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### **PRESERVATION TEXAS NAMES JEFFERSON PLAYHOUSE IN MARION COUNTY TO LIST OF TEXAS' MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES**

AUSTIN, TEXAS...In the 1880s, Jefferson was one of the largest cities in Texas, enjoying much prosperity as a bustling riverboat port and a rich heritage that included its roots in the Louisiana Purchase and the Civil War. Today the city is at risk of losing one of the most important historic buildings remaining from its heyday—Jefferson Playhouse.

To highlight the threat to a building that is such a symbol of Jefferson's history, Preservation Texas has named Jefferson Playhouse to its second annual list of *Texas' Most Endangered Historic Places*. Preservation Texas officials announced the selection on the steps of the Texas State Capitol on February 16, Preservation Day 2005.

Listed as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1965 and on the National Register in 1971, its beautiful Greek Revival two-story arched windows and interior woodwork are original. Father Jean Giraud built the structure in 1866 as one of the earliest Catholic convents and schools. In 1965 the Excelsior Foundation purchased and renovated the property. It has been used for cultural and educational events and was viewed regularly by tourists and school children. