

This Old Courthouse

June 2011

The Official Newsletter of the Comal County Courthouse Restoration

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Comal Hosts its First “Hard Hat” Tour of the Courthouse Restoration Effort



Group Tour of the Comal County Courthouse

On Saturday, May 21, 2011, Comal County held its first public tour of the Courthouse restoration effort. As part of Preservation Month, the City of New Braunfels assisted with the tour. Cherise Bell, the City’s Historic Preservation Officer, organized the free tour and did most of the work scheduling and taking reservations. The “Hard Hat Tour” was open to the public and gave citizens the opportunity to learn more about this current work in progress. Assisted by Rob Dooley, RBR Construction Superintendent, the tours covered the major areas where work is being done on each level of the Courthouse, including the removal of a section of the third floor, where a balcony is to be put back in place.

Each tour lasted approximately 30 minutes, and consisted of groups of about ten hard-hatted guests. All of the participants showed a positive response to the tour.

The current and future work was well explained and clearly described how much effort is being put into this restoration project. Careful measures are being taken to preserve any historical items such as original wood flooring, wood doorway treatments, widow casings and antique tile.

Overall, the tour was a huge success. Cherise Bell, along with County Engineer, Tom Hornseth, led the tours. Participants were grateful for the opportunity to learn more about the work being done in their community. Future tours will be organized as more progress is made to the Courthouse. Please see the next page for additional images.

"Hard Hat" Tour Photos



Cherise Bell takes the first group on the tour. Here she is pointing out the 1931 and 1952 additions that are being removed.



Cherise describes how the exterior limestone finishes will be restored.



Here people are climbing the stairs to examine the bell tower. Not too many people have been up there.



Tom Hornseth is showing one of the large historic photographs that were positioned throughout the tour. The photos showed how the Courthouse looked in 1898.



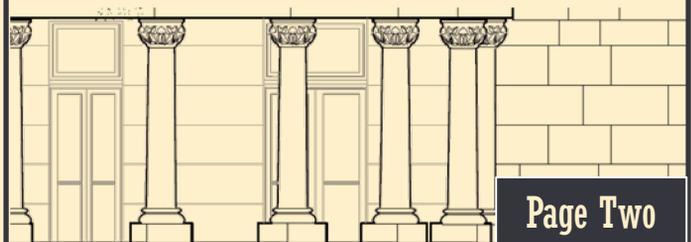
In this image, Tom is describing how all of the internal electrical, communications wiring, plumbing, and heating/air conditioning facilities are being completely removed and updated to modern standards. The work involves "trenching" into the existing masonry walls to run new conduit and other improvements.

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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All images and text by Tom Hornseth, Comal County Engineer and Nicci Krause, Public Relations Intern



Where did the stones go?



As part of the restoration process, the County removed the 1931 and 1952 additions. These additions were covered with limestone blocks that closely matched the original 1898 Courthouse. The County wanted to preserve these stones for future projects. The stones were carefully removed and cleaned. They were then packed with foam separations onto pallets. The pallets were wrapped in plastic and hauled to a County-owned storage building in Bulverde. The County hopes to incorporate these building materials into future County facilities.



A crane carefully removes the limestone blocks from the exterior of the fully-scaffold addition.



Interestingly, the stone masons individually numbered each limestone piece!



The stones are packed and ready to go.

Commissioner's Court Corner

Comal County Commissioner Jan Kennedy has been greatly involved in the Courthouse Restoration Project. Along with the support she received from the County, Kennedy "spearheaded" a successful grant request from the Texas Historic Commission. Commissioner Kennedy put much effort into this project and, as a result, has made the restoration a reality.

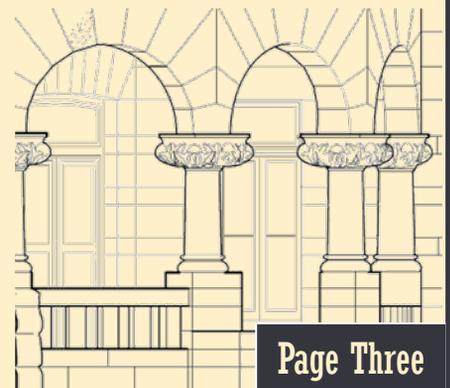
"I could not be more pleased with the progress," Kennedy said. "I really want to thank everyone who is involved." Kennedy looks forward to seeing the Courthouse restored to its "original 1898 glory," and is most excited about the new courtroom, which will be two levels once the project is complete.

A requirement set forth by the Texas Historic Commission states that the Courthouse must be restored to its original state. Commissioner Kennedy noted how much research has gone into the restoration effort. "The exterior and interior will be the same (as its original 1898 appearance)," Kennedy said, so historic methods and compatible materials are being used.

Commissioner Kennedy is staying involved with progress by "peeping in" the courthouse and looking at any updated pictures. She tries to visit once a week to see the hard work being put into the restoration. After her effort in the grant process, her role in the project now, as she put it, is to "sit back and enjoy the completion."



Comal Commissioner Jan Kennedy



Meet the Project Superintendent



Rob Dooley, the Superintendent for RBR Construction, Inc. at the Courthouse Restoration project has 13 years of heavy construction experience. He has been with RBR for the past five years and is grateful for the opportunity they, along with Comal County, have given him to work on this great restoration project.

As Superintendent, Dooley's role is to oversee the construction project as well as the various trades and workers. He described the Comal County Courthouse restoration as having much more detail than other projects.

"This is more interesting and historical," said Dooley. "Everything is more delicate...it takes more time." The men working at the construction site for the restoration are, according to Dooley, very professional. He described them as "top-notch" and said he feels lucky to be working with such a well qualified group of men. The courtroom seems to be what people are looking forward to the most. It will be restored to its original form, consisting of two stories, a balcony, and archways above the judge's bench.

Rob is very excited about the progress being made. "I'm excited to see the balcony recreated." The addition to the third floor has been removed, and the restoration to the courtroom is well underway. He also enjoys discovering hidden historical elements.



A Glimpse Back In Time



This historic photograph shows the Comal County Courthouse in its original 1898 configuration. The image depicts a parade moving around the New Braunfels Plaza. The Landa House can be seen in the background.

In what year was this picture taken and what was the event?

