THE
MEDALLION
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
FALL 2020

PRESERVATION PAYS DIVIDENDS
COURTHOUSE PROGRAM INVESTS IN TEXAS' RURAL COMMUNITIES

ABOVE, TOP: Mills County courtroom, Goldthwaithe.

ON THE COVER: The 1911 San Saba County Courthouse.
Photo by Patrick Hughey.

CORRECTION: An article in our Summer 2020 WWII issue referencing the Iwo Jima memorial in Harlingen misidentified Pfc. Franklin Sousley as a Navy corpsman. Another article referencing Pvt. Felix Longoria's funeral should have identified the chapel as belonging to the funeral home, rather than the cemetery.

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
FALL 2020

ISSN 0890-7595 Vol. 58, No. IV
thc.texas.gov thc@thc.texas.gov

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Our Mission
To protect and preserve the state's historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.

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The Medallion is financed in part by a grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. All of the agency's public programs and activities are operated free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against should write to Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

The Medallion is available online at thc.texas.gov/medallion. If you would prefer to receive *The Medallion* electronically instead of through the mail, please send your name and address to thc@thc.texas.gov. You will be notified by email when each new issue is available on the THC website and will no longer receive a printed copy.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION CHAIR JOHN L. NAU, III

LEADERSHIP LETTER

Friends,

Our shared Texas history inspires, educates, and unifies our state, our communities, and our people. The professional staff of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) works diligently to preserve the proud history of the Lone Star State, guided by knowledgeable and enthusiastic commissioners appointed by Gov. Greg Abbott.

Preserving Texas' history is an important responsibility that requires persistence and expert attention. If neglected, we lose a part of our storied past that cannot be retrieved.

Recently, our commission fulfilled its responsibility to the entire state when it put a stop to detrimental changes to the Alamo. The commission supports the work of the Alamo Trust and the Texas General Land Office to preserve the site's unique history and create a world class visitor attraction for the City of San Antonio. We look forward to these achievements and are ready to assist.

Heading into the 87th session of the Texas Legislature, the THC, like most agencies, faces budget challenges due to the pandemic's impact on travel, tourism, our economy, and state revenues.

Preserving, maintaining, and providing meaningful visitor experiences at Texas' great historical sites can be a costly mission. Fortunately, Texas history and the THC have strong allies in the Texas Capitol who know the cultural, educational, and economic value of Texas' historical sites. We are working hard to keep the THC budget whole, prioritizing the maintenance of historic sites, the safety of our visitors and employees, and continuing historic courthouse preservation.

Across Texas, historic courthouses stand as beacons of our past and places for ongoing community engagement, government administration, and heritage travel and tourism. I know you will enjoy this issue's focus on these treasures, and it is my hope that you can visit the communities where they are located soon.

Our state's modest investments in the THC protect our precious historic places so they can be a magnet for millions of tourists from around the world, generating billions of dollars for the state's economy annually. The total impact of historic preservation in Texas is more than $4.6 billion annually, supporting 79,000 jobs. Texas history means business.

I encourage everyone to support Texas' historic treasures, from sacred battlefields like the Alamo Mission to county courthouses and revitalized Main Streets. The real places and real stories of our history educate, inspire, and connect all Texans. By conserving and learning from Texas history, we help ensure a stronger, more prosperous, and more unified Texas for generations to come.

John L. Nau, III
Chair, Texas Historical Commission

GOING GREEN

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES ENSURE HISTORIC COURTHOUSES STAND STRONG

By Farah Merchant
THC Preservation Scholar

Protecting history and the environment are not mutually exclusive. Most of Texas' courthouse restoration projects preserve the historic integrity of prominent county structures while implementing sustainable practices.

Some of the state's historic courthouses operate inefficiently, using an abundance of energy to heat and cool the interior due to lack of window maintenance, inadequate insulation, and modern electrical practices. However, recent restorations address these issues while maintaining the courthouses' historic design and function.

