

Historic Texas Jailhouses: Romanesque Revival, Identity, and Reform

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ABSTRACT

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(Under the Direction of Bernard L. Herman)

Even though jailhouses dominate the skyline of many small Texas towns, not much work has been done on what those buildings mean in the historic context in which they were built. These jailhouses held specific meanings for small Texas communities and their townspeople that also helped to shape present day society. Texas jailhouse architecture between 1880 and 1910 reflected the desire to be modern, the desire for changes in prison reform, and the position of women and family in a newly civilized society.

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In the middle of Brady, Texas, sits a magnificent stone courthouse. (Fig 1) Built in 1900, the Romanesque Revival structure was recently completely renovated, and stands proudly as the focal point of the town square. Slightly over a block away, tucked into a side street behind the main downtown shopping district, another large Romanesque Revival building stands guard over the town. The two impressive buildings are the largest in town, and dominate the skyline. The second structure was the McCulloch County Jail from 1910 to 1974. (Fig 2) It looks like a fortress on the outside, suggesting that the function of the building during its jail years was to impose order, keeping certain people outside and others inside. In addition to housing prison cells on the upper floors, the inside of the jail housed the sheriff and his family, allowing two very different parts of Texas life to intersect beneath the castellated roof. Most of the buildings in these small towns are one to two story houses and commercial buildings. The only exceptions are the older public buildings, typically built between 1880 and 1910. These older buildings once housed schools, sanitariums, courthouses, and jailhouses. Public buildings like these showed their importance partially by their impressive size.

Folklorists study buildings because they can tell us about communities and their inhabitants. By examining buildings and the way communities use them and respond to them, we can find out information about people and their values. Buildings can show what values were important to a group of people. For example, schools that were built in this time period showed changing attitudes toward education and child rearing. The fact that the buildings were large and stood over the community showed that education

was valued. ¹The Romanesque Revival jailhouses were an important part of Texas society in the late 1800s, and they conveyed some of the values that white, predominantly Protestant Anglo, Texan settlers found most important. Jailhouses helped a community create an identity that connected townspeople and the buildings were symbols that those townspeople could read and understand. By looking at jails and the surrounding landscape and political and social environment in the late 1800s and early 1900s, we can see patterns of societal values across Texas that are important in determining how people lived during that time, and what they felt were important parts of becoming a civilized society in place recently seen as wild frontier. Buildings can show patterns of creative and social behavior that were affected by different circumstances in a specific time period and in a specific place. This is a good time to also point out that here we will be examining jails, and not penitentiaries. Penitentiaries are larger state or federally run prisons that often house criminals serving long sentences, while a jail tends to be a place for people awaiting sentencing or serving shorter sentences for less serious crimes.

The McCullough County Jail was built at the end of a thirty-year stretch of Romanesque Revival jailhouse building. The McCulloch County Jail's exterior is made of solid red brick, and the roofline is castellated. The windows on all floors are the typical rounded arches of the Romanesque Revival. The first floor, currently a museum, was the living quarters for the sheriff and his family. Typically in the jails, and even in Texas jails of similar architectural styles, there were several bedrooms, a kitchen, and a living

¹America at Work, America at Leisure, "America at School," <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awlhtml/awlscho.html>.

area for the family. In this particular jail, the door leading to the cells was in a bedroom. The McCulloch County Jail had two upper floors that housed cells, accessed by a narrow, winding metal staircase. The third floor is where the drunk tank was located, and also home to the solitary confinement cell. (Fig. 3, 4) This floor also had access to a rooftop catwalk that was sometimes used to allow prisoners to get fresh air and exercise. The gallows was on the second floor, but was never used.

Numerous towns across Texas had similar jailhouses that followed the same pattern. There were Romanesque Revival jails in all regions of Texas, stretching from Hereford in the west to Palestine in the east and Angleton in the southeast. These jails were built in response to a series of events that began with Texas' early lawlessness and ended with the state allocating money for the construction of suitable jails that replaced earlier, hastily built, often wooden structures. Architecture from across the country influenced the style of these structures, and events and social issues in Texas changed the way people thought about civic buildings. Here I will examine the jailhouses in the context of their time and place, and look at how prevailing ideas about prison reform and woman were revealed in the architectural style of the jails. Texas jailhouse architecture between 1880 and 1910 reflected the desire to be modern, the desire for changes in prison reform, and the position of women and family in a newly civilized society.

A Portrait of Late 19th Century Texas

Texas was a quickly growing state in the second half of the nineteenth century. People traveled from across the nation and around the world looking for new land for farming, especially cotton. This dramatically increased the population across Texas as they settled new farms and ranches wherever there was available land. In 1850, the population of white settlers was 21,592. In a United States Census just ten years later, the population had increased to over 600,000. The slave population in the state saw a 214% increase during the decade, with numbers rising from 58,161 to 182,566.² Over 95% of the white population was involved in some form of agricultural production, and almost all lived in just two-thirds of the state.³ The number of acres in agriculture doubled in the decade prior to the Civil War.⁴ Gradually, people began searching for less crowded areas in the central and western portions of the state.

Populations after the Civil War fluctuated. People were on the move after the fighting ended. Emancipated African-Americans fled to places in Texas they felt would allow them to make the most of their newfound freedom. The less populated areas of the frontier were inhabited by bands of men who were Civil War draft dodgers or

²Texas State Historical Association, "Antebellum Texas,"
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/npa01>.

³David G. McComb, *Texas: A Modern History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 64. For more information, see Texas State Historical Association,
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/npa01>.

⁴McComb, 64.

deserters, but these areas were seeing an increase in the population of white settlers.⁵ Land in Texas was still plentiful and many families were in search of a place to call their own. Communities cropped up all over the eastern and central portions of Texas, providing services that the new settlements needed. These services ranged from banks to dry goods stores to hotels. The new communities also became “centers for theater, education, law, newspapers, and religion.”⁶ With more and more people settling these communities, courthouses and jails were also added to the landscape to house and manage criminals, and local law enforcement was becoming more adept at handling criminal activity in the new communities, helping make residents feel safe.

The white settlers were not the first, or the only residents in Texas. Several Indian tribes lived in the region, and there were numerous Mexican ranches and villages. While the population in 1850 was already a majority white, including 53% that were of Anglo origins, there were still small but significant numbers of Native Americans and Mexicans. Mexicans accounted for 6.5% of the population, and an unknown number of Native Americans lived in Texas, predominantly in the southernmost counties.⁷ The Anglo population was growing, causing displacement of the minority populations that were steadily shrinking. (Map 1)

⁵Texas State Libraries and Archives Commission, “Under the Rebel Flag: Life in Texas During the Civil War,” http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/exhibits/civilwar/1863_2.html.

⁶McComb, 66-67.

⁷Terry G. Jordan, “A Century and a Half of Ethnic Change in Texas, 1836-1986,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 89, No. 4 (Apr., 1986), 388, 418. Jordan has examined several different sources to determine the populations of different groups through 1986. He examines the fluctuations of the white and Mexican populations over time.

Religious differences were also a factor in the population shift in Texas. The Native American and Mexican populations were either Catholic or of Native American religions. By 1850, most Native Americans in Texas had been converted to Catholicism by Spanish missionaries. The Spanish had built about 40 missions, but by 1800, most were in disarray. Even so, to gain permission to settle in Mexican Texas, a person had to accept Catholicism as their faith of choice. Because economic opportunities in the region were plentiful, many white settlers professed themselves as Catholic just to be allowed to settle the area. Sam Houston did this in 1833. Col. John Hawkins wrote to Stephen Austin in 1824, saying, "I can be as good a Christian there [Texas] as I can here [Missouri]. It is only a name anyhow."⁸

By the time the Mexican War for Independence from 1810-21 to about 1835, the number of priests in Texas declined by 50%. This eventually led to a period of religious apathy, but by the 1840s, religious groups such as the Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians had established themselves in Texas. By 1860, all of the Protestant churches had Sunday Schools, and camp revivals were meeting the social needs of small town white Americans. The revivals lasted for two to four weeks, and brought a much-needed break to the monotony of small town life. Catholicism was no longer the most common religion in the area. In fact, in some places, it was all but obliterated by the new Protestant churches and Anglo and other white American

⁸Texas State Historical Association, "Religion,"
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/izrdf>.

settlers who, as noted above, seriously out numbered the Mexican and Native American populations by 1850. ⁹

Between 1880 and 1900, even more changes were taking place in Texas, and these changes were helping to shape the Texas we know today. This is the time period when the Romanesque Revival jails were being built across the Texas landscape. The Industrial Revolution made its mark on Texas by 1880, and other factors were changing the way Texans worked and did business. The closing of the range and the start of commercial farming were important shifts in agricultural practices. The railroad brought easier access to the rest of the nation. These changes were occurring at a startling pace, and the early 1900s were a time of social change brought on by these radically changing new processes, and new forms of relationships were required for successful navigating of the new, more “modern” Texas. ¹⁰

Richard R. Flores argues in *Remembering the Alamo* that these changes also brought about a new social hierarchy for Texas that was divided into both ethnic and class divisions. He uses the example of the rancher and his workers, and how eventually the social divide between them could not be ignored.¹¹ The rancher was able to earn more money, eventually being able to buy more material goods, land, and equipment. The addition of new land and equipment allowed the rancher to earn even more money. The farm or ranch worker often was paid the same no matter how much the rancher

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Richard R. Flores, *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol* (Austin: University of Austin Press, 2002), 1.

¹¹Ibid, 2.

earned. This kept the worker in the same social and financial position throughout his employment. Flores argues that capitalism is a major sign of a place becoming modern. Flores defines modern as being the process by which earlier social and cultural complexes are changed through different means into entirely new forms. The capitalist economy created classes of wealthy citizens with good paying jobs, while the predominantly Mexican minority had skilled, but low paying jobs. Divisions also extended into race and ethnicity, with the wealthier being mostly white and the lower classes being mostly minorities.¹² Capitalism was a force in the transition to “modern” commercial farming and changes in local farming and ranching practices in Texas. Using Flores’ rancher/worker example again, we can see how this switch affected wealthy Anglo American ranchers and their largely Mexican workers. The ranchers became wealthier while the workers remained the same, causing a social gap that was reinforced again and again, creating class differences that could not be overcome.¹³ Capitalism caused this type of social gap between owners and workers in many places, not just Texas.

Anglo Texans were the major players in the process of creating what Flores refers to as the Texas Modern, or Texas after the new social forms had been established. They settled in communities all across Texas with other groups of white Protestants that had similar needs and desires. Safety and crime control, which included the building of improved jails, were important parts of the development of these

¹²Ibid, 2-4.

¹³Ibid, 4. Flores has an in depth discussion on how the Mexican population fared in Texas. Terry G. Jordan’s article “Population Origins in Texas, 1850” provides a broader view of the populations in Texas in 1850 and later.

communities from the very beginning of westward settlement, so Texas has a long and interesting history of jail building, law enforcement, and crime control.

Texas and Law Enforcement

The San Saba County jail was built in 1884 (figure 5). It is built of local blue limestone and has a rusticated exterior and rounded arches on many of its windows, showing a Romanesque Revival influence. The roof is flat, though, suggesting a mix with an Italianate style. The building is important because it is the oldest continuously operated jail in Texas today. The history of the building encompasses many periods of Texas law enforcement, including a very wild period in the 1880s and 1890s when ranchers and cattle thieves battled each other. Several mysterious lynchings and murders took place before the county finally began to see peaceful times.¹⁴ Today, visitors to San Saba can still see prisoners walking in the fenced yard. Even though the San Saba County jail is the oldest in Texas, there were jails of a much different kind earlier in the 1800s.

In the early days of the Republic of Texas, hostile Indians, Mexican bandits, and outlaws of all types marauded their way through the countryside. New white settlers to the area were concerned for their safety, and pushed for better law enforcement. They felt a need for a large-scale law enforcement operation, and in 1835, the Texas Rangers were formally organized using an organizational structure that was more cost effective than supporting an army. The initial company was made up of twenty-five lawmen

¹⁴Blackburn, 294.

whose primary purpose was to protect the white settlers from the dangers of living in the Texas frontier.¹⁵

The Mexican War and annexation of Texas to the United States in the mid-1840s caused a shift in law enforcement. For ten years after the Mexican War, United States troops provided protection. In 1861, Texas seceded from the United States, and it was once again the job of the Texas Rangers to protect the Texas landscape. They occupied abandoned forts as both Texas and Texans became part of the Confederacy.¹⁶ Until the Civil War ended, the Rangers were a large part of law enforcement in Texas. During the years up to the Civil War, the Texas landscape had changed from the previous space the Rangers had protected. The white population had continued to grow, and more parts of Texas had been settled.

The Texas Rangers continued providing this protection to the Texas frontier until they were disbanded by the United States after the Civil War. There was no civil government, and this time period became one of widespread lawlessness and corruption.¹⁷ All vestiges of the Confederate government had disappeared with news of the Confederate surrender, allowing armed bands of highwaymen to become active all over Texas. Texas government and military leaders fled into Mexico, leaving remaining citizens panic stricken and scared. The lack of government continued until President

¹⁵Texas Ranger Law Enforcement Association, "History," www.texasrangers.org/history.asp.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, 75.

Johnson demanded that a provisional governor call a convention to restore civil government and constitutional relations between Texas and the national government.¹⁸

Reconstruction marked a transition period for Texas. The Civil War had brought financial troubles to the region and the building of railroads and public buildings came to a halt. In 1869, E.J. Davis was elected governor. Davis, a Republican, was pro-Reconstruction. He was upset by the conditions of the Texas jails, which at this time were mainly poorly constructed wooden structures. They were not escape-proof, and often succumbed to fires. Davis also noticed a need for a statewide police force, and organized one to try to control the wilder populations. Unfortunately, this police force was corrupt, and the situation in Texas became worse. The corruption included members of the force committing crimes that for a long time went widely unnoticed. For example, Adj. Gen. James Davidson embezzled \$37,000 in state funds, and Capt. Jack Helm was accused of murdering prisoners.¹⁹ Law enforcement was inadequate and limited with this new police force, and law enforcement officers were prejudiced against anyone who had served in the Confederate army.

Texas still had a reputation for being backwards in the mid-1800s. Shapley P. Ross, an Indian fighter and the father of a future governor, moved his family to Texas, much to the dismay of other family members. Texas had a reputation that was a deterrent to most migrants. One relative of Ross' said, "Ah well, let him go. In a few years he will come back from Texas in an old cart drawn by a crop-eared mule, and he

¹⁸ Texas Military Forces Museum,
<http://www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org/wortham/4345.htm>.

¹⁹ Blackburn, 7.

will be followed by a gang of yellow dogs covered with mange. In that cart, and walking behind it, will sit a set of ignorant boobies, who would not know a schoolhouse from a hog pen or a schoolmaster from a Hottentot.”²⁰ This statement echoed the sentiment of many people’s feelings about Texas. Despite some of Texas’ largest cities, Dallas and Houston for example, becoming cultural centers, Texas continued to have this backwoods reputation and other Americans felt the state was to be avoided if one was to make anything respectable of themselves.

Texans needed to make their communities safe to promote a positive reputation. The first step toward that goal was to bring law and order to the Texas frontier. There was a great need for jails, so much so that often the jail was built before the courthouse. In Anderson County, an early jail was built in 1846. At this time they were still renting a house to use as a courthouse.²¹ The Texas Rangers also were active again. In June 1870, the legislature authorized the government to raise twenty companies of Texas Rangers to provide protection. The job of the Rangers soon extended to dealing with Mexican bandits and cattle rustlers as well as their Indian duties. More communities also had better local law enforcement, but the current jails were often found lacking and became the subject for improvement. Unfortunately, the early 1870s marked difficult financial times, and a corrupt state government also still plagued Texas. This created limitations in the ability to build stronger jails. The corrupt state police force was disbanded in 1873, and a bill in 1874 allowed the Rangers to form more companies and again

²⁰ Ibid, 67-68.

²¹ Blackburn, 3.

provide protection, but still better jail structures were needed to house the increasing number of prisoners.²²

The decade of the 1880s was a busy time in Texas history. The 1880 census showed a population of over 1.5 million people. Yet, in many places, Texas was still seen by many as a wild frontier, particular in more rural areas outside of cities like San Antonio. Gunfights took place. Family feuds became deadly. Cattle and sheep ranchers fought, sometimes violently, over fencing issues.²³ The Texas Rangers and local law enforcement had their hands full trying to control the violence caused by these disputes. ²⁴Texas still had a reputation for being wild and uncivilized, but gradually, with better law enforcement, things began to come under control.

First Jails

Jails were located in Texas since before its time as a republic. They varied greatly from place to place, and there were no regulations to keep the existing jails in check. The early jails served as a reference point to the next generations of jail, providing examples of what did and did not work. For example, a prisoner or accomplice setting a wooden jail on fire frequently made escapes. Thus, prevention led to the use of different building materials in future structures.

Texans expressed the desire for their state to become a safe, law-abiding place to live. But how does a frontier state manage and communicate such a transition? The

²² Texas Ranger Law Enforcement Association, www.texasrangers.org/history.asp.

²³ Blackburn, 294.

²⁴ Blackburn, 7.

challenge Texans faced was how to demonstrate that their state was a safe place to live. One of the answers lay in the architecture of the jailhouses built in the 1880s building boom. The appearance and effectiveness of jails varied greatly between the 1830s and 1880s.

As mentioned before, small jails had been a part of the Texas landscape since before the state joined the union. Early county jails were typically improvised. Most courthouse squares had a large, sturdy windmill that pumped water, and prisoners were often chained to that at night. A large tree made a good substitute. Sometimes, a hole in the ground sufficed.²⁵ Many towns had “dungeons”, or sturdy buildings made with multiple layers of oak walls. The first floor would act as the “dungeon,” with the entrance being a trap door on the floor of the second story. One of the only existing dungeons is located in a museum in Gatesville, Texas, and dates to 1858.²⁶ (Fig 6)

Several jail builders used iron plates to line areas that might tempt diggers. Other early jails consisted of small trees that were cut and tied together to make walls, reflecting an early Spanish and Indian tradition of using available materials to create buildings, and they were often made to be temporary. Fred Kniffen and Henry Glassie suggest these buildings were commonly used in Louisiana as well, and were influenced by Gulf Coast Spaniards, or by the Indian tribes who fashioned stockades out of similar post

²⁵ Ed Blackburn, Jr, *Wanted: Historic County Jails of Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 2006), 3.

