

This Old Courthouse

The Official Newsletter of the Comal County Courthouse Restoration

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Removal of Additions



Comal County Courthouse After Removal of the 1951 Addition

In compliance with the Texas Historic Commission, who authorized a three million dollar grant for the restoration of the Comal County Courthouse, the building is required to be returned to its original 1898 appearance. Over the past several months, workers have been preparing the building for the removal of the three additions. As of recently, the addition built in 1951, originally used as the County Clerk's Records Vault, has been completely removed. The original exterior northeast entrance is once again visible for the first time in over 50 years.

Workers had to take careful measures in order to remove this addition. The original granite columns are being protected from surrounding construction by lumber sheathing.

Workers are taking the same precautions to remove the 20 foot extension off of the District Courtroom. This addition, added in 1931, the same time as the jail addition, is in the process of coming down. Temporary shoring had to be installed in order to provide support for the building as the addition is removed. A provisional wall was also built to provide extra support for the courtroom, as well as protect it from external elements.

The removal of the jail addition is scheduled to be completed next month. After these additions are removed, the "new" exterior Courthouse wall will be rebuilt using the salvaged stones that were removed and stored.

First Floor Removal



This photo shows a hallway of the first floor after a section of the floor was removed. Here you can see the original foundation structure that was used for support. The original first floor had to be removed due to corrosion and deterioration.



Construction workers are removing the concrete foundation of the first floor. Their next step will be to excavate for a larger basement.



The floor in this room has been completely removed. Workers will install new underpinning and a new concrete foundation once the excavation process has been completed.



With the removal of the first floor, you can clearly see the base of one of the Courthouse's columns, a main area of support.



This photograph shows a section of the first floor that has been removed, exposing existing structural steel, as well as the existing basement.



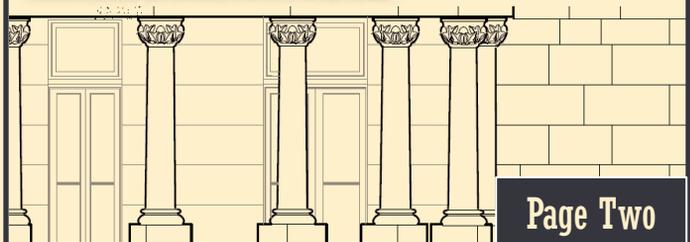
Here you can see what has to be done for the first floor removal: Original wood flooring was taken out and stored, then workers remove the concrete slab until only the underpinning remains.

About this publication...

Comal County publishes this newsletter monthly to provide information on the current restoration effort of the Comal County Courthouse.

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Air Conditioning during Construction

A temporary air conditioning unit has been installed for the duration of the Courthouse Restoration for several reasons. It is not only intended to provide a comfortable working environment, but also to help preserve the work being done to the Courthouse. Due to work in progress, the interior of the building is more exposed to elements such as moisture. The masonry can easily soak up any moisture which enters the building and can cause future problems once it comes time to completing the finishing touches, such as painting the interior walls. If the masonry has absorbed moisture, paint and other surface finishing treatments will not adhere properly and could flake and peel. The air conditioning unit controls the humidity level to ensure that the existing masonry substrate is adequately dry.



The air conditioning unit provides a comfortable working environment for the RBR construction team and keeps the humidity out of the building.



Air conditioning entering temporary 2nd Floor construction office.

Commissioners Court Corner

The Comal County Commissioners Court is actively involved with the Courthouse Restoration. Krause attends Commissioners Court meetings held every week and receives up-to-date information about the status and progress workers are making. In addition, he attends many of the bi-weekly Courthouse Restoration Owner's Meetings. At these meetings, County staff, the project architect, and contractor project supervisors discuss the work being done, the work that is to be completed, and all of the fine details in between.

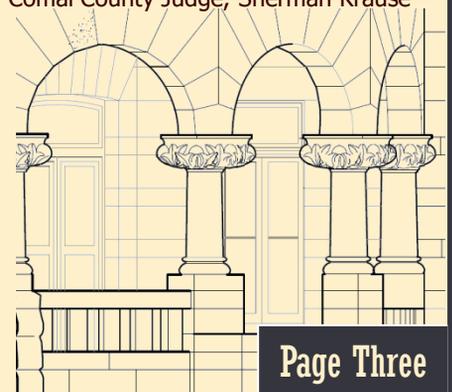
Judge Krause, along with other members of Commissioners Court, hired RBR Construction to work on the Courthouse. Krause is pleased with the work they are doing, and, overall, the decision that was made to hire them. "They seem to be very professional and diligent with the work they do."

The Judge also pointed out that he looks forward to the completion of this great Comal County structure and said, "...it will be good to have this building back in the center of the county government. We will once again be able to provide office space for County officials and employees in this historic landmark of Comal County."

He also is eager to see the use of the restored District Courtroom for the Commissioners Court meetings. "It will be a privilege to hold a Commissioners Court meeting where so much historic County government actions have taken place."



Comal County Judge, Sherman Krause



Meet the Project Manager

Bill Wilson is the Sr. Project Manager with RBR Construction, Inc that has been assigned to the Comal County Courthouse Restoration Project. Bill has been working in the construction industry for the past 40 years with historic restoration experience during the past 11 years. He has been employed with RBR for last 2 1/2 years

Concerning historic restoration experience, Bill says "I have an association with Texas Historic Commission and have known and worked with them for the last 12 years."

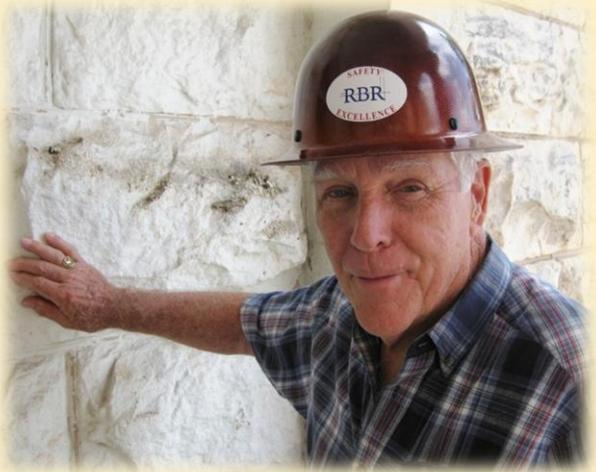
Bill enjoys working with "special" courthouses and he says "this courthouse holds fond memories, it is unique, as most of architect J. Riley Gordon's courthouses are. You can always tell his apart from others."

Bill likes the prospect of finding hidden historic artifacts and building features. He says, "An exciting aspect is the possibility of discovery. Over the years, we have found all sorts of treasures in the basements of these buildings. Additionally, the way they built all of these courthouses is really amazing."

He remarks, "It is amazing how, even after 100 years the courthouse is still structurally sound. The original builders took their time and didn't cut corners. They put their life's blood in to these structures. Its a work of art."

Concerning the restoration effort, he says, "You can see the existing , original craftsmanship...and, today, it takes an equally skilled craftsman to take it back to the original state. To restore this Courthouse, we often need to do things in an old world way."

"These are wonderful pieces of history that need to be preserved and not torn down."



A Glimpse Back In Time



This photograph shows a bottle that was excavated from the basement of the Comal County Courthouse. The bottle reads "St. Jacobs Oil" and it's claim is that " It Conquers Pain - Strong, Safe, Sure, The Old Monk Cure." It dates back to the late 1800s.