According to Texas Historical Commission (THC) architects, restoring courthouses and other historic buildings is inherently green due to the use of previous construction (aka embodied energy) and passive climate-responsive designs, such as solar shading from deep entry porches, daylight use, and durable materials. Most restoration projects, however, make buildings even greener through energy-efficient electrical systems, which maximize control over thermal loss and gain.

Bess Althaus Graham, the THC's Architecture Division director, has overseen several courthouse restoration projects that implemented ground-source heat pump systems. The Trinity and Hamilton county courthouses use the earth's constant temperature to preheat or pre-cool water used in the HVAC systems. Buried underground, the system is highly efficient and invisible. The restoration of the La Salle and Hood county courthouses also used similar systems incorporating heat-pump systems to reduce energy use and the buildings' carbon footprints.

Another energy-efficient courthouse feature is a cool roof, which reflects sunlight and absorbs less heat than a standard roof through reflective paint, sheet covering, or reflective tiles or shingles. Also, courthouses updated with modern systems use new technologies that increase energy efficiency and reduce water waste.

To further lessen the amount of energy needed to power courthouses, restoration plans typically focus on insulating attics. This balances temperature and reduces the need to overwork the air conditioner or heater, since the tops and bottoms of buildings are more susceptible to heat or cooling loss. These areas are also easier to insulate than perimeter walls and openings, without sacrificing these key historic features.

REDUCE AND REUSE

Along with shifting to more-renewable sources and reducing energy consumption, reusing materials and taking advantage of existing infrastructure is imperative for sustainability.

For example, original windows are rehabilitated to allow future maintenance by replacing deteriorated window parts over time. Rehabilitating these historic windows is more sustainable than replacing the entire window panel with newer models that have a life expectancy of 20–30 years. The Hood County Courthouse restoration included restored window sashes and frames and a shutter-track system, which allows for natural light while preventing the building from heating.

Like most preservationists, Susan Tietz, coordinator of the THC's Courthouse Preservation Program, is a strong

proponent of preservation rather than the replacement of building elements, which reduces waste going to landfills and the need to use new materials.

"It's inherently sustainable," Tietz said. "It would waste so much energy to demolish those buildings. There is already so much embodied energy in the courthouses, and the buildings and materials used in them are durable. They've already lasted a hundred years and, if they're well maintained, they'll last indefinitely."

For her, sustainability is an important aspect of restoration, but so is respecting the historical integrity of the buildings. She believes the energy invested in constructing a landmark such as a courthouse needs to be preserved to remember the past and honor those who came before us.

"At the time they were built, these counties, in most cases, borrowed substantial amounts of money and often hired famous architects to design their courthouses, even in small rural communities," Tietz said. "Courthouses were considered important buildings, so most counties hired the most prominent architect they could afford to design their courthouse."

COURTHOUSE COEXISTENCE

Graham claims there are new environmental issues on the horizon, such as climate change, net-zero construction, and the difficulty of restoring, repairing, and maintaining materials introduced by the Modern style following World War II.

She says adopting the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) environmental rating system combines preservation and sustainability. Many architects don't use this system due to the misconception that LEED clashes with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, a guide for maintaining the integrity of historic buildings. Graham points out that the latest version of LEED focuses on the source and life cycle of materials, which supports historic buildings' efforts to reuse materials.

"The LEED rating system is effective because each point is associated with a measurable goal and verified by a third party," Graham said. "Preservation and sustainability can coexist very well, as long as both sides understand each other and their assumptions."

Tietz adds that more needs to be incorporated into grant-funded courthouse restoration projects; she hopes to use her position to expand the Courthouse Preservation Program's involvement to ensure the most sustainable outcome.

"The program could do more to encourage project architects to focus on sustainability when choosing materials or methods," said Tietz. "Most of the architecture firms do tend toward sustainable design anyway, but our program doesn't require it. We can all do our part to help ensure these historically significant buildings are sustainable and preserved for future generations of Texans to use and enjoy."

To learn more about the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, visit thc.texas.gov/thcpp.

