

United States Department of the Interior
National Park 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 NPS use only
received MAY 18 1982
date entered JUN 17 1982

1. Name

historic Jefferson County Courthouse

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1149 Pearl Street N/A not for publication

city, town Beaumont N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state Texas code 048 county Jefferson code 245

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name County of Jefferson

street & number 1149 Pearl Street

city, town Beaumont N/A vicinity of state Texas 77704

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Clerk, Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number 1149 Pearl Street

city, town Beaumont state Texas 77704

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Inventory; SPARE Beaumont has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981; 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Texas Historical Commission

city, town Austin state Texas

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one		
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	N/A	
<input checked="" 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 Jefferson County Courthouse is one of the earliest and most outstanding examples of the Art Deco style not only in Beaumont but in the entire State. Of steel frame construction with buff brick cladding, the courthouse with its progressive, set back tower rises fourteen floors and stands as one of the most dominate elements of the Beaumont skyline. The Courthouse features noteworthy craftsmanship and ornamentation throughout its exterior and interior and stands virtually unaltered since its completion in 1932. The Courthouse, therefore, retains its historic character to an unusual degree. A late 1970s, three story, pink granite veneered annex was erected just north of the Courthouse and is joined to the original building with a two story passageway. This addition detracts from the integrity of the Courthouse but its effect is minimal due to its small scale and siting.

The Jefferson County Courthouse stands one block west of the Neches River within the city's original townsite and is bounded by Pearl, Milam, Main and Franklin Streets. The Courthouse remains somewhat detached from its immediate surroundings because of its scale, the abundance of parking lots nearby, as well as its location within a transitional area between the commercial center of town a few blocks northwest and the Port of Beaumont to the east.

In plan, the building begins at the basement level as a rectangle about 240' x 108', the long axis facing Pearl Street. The first and second floor configuration includes indentations on either side of the entrance blocks. At the third level the indentation pattern changes, making the building's wings, occupied by courtrooms, higher than the inner section. The fourth floor is limited to the central core. Diagonally placed walls there are repeated on the building's tower, which begins at the fifth level. A final step-back occurs at the twelfth floor. The corner walls of this crown are set approximately 45° from their flanks, in contrast to the main tower corner walls which are at (approximately) 70°/20° angles with the main facades. Altogether, the many planes create a highly variegated mass reminiscent of contemporaneous Northeastern ziggurat skyscrapers.

This complexity is enhanced by the building's polychromatic textured surface. The building rests on a rough-finished Colorado greenstone foundation. Windows are separated by long vertical bands of the buff brick that is the building's main material. Each coping of the structure's many blocks is articulated in carved limestone. Some courses are simple, such as the anthemion moldings, eagles, bucrania, garlands, wheat sheaves, and the ubiquitous curled ferns so typical of the 1930's. The north and south elevations and the fourteenth floor cornice are particularly rich in detail. In places these design elements are applied directly to brick walls. Twelve simple stone panels separate the tower windows below an ornate carved limestone band accentuated by octagonal medallions. These motifs are repeated around the tower and in reverse values on the north and south facades, where they are spaced by pilasters and further decorated by carved bands that completely surround the windows. Openings on the fourth floor wings are surmounted by shields and grouped flags. Triglyphs, moldings, and bas-relief limestone panels portraying the workers who built Jefferson County - sawyers, cowboys, farmers, and oil field roughnecks - make the Pearl Street entrance a focal point.

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Item number 7

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Fenestration types vary. Most of the windows are aluminum-framed replacements for the steel casement originals, a few of which remain. On the tower they follow a general ABBBA pattern. On the jail floors, eight through eleven, the original jail-awnings are in place. Nine-light oculi surrounded by voussoirs punctuate the limestone facing of the first floor at its corners.

The pyramidal roof is composed of eight triangular panels covered with tiles laid in a zigzag pattern. A beacon light mounted on a metal tower caps the roof.

Minimal changes have occurred on the exterior. Some entrances have been modernized with glass and aluminum. The main door is sheltered by a corrugated metal awning that will be removed soon. The aforementioned window exchange, although unfortunate, has not seriously eroded the appearance, since a central mullion continues the old casements' general configuration. To the building's north is the most severe modernization - a massive three-story pink granite annex. A progressively indented entrance-way supported by square pillars is at the southwest corner. The annex does not contribute to the Jefferson County Courthouse's significance. However, landscaping disguises the link so the buildings almost appear to be two separate structures, and the fourteen-story 1931 structure dwarfs the annex and remains the focal point of the complex. Just east of the old courthouse is a small mechanical services building. Of recent construction, it does not contribute to the other's significance.

