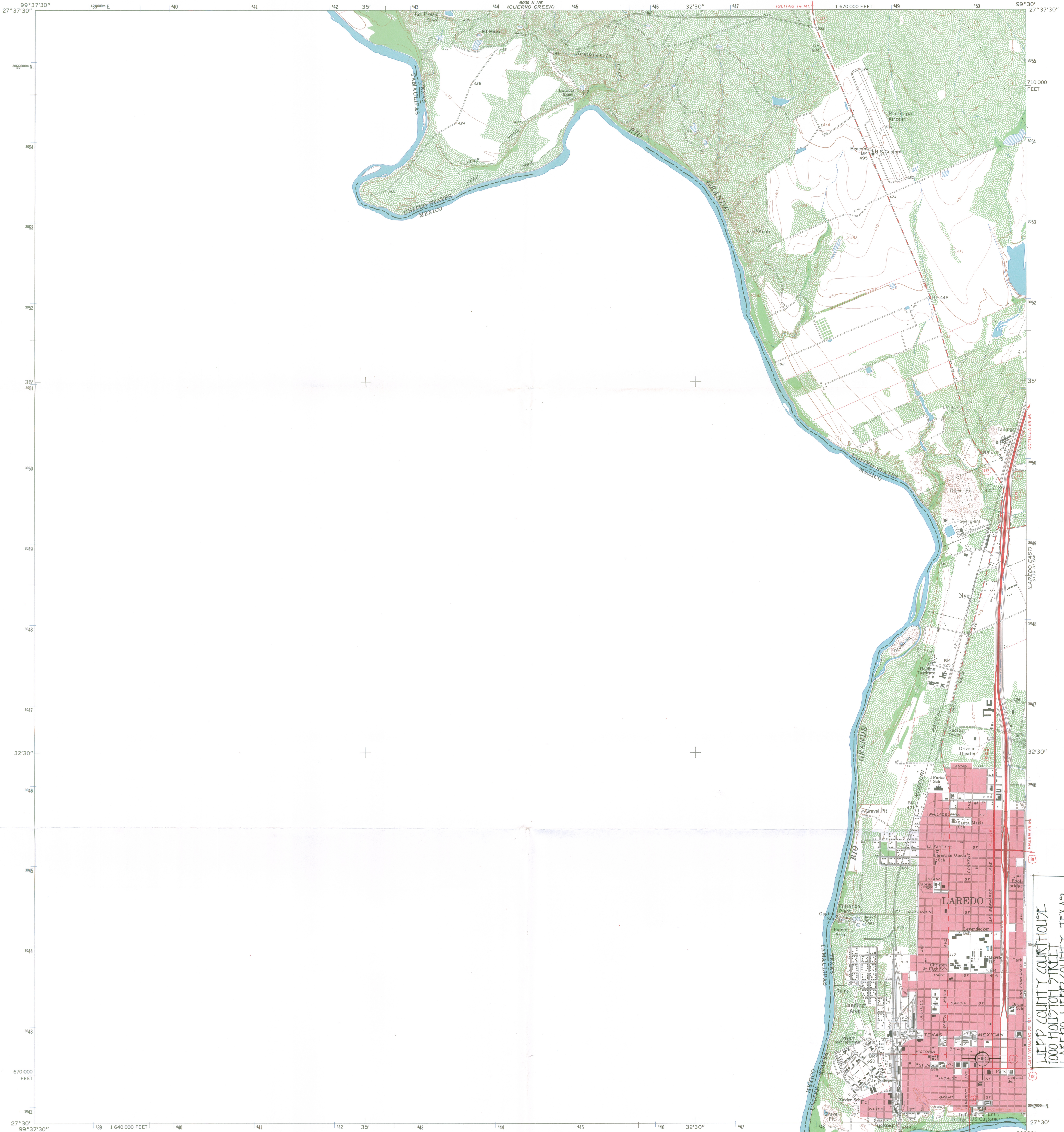
MAR 31 1981

MAY 4 1981

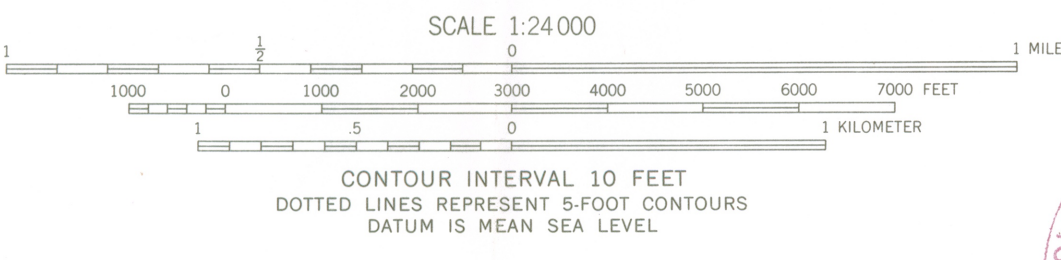
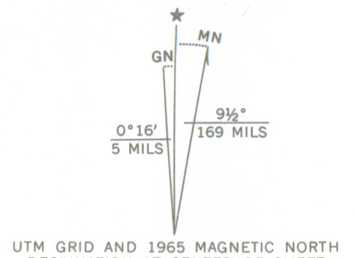
Photo courtesy of Webb Co. Historical Commission, 1980.
Negative property of Webb Co. Historical Commission.

Northwest oblique showing jail (middleground), juvenile
center (foreground), and courthouse (background).

Photo 7 of 7.



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and International Boundary
and Water Commission
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1964. Field checked 1965
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 areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines
International boundary line not completely defined at date
of map, due to changes in river



MAY 4 1981

2799-311

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

LAREDO WEST, TEX.
N2730—W9930/7.5

1965
AMS 6039 II SE—SERIES V882

LIEPP COUNTY COLLEGE
1000 HOLSTON STREET
LAKE PO, LIEPP COUNTY, TEXAS
LITL REF: 14 / 450070 / 2012940

LAREDO SOUTH
6:39 II NW
FORVU

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE TEXAS

Date Entered MAY 4 1981

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Gates Memorial Library	Port Arthur Jefferson County
Webb County Courthouse	Laredo Webb County
Number 4 Hook and Ladder Company	Dallas Dallas County

Also Notified

Honorable Lloyd M. Bentsen

Honorable John G. Tower
Honorable Jack Brooks
Honorable Abraham Kazen, Jr.
Honorable James A. Mattox
South Central Region, HCRS

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

NR Eady/bjr/5/6/81
For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.