

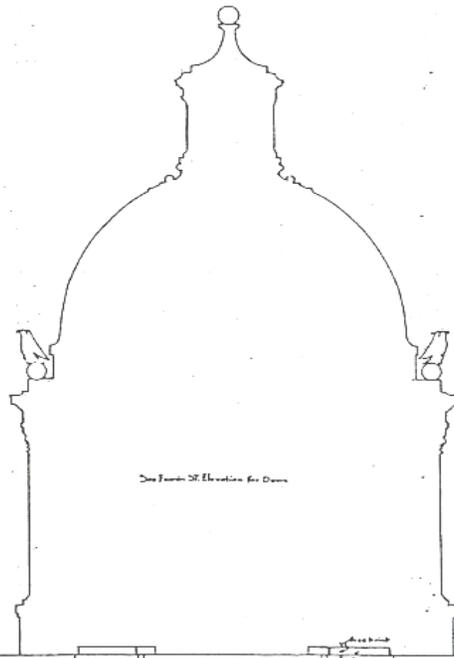
## Brief History

Since its official opening on November 15, 1910, and dedication on Texas Independence Day on March 2, 1911, the Harris County 1910 Courthouse has symbolized strength, justice, good government, and security.

For the next 30 years, as Houston and Harris County grew, county government and the courts also expanded. The courthouse soon ran out of space to conduct business. By 1940 Harris County was looking for alternatives to the 1910 Courthouse.

After the construction in 1952 of a new Criminal Courthouse with administrative offices at 301 San Jacinto, renovations in 1954 significantly altered the exterior and interior of the 1910 Courthouse. Among the most notable changes were the removal of the monumental stairs at the Fannin and San Jacinto entrances and the infilling of the central rotunda. Modernization continued with the introduction of mechanical units, ductwork, piping, conduits, and suspended ceilings with contemporary lighting fixtures, which in turn covered up and destroyed the ornamental plaster work. Much of the original marble, wooden doors, wood casings, and windows were also removed along with most of the interior hardware and furnishings.

In March 2003, Commissioners Court gave authorization for a master preservation plan to be prepared and submitted to the Texas Historical Commission which would define the current condition of the courthouse building and propose a scope of work to restore the building exterior and the public spaces within the interior to their 1910 condition.

