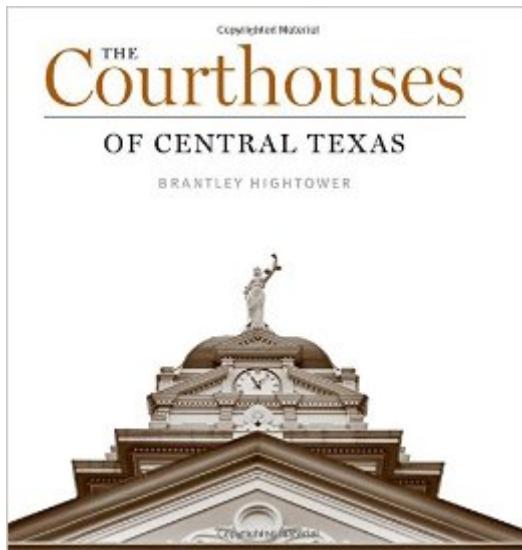


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The Courthouses Of Central Texas (Clifton And Shirley Caldwell Texas Heritage)



Synopsis

The county courthouse has long held a central place on the Texas landscapeâ "literally, as the center of the town in which it is located, and figuratively, as the symbol of governmental authority. As a county's most important public building, the courthouse makes an architectural statement about a community's prosperity and aspirationsâ "or the lack of them. Thus, a study of county courthouses tells a compelling story about how society's relationships with public buildings and government have radically changed over the course of time, as well as how architectural tastes have evolved through the decades. A first of its kind, *The Courthouses of Central Texas* offers an in-depth, comparative architectural survey of fifty county courthouses, which serve as a representative sample of larger trends at play throughout the rest of the state. Each courthouse is represented by a description, with information about date(s) of construction and architects, along with a historical photograph, a site plan of its orientation and courthouse square, and two- and sometimes three-dimensional drawings of its facade with modifications over time. Side-by-side drawings and plans also facilitate comparisons between courthouses. These consistently scaled and formatted architectural drawings, which Brantley Hightower spent years creating, allow for direct comparisons in ways never before possible. He also explains the courthouses' formal development by placing them in their historical and social context, which illuminates the power and importance of these structures in the history of Texas, as well as their enduring relevance today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Courthouses of Central Texas by Brantley Hightower is a beautiful book that proudly portrays the distinctive architecture and history of 50 Central Texas courthouses. It is Volume 20 of the Clifton and Shirley Caldwell Texas Heritage Series by the University of Texas Press. The coffee table book is well worth the \$45 price tag for its beautiful hard cover, high-quality paper, 92 color illustrations, and 61 maps; comprising a 192 page nostalgic stroll through Central Texas. I could, and did, look at this book for hours. The Courthouses of Central Texas, as much a tribute as a survey, not only expresses the importance of the courthouse as the seat of government, but also explains what it represents symbolically for a community. "This remarkable book sensitizes us to what these courthouses have to say," according to Max Levy in the Foreword. "Through the use of stately architecture and tall, ornate towers and domes, they communicated to the outside world that a community was prosperous and secure," says Hightower. The author further explains the courthouses' formal development by placing them in their historical and social context, which tells the story of the power and importance of the courthouses in the history of Texas, as well as their enduring relevance today. Comparisons of the courthouses represent the historical trends occurring throughout Texas at each particular step in the development of the structures. The buildings are described with information about the dates of construction, the architect involved, and includes a historical photograph and site plan of each current structure and campus. Of particular interest are two- and three-dimensional drawings showing the points of architectural interest as well as the evolution of the facades over the years.

Texas: Architecture
Brantley Hightower
The Courthouses of Central Texas
Austin: University of Texas Press
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192 pages; 92 color illustrations, 61 maps
Spring 2015
May is recognized each year as Preservation Month, an opportunity to highlight our shared heritage and why we should save it. The Courthouses of Central Texas by Brantley Hightower, an elegantly conceived and executed coffee-table book, volume 20 in the University of Texas Press' Clifton and Shirley Caldwell Texas Heritage Series, features Texas' beloved architectural confections: our distinctive courthouses. Handsome in its subdued burnt orange, black, and bone color scheme, Courthouses brims with sepia-toned photographs and architectural drawings of the fifty courthouses in the central Texas region, as well as the history of each, on matte heavy-stock paper. Each courthouse in the central Texas region is addressed individually. From the fairly simple Italianate limestone of the Kendall County courthouse, the grand Renaissance Revival style of Bell County, the awkward mishmash of medieval towers and Second Empire style of Hamilton County, the Gothic drama of Bosque County, to the low horizontal modernism of Zavala

County, each of these buildings is unique. The collection of county courthouses built in central Texas represents a wide spectrum of architectural styles, approaches, and ambitions. This diversity is not random, but the product of the specific social, economic, and political forces in existence when a courthouse was designed and constructed. As such, each courthouse can be seen as a reflection of a particular community at a particular place and time.

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