

# FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

## *ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE*



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### Abstract: **FBC Courthouse Renovation 2014**

The construction phase of the rehabilitation of the historic Fort Bend County Courthouse began in January of 2013 and included the removal of the 1952 addition of two one story additions on either side of the Liberty Street entrance and restored the building to its 1935 appearance. The historic courthouse was originally built in 1909. The total cost of the project was \$5.8 million. The State awarded a small planning grant and the George Foundation generously contributed \$2 million to the restoration.

Don Brady, Director, FBC Facilities Management & Planning from 2005-2014, oversaw the 2013 reconstruction of the Historic Courthouse and provided a tour of the way construction and repairs were made in the early years as compared to today's standards. The roof was replaced; repairs to the clock and dome were made; upgrade to the HVAC system, as well as repair to the Statute of Lady Liberty. Don shared photos and defined terms for tools, equipment & construction.

County Judge Robert Hebert provides first hand knowledge of the functionality of offices within the courthouse and landmarks surrounding the courthouse as well as historical background. Citizens are encouraged to take the opportunity to tour the building.

24 Pages

⇓ *Scroll down for Key Words from the Interview.* ⇓

## Interview Summary

### People (in order mentioned in interview)

Harry S. Truman, US President 1945-1952

D. R. Peareson, FBC County Judge 1905-1909

### Places / Businesses

Fort Bend County Justice Center

Judge's Chambers – a room or office wherein he or she hears motions, signs papers, and performs other tasks pertaining to his or her office when a session of the court, such as a trial, is not being held.

Southwestern Clock and Museum, Austin, Texas

Austin, Texas

### Terms

**Air ducts** – an enclosure, usually of sheet metal, that conducts heated or conditioned air.

**Apse** – An apse is a rounded end of a building, most often a basilica or a church, but sometimes a private house or a Roman bath building.

**Artisans** – persons skilled at making things by hand.

**Atrium** – an open area inside a tall building that has windows to let light in from above.

**Beam supports** – squared-off logs or large, oblong pieces of timber, metal, or stone used especially as a horizontal support in construction.

**Cladding** – the act or process of bonding one metal to another, usually to protect the inner metal from corrosion.

**Coal tar** – A viscous black liquid containing numerous organic compounds that is obtained by the destructive distillation of coal and used as a roofing, waterproofing, and insulating compound.

**Crawlspace** – (in a building) an area accessible by crawling, having a clearance less than human height, for access to plumbing or wiring, storage, etc.

**Epoxy** – any of a class of resins derived by polymerization from epoxides: used chiefly in adhesives, coatings, electrical insulation, solder mix, and castings.

**Fan coil unit** – a simple device consisting of a heating and/or cooling heat exchanger or 'coil' and fan. It is part of an HVAC system found in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings.

Sugar Land, Texas

Wessendorff Lumber Yard – Page 12, Richmond, Texas

Highway 90 between Sugar Land and Richmond, Texas

Richmond, Texas

The White House, Washington, D. C.

Colorado County Courthouse, Texas

### Events

1925 The Chart House built

Jaybird/woodpecker" business – armed conflict between opposing Fort Bend County political factions in 1889.

**Flashing** – a protective sheet metal detail, usually of lead or copper, covering a joint or surface which may be exposed to rain penetration.

**Flue** – a tube, pipe, or shaft for the passage of smoke, hot air, exhaust fumes, etc., esp. in a chimney.

**Freon** – Freon is the cooling agent used in most air conditioning systems. Every air conditioning system needs a refrigerant (also called a coolant) that actually creates the cool air – that's the role of Freon.

**Hidden Conditions** – an unknown and hidden, concealed, or latent physical condition encountered at a site that differs materially from the reasonably anticipated conditions.

**Lady of Liberty** – statue mounted atop the Fort Bend County courthouse.

**Lightning rod** – a rod that is placed on a building and connected with the ground below to protect the building from being damaged by lightning.

**Masonic Cornerstone** (or foundation stone) concept is derived from the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, important since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure. Masonic Lodges are often invited to perform a cornerstone ceremony.

Over time a cornerstone became a ceremonial masonry stone, or replica, set in a prominent location on the outside of a building, with an inscription on the stone indicating the construction dates of the building and the names of architect, builder

**Oxidized** – to convert (an element) into an oxide; combine with oxygen; to cover with a coating of oxide or rust.

**Parapet wall** – A parapet wall is a low protective structural layer that is built adjacent to a roof that provides continuity and support in terms of water, air, vapor and thermal control. The regulation of these factors helps prevent corrosion and degradation of the roof or some other pre-built adjacent structure.

**Patina** – a film or incrustation, usually green, produced by oxidation on these surface of old bronze and often esteemed as being of ornamental value.

**Rebar** – a steel rod with ridges for use in reinforced concrete.

**Scupper** – a drainage device in the form of an outlet through a wall, parapet wall or raised roof edge typically lined with a sheet-metal sleeve.

**Skylight windows** – windows placed in a roof or ceiling to admit daylight.

**Soldier bricks** – a row of bricks all oriented in the same direction which have been placed on their sides so that the long, narrow side of the brick shows. The idea behind the name is that when one looks at the long narrow side of a brick, it is supposed to resemble a soldier standing at attention. A soldier course can be laid horizontally or perpendicularly in relation to another course of bricks, with soldier courses commonly being used for edging.

**Spall** – a fragment broken off from the edge or face of stone or ore and having at least one thin edge.

**Splotchy** – an irregularly shaped spot, stain, or colored area.

**Spread footing** – A footing that transmits a load from columns to the supporting soil. If the soil is weak or the column load is heavy, isolated spread footings must be larger.

**State-of-the-art** – the latest and most sophisticated or advanced stage of a technology, art, or science.

**Terracotta** – hollow casting that was popular with public buildings.