



# PASTIMES

Newsletter of the Panhandle Archeological Society

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2019

## Hopes and Dreams

New Year

New Finds

New fulfillment of

Old Dreams

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## From the Editor's Desk

In the interest of historic archaeology, I wanted to look at Texas' famous county courthouses. First obstacle: Texas has 254 counties! Luckily, there is a page listing them all alphabetically. There are pages for individual counties, and even one listing them by the architects of the various courthouses.

When Texas was still part of Spain/Mexico, there were 23 *municipos*. They became *counties* with Independence in 1836. By 1860 the counties numbered 152. The Constitution of 1876 —Texas, not U.S.— decreed that counties must have at least 900 square miles and be laid out in grid fashion, like the original 54 (now 26) counties in the Panhandle. In general, the idea was that each county seat should be situated so that residents could get there, do their business and get home in a single day.

*With some courthouses dating from as far back as the mid-19th century, they were among the first permanent structures in many counties. With their brick and stone towers, ornate cupolas, and soaring domes, they represent an impressive collection of public architecture. Not surprisingly, Texas has more historic courthouses than any other state—242 are still in active government use. With decades or even centuries of use, most of these structures have significantly deteriorated due to inadequate maintenance, insensitive modifications, or weather-related damage.*

THC.Texas.gov



Although I will certainly not be able to visit all of them, modern technology allows me — and you!— to log on and look at all of them. I hope to run this series for a few months, probably until my skittish mind veers off to something else.

**If you have a favorite, let me know and I'll include it.**



Leonard Lane, architect,

lives and works in Houston.

[www.254texascourthouses.net](http://www.254texascourthouses.net)

*This website will document my travels, my photos, and my impressions of the Texas courthouse and its context. On May 9, 2016, nine years after I began my project, I visited Dalhart, the seat of Dallam County in the northwest corner of the Texas panhandle. That afternoon I completed my first circuit of the 254 Texas counties. At this point I've been from "A" to "Z"; from Anderson County to Zavala County.*

[leonrdlane@gmail.com](mailto:leonrdlane@gmail.com)

**PANHANDLE ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

**Minutes of December 8, 2018**

**STUDER BANQUET**

**Banquet cancelled because weatherman predicted ten-inch snowfall.**

**OOPS! Storm moved to Lubbock.**

**Better luck next year!**

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January 16 PAS Next Meeting, Amarillo Public Library, Downtown Branch, 7:00 p.m. Please join us for the pre-meeting dinner at Napoli's, 700 South Taylor, 5:00 p.m.

March 31-April 1 SWFAS meeting, Midland College, Midland.

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**PROGRAM INFORMATION**

Movie — professionally produced — about an early dig by group members. I believe Rolla said 1968, but don't hold me to that. Come to the meeting and be surprised!

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**PASTIMES —Your contributions.**

You have undoubtedly noticed that this issue is very short. That's because YOU haven't sent me anything to put into it! I'm more aware than anyone else that this looks like it must be MY newsletter. It isn't, although my ramblings have filled two pages. It is, or should be, a group production, by and for YOU. I'm just the editor, the compiler if you will. Somebody out there must be doing, or maybe researching, something or other that would enable him/her to write a short report.

BTW Archaeology cannot exist in a vacuum. If you want to make or find rock art, for example, you must know enough geology to enable you to find a rock! Same goes for flint tools. Material remains are only valuable insofar as you can fit them into the pattern!

**LOOK for it; FIND it; ANALYZE it; WRITE it up; SHARE with all of us!**



## THE FAMOUS COUNTY COURTHOUSES OF TEXAS

### Beginning with RANDALL COUNTY County Seat: CANYON

Randall County was created in August, 1876 from Bexar Land District, and officially organized in 1895. The organization process required 150 signatures, of which 45 were qualified residents. The other 105 were passers-by. The story goes that these included cowboys, horses, and mules from the nearby T Anchor ranch.

The county was named for Brig. Gen. Horace Randal. (The printer “corrected” the name by adding an “l” on the end). Randal was the first Texan to be entered at West Point, in 1849. He graduated July 1, 1854, became a Colonel of Cavalry and was assigned to the 28th Regiment of Texas on Feb. 12, 1862. However, Texas had already seceded from the Union in 1861, so Randal resigned his new commission and became a General in the army of the CSA. He was killed at the battle of Jenkins Ferry in Arkansas, April 30, 1864.



"A print of a painting by R. Russell Brown depicting the 1908 Randall County courthouse in its original condition." - [Terry Jeanson](#), September 2007 photo

The new county needed a repository for its records, which was met by the construction of a modest two-room frame building. This “courthouse” also served as a church, community center, and dance hall. It became a school when the new courthouse was built. Still standing, the 1908-9 building is a three-story, brick and stone Classical Revival building, complete with clock tower on top. The designer was Architect Robert G. Kirsch. A day-long party was held to officially celebrate the dedication, July 14, 1909.

By 1945, the roof had begun leaking, and in order to repair it, the clock tower was removed. In another 20 years, it was felt that the by-then-old building was no longer adequate for the county’s needs, so architects and engineers Clayton B. Shiver and Russell A. Megert were hired in 1968 to design another one. They came up with a pair of stunningly inappropriate lean-tos, and records and offices were moved into the new additions. In 2010, with the assistance of the State Historical Society, the addition was torn down and the clock tower rebuilt. County business was moved to still another site, a former WalMart. The interior of the 1909 building awaits funds for renewal.



The 1968 Randall County Courthouse, one on north and south sides of 1908 edifice. [Terry Jeanson](#),



Randall County Justice Center north of town, east of US 87 [Terry Jeanson](#), August 2012