OPPOSITE: Minimal lighting is needed in the Hood County Courthouse because of the windows' daylighting. Photo courtesy of HDR Architecture, Inc. LEFT: Cameron County Courthouse's atrium allows heat to rise out of the occupied spaces.

Wharton County Courthouse, Wharton

By Andy Rhodes, Managing Editor, *The Medallion*

CARE MAKES CENTS

INVESTMENT IN PRESERVING TEXAS' RURAL COURTHOUSES PAYS OFF

Texas' historic courthouses are among the state's most widely recognized and valued assets. Their classical copper domes, lofty towers, and stately silhouettes punctuate the skylines of many counties, luring travelers to explore historic downtown districts.

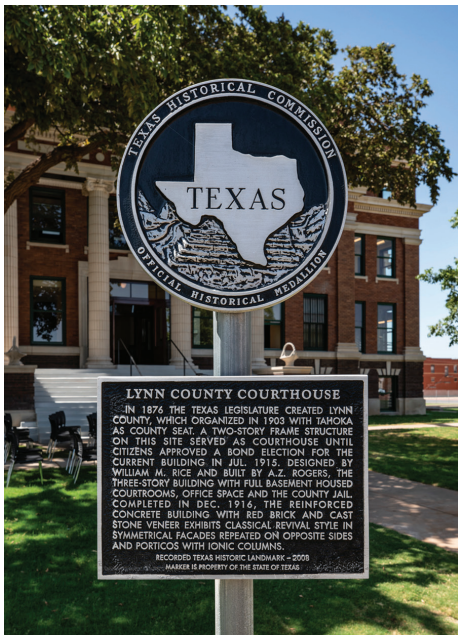
The Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program (THCPP) is protecting these iconic structures in communities throughout the state by offering grants to counties that help preserve their historic courthouses. In the process, Texas is providing a cost-effective example about utilizing existing assets, refocusing community pride, and maximizing the return on historic civic buildings in county seats.

The THCPP provides the incentive for counties to invest matching funds to ensure their courthouses will always be safe, energy efficient, and inspiring places to visit and conduct government business. Program participants experience many benefits, such as improving functionality and creating a tangible link to the past.

Since the program's inception in 1999, 73 county courthouses have received full restoration funding, and 30 counties have received emergency and/or planning grants while awaiting major construction funds. So far, the THCPP has attracted 145 participants, and awarded over $310 million to 103 counties or municipalities.

Meanwhile, 43 other program participants have not received any funding at all, with a total outstanding need among participants of over $550 million.

In addition to providing safe and functional buildings, restored historic courthouses benefit the state and local economies. Courthouse preservation projects have created more than 11,800 jobs in Texas and generated nearly $690 million in revenue, and almost $850 million in gross state product.



The economic impact has been especially significant in Texas' rural communities, where courthouses often anchor a historic downtown district, and the associated heritage travelers—who spend more than average—bring money to the community. Restored courthouses reinvigorate historic downtowns and promote heritage tourism, which generated $7.8 billion in state and local taxes in 2019, according to the Office of the Governor–Economic Development and Tourism.

PRESERVATION PROVIDES DIVIDENDS

The THCPP also serves as a catalyst that encourages additional public and private investment in historic downtowns. When a courthouse project begins, vacant buildings in the central commercial district often dwindle by the project's completion.

"Preserving Texas' historic courthouses is an investment that offers immediate returns while paying dividends to the citizens of tomorrow," says Bess Althaus Graham, director of the THC's Architecture Division. "There aren't many places that can strengthen and transform an entire community like a restored cherished courthouse."

In 2005, the THC developed the Texas Courthouse Stewardship Program to prevent these state landmarks from returning to a state of decay or deterioration.

"After restoration, these buildings need to be cared for to prevent them from falling back into disrepair," Graham says. "Stewardship is an important ongoing effort for any historic building."

