

February 19, 2004

RELEASE ON RECEIPT

For more information, contact: Danelle Baldwin Smith, 512-472-0102
Dbsmith@preservationtexas.org
Shirley Wills, 210-822-2378 (o)/210-365-4488 (cell)
Shirleywills@stic.net

**PRESERVATION TEXAS NAMES THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF RIO GRANDE CITY
TO ITS INAUGURAL LIST OF TEXAS' MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES**

AUSTIN, TX...Rio Grande City, with approximately 630 historic properties, is one of the state's most architecturally significant cities along the Rio Grande River. Its rich heritage, which includes Spanish, Mexican and French influences, gives it the powerful links with the past that are the source of the city's distinctive identity. In recent years, tourists and businesses associated with the North American Free Trade Agreement have begun to draw attention to this once almost unknown community. However, the city remains challenged economically and many of the historic properties are neglected or inappropriately used or under utilized.

Some of the city's most noted buildings include the Samuel Julian Stewart House (c.1850), known for its combination of Spanish and Mexican architectural influences; the LaBorde Hotel (1877), featuring a combination of Spanish and French influenced architectural traditions; and the Silverio de la Pena Building (1886), the work of master mason, Heinrich Portscheellar. Many of these buildings are part of a historic district being proposed for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

To highlight the threat to this architecturally and historically rich city, Preservation Texas, Inc. today named the historic buildings of Rio Grande City to its inaugural list of *Texas' Most Endangered Historic Places*. "The city is a treasure," said Elizabeth Grindstaff, president of Preservation Texas. "We hope our designation will be a powerful tool for raising awareness of the importance of its many historic structures and of the need to act now to save them."

Preservation Texas, Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving our state's historic resources by direct action and by empowering individuals and local and state organizations through partnerships in education, communications and advocacy. Preservation Texas is a statewide partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which annually announces a list of the 11 Most Endangered Places. Through the list of Texas sites, issued this year for the first time, Preservation Texas hopes to draw attention to the condition of our state's historic resources.

The 2004 list of *Texas' Most Endangered Historic Places* includes:

· PANHANDLE

Bob's Oil Well, c. 1930

Junction of Highway 70 and State Highway 70, Matador, Motley County

As one of the state's once flourishing roadside businesses, Bob's Oil Well is a landmark at the junction of two heavily traveled highways in West Texas. Constructed in the early 1930s by Bob Robertson, the

tourist destination and service center featured an exaggerated and oversized oil derrick. Several buildings remain, including the derrick, station, and a diner constructed of stone and petrified wood. The site is threatened by neglect.

•THE METROPLEX

Old Dallas High School/Crozier Tech, 1907-1911

2218 Bryan, Dallas, Dallas County

Dallas High School is the oldest and most intact high school building in Dallas. It served as a prominent point of education for hundreds of Dallas students and today boasts one of the most active alumni groups in the state. Sold to a private developer, the entire campus, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, was demolished except for this building protected by the City of Dallas historic preservation ordinance. Owner demolition remains a threat.

•EAST TEXAS

Sabine Farms Community Center, 1936

FM 1186, 13 miles from US Highway 59 (south), Harrison County

Sabine Farms was one of 200 New Deal Resettlement Administration communities and one of only thirteen set aside for African Americans. It was the only African American Resettlement community west of the Mississippi. Around 1960 the complex began to deteriorate, and many of the buildings are now removed except for the Community Center, which is threatened by neglect.

•HOUSTON

Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral, 1911

1111 Pierce Avenue, Houston, Harris County

Constructed in 1911, the Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral first served as a parish for Irish immigrants. Architect Olle J. Lorehn of Houston designed the cruciform Gothic Revival building. Though well maintained and in use for daily masses, the Diocese has pronounced the cruciform Gothic Revival building “unsound” and has announced plans to demolish it within three years.

Prudential Building, 1952

1100 Holcombe Boulevard, Houston, Harris County

This 18-story office building became the first high-rise constructed outside of downtown Houston. The work of local and prominent Modernist architect Kenneth Franzheim, it is at risk for demolition by M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, owner of the property.

Ammon and Rachel Underwood House, 1835

Main Street, CR 703, East Columbia, Brazoria County

The Underwood House dates to the early days of the Republic of Texas. After participating in the Runaway Scrape, Ammon Underwood located in East Columbia serving as postmaster and merchant. The two-story Greek Revival house rests on the banks of the Brazos River. A Recorded Texas Historic Landmark listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it is threatened by erosion and the redirected course of the Brazos River.