²⁶ Blackburn, 5.

systems.²⁷ This type of vernacular architecture was still being used in western parts of Texas as late as the early 1900s on ranches.²⁸ Again, none of these jail types were escape proof or fire proof, but for much of Texas's early statehood, they were the primary form of confinement.²⁹ There are numerous examples of prisoners making escape attempts from these earlier jails by catching the jail on fire. The April 4, 1879 edition of the *Brenham Weekly Banner* included a story about an attempted jailbreak by five Houston prisoners. The men set the jail on fire, but the alarm was sounded and the fire attended to. On the same page was a blurb about an escape attempt in Georgetown, calling escape attempts an "epidemic," and a report on the number of prisoners in the Grimes County Jail. The Grimes County Jail "wouldn't hold a practical jail breaker more than about three minutes."³⁰ Obviously, jails were seen as something needing improvement.

Legislation passed before the Civil War called for counties to provide appropriate jails, but financing was limited. In 1876, the Fifteenth Legislature allowed certain Texas counties to levy a tax for the construction of courthouses. Some jails were built during this time. In 1881, the counties could sell bonds to help provide funding for courthouse construction. Blanco County took advantage of this funding and hired F. E.

²⁷ Fred Kniffen and Henry Glassie, "Building in Wood in the Eastern United States: A Time Place Perspective," *Geographical Review* 56 (1966): 10.

²⁸ Ranching Heritage Center, "Picket and Sotol," www.depts.ttu.edu/ranchhc/picketandsotol.htm.

²⁹ Blackburn, 3-5.

³⁰ *Brenham Weekly Banner*, April 4, 1879, page number missing.

Ruffini to design and build them a courthouse that was completed in 1886.³¹ Ruffini later built jails in other Texas towns. Finally in 1884, the law was changed to include jailhouse construction, leading to a building boom that lasted until the early decades of the 1900s.³² The architecture of these buildings reflected the desire to shape and control Texas's public image.

The early Texas jails provided a starting point from which to base all new jails. Hastily built early jails provided examples of how building materials could fail to contain prisoners, and how certain building practices were not effective. As more people settled in Texas and towns grew, the need for a solidly built jail became more important to the townspeople. Willard Robinson noted that the quality of these jails and other public buildings were a "function of the maturity of a community."³³ Flores would also call this a step in the direction of the Texas Modern. As the towns developed, their needs became more sophisticated, and this included the need for strong, more effective jailhouses.

Many of the new jails being built were erected in an eclectic mixture of currently popular romantic styles with the Romanesque Revival among the most favored. Romanesque Revival architecture was an appropriate choice for Texas jails because it fit the needs of the new state. Not only did this style help bring Texas into the nation as a modern state, but it allowed for reforms in the way jails and prisoners interacted with each other and with society. Architects saw the Romanesque Revival as being a style

³¹ Historic Blanco, www.historicblanco.org/history.htm

³² Ibid, 8.

³³ Blackburn, 6-7.

widely used across the nation, and Texans saw it as a way to connect with the other places in the country that were using it effectively in the creation of new civic buildings. Romanesque Revival also was a style that emphasized values that white Texans appreciated and hoped to share with their townsmen. Texas jailhouse architecture in the 1880s reflected the desire to be modern, the desire for changes in prisoner reform and repentance, and the position of women and family in a newly civilized society.

Romanesque Architecture: A Brief History

A Romanesque Revival had already been spreading throughout northern Europe in the early 1800s. Carroll L. V. Meeks recognized the beginnings of the movement and said that it began with the Germans.³⁴ The Germans used this style often, and both religious and political groups supported it. In the 1820s, Bavarian King Ludwig I was a patron of the architectural style called *Rundbogenstil*, or the “round arched” style. Friedrich Wilhelm IV was a great patron of architecture who also liked the style.³⁵ The style spread in the 1840s, and was brought over to the United States by several emigrants that had fled German lands in difficult times.³⁶ The style in the United States was very heavily influenced by Norman architecture, including towers and rounded

³⁴ Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 259.

³⁵ Curran, 362. (The German Rundbogenstil)

³⁶ *Ibid.*

arches.³⁷ In the 1840s, it was predominantly used for new Protestant churches that were being built.³⁸ The first two American buildings built in this new Romanesque Revival style were Richard Upjohn's Church Of the Pilgrims in Brooklyn (1846), and the Bowdoin College Chapel in Brunswick, Maine (1845-55). (Fig 7). German architects heavily influenced Richard Upjohn. Upjohn had traveled to Germany and seen their contemporary architecture, which happened to be at the height of the Rundbogenstil movement.³⁹ Upjohn included towers in his designs that were of obvious German influence, and he incorporated the round arched windows into his work. These features eventually made their way to Texas jailhouses in the 1880s.

The Romanesque Revival was especially suited for development in the United States. The country was rapidly growing, and had new building needs for which the Romanesque seemed to be especially suitable. It seemed solid and easily adaptable to many situations. Carroll L.V. Meeks explained that in the 1800s, the Romanesque was also called "Byzantine" and "Norman." As early as 1847, Robert Owen, in his book *Hints on Public Architecture*, wrote positively of Norman architecture, saying that it met America's needs. Owens stated that, compared to Gothic, "if political character could be ascribed to architecture, [Norman was] more Republican."⁴⁰ Edward Augustus

³⁷ Kathleen Curran, "The Romanesque Revival, Mural Painting, and Protestant Patronage," *The Art Bulletin* 81 (1999): 693.

³⁸ Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange*, 260.

³⁹ William H. Pierson, Jr. "Richard Upjohn and the American Rundbogenstil," *Winterthur Portfolio*, (Winter 1986): 228-229.

⁴⁰ Carroll L.V. Meeks, "Romanesque Before Richardson in the United States," *The Art Bulletin*, March 1953, 22.

Freeman, the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, visited the United States in 1881-82. He liked to think of architecture as a valuable way to interpret history. As he traveled, he pondered the question of what architectural style should represent the new republic. He liked the Romanesque. He admired the churches with their round arches and columns, and felt this was an ideal architectural style for the young nation because it was well suited to America's commercial streetscapes.⁴¹ Many others echoed this thought. The use of Romanesque Revival architecture soon spread from New England and New York across the prairies and into places like Nebraska, Kansas, and Texas. The style was readily adapted to many purposes, and architects found themselves using the style for secular buildings such as schools, libraries, and government structures. In Texas, counties like McCullough in central Texas built Romanesque Revival courthouses, and then built complementary jailhouses. The courthouses and jailhouses in Texas towns often were built in similar or identical styles. The Romanesque Revival provided communities with a connection to the modern, civilized parts of the country, and this helped improve the civic identity of the people of Texas.

Romanesque as Civic Identity

In the 1880s, Texans were struggling to modernize and civilize their rugged frontier towns. The larger cities like Houston and Dallas were quickly becoming cultural centers, but the outlying agricultural towns were still trying to control wilder parts of the local population. Gunfights were still commonplace, but with the help of local law enforcement and the Texas Rangers, the lawlessness began to be better controlled.

⁴¹ Ibid, 259.

Theft and other crimes were also common, but were being dealt with daily in the court system. *The Fort Worth Daily Gazette* listed over half a column of cases ranging from embezzlement to theft to manslaughter in the April 19, 1886 court docket.⁴² This was comparable to a March 23, 1886 edition that listed the court docket in Waco as having five murder cases, two cases for manslaughter, one for rape and one for incest. This was directly above a story about a burglary in San Antonio in which two of the robbers were shot and all were captured.⁴³ These dockets show that, while crimes were happening, the criminals were being caught and tried for their actions. Now that crime was being regularly controlled, communities needed to visibly showcase their respectable status to the world and to themselves. Romanesque Revival architecture provided a way to do just that.

Rounded arches were a hallmark of the Romanesque Revival. In Samuel Sloan's 1859 book *City and Suburban Architecture*, nine of every ten designs included exhibited this feature. Sloan's examples included banks, schools, and commercial buildings. Only one of his designs drew on the Gothic Revival; a third were non-religious buildings.⁴⁴ This shows that the Romanesque was spreading in popularity for buildings of all kinds, and that builders and architects felt that it was an appropriate style for America's changing building needs. It was easily adapted to uses other than church buildings, and the floor plans provided a wide variety of options for building use.

⁴² "District Court," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, April 18, 1886, page 4.

⁴³ "Waco," *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, March 23, 1886, page 5.

⁴⁴ Meeks, 31.