Fayette County Courthouse, La Grange

As part of the stewardship program, THC reviewers help counties by offering professional advice on how to best preserve the buildings. Useful information is also available at thc.texas.gov/tcsp, where county staff can access the Courthouse Maintenance Handbook and other resources on courthouse components and systems. These reference materials are valuable tools, allowing county staff to plan for budgeting and construction projects.

Courthouse Preservation Program reviewers can also assist counties with developing a cyclical maintenance plan for immediate and long-term care of their historic buildings and sites. The program provides additional guidance by offering preservation resources, preventive maintenance checklists, sample templates for schedules, budget formats, and inspection forms.

Presidio County Courthouse, Marfa

This assistance has been bolstered by important statewide partnerships. The THC and the Texas Land Title Association, a statewide member-based trade organization for title agents, developed an annual workshop series in 2007 for the stewardship program and regional training workshops. This initiative provides assistance and training for county officials and facilities managers with an emphasis on a commitment to routine maintenance programs.

GRANTS ANNOUNCED

In June 2020, the THC announced grant recipients for Round XI of the THCPP. The THC awarded matching grants totaling $20,038,121 to nine counties, including three grants for full restorations.

Callahan, Mason, and Taylor counties received construction grants for full restorations.

Kimble, Washington, Willacy, and Wise counties received planning grants to be applied toward the production of construction documents for a future application to the THCPP for full restoration of their courthouses. Duval and Lee counties received emergency grants to address critical issues, including the replacement of an original electrical system and foundation repairs.

Fayette County Courthouse, La Grange

Grimes County Courthouse, Anderson

"Preserving our Texas courthouses has always been a priority for the THC," said THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe. "Our courthouse grants help counties maintain essential state services and offer centerpieces of history and culture for visitors to enjoy."

The THCPP Round XI grants were made possible through a $25 million appropriation by the 86th Texas Legislature. Over $2.5 million of those funds were distributed last year to counties with unforeseen conditions, in the form of supplemental funding.

The THC received applications from 21 counties requesting over $100 million in grants for projects totaling over $175 million. The agency determined grant awards by assessing 22 criteria, including the building's age, endangerment, historical designations, the applicants' project proposals, local support for the project, and a new scoring criterion that assesses an applicant's ability to contribute financially toward the project. This new criterion, county revenue, gives applicants with lower revenues more points than applicants with higher revenues. Emergency grants were based primarily upon the score assigned to the endangerment category.

To learn more about the Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, visit thc.texas.gov/thcpp.

CREDIT: TEXAS HISTORY

TAX INCENTIVE PROGRAMS HELP REVITALIZE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

By Caroline Wright and Valerie Magolan
THC Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

The words "tax credits" have been a buzz term in Texas' historic preservation and economic development communities for the last several years. Those who have never been involved in a historic rehabilitation project may not see the connection between taxes and historic buildings, but tax credits have become an important tool for preservation in Texas.

Historic tax credits were established to incentivize private investment in historic preservation projects. Most grant funds, which can provide only limited amounts of support, are restricted to nonprofit organizations or government entities, leaving a significant resource gap for privately owned properties. The Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit was established in the 1976 by the U.S. government to address this gap and help revitalize communities.

While the federal credit has a long history, it was not always well-used in Texas, with most projects preserving large buildings in big cities. The introduction of the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit in 2015 has ushered in hundreds of new projects of varying sizes from communities across the state.

Many of the agency's projects still occur in major cities, but tax credits are now part of the resurgence of smaller towns across the state. Two recently certified projects are in Taylor, northeast of Austin.

In 2016, Kaitlin and Cliff Olle bought the former Taylor High School campus, which hadn't been used by the school district since the 1980s. The sprawling complex at the north end of downtown Taylor includes the 1923 high school building, an Art Deco gymnasium built in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration, and a 1956 junior high building.

This enterprising local couple had a vision and took on an ambitious tax credit project to develop the three buildings into a mixed-use facility. In the classroom buildings, they created apartments, restaurants, and tenant spaces for retail and office use.