•SOUTH TEXAS

Gonzalez and Cyneo Houses, c. 1850

215 and 219 Perez Street, San Antonio, Bexar County

The Perez Street houses represent early Texas architectural forms and materials. Built in the *barrio* referred to as *Laredito* or Little Laredo, the houses are among the last of this type and period. The University Health System currently owns the houses and agreed to their restoration if allowed to demolish another nearby historic house. The properties remain in a stabilized though threatened condition.

Historic Buildings of Rio Grande City, c. 1850 – 1900

Multiple sites, Rio Grande City, Starr County

Founded by Henry Clay Davis in the mid-19th century, Rio Grande City is one of the state’s most architecturally significant cities along the Rio Grande River. Tourists and businesses associated with NAFTA have in recent years begun to draw attention to this once almost unknown community. Despite the

growth in awareness, the city remains challenged economically and many of the historic properties are neglected and underutilized. Some of the city's most noted buildings include the Samuel Julian Stewart House (c.1850), known for its combination of Spanish and Mexican architectural influences; the LaBorde Hotel (1877), featuring a combination of Spanish and French influenced architectural traditions; and the Silverio de la Pena Building (1886), the work of master mason, Heinrich Portschellar. Many of these buildings are part of a historic district being proposed for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Corpus Christi Memorial Coliseum, 1954

402 South Shoreline Boulevard, Corpus Christi, Nueces County

Designed by noted architect Richard S. Colley in 1952, the Memorial Coliseum was completed in 1954 as part of a civic center complex including the City Hall (demolished) and Exposition Hall (demolished). In 1952, the Design Award Jury of *Progressive Architecture* magazine noted the extraordinary pre-construction design. The coliseum is threatened by demolition by the City of Corpus Christi.

George Kraigher House, 1937

Paredes Line Road, Brownsville, Cameron County

The George Kraigher House is the work of internationally known architect Richard J. Neutra. An Austrian-born emigrant, Neutra brought modern architectural practices to the United States before World War II. His work encompasses some of the most important examples of Modern design in the country. This is one of the few Neutra designed houses outside of California and the only single-family house he designed in Texas. It is threatened by neglect, vandalism, and water penetration.

· WEST TEXAS

Vanishing Adobes of Presidio County, 1870-1910

Marfa to Presidio, FM 169 along the Alamito Creek Drainage, and the Sagrado Corazon de Jesus Church at Ruidosa on State Highway 170

The "vanishing adobes" encompass some of the last remaining adobe buildings along the ancient Chihuahuah Trail from Ciudad Chihuahuah through West Texas. Early Anglo settlers constructed these buildings for settlement and trade using traditional building forms and materials. These sites include important archeological opportunities such as Alamo Ranch, one of the most complete ranching complexes in the Trans-Pecos region. The structures are threatened by neglect, erosion, and development

Albert Fall Mansion, 1907

1725 Arizona Avenue, El Paso, El Paso County

The two-story Classical Revival mansion was home to Albert Bacon Fall, Secretary of the Interior under President Warren G. Harding. Fall was convicted of accepting a bribe during the Teapot Dome Scandal, and the term "fall guy" originates from his role. The house incorporated colossal white columns from Fall's boyhood home in Kentucky. Located in a City of El Paso historic district, it is threatened by neglect.

•STATEWIDE

Working Class Neighborhoods of Texas, early to mid 20th Century

In the early 20th century, hundreds of neighborhoods developed in small and large Texas communities. Many of these neighborhoods were home to the working families of local industries and reflected the means and tastes of a generation of Texans. Neighborhoods typically consisted of a many residences, corner grocery stores and businesses, churches, and schools. Today, some of these neighborhoods suffer from neglect, inappropriate alterations, abandoned buildings, and disenfranchised residents, while others have become targets for demolition and insensitive redevelopment. Despite that, working-class neighborhoods sustain many inner-city areas providing important homes to long-time residents and first homes for new immigrants. Some of these neighborhoods are listed as local historic districts and in the National Register of Historic Places. These neighborhoods are threatened by neglect, demolition, abandonment and inappropriate rehabilitation

Preservation Texas, Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving our state's historic resources by direct action and by empowering individuals and local and state organizations through partnerships in education, communications and advocacy. Through its list of *Texas' Most Endangered Historic Places*, Preservation Texas is working in tandem with the Texas Historical Commission's (THC)

Historic Endangered Landmarks Program (HELP), which identifies, tracks and publicizes endangered historic properties in Texas. The THC maintains a statewide database of identified properties that can be used to direct assistance to the historic properties that most need it. If you know of an endangered historic property in your community, please complete and submit an Endangered Historic Property Identification Form that can be downloaded from the THC Web site at www.thc.state.tx.us.

For more information on *Texas' Most Endangered Historic Places*, visit our Web site at www.preservationtexas.org, or phone Preservation Texas, Inc. at 512-472-0102.