Henry Hobson Richardson was almost singlehandedly responsible for the popularity of the Romanesque Revival in American secular buildings. He began the trend that spread across the country, eventually becoming one of the most popular architectural styles in Texas and other frontier states. Many Texas jails borrowed design features of Richardson's Romanesque buildings. One of Richardson's earliest examples of this style was Trinity Church in Boston in the mid-1870s. (Fig 8) He had been exposed to the Gothic Revival while at Harvard, and had built early Gothic Revival churches, as well. Richardson was influenced by the ideas of John Ruskin. Ruskin had similar views as Augustus Pugin, both having complex approaches to the ideal concept of planning and honesty in architectural massing, or buildings that had floor plans that could be easily read and understood, even from the outside. Both he and Pugin pushed an idealized view of medieval civilization and the healing effects of nature and naturalistic imagery. Ruskin initially felt that Gothic Revival architecture fit with this idea, but he later decided to favor the Romanesque's asymmetrical, picturesque beauty over the more sublime Gothic.⁴⁵ Ruskin struggled with the problem of human creations in the landscape. He resolved this by deciding that there needed to be agreement between nature and culture. Ruskin felt that cultural and natural forms needed to be in harmony to work well, and this was only attainable by men who were free to be expressive, with no few or no boundaries from their government or society to prevent

⁴⁵ Thomas C. Hubka, *The Picturesque in the Design Method of H. H. Richardson*, in *H.H. Richardson: The Architect, His Peers, and their Era*, ed. Maureen Meister (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 19.

their creative expression.⁴⁶ Ruskin also believed that nature should be a source of inspiration in architecture and art. He held the tenet that truth in architecture was inspired by nature and that Gothic buildings confirmed this belief.⁴⁷

Richardson was inspired by Ruskin's theories, and his early Gothic work influenced his later Romanesque designs. The style retained rounded arches and other aspects of medievalism that Ruskin thought important.⁴⁸ Critics commented on the adaptability of the style for various climates and situations, noting how even the workmanship could be altered to suit the building's needs.⁴⁹ Richardson's buildings manifested Ruskin's theories in many ways. He used battered walls, soaring towers, and textures in masonry that stressed the relationship to the landscape. When Richardson designed the Allegheny County courthouse and jail in 1883, he began a new phase of secular buildings. (Fig. 9) The Romanesque was perfectly adapted to this type of building. It symbolized the government and what it stood for—progress and solidity. Before long, new secular Romanesque Revival buildings were popping up all over the United States in the form of railroad stations, schools, mental asylums, libraries, and courthouses.⁵⁰ In 1885, Richardson himself designed the Marshall Field Wholesale

⁴⁶ Denis E. Cosgrove, "John Ruskin and the Geographical Imagination," *Geographical Review*, January 1979, 58.

⁴⁷ Hubka, 24.

⁴⁸ Margaret Henderson Floyd, *Henry Hobson Richardson: A Genius for Architecture* (The Montacelli Press, 1997), 86.

⁴⁹ F.S Bryce, 16.

⁵⁰ Judith A. Martin, *The Prairie Comes of Age: Ambitions and Expectations in the Richardsonian Era*, in *The Spirit of H. H. Richardson on the Midland Prairies: Regional*

Store in Chicago, and architects in other Midwestern states followed suit.⁵¹ Joseph Scwhartz designed the Jewett Brothers Warehouse in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Long and Kees designed the Minneapolis City Hall and Courthouse in the Romanesque Revival style.⁵² Richardson had created the perfect building style for new urban building problems.

Richardson's buildings influenced other architects in his generation. His ideas quickly spread throughout the United States. In the years before his death, an architectural press flourished and helped spread the new "Richardsonian Romanesque" style across the Plains. Journals like Chicago's *The Inland Architect and Builder* and Minneapolis' *The Northwestern Architect and Improvement Record* were first published in 1883. By 1886, similar journals were published in St. Louis and Kansas City.⁵³ The February 1883 issue of *The Inland Architect and Builder* included a description and photograph of the new Calumet Club, a Romanesque Revival style building in Chicago that would have been seen by subscribers all over the country.⁵⁴ The San Antonio Post Office and Courthouse (1887-1889) was published in *American Architect*, again

Transformations of an Architectural Style, ed. Paul Clifford Larson with Susan M. Brown (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 119.

⁵¹ Great Buildings Online, http://www.archiplanet.org/architects/Henry_Hobson_Richardson.html

⁵² Historic Structures, http://www.historic-structures.com/mn/minneapolis/municipal_building1.php.

⁵³ Paul Clifford Larson, *H.H. Richardson Goes West: The Rise and Fall of an Eastern Star*, in *The Spirit of H. H. Richardson on the Midland Prairies: Regional Transformations of an Architectural Style*, ed. Paul Clifford Larson with Susan M. Brown (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 30.

⁵⁴ "The Calumet Club Building," *The Inland Architect and Builder*, Feb 1883, 4.

creating a link to other parts of the country.⁵⁵ By being published in a national journal, the architectural style would again be shared across the country, effectively connecting Texas and other regions to each other again after the buildings were built.

Sketch clubs began exchanging ideas, and architecture associations began forming across the country.⁵⁶ Competitions for building designs were held across the Midwest and were inundated with entries reflecting Richardson's ideas.⁵⁷ Professional architectural societies, like the Chicago-based Western Association of Architects and Des Moines' Central Architectural Association were formed, along with others, including a similar one in Texas in 1886. One main agenda for these groups was to assimilate eastern trends in architecture so they could fit in to the contemporary nation.⁵⁸ The Texas State Association of Architects was affiliated with Chicago's Western Association of Architects. The TSSA was the first organization to propose a Texas state law regulating the practice of architecture. Their goal was "'unite in one common fellowship the architects of Texas; to combine their efforts, so as to promote

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, *Seeing Richardson in his Time: The Problem of the Romanesque Revival*, in *H.H. Richardson: The Architect, His Peers, and their Era*, ed. Maureen Meister (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 127.

⁵⁶ Kenneth A. Breisch, *The Richardsonian Interlude in Texas: A Quest for Meaning and Order at the End of the Nineteenth Century*, in *The Spirit of H. H. Richardson on the Midland Prairies: Regional Transformations of an Architectural Style*, ed. Paul Clifford Larson with Susan M. Brown (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 87.

⁵⁷ Larson, 36.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 31.

the artistic, scientific, and practical efficiency of the profession; and to cultivate and encourage the kindred arts, and to correct unprofessional practices.⁵⁹

The Romanesque first appeared in Texas in the mid-1880s. It was widespread in the 1890s, but by the end of the century was waning.⁶⁰ Many public buildings were modeled on Richardson's work, only on a smaller scale more befitting the smaller towns. Richardson influenced many courthouse architects. The above-mentioned San Antonio Courthouse was obviously influenced by Richardson's work. James Riley Gordon built several Texas courthouses with Richardsonian features, including the Bexar and Angelina county jails.⁶¹ Gordon was instrumental in bringing the Romanesque Revival to Texas, and introducing it to several Texas towns in the form of courthouses or jails. By building these buildings in several different communities, he helped spread the style westward through Texas. The Romanesque style public buildings, some felt, represented an early attempt to promote an image of being "modern."

Towns and cities across Texas looked to the Romanesque Revival as a style that was modern and permanent. Block after block of stone buildings would be built—even before the streets were paved. They displayed qualities of permanence and sophistication that people would not expect from towns that had so recently been associated with the perceived wildness of the frontier.⁶² Dallas city streets contained

⁵⁹ The Texas State Association of Architects, "Public Resources," <http://www.texasarchitect.org/public.php>.

⁶⁰ Breisch, 87.

⁶¹ Ochsner, 127.

⁶² Martin, 108-112.

numerous Romanesque buildings in the late 1800s, including the Dallas County Courthouse built in 1890-91.⁶³ One of the earliest Romanesque buildings in Texas was the Driskoll Hotel built by Jasper R. Preston and Son in 1885-86 in Austin. Another, the San Antonio Courthouse and Post Office (1887-90), “acted as an important catalyst for the ultimate acceptance of this fashion as an idiom appropriate for other public and government buildings in the state.” In 1889, Nicholas J. Clayton built the Ashkel Smith Building for the University of Texas Medical School at Galveston.⁶⁴

The political mood in Texas in the 1880s and 1890s fostered and reinforced tradition, regional pride, and independence.⁶⁵ The Romanesque buildings helped create this local pride and identity by using local builders and laborers, and local materials. Some of the usage of local people and materials was caused by financial considerations, but was not seen as entirely negative. Budget constraints affected the appearance of Texas courthouses and jails. The appearances were stripped down. Much of the expensive ornamentation was eliminated, creating a simpler appearance. Similarly, the use of local building materials kept construction costs at a minimum. Fortunately, much of Texas has local limestone or sandstone deposits that are well suited to large, fireproof buildings. The local German settlers had long mined this material to build their houses, and their skills and knowledge of the material proved to be invaluable to

⁶³ Breisch, 92.

⁶⁴ . Breisch, 87-91.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 87.

the courthouse and jail building boom.⁶⁶ German stonemasons were particularly prevalent in the Hill Country, a region in central and southern Texas. Local historians in Comfort, Texas, have documented numerous stonemasons in early census information. These stonemasons were successful enough to eventually purchase farms and ranches of their own.⁶⁷ Richard Grosse was a German stonemason who designed the Mason Lutheran Church, the Methodist church in Art, and several other stone structures. He designed for Hill Country clients while maintaining a lumberyard and hardware store in Hilda, Texas.⁶⁸ The local stonemasons and local materials fostered a sense of community pride.

The wave of jailhouse building that began in the 1880s showed buildings heavy with Richardson's influences. Richardson had used local stones like granite and sandstone in New England, and many jails were made of similar materials in Texas. Local stonemasons used the local limestone sandstone to build jails. The standard jail of the time was three stories high. The Brown County Jail (1903) is an excellent example of what the typical Romanesque Revival jailhouse looked like. Designed by Martin, Moodie, and Co. and their partners the Youngblood brothers, the jail was deliberately planned to reflect the security of a medieval fortress.⁶⁹ The Brown County Jail is laid in local rusticated sandstone bricks that were cut 18 inches wide and 18 inches thick. (fig.10) There are many windows and doorways with round arched openings, and the building

⁶⁶ Ibid, 93-94.

⁶⁷ Voices of the Texas Hills, <http://voicesofthetexashills.org/vthtown0004.htm>.