Inside, lavish decoration proclaims the building's Art Deco heritage. Any surface or object, whether utilitarian or nonessential, was evidently considered a proper subject for the metal worker's artistry. Some of the most outstanding examples are the door and transom of Rooms 205 and 207, a wall heater on the second floor, the treasurer's department public service window, and fire hose cabinets and elevator doors throughout the building. The aluminum designs are primarily non-representational zigzags, geometric shapes, or stylized plant forms.

Molded plaster was another popular decorative feature of the 1930's, and is well represented in the courthouse. Good examples are found at the entrances to and in the second floor courtrooms. Motifs that recall seashells adorn walls and ceilings. They are repeated in carved wood panels to set off doors and unadorned spaces. Another bovine skull is at the center of a panel found in the southeast second floor courtroom.

Furnishings also are in keeping with their surroundings. Elegant lamps with sharply angled panes softened by etching are common. A curvilinear metal freestanding counter in the first floor tax office is typical of built-in appointments. Marble from France, Belgium, and Italy is employed for partitions, floors, and wainscots. Texas terrazo is also used for flooring. It has been laid out in large scale patterns, including checkerboards, diamonds, stripes, and medallions. Even the bathrooms are distinguished by Art Deco ceramic tiles.

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Two interior features deserve particular mention. One is a large metal bas-relief map of the county illustrating its industries - ranching, lumber, rice, and oil - found in the main hallway floor. The other is a skylight over the north wing's courts lobby. Its light filters through stippled glass panes set in a coffered ceiling. It is matched by another skylight over the south wing, but its light has been obscured at the roof level. There are too many interior details to describe each individually, but their variety and elegance are virtually important to the building.

A large renovation program is scheduled. Architects at the Texas Historical Commission are in close communication with the project architects to ensure preservation of the building's distinctive character. The original drawings, with notes on work done to date, are available to assist in this task.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" 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 1931 - 32 **Builder/Architect** Fred C. Stone and A. Babin, architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Jefferson County Courthouse at 1149 Pearl Street in Beaumont is one of the most outstanding examples of the Art Deco style in Texas and is an important landmark in the architectural development of the Texas Gulf Coast region. That the town of Beaumont should have one of the most significant high-style Art Deco structures in the State is remarkable and illustrates the sophistication that new industries brought to Jefferson County. The Courthouse has outstanding stylistic features on both its interior and exterior. Particularly noteworthy are the strong vertical emphasis and the carved stone panels that embellish it. The interior is equally important, with aluminum, marble, wood, and glass employed as ornament for the large airy spaces. The fourteen story building was constructed in 1931-32 and was designed by local architects, Fred C. Stone and A. Babin. The Courthouse has remained virtually unaltered since its completion. However, a three story annex was recently erected just north of the building, but this addition does not severely affect the historic character and integrity of the Courthouse.

The property the building occupies has a long history as the scene of county functions. It was conveyed to the Chief Justice of Jefferson County in 1838 by Nancy Tevis, a woman settler who arrived thirteen years earlier. 1838 saw construction of the first courthouse, a two-story log and pole structure with the jail below and courtroom above. From 1850 to 1853 court was held over a store owned by Millard and Pulsifer. The second courthouse, of lumber on a cypress log foundation, was begun in 1854. D.T. Inglehart, a surgeon of the Confederate Army, rented the building in the spring of 1863 for use as a hospital. In 1893 the third courthouse, built of red brick and white stone, was completed. The cornerstone of the 1893 building is installed to the right of the entry in the current Jefferson County Courthouse.