The Plowman's Kitchen restaurant is in the former band hall, and the Loose Screw Craft Beer House is in a converted classroom—both are favorites with the local community. The old gym is now a large event hall available for rentals. Major expenses included repairs, new windows that recreated the original designs, and all-new mechanical and air conditioning systems for the three buildings. The rehabilitation was completed in 2019 and brought new life to an empty property.

Half a mile away, one of the buildings at the main intersection in downtown Taylor was sitting vacant, with rotting wood windows and part of the façade ready to collapse onto the sidewalk.

Architect Douglas Moss now lives in New York, but grew up in Taylor. He decided this was going to be his personal project. Moss purchased the property (built around 1900 with a 1925 addition) and went to work.

His team completed structural repairs, restored exteriors to their original appearance, and modernized systems and finishes on the interior. They created seven loft apartments inside, each with its own unique charm, and a retail space at the front corner that takes full advantage of the great location.

The building was an eyesore in the heart of downtown, but it's now a desirable place to live. Moss says he couldn't have saved this property without the help of tax credits.

"The tax credit program is the difference between making a project viable or nonviable," says Moss. "It's an amazing program that I wish more people took advantage of."

The time-consuming yet ultimately rewarding efforts made both projects possible, according to Bess Althaus Graham, director of the THC's Architecture Division, which oversees the program.

"Using the tax credits to revitalize these historic properties in Taylor has helped bring pedestrian traffic, small businesses, economic activity, new residents, new investment, and a new spirit to downtown," she says.

CREDITING HISTORY

So how does it all work? The Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit is available to taxpaying entities that undertake architectural work to historic buildings. In exchange for coordinating with the THC and meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the property owner is awarded tax credits, which reduce the amount owed on federal income taxes.

Applicants are awarded credits equal to a percentage of most (but not all) construction costs. While adequate funding must be in place to complete the project, credits can be used afterward to offset costs. Depending on the size of the project, credits can be used to help projects secure loans or investments.

The Texas credit program works much like the federal one, although it is applied to either the Texas Business Franchise or Insurance Premium taxes, both paid only by certain types of corporations. Most applicants for the Texas historic tax credit do not pay either of these taxes.

How is it useful? The Texas credit can be sold—a property owner that has earned credits may sell those for cash to a business that owes taxes to the state. While applicants must still take time to understand the application process, program requirements, and financial implications of the program, the state credit has proven to be a powerful tool to assist property owners.

For more information about the tax credit programs, visit thc.texas.gov/taxcredits.

FAR ABOVE AND LEFT: The intersection of 2nd and Main streets, Taylor. Photos by Paul Bardagjy. ABOVE: Plowman's Kitchen.

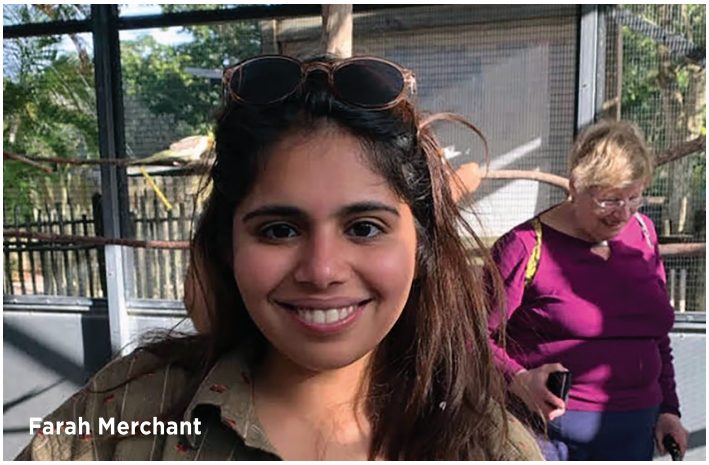
PRESERVATION EDUCATION

INTERNS LEARN ABOUT HISTORICAL CAREERS IN THC SUMMER SCHOOL

By Andy Rhodes
Managing Editor, *The Medallion*

Earlier this year, the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission welcomed six interns for nearly two months of online summer school through the Preservation Scholars program.