⁶⁸ Voices of the Texas Hills, <http://www.voicesofthetexashills.org/vthtown0040.htm>.

⁶⁹ Texas Historic Commission, "Brown County Jail."

has several turrets and a castellated roofline. The windows on all floors are barred. The building towers over the smaller commercial buildings surrounding it.

The jail contained first floor quarters for the sheriff and his wife. There was also a first floor apartment for the jailer and his wife. The latter couple cared for the prisoners. A heavy steel door separated the residential area from the prison floors. The backyard was where the sheriff and jailer's children played, so the inmates were allowed time outside of their cells in large barred room upstairs. There was a gallows in this building, but it was never used.⁷⁰ The prison floors were divided into east and west wings, and there was a central circulation core. The cells were arranged according to the jails needs, with different levels of security and cells sizes available.⁷¹ Arranging cells to allow for different security levels and prisoner groupings was part of prison reform, which we will examine shortly.

Almost all Romanesque Revival jails echoed the Brown County Jail plan and included a first story that housed quarters for the sheriff and his family, and the second and third stories were equipped with freestanding iron cells. Some jails included a gallows but few were ever actually used, serving instead as grim visual deterrents. Jails varied from place to place, even after the turn of the century. While the 1910s saw mostly brick and stone jails in the eastern parts of Texas, some places in the west were still far behind in modernization matters. From 1917-1925, for example, Bailey County

⁷⁰ Brown County History, "History of the Old Jail," <http://www.browncountyhistory.org/historyjail.html>.

⁷¹ Historic Texas, <http://www.historictexas.net/brown/history/brown-co-jail.htm>.

was using a second hand wooden jail building that they had purchased from Parmer County.⁷²

Jail manufacturers offered their services to this booming jail-building trend. Some provided just the iron cells, but others offered full service jail building. These jails manufacturers provided the architects, materials, builders, and iron cells.⁷³ Jail manufacturers showed up in the 1870s. Peter Joseph Pauly, founder of Pauly Jail Building and Manufacturing Company, was based in St, Louis, but was a primary jail manufacturer for the state of Texas. His products were designed and assembled at his plant, and then disassembled and shipped to the building site. There they were again assembled. Pauly built cells for fifty-eight Texas jails, including the jails in Bell and Ellis Counties. The Southern Steel Company was a later, similar company founded in San Antonio, and this company eventually dominated jail product manufacturing in Texas.⁷⁴ The Southern Steel Company built jails in numerous counties from Archer County in 1890 to Jones County in 1941. Many architects also designed jails in Texas, and most were local businessmen. Eugene Heiner of Houston and the Ruffini brothers of Austin and San Angelo worked on several jails across Texas. Heiner built the jails in Tyler, Victoria, and Wharton counties. Oscar Ruffini built jails in counties like Tom Green and San Angelo, while his brother Frederick worked in Austin County and Comal County,

⁷² Blackburn, 6-7.

⁷³ Ibid, 8.

⁷⁴ Blackburn, 12-13.

among others.⁷⁵ Usually contractors bid on the contracts, and most of the time, local men won. Ninety-seven contractors built at least one jail in their local area, but there were also companies like Martin, Byrnes, and Johnson that built numerous jails.⁷⁶

Local stonemasons and laborers worked on construction of the jails, helping the local economy by putting money back in the hands of the local citizens. When using these local materials and builders, local civic pride blossomed. By using a recognizable form of building that looked civilized and was tied to a nationwide architectural tradition, the buildings helped the frontier towns come into their own as part of the contemporary nation. If these buildings tied them to Trinity Church in Boston or the Alleghany County Courthouse and Jail in Pennsylvania, then they were part of a respectable culture, no longer a wild frontier.

The Romanesque Revival also created an identity for white Texans by making a mark on the landscape that was drastically different than the buildings that had previously been there, marking the communities as distinctly white and Protestant. In *Remembering the Alamo*, Flores argues that modernizing was partially responsible for pushing Mexicans out of Texas. The Romanesque Revival buildings, including the jails, were symbols of an economically and politically dominant “white” society that helped achieve this result. Previously, the buildings in Texas reflected a vernacular Spanish or Mexican style. The buildings were often made of adobe. Secular buildings, like the early jail in figure 10, were low, flat roofed structures, while religious buildings were larger

⁷⁵ Ibid, 272-275. Blackburn has compiled an exhaustive list of jail equipment companies, architects, and contractors, including which counties they worked in.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 12.

mission-type structures. The addition of huge, Romanesque style buildings indicated a major change in what group was dominant in Texas. The Catholic Mexican and Native American populations were being gradually pushed to the side. It can be argued that the Anglo Americans were in effect conquering the Catholic Mexicans by claiming their land for their own communities and erecting a very different style of building that towered over the landscape. The addition of drastically different building styles that symbolized a very different way of life reinforced the power white Protestants held over the Mexican and Native American populations. The buildings were a symbol of dominance and power over a conquered people. The Romanesque Revival marked the space as white and Protestant and, perhaps more importantly, as not Catholic or Mexican.

The Romanesque Revival jails in particular spoke to Mexican and Native American fears of white dominance and power. The fortress-like appearance of the jails recalled the earlier Spanish forts and presidios in areas where the Spanish had eventually tried to take control from native peoples. The Presidio La Bahia in Goliad, Texas, was established in 1749. It is one of the only surviving Spanish presidio complexes left in the United States. It is a combination of brick and stone, with towers and thick walls.⁷⁷ There is a resemblance to the large Romanesque jails built later in Texas. It was the Spanish who conquered the native peoples and converted them to Catholicism. It was the Spanish who ruled over the Mexicans in a way that led to a war for Mexican freedom. Now white Americans were building large brick and stone buildings with a similar feel on the formerly Mexican and Native American landscape.

⁷⁷ Presidio la Bahia, <http://www.presidiolabahia.org/restoration.htm>.

Romanesque Revival jails were also an important part of the new Texas town landscape. Texas towns were often planned on a grid, and the center of the town included a square with a courthouse. The jail was usually not far away. The townspeople went about their daily business in the shadow of these buildings. The largest buildings in town were buildings like the courthouse, jail, bank, school, sanitarium, hotels, and churches. For example, the largest buildings in Post, Texas from the late 1800s and early 1900s are the sanitarium, a school, the courthouse, a bank, and a hotel. This tells much about the values of the townspeople. All of these large buildings speak to what the people found important for civilized living. Law, finances and the economy, education, health, and religion had special importance that was displayed through buildings that stood out on the landscape, unable to be ignored. The courthouse and jail reminded people that they lived in a safe community, and also that if they did not follow the laws, there were consequences to be paid.

Romanesque Revival Values and Prison Reform

The Romanesque Revival style visually epitomized many of the reforms taking place across the country. As noted before, the political environment in Texas was conducive to reforms and changes, and the architecture of these jailhouses helped spread Victorian prison reform ideals to the frontier. This was a way of continuing to tame the environment and shape it into something civilized and respectable by reforming prisoners and making them better citizens through different means than the torture and humiliation of “pain and shame” that had been formerly used. Since the Romanesque architecture was so closely tied Evangelical churches, it made sense that

the theological reform ideas expressed in religious buildings would resonate with jailhouse architecture and affect the treatment of the prisoners housed in such buildings. The Romanesque Revival had been used for churches for years, with the picturesque design offering a place of quiet contemplation. Prison reform movements suggested that prisoners should also reflect and contemplate their lives and actions on their way to repentance for crimes committed. This idea of repentance and reflection was brought to the jails in part by tying the architectural style to a religious building form.

The Romanesque Revival was being used for churches in the United States as far back as Richard Upjohn's Congregational Church of the Pilgrims (1844-46). Richardson's Trinity Church in Boston was dedicated in 1877, and began a trend of Romanesque style church building. Evangelicals in the United States were drawn to the Romanesque's plainness, simplicity, and directness, a departure from elaborately decorated Gothic structures that the Anglican churches favored.⁷⁸ Many of the clients requesting Romanesque style churches were Evangelical, but almost all denominations had examples of the Romanesque in at least one of their buildings. The Evangelical churches, largely Congregationalists and Low Church Episcopalians, initially sought an architectural style that represented them better than the Gothic style favored by Catholics and High Church Anglicans or Episcopalians.⁷⁹ They felt the Romanesque was more appropriate, but eventually the Romanesque Revival became less of a church-specific style and more of a popular style and was used for different denominations. The

⁷⁸ Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange*, 261.

⁷⁹ Curran, "The Romanesque Revival, Mural Painting, and Protestant Patronage," 693.

First Presbyterian Church in Galveston and the Saints Cyril and Methodius Church in Shiner are Texas examples. The Romanesque was again based on Ruskin's ideas on nature, but this time aligning themselves more with moral meaning than concerns of tying the building to the landscape. Ruskin saw a "moral imperative" that architecture could imply.⁸⁰ Gothic churches possessed towering spires that reached for the heavens, but the Romanesque was a pared down version of that that allowed contemplation and reflection. This idea of contemplation fit well with new ideas on prison reform that had already taken shape by the time this wave of jail building began.

Studies of prison reform have been done that also help us understand what was happening in the late 1800s and early 1900s and then relate that broad history to the specifics of Texas buildings. Michel Foucault traces a timeline of prisons and punishment.⁸¹ Early punishments relied heavily on torture or hard labor. During the 1800s, more people began to consider other methods of punishment, penitence and repentance through a system that encouraged reflection and a system that encourages reflection and reform of the individual. Foucault also noted the role of surveillance epitomized Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a prison design that allowed the authoritative figures to watch over the prisoners at all times. According to Foucault, the Panopticon is a powerful method of control but that the prisoner "must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but ... must be sure that he may always

⁸⁰ Cosgrove, 61.