When the time came to build a fourth courthouse, the county chose a former Beaumont mayor, Fred C. Stone, and his partner A. Babin, a Louisiana native, as architects. A million dollar bond issue provided the funds. Stone and Babin designed it in the current style, with a tower set back from flanking wings, and spared no effort to make the offices and courtrooms grand and impressive. Their work remains virtually whole today. The skyscraper configuration chosen for the Courthouse is especially noteworthy. Texas courthouses had long emphasized verticality, but this was traditionally associated with the use of domes or tower elements. Technology and changing fashions by 1930, however, made possible high-rise public buildings, of which the Jefferson County Courthouse was certainly one of Texas' first; curiously, Huey Long's skyscraper. Louisiana State Capitol less than 200 miles away, was under construction at the same time as the courthouse in Beaumont.

January 17, 1932 was the dedication day. For the first time, all county offices, court quarters, and the jail were assembled under the same roof. The building was adequate for almost 50 years. In 1978 construction began on an annex, and was completed in 1980.

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Page 1

There are few true Art Deco buildings in Texas. The biggest cities - Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston - all have several notable examples. But Beaumont's reception for the new style is unexpected. Of the fifteen buildings for which construction dates are given in Emily Little's Art Deco Architecture in Texas, only six preceded the Jefferson County Courthouse's erection. Beaumont is the smallest city known to have a major Art Deco representative. The Kyle Building, in Beaumont's Commercial Historic District, was built after the courthouse. So the courthouse was definitely a pioneer in this part of the state that was just losing its frontier quality, thanks to its roaring industries.

The future of Art Deco buildings in Texas is uncertain because they are, for the most part, unrecognized as valuable. Designation of a major public structure, the Jefferson County Courthouse, as historic, will facilitate their being more highly esteemed.

9. Major Bibliographical References

National Register nomination submitted by Mary Graves Powers on September 1980 and filed at the Texas Historical Commission in Austin, Texas.

National Register nomination submitted by Laurie Limbacher on April 15, 1981 and filed at the Texas Historical Commission in Austin, Texas.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 2 acres

Quadrangle name Beaumont East, Texas

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	5
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3	9	5	7	0	0
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3	3	2	7	8	1	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Blocks 9 and 10, old town of Beaumont, includes the 1931 courthouse, the 1978-80 annex, and the mechanical services building. A landscaped area surrounds the structures.

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

state	N/A	code	county	code
-------	-----	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lissa Anderson, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization _____ date December, 1981

street & number 1401 St. Edward's Dr., #113 telephone 512/442-6286

city or town Austin state Texas 78704

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

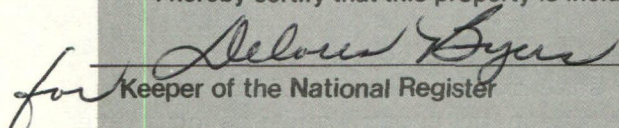


title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 24 March 1982

For NPS 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 6/17/82

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

82004509
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

EVALUATION / RETURN SHEET

Property: Jefferson County Courthouse
State, County: TX, Jefferson
Federal Agency: _____

Working No. 5/18/82-1450
Fed. Reg. Date: FEB 1 1983
Date Due: 6/17/82 - 7/2/82
Action: ACCEPT 6/17/82
 RETURN _____
 REJECT _____
Entered in the National Register
photos _____
maps

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
 see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: technical corrections cited below
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Area of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- _____ summary paragraph
- _____ completeness
- _____ clarity
- _____ applicable criteria
- _____ justification of areas checked
- _____ relating significance to the resource
- _____ context
- _____ relationship of integrity to significance
- _____ justification of exception
- _____ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

USGS References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

Site _____ date _____

13. Other

- _____ Maps
- _____ Photographs
- _____ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

David Moore June 1979
Texas Historical Commission
Austin, Texas

Front (west) facade;
Photo # 1 of 10



JEFFERSON COUNTY
COURT HOUSE

Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo courtesy of the White Budd Van Ness
Partnership. Photo by Bill Nelson 1977.

West (front) facade; camera facing east
Photo # 2 ↙ 10

Christopher
STUDIO

PHONE 713-866-2333

7575 Calder Beaumont, Texas
77706

West Elev.

78519



Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo courtesy of the White Budd Van Ness
Partnership. Photo by Bill Nelson 1977.

North facade; camera facing south
Photo # 3410

North Elev. Before Addn.

Christopher
STUDIO

PHONE 713-866-2333

7575 Calder Beaumont, Texas
77706

78519



Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo courtesy of the White Budd Van Ness
Partnership. Photo by Bill Nelson 1977.