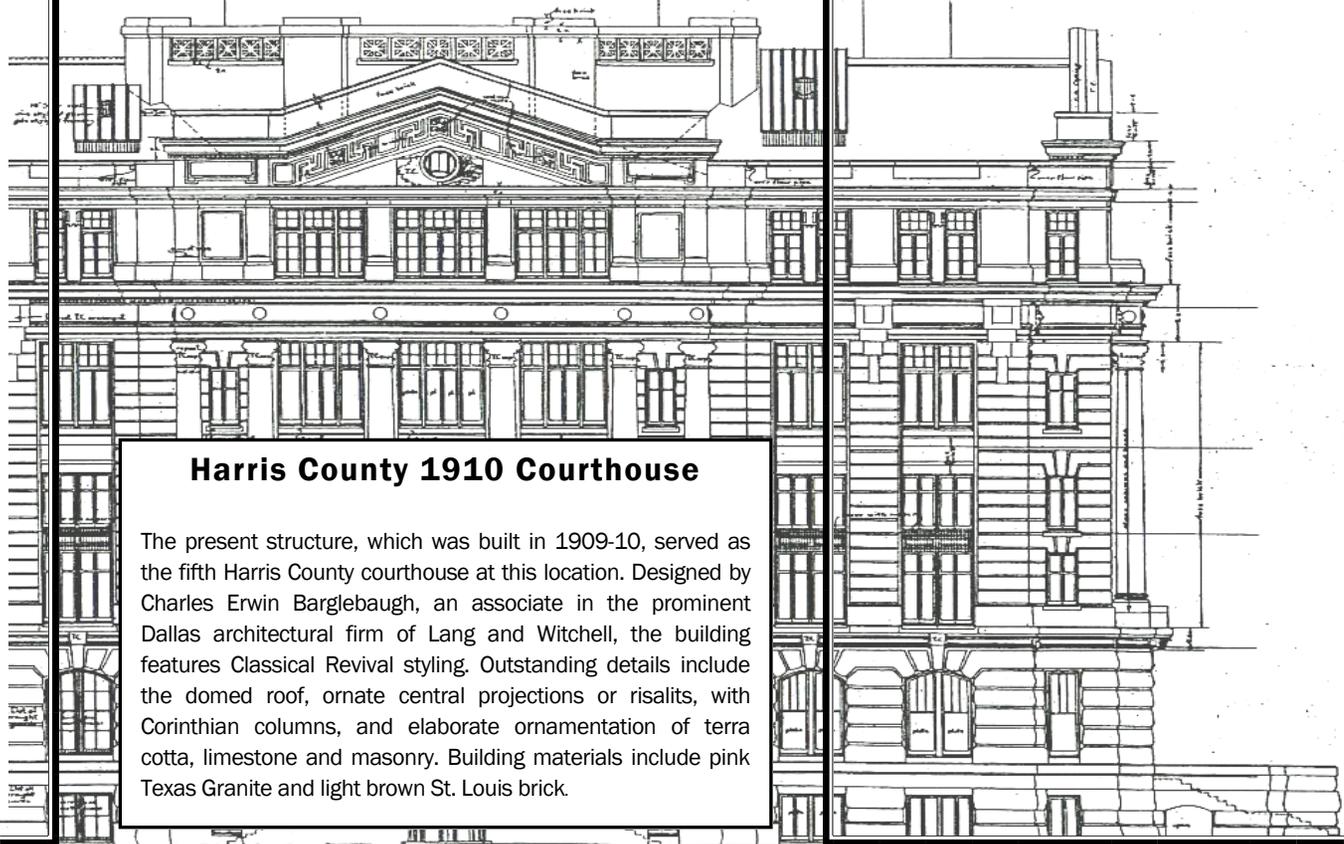


# A Self-Guided Tour of the Harris County 1910 Courthouse

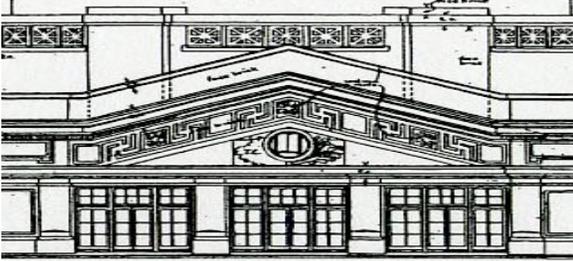
Dedicated March 2, 1911  
Rededicated August 23, 2011

## Harris County 1910 Courthouse

The present structure, which was built in 1909-10, served as the fifth Harris County courthouse at this location. Designed by Charles Erwin Bargebaugh, an associate in the prominent Dallas architectural firm of Lang and Witchell, the building features Classical Revival styling. Outstanding details include the domed roof, ornate central projections or risalits, with Corinthian columns, and elaborate ornamentation of terra cotta, limestone and masonry. Building materials include pink Texas Granite and light brown St. Louis brick.



# Touring the 1910 Courthouse



The work on the 1910 Courthouse is both a restoration and a renovation. The public areas of the building have been restored to their original configuration whenever possible, and the non-public areas of the building have received modern improvements.

The restored courthouse is now home to the First and Fourteenth Courts of Appeal.

General Notes :

- The pinnacle on the dome was removed during the 1920s. A replica pinnacle was constructed in 1993, and acquired a patina over the next 17 years until it was placed on the courthouse dome on March 14, 2010.
- The exact color of the original clay roof tiles (red) was unknown until photographs of a roof replacement in 1992 were discovered on the Internet.
- The original monumental stairs on both the Fannin and San Jacinto sides of the building were reconstructed, returning the main entrances back to the second floor.
- The replacement marble for the interior came from the same quarry near Tate, Georgia that supplied the marble over 100 years ago. Cherokee marble was used on the stair treads, and Creole marble was used on vertical surfaces, such as walls, columns, and stair risers.

## Sixth floor

The 6th floor was initially shell space. The county began to finish it out after the 1915 Hurricane damaged the courthouse dome.

- The floor on this level is the original unfinished concrete.
- The most ornate ceiling in the building, the ornamental ceiling on the South side at the elevator lobby, was recreated from a 4' x 5' section found during the demolition.
- The large plaster capital moldings at the four corners of the rotunda just below the skylight were recreated using motifs found in the adjacent wall moldings, since the center portion of all four had been demolished.
- No drawings or photographs of the original dome skylight were ever found. The design is based on similar skylight designs of the period, and uses colors found in the tile floor patterns. It is the focal point of the open rotunda.

## Fifth floor

In 1910, the 5th floor was the highest occupied floor; so the heavy ornamentation, plaster moldings, marble wall panels and floor tile stopped at the 5th Floor.

- Glass plank floors above the skylight ceilings of the courtrooms help recreate the light from the original light shafts.
- The east staircases have much of their original iron work, wooden hand rails, and marble treads. Replacements of the iron work were made from molds of the originals.
- Any painted wood is not original. Black granite thresholds usually indicate the boundary between the historic finishes and new non-historic finishes.

## Fourth floor

The 4th floor is a short floor, since it was originally the mezzanine used to access the balcony in the north courtroom and the conference area in the south courtroom.

- Notice the tracks cut into the sides of the marble columns. These are for the roll-down fire shutter doors that will close off the open rotunda in case of a fire.
- The height of the guardrails around the open rotunda was increased to 42" due to current building codes.
- Each floor of the building has a different border pattern of mosaic tiles. The floors were heavily trenched during the 1954 renovation, but were not eliminated.

## Third floor

The 3rd floor contains both original two-level courtrooms that have been restored to their 1910 appearance.

- The original Commissioners Courtroom on the west side of the rotunda is now used as the Attorney Waiting Room.
- The plaster patterns in the bow-front balcony of the north courtroom were recreated from historical photographs.

## Second Floor

The main building entrance is on the Fannin Street side.

- The vertical marble sides of the rotunda stairs are original, but many of the horizontal treads had to be replaced.
- The prism glass on the floor of the rotunda is based on the original design, allowing light to enter the first floor below.

## First Floor

Primarily mechanical and maintenance areas, the 1st floor contains the original vaults.

- The 1883 cornerstone from the 1884 courthouse was found buried in the northeast corner of the site.