⁸¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage Books: 1991.

be so."⁸² This model became desirable for other places that needed to have some degree of control over their occupants. Schools, hospitals, factories, and asylums borrowed the system, and also began to be housed in Romanesque Revival buildings. By the 1880s, it was common to expect a prisoner to reflect upon what he or she had done and to try to reform to fit into society upon release. The development of Texas' jails paralleled the timeline laid out by Foucault, and by the 1880s, the new Texas jails reflected this in their architecture and in some of the things they now included, like heat and better sanitation.

The cells in the Brown County Jail offer a look at how prison reform was being incorporated into new Texas jails. The Brown County jail, built in 1902-3, divided the prison cells according to different needs based on security and other needs. The jail also used a scaled down version of the Auburn Cell Block System, a system for organizing cells that separated the cells from the building around them that was made popular by the Auburn State Prison in Auburn, NY.⁸³ This system was widely used in the United States by the late 1800s, and is still used in various forms today.⁸⁴ Jails in Dickens County and Kent County used similar systems. All use forms of solitary confinement.

Other forms of cell organization were being experimented with at this time, too. Drawing on the 18th-century example of the Panopticon, P.J. Pauly developed the rotary jail, an invention by W. H. Brown and Benjamin Haugh (fig 12). Grayson and Ellis counties in Texas had these rotary jails, allowing the jailer to keep watch over several

⁸² Ibid, 201-202.

⁸³ Historic Texas, <http://www.historictexas.net/brown/history/brown-co-jail.htm>.

⁸⁴The History Box, http://thehistorybox.com/ny_state/nys_interest_article00003.htm.

prisoners at once.⁸⁵ The rotary jail was a type of carousel cell that consisted of pie-shaped cells rotated by hand crank. Prisoners were only able to enter or exit when their cell was in alignment with the doorway. This type of system reflected a desire for a Panopticon-type system that allowed for total surveillance. Although this was not the most common form of cell, the fact that the cells were inside the same space as the sheriff's quarters meant that the prisoners always had a law enforcement officer nearby who could manage the activities in the jail, thereby embodying Foucault's "gaze," which he argued was a powerful form of discipline.⁸⁶ Mechanical problems made the rotary cell unworkable, and it quickly ceased to be a viable option. As Texas counties abandoned the rotary units they replaced them with traditional strap-iron cells.⁸⁷

Romanesque Revival jails were built with gallows, but very few were they actually used except as a powerful cautionary emblem. To work as a symbol of power and to induce fear on would-be criminals, the jail had to be a complete package. Without the gallows, it would not have the same effect on townspeople. Hanging was the primary means of executing convicted criminals in Texas until 1924, so the gallows threatened a very real punishment. The jails used the visual cues of the gallows and the fortress-like façade of the jail building to help promote the feeling of safety for the community and to instill fear into those who committed crimes. In the McCulloch County jail, the gallows were directly to the right of the winding metal staircase on the

⁸⁵ Blackburn, 13.

⁸⁶ Lauren M.E. Goodlad, "Beyond the Panopticon: Victorian Britain and the Critical Imagination," *PMLA*. vol118, 543.

⁸⁷ Blackburn, 13.

second floor. Every prisoner who went to a cell, no matter which floor or cell they were placed in, saw first hand the gallows. The Brown County Jail housed the gallows in the solitary confinement cell, adding another level of punishment for the prisoner left alone to contemplate his fate. This visual element of the jail served as a deterrent to those imprisoned in the jail, and offered the sheriff and the jailer a symbol of their power that worked to keep peace inside the jail and out.

The Romanesque Revival jails and their fortress-like resemblance served to remind prisoners why they were in jail, and to remind them of their place inside the building. When Annette Williamson⁸⁸ was a small girl living in the jail, her father Sheriff J.P. Williamson told her that the jail looked like a “castle” so everyone in Brady, Texas, “could see it, and so nobody could get inside or get outside unless the sheriff said so.” What was an obvious cautionary image for a child was surely apparent to an adult. The Romanesque Revival was one of several romantic style buildings that allowed for the look and feel of a fortress while providing a contemporary architectural style that incorporated room for living quarters on the first floor. This allowed the sheriff to live where he worked, always keeping an eye on his prisoners in the upper stories, similar to Foucault and Bentham’s ideas of constant supervision.

The living quarters also brought the sheriff’s family into the space. Women and children lived on the first floor, directly under the prison cells and their inhabitants. The doorway leading to the staircase was often in a bedroom or other more private part of the living quarters. These living quarters allowed for women to gain new roles as reformers, extending what they were doing through their churches to the prisoners

⁸⁸ Annette Williamson, *Pigtail Annie*, date unknown, self published.

living above their homes. Their new role was unique to women, and combined Protestant ideas of good Christianity and the cult of domesticity into an opportunity that could only have existed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These women were becoming more and more powerful members of society, and changes brought about by their actions were apparent in many social aspects of their communities.

Women, Moral Responsibility, and Social Reform

The idea of a family sharing a living space with prisoners is alarming to our twenty-first century sensibilities. Annette Williamson's brother slept in the bedroom that contained the doorway to the prison area of the building. What might make a family in the late 1800s feel comfortable with this degree of closeness? Much of the answer lies in the history of women and reform movements, including the early movements that began in churches across Texas. Texas had a history of mob lynchings and prison escapes that also led to the acceptance of this form of floor plan. In this case, the family's living quarters actually provided a buffer zone between the world outside the jail and the prison cells on the upper floors. It was much more difficult to access the upper floors if you had to maneuver through a family's house to get to your destination.

The prisoners in Texas jailhouses were ideal targets for reform movements that grew out of early women's activism and church activities. Women had been influencing politics and social reform from inside the home for many years and when the jailhouse became the home for many women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

this influence continued. Living in the jailhouses provided a place for women to influence a population that was seen as needing reform, and women had recently found that they were able to help the less fortunate through churches and women's groups. A history of women raising the next generation of good American citizens also influenced the desire to reform prisoners in Texas jails. There were advances in what women were allowed to influence outside the home, and this led to women who felt it was their responsibility to reform prisoners who lived in their environment.

The changes began with new ideas about the home. The American home's status changed just before and during the American Revolution. Women organized boycotts of British goods, bringing items that were once private household objects into the political realm. The cloth one chose to make clothing and the beverages consumed at the table now encoded a new set of meanings, and provided women of the household access to the political sphere in a way that had previously not been available to them.⁸⁹ The new nation also saw that they would need a new type of citizen that would be uniquely prepared to face the challenges of being an American. Women were expected to educate her children in a way that prepared them for this new role. The American mother was now responsible for the virtuous citizens of tomorrow.⁹⁰

By the 1830s, the home had become highly sentimentalized. Motherhood became more about nurturing and loving rather than about asserting authority.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Glenna Matthews, *Just a Housewife: the Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 6.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 21.

⁹¹ Ibid, 8.

Women's roles became ideologically more important, and the material culture of the time supports this. The early to mid-1800s saw a steady increase in cookbooks, domestic novels, and women's periodicals. Advances in technology allowed women more free time to peruse these materials, and ideas about womanhood and motherhood were shared in the pages of reading materials. More time was devoted by the upper, and especially by the middle classes, on the domestic space and the rituals that went along with successfully running such a space. As the century progressed, more and more conveniences allowed the wife and mother to change the way they ran the household, often using suggestions and recipes from national magazines that tied them to the rest of the country.⁹² They felt a sense of belonging to a community that knew the challenges they faced on a daily basis and offered solutions to those problems.

Changes in the way that Protestant reformers viewed the home also exerted an impact on women's roles in the home. Scholars like Horace Bushnell and Henry Ward Beecher defined the home as a religious place as well as one for raising virtuous citizens. Bushnell even claimed that the Christian home replaced the cross as the central Christian symbol.⁹³ Christian parents should strive not only to raise their children to be morally correct adults, but morally correct Christian adults. Both men thought that Christian education should begin early in the home, and it was the mother who was given the responsibility of making sure this happened. Because jails housed Christian living quarters, there was already a foundation of Christian and moral learning in the Texas jails before the women began reform movements.

⁹² Ibid, 13-14.

⁹³ Ibid, 19.

Women's literature provided many examples to women across the country. Food and cooking seemed especially important. Not only did meals provide nutrition for the family, it provided a way to teach "punctuality, order, neatness, temperance, self-denial, kindness, generosity, and hospitality."⁹⁴ In novels like *A New Home—Who'll Follow? Or, Glimpses of Western Life* or *Jane Eyre*, cooking was portrayed almost as a religion, tying women's actions once again to religion and moral standards. Women in Texas jails cooked for both her family and the prisoners, bringing these ideas of religion and moral standards to the prisoners. Timothy Shay Arthur also wrote that no man could be a good citizen unless he had a good home. Men were encouraged to wipe their feet before entering the house, for example, so the woman could go about her job of being a good mother and wife.⁹⁵ Again, this was already a part of the sheriff's family living environment in Texas jails as reform movements in Texas started.