South facade; camera facing north
Photo # 4 10

South Elev

Christopher
STUDIO

PHONE 713-866-2333

7575 Calder Beaumont, Texas
77706

78519



Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Courthouse

Photo courtesy of the White Budd Van Ness
Partnership. Photo by Bill Nelson 1977

South facade; camera facing north

Photo # 5A10

Christopher
STUDIO

PHONE 713-866-2333

2575 Calder Beaumont, Texas
77706

South Elev

78519



Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

Stan Graves 1 November 1981
Texas Historical Commission
Austin, Texas

Northwest Oblique of Courthouse & Annex
Camera facing southeast
Photo # 6410



Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

Stan Graves November 1981
Negative filed at the Texas Historical
Commission; Austin, Texas

West facade of Annex passageway
Camera facing southeast
Photo # 7A10



TREASURER'S DEPT

Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

Photographer Unknown; circa 1981
Photo courtesy of the Jefferson County
Historical Commission

View of Treasurer's Department counter
Photo #f8 J 10



Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

Photographer Unknown; circa 1981
Photo courtesy of the Jefferson County
Historical Commission

View of table in Tax Department
Photo # 9 ^A 10



~~6x9 1/2~~

2nd floor court room

Jefferson County Courthouse
1149 Pearl Street
Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas

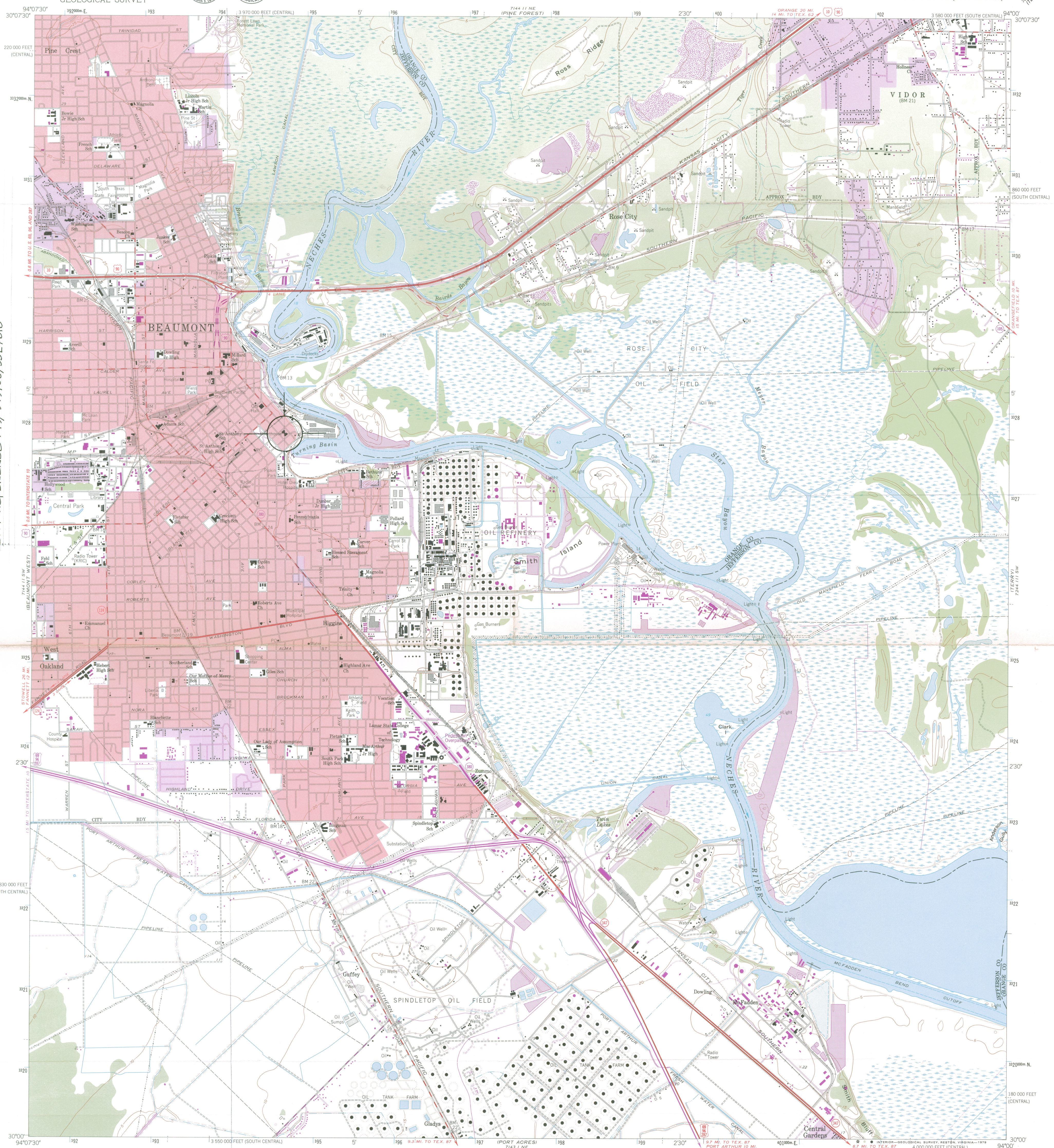
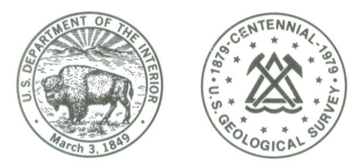
photographer unknown; circa 1981
Photo courtesy of the Jefferson County
Historical Commission

View of Second floor courtroom
Photo # 10 + 10

10 1/2
7 1/8"

~~10 1/2~~

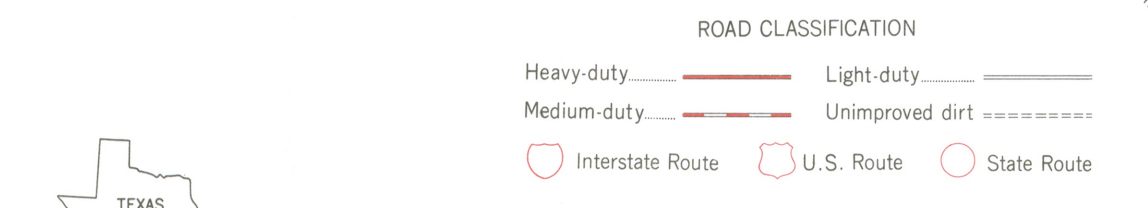
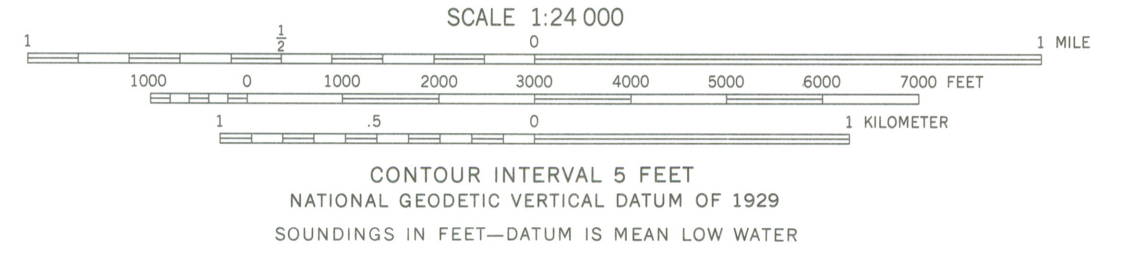
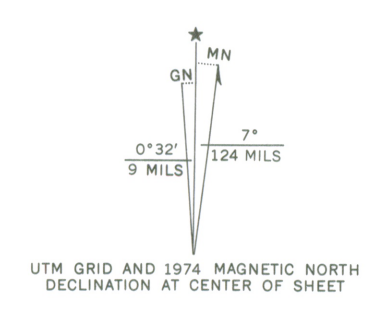
~~10 1/2~~ size



JEFFERSON CO. COURTHOUSE
1149 PEARL STREET
BEAUMONT, JEFFERSON CO. TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 15/ 945700/3327810

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1942. Topography from U.S. Corps of Engineers 1946 map
Revised from aerial photographs taken 1959. Field checked 1960
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC & GS
chart 533 (1961). This information is not intended for
navigational purposes.
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system,
south central and central zones
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Red tint indicates area in which only
landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1970 and 1974. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



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

3094-111

BEAUMONT EAST, TEX.

N3000—W9400/7.5

1960
PHOTOREVISED 1970 AND 1974
DMA 7144 11 SE—SERIES Y882