With remote work requirements due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Friends restructured this year's program into remote internships. Representing universities across the state, the students spent much of the summer working with THC staff on projects related to their fields of study. To learn more about the program, visit thcfriends.org


Farah Merchant

FARAH MERCHANT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Why did you decide to apply for the THC's Preservation Scholars Program? I saw the THC Preservation Scholars Program as an opportunity to do good and enact change. I have always wanted to use my voice in a positive way and bring awareness to serious issues. The program offered me an outlet to write history in a fair and honest way, share the stories of underrepresented groups, and create accessible content.

What goals are you hoping to accomplish during your internship? I hope to write stories that resonate with individuals and represent the voice of marginalized groups. When looking through the THC blog, I noticed there are few stories of Asian Americans and much of what is included is repeated and rudimentary. I wanted to change that by showcasing their work and influence.

Why is Texas an interesting place to pursue a career in a history-related field? Texas has such a rich culture and history that I could spend years reading, researching, and learning everything about it and still not know it all. It's so expansive that each region looks different and adds a new perspective to being Texan. The diversity makes Texas a unique and enriching place to study, and a place that I'm glad I got to explore during this internship.

RICHARD QUIROZ
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-CORPUS CHRISTI

What factors did you consider when choosing your major? My major is English with a concentration in literary studies. I developed an interest simultaneously with my love for literature, and listening to oral histories from family members. I found I greatly enjoy assisting others in accessing, networking, exploring, and researching information.

Why is Texas an interesting place to pursue a career in a history-related field? Texas history hosts multiple cultural perspectives, and stories which often aren't included in our mainstream narrative from our educational institutions. The significant events, cultural customs, and personal beliefs shape the way memory plays in our communities. It is crucial to not only continue teaching history, but also incorporate the history of under-represented communities.

How do you like to spend your free time? I usually spend my free time reading and writing. My favorite genres include horror, mystery, and (not surprisingly) history and historical fiction. When not busy diving into the world of mysteries and the macabre, I dive into cooking, which I found to be equally perplexing—especially when using the wrong measurements.

Richard Quiroz

William Polley

WILLIAM POLLEY
PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

Why did you decide to apply for the THC's Preservation Scholars Program? I decided to apply for the program after talking to the THC representatives at a Prairie View A&M career fair. I applied because because the internship felt like the perfect fit for me. I had just taken a course in cultural heritage preservation, so I was ready to get out and use what I'd learned.

What goals are you hoping to accomplish during your internship? I was hoping to learn how to impact African American communities in historic preservation, and I did just that. The THC provided me with excellent guidance; I worked with and learned from an architect, an economic development specialist, and gained a new colleague in Gabe Ozuna. I got the chance to use my voice to help the African American community.

How do you like to spend your free time? I do a lot of reading, and I like to spend my free time helping youth from my area learn the art of running. I plan to continue training so that I can try out for the USA team. Also, I recently went plant-based, so lately I have been doing a lot of experimenting with recipes to try to make my favorite meals and desserts into vegan dishes. When I have the time, I also love to skateboard.

LEZLIE HERNANDEZ
TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

What factors did you consider when choosing your major? History reminds us of victories, tragedies, and what it means to be human. I also decided that geography shared some of these characteristics. Knowing where things are, how the environment affects events, and how cultures interact with others is central to understanding history. I am also seeking a teaching certification in both subjects.

What goals are you hoping to accomplish during your internship? My biggest goal was to learn from others. The THC is filled with many knowledgeable and experienced people. I wanted to pick their brains and learn about how they got where they are. Many THC employees used to be educators, archivists, and museum curators. By listening to their stories, I can learn about the many ways to become a part of historic preservation.