Women joined churches soon after their arrival to Texas towns. They provided a way to meet people with similar backgrounds and interests, and offered an escape from the loneliness that frontier life often fostered. Women found opportunities outside the home through church work. Many women either joined or taught Sunday School or Bible classes, led youth groups, or created or joined women's societies. Churches encouraged this behavior because it brought more families to the church roster and hopefully would help stop the steady pace of the secularization of society. Many church leaders felt that this increase in secularism was a serious threat to the values and morals of a good Christian society. In Galveston, this fear of secularism led to women

⁹⁴ Ibid, 25.

⁹⁵ Matthews, 27.

teaching Sunday School classes and creating youth groups. At the First Baptist Church, the deacons made it the women's responsibility to run the Sunday School.⁹⁶

Women took roles in society that worked with Victorian ideas about reform. This is one reason why it is understandable how jails came to house the sheriff and his family on the first floor. If a prisoner could be shown the errors of his ways, and the pleasures of the ideal family life, he might also benefit from aid in the form of the presence of a Christian woman. The woman saw reforming the prisoners as part of their Christian duty. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, organized in 1873, is an example of a woman's organization whose "Women's Crusades" included prison reforms in the late 1800s.⁹⁷

Women living in the jailhouses could feed and nourish the prisoners both physically and spiritually. Women could influence prisoners by providing an example of a good Christian. Women cooked for the prisoners, and their children often interacted with the prisoners. In 1970, *The Amarillo Daily News* interviewed a woman that had lived in the Romanesque Revival jail in Claude, Texas. Mrs. McFarland remembered her mother cooking for the prisoners, and that they ate the same meals the family ate. Her mother washed the prisoner's laundry, too. While the children were not allowed to wander onto the second floor, they did talk to the prisoners from the yard outside and sometimes passed candy up to them on string.⁹⁸ Other children remember playing

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Hayes Turner, *Women, Culture, and Community; Religion and reform in Galveston, 1880-1920*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 68-69.

⁹⁷ "History," *Women's Christian Temperance Union*, <http://www.wctu.org/history.html>.

⁹⁸ Blackburn, 24.

school by sending papers up and down via the same string system. The prisoners witnessed how a model Christian family functioned, an experience that enhanced their process of reflection and repentance. In an idealized world, the imprisoned would realize that if they, too, became model citizens and changed their ways, they could have the happy life that the sheriff and his family enjoyed.

Religion and the upbringing of the nation's future patriots were important in the late 1800s. These ideas were an important part of the Texas jailhouse floor plans functioning as both a living space and a prison space. The floor plans allowed the upper floors of the jails to have some interaction with the domestic sphere directly below them. By doing the laundry and cooking for the prisoners, the sheriff's wife was extending the domestic space into the upper parts of the jail. Mrs. Tiny MacFarland remembered eating the same meals as the prisoners.⁹⁹ The family interacted with the prisoners on a daily basis, and while the prisoners were not allowed to leave their assigned spaces, the family brought a modified form of domesticity up to their cellblocks. For modern Americans, this type of closeness would be uncomfortable, but for Texans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was an acceptable form of reform. Without this easy access and familiar relationship with the prisoners, the women would not have had an easy way to help reform the men who resided in the jails. It was a natural branch of their newfound civic responsibility of reforming and helping those who needed it to reach their potential in becoming moral members of society.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 24.

Combining the domestic and prison spaces in one building made sense from another standpoint, as well. Escapes and lynchings were common problems in Texas. Early jails had a tendency to be easy to break out of, or to break someone out of. Parts of Texas had problems with mobs breaking prisoners out of jail and handing out their own kind of justice, often ending with a lynching. Comanche County was the site of a lynching in 1874. John Wesley Hardin, his brother Joe, and several of their associates were arrested. John Wesley Hardin was jailed in Austin, but the rest of his group was put in the Comanche jailhouse. A mob attacked the jail one night, removing the prisoners, threatening to burn the building down, and then hanging all the prisoners. This led to the new Comanche and Brown county jails being built, both in a similar style Romanesque Revival style. The fortress-like construction prevented mobs from finding easy ways to break into a jail.¹⁰⁰ The heavy stone and upper floor location of cells presented an access problem. If mobs had to go through the family's quarters and through a child's bedroom to access the prison floors, it was a little different than breaking into a sheriff's office or a pulling a wooden wall from a small, primitive structure. This arrangement made a situation where the moral implications of disrupting a family were involved. In the Romanesque Revival style jails, the only access to the prison was through a man's home, and with the way family and home were highly regarded, and the fact that women and children would be present, most citizens would think twice before attempting such a venture. A home was also a Christian space, also deterring mobs and other violence. Elizabeth Hayes Turner argues that women in Galveston and other Texas towns would have had religious iconography in their homes.

¹⁰⁰ Blackburn, 51.

Framed Biblical pictures, crosses, samplers, and other items would be displayed throughout the home, offering visual reminders of the ideals of moral responsibility and religious piety.¹⁰¹ These reminders that the living quarters was also a Christian home would serve as a deterrent for angry mobs, who also happened to be composed of Protestant white citizens.

Texas Romanesque Revival Jails Today

Many of the Romanesque Revival jails built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries have been demolished to make way for new building needs. The ones that remain have often fallen short of new building codes or do not meet new jail requirements. There are a few that have been able to keep up with those codes, such as the Coleman County jail in Coleman and the San Saba County jail, that are still being used as jails. There are additions of things like heavy fencing to keep up with regulations, but the buildings look much the same as when first built. In 1975, The Texas Commission on Jail Standards was formed, and many jails failed to meet new codes. These jails stood empty for various time periods. A large number of jails, including our examples in Brady and Brownwood, have become historical museums. Since most county jails were in small county seats and the towns did not grow much, the skyline of the towns remain much the same. The large stone buildings dominate the landscape and draw attention to themselves. There are typically no other buildings or landmarks that rival that attention.

¹⁰¹ Turner, 41.

The Romanesque Revival buildings no longer hold the same meanings for town residents. Romanesque Revival is now an historical architectural style, a symbol of the past instead of a symbol of belonging to a modern era, or a sign of being tied to the rest of the country. Perhaps today's example would be certain chain commercial businesses, like a Wal-Mart or a Home Depot. Townspeople know their town has reached a milestone when a certain storefront opens. It not only shows how modern or large the community is, but it ties the community to others like it across the country. Yet, while we no longer read the Romanesque Revival jails in the same way, our communities today still have the same needs as those frontier settlements. Crime control is important. It is a right we have as American citizens.

Very little work has been done on the meanings that the jails in Texas hold for Texas citizens, both in the past and the present. Other styles of jails were built in Texas during this time period. Some of the styles were very similar to the Romanesque Revival, like the Second Empire jails in Bastrop and Bee counties. Other jails, like the small square Borden County jail, are much different than its Romanesque Revival counterparts. More work can be done in determining if any of these jails have meanings similar to the Romanesque Revival's fortress-like security statements. There might be characteristics that are shared across styles. For example, the Second Empire jails shared the first floor living quarters floor plan with the Romanesque Revival. Other states should be studied, as well, to make comparisons across the country at this specific point in time.

Folklorists can use these same methods to determine what our modern day jails say about the populations who build them and live near the buildings. We can compare

that to how people felt in other time periods to see how feelings and attitudes have changed over time. For example, today we surround our jails with fencing. The Coleman County jail was built in 1890, but modern barbed wire fencing has been added to areas where prisoners have leisure time or are moved from place to place outdoors. The fencing is there not only to prevent escapes, but also to make the townspeople feel safe and confident that the prisoners will remain where they are supposed to be. The Brown County jail also had fencing around the building. It was a rusticated, low stone wall that was topped with ornamental ironwork fence. The wall and fence, finished in 1903, was built in part to integrate the jail with the streetscape it was part of.¹⁰² The need for and function of fencing has changed over time. It would be interesting to see what other features of jail architecture have undergone such a change.

It is also important for folklorists to help maintain the architecture from the past. Preservation work can benefit from what folklorists learn. Stories about local buildings help to endear them to the public, making preservation efforts easier when it comes to gaining community support. Unfortunately, Texas jails have not traditionally been the focus of preservation work. Courthouses in Texas have undergone major reconstruction work in past years, but jails have been left out. Perhaps if the public is educated about the wonderful history of the Romanesque Revival jails, that will change so future generations of Texans can be influenced and inspired by these majestic buildings.

¹⁰² <http://www.historictexas.net/brown/history/brown-co-jail.htm>.



Figure 1. McCulloch County Courthouse, Brady, Texas. Shawna Prather, 2011.



Figure 2. McCulloch County Jail. Shawna Prather, 2011.



Figure 3. Drunk Tank. Shawna Prather, 2011.



Figure 4. Solitary Confinement. Photo by Shawna Prather.



Figure 5. San Saba County Jail. Shawna Prather, 2011.



Figure 6. Coryell County Jail.



Figure 7. Bowdoin College Chapel. Photo courtesy of shadysidelantern.
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/timengleman/page27/>

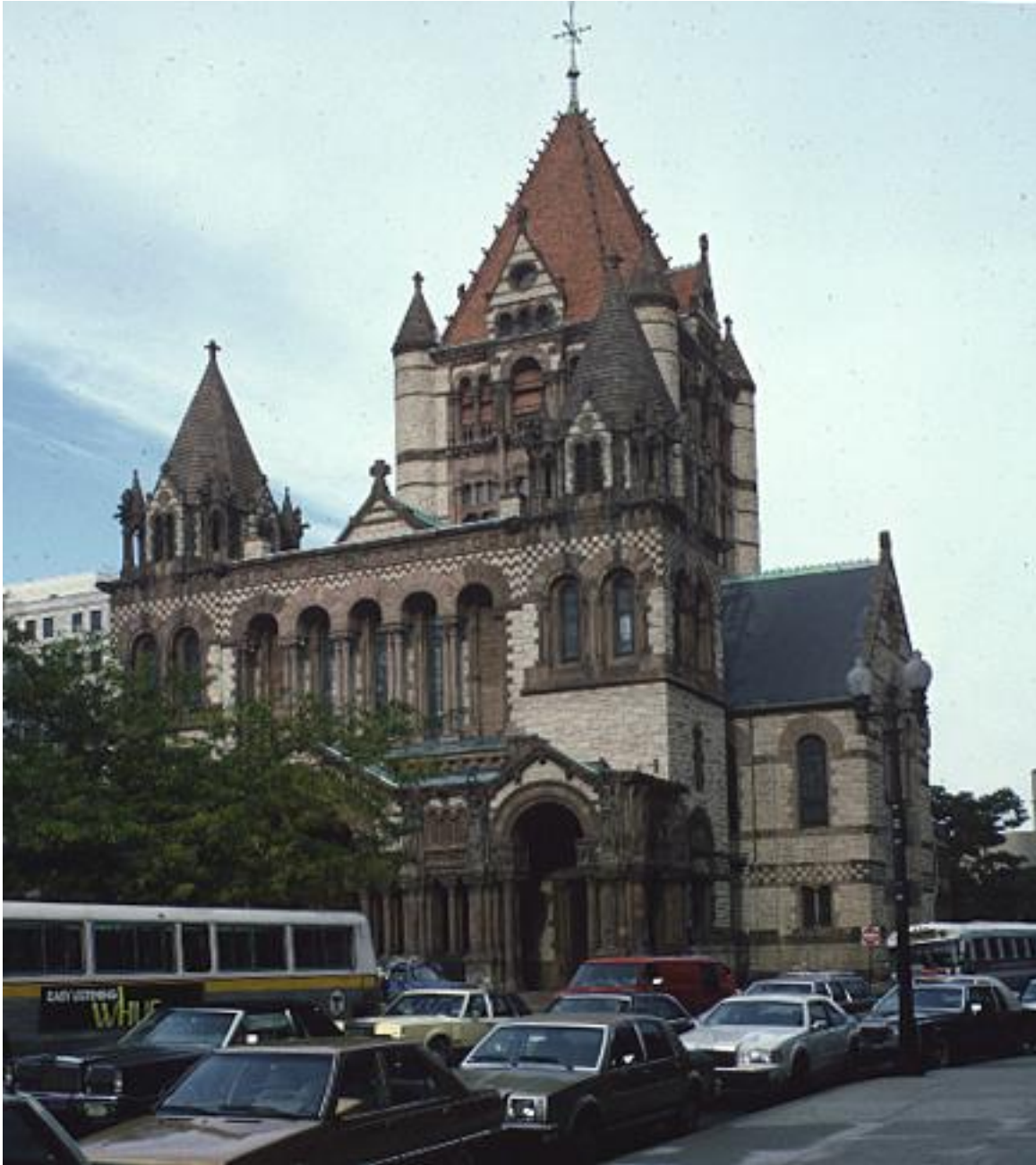


Figure 8. Trinity Church. Photo courtesy of Boston College, "A Digital Archive of American Architecture."

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/fa267/hhr/trinity5.jpg.



Figure 9. Allegheny County Courthouse. Photo courtesy of Essential Architecture.
<http://www.essential-architecture.com/STYLE/STY-rr.htm>.



Figure 10. Brown County Jail. Shawna Prather, 2011.



Figure 11 El Paso, HABS Collection, Library of Congress,
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/habs_haer/.

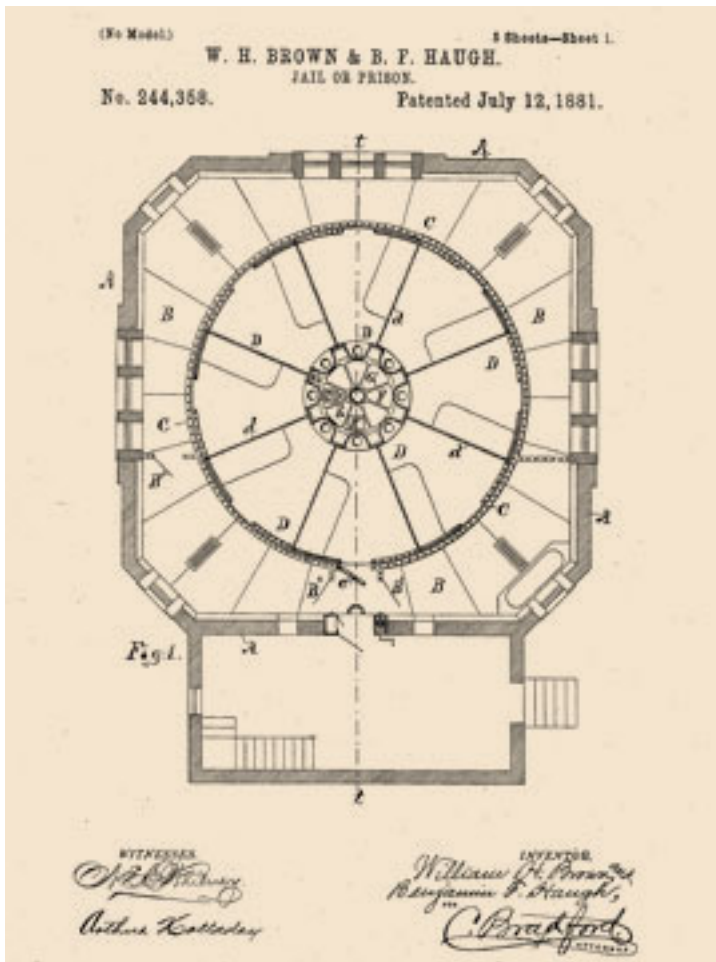


Fig 12. Plans for Rotary Jail

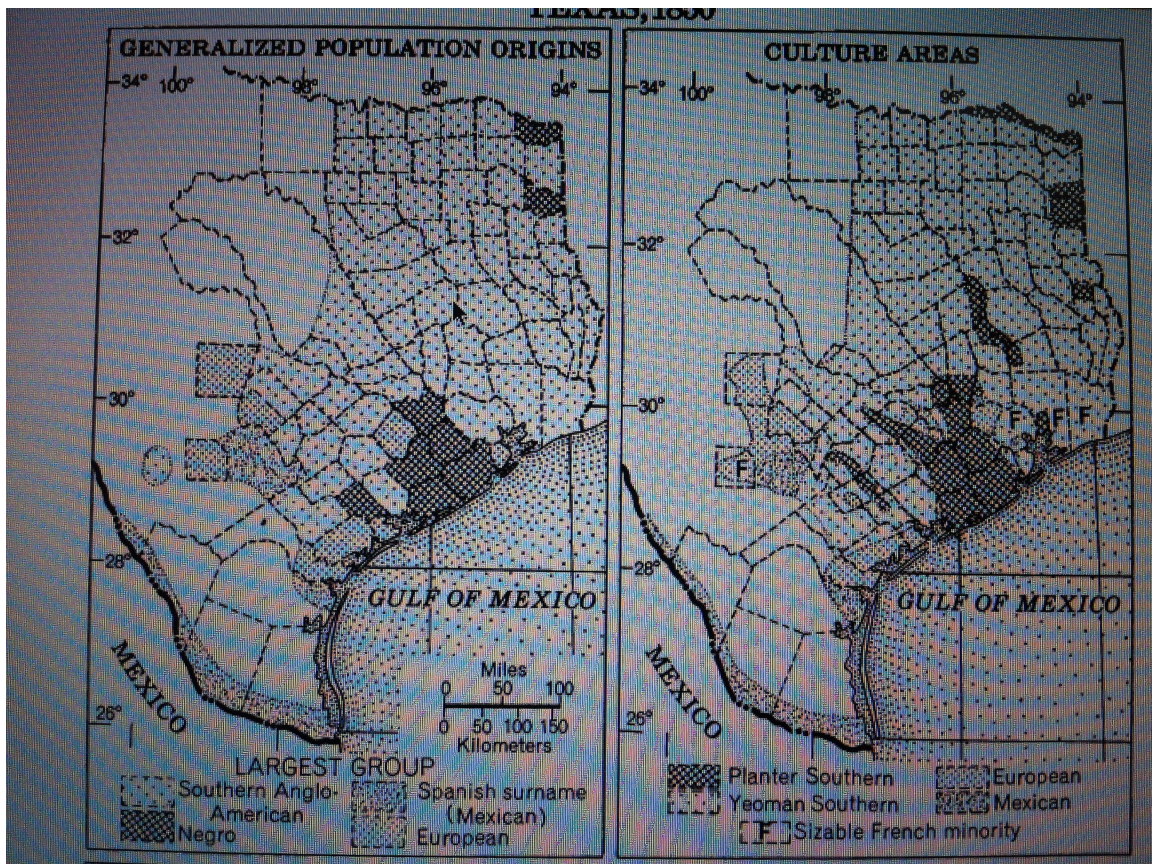


Figure 13 Cultural Regions of Texas, courtesy of Terry G. Jordan

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