Why is Texas an interesting place to pursue a career in a history-related field? I grew up in Nebraska and its associated corn fields. When I arrived in Texas, I began to immerse myself in its history. In a few short years, I learned that Texas is vibrant, diverse, and proud of its culture. Texas is interesting to me because there is much to learn. The people of Texas are ready to use their voices and share their stories. I hope to be a facilitator of those voices and rich heritages.

Continued on page 14

Lezlie Hernandez

Continued from page 13

Gabriel Ozuna

GABRIEL OZUNA
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS RIO GRANDE VALLEY

Why did you decide to apply for the THC's Preservation Scholars Program? I first learned about the THC when I discovered the Historical Marker Program in college. After college, I became involved with the Texas Tropical Trail Region and the Hidalgo County Historical Commission. Thanks to a scholarship from the former, I was able to attend the 2020 Real Places Conference in Austin. So, when I applied to graduate school and became eligible for the Preservation Scholars Program, I knew this was how I wanted to spend my summer before starting classes in the fall.

What goals are you hoping to accomplish during your internship? My main aspiration for this internship was to familiarize myself with the world of historic preservation. So far, I have had the opportunity to meet and speak with division staff working on fascinating projects. I am particularly grateful to be interning at the Texas Main Street Program. They have done an incredible job mentoring me and allowing me to help on a couple of important projects in Eagle Pass and Texarkana. My hope is that this knowledge and these connections will aid me in whatever future career I choose to pursue.

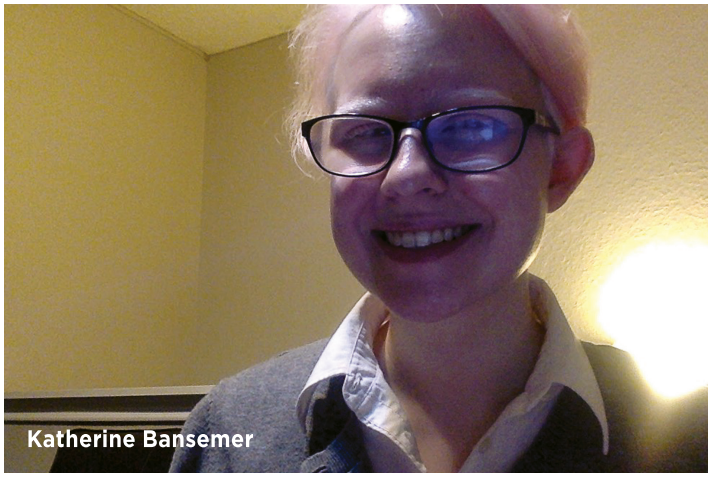
Why is Texas an interesting place to pursue a career in a history-related field? Texans love their history, but so much of this state's stories have been overlooked or have gone completely untold. I applaud recent efforts by the THC and other state historical organizations to remedy this oversight, but there is so much more work to be done. As a historian, I look forward to researching and retelling the stories, particularly those of the South Texas frontier.

KATHERINE BANSEMER
TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Why did you decide to apply for the THC's Preservation Scholars Program? I heard about the program from one of my friends in graduate school who participated last summer. He explained the program's commitment to diversity and told me about the exciting projects he got to work on while at the THC. Later that day I looked into the application process and submitted my own application soon after!

What factors did you consider when choosing your major? I have always had a passion for history, and I want to share that passion and excitement with others. Public history is really the perfect fit for me as I get to work with lots of different people and explore meaningful topics.

How do you like to spend your free time? I'm a competitive person, and I enjoy pushing myself to achieve new goals. I have found fitness and specifically weight training to be a fun and rewarding outlet to challenge myself.


Katherine Bansemer

To learn more about the Friends of the THC's Preservation Scholars program, visit thcfriends.org/preservation-scholars-program.

NEWS BRIEFS

THC REJECTS ALAMO CENOTAPH RELOCATION REQUEST

The Texas Historical Commission (THC) denied a permit request from the City of San Antonio to relocate "Spirit of Sacrifice," a 1936 cenotaph honoring Texian and Tejano soldiers who died at the 1836 Battle of the Alamo.

The final vote—held at a special commission meeting in September— was 12 to two against the request, with one member abstaining.

The THC approves any work permit pertaining to State Antiquities Landmarks, which the Alamo was designated as in 1983. As part of the Alamo Master Plan project, the THC has worked closely with the City of San Antonio, the Texas General Land Office, and the Alamo Trust since 2016. The THC has granted several Phase One permits involving sensitive archeological and other work done impacting the Long Barracks, church, and Alamo Plaza.

1936 "Spirit of Sacrifice" cenotaph.

The request to move the Cenotaph generated significant interest and opinions, as would be expected given the prominence of the Alamo around the world. Thousands of Texans including many elected officials shared their thoughts regarding the proposal through letters, phone calls, and emails, with more than 300 providing comments across more than six hours of online testimony.

THC Chairman John L. Nau, III said, "The Commission recognizes the significance of this decision and the importance of the Alamo Master Plan to the future of our state's most important historic site. The 15-member commission voted on this issue based on their individual determinations of what was in the best interest of Texas."

For more information, go to thc.texas.gov/news-events.

FIND UNIQUE HOLIDAY GIFTS AT STATE HISTORIC SITES IN TEXAS

If you're looking for unique and creative gifts for a Texas history buff, look no further than one of the THC's state historic sites.

Magoffin Home State Historic Site mug.

Sip hot chocolate in style this holiday season with wraparound mugs—each uniquely designed with artistic renderings of its corresponding state historic site. The mugs are available at the following sites: Caddo Mounds, Confederate Reunion Grounds,Eisenhower Birthplace, Fort McKavett, Fort Griffin, Fort Lancaster, Fulton Mansion, Landmark Inn, Mission Dolores, Magoffin Home, Sam Bell Maxey House, Sam Rayburn House, San Felipe de Austin, and Varner-Hogg Plantation.

T-shirts, a heritage tourist favorite, are available at the following state historic sites: Caddo Mounds, Confederate Reunion Grounds, Eisenhower Birthplace, Sam Bell Maxey House, San Felipe de Austin, and Starr Family Home.

This holiday season, take a step back in time as you shop for gifts while experiencing Texas history. These gifts and more timeless treasures are available at a state historic site near you. Visit texashistoricsites.com for holiday hours of operation and a guide to the sites throughout Texas.

For more information, visit thc.texas.gov/historicsites.

MAKE PLANS TO VIRTUALLY ATTEND REAL PLACES 2021

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the THC's Real Places conference—originally scheduled to be in Austin in February 2021—will shift to a virtual, online conference. The conference program is currently being determined, but is expected to follow well-received formats from the past, with sessions dedicated to heritage tourism, preservation practices, and continuing education.

The online format will provide new opportunities for preservationists, history buffs, and professionals to network with each other and reach new audiences that are unable to travel to the in-person event.

For more information and registration, visit realplaces.us.

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
REAL PLACES TELLING REAL STORIES

The Medallion
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, TX 78711-2276

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WHERE ON EARTH...IN TEXAS

KNOW YOUR TEXAS HISTORY? Put your skills to the test by identifying the pictured site! The first three people who correctly identify the location will receive a prize and be named in the next issue of *The Medallion*. Send your answer to: *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or email to medallion@thc.texas.gov. Limit one prize annually per contestant.

NEED A CLUE? This museum's exhibit offers a dramatic representation of Texas' bone-picking industry in the late 1800s, when frontiersmen collected bison skulls that had been undisturbed for decades.

ANSWER TO THE PHOTO FROM THE LAST ISSUE:

The photo at left is of Jackson Ranch Chapel and cemetery in San Juan, adjacent to the Rio Grande. In 1883 the congregation began meeting near this site on the Jackson Ranch, which was reportedly a refuge for runaway slaves on the southern "Underground Railroad."

Congratulations and (eventual) prizes go to the first readers to correctly respond: Rick Hernandez of San Antonio and Kenneth McGehee of Montgomery. Thanks to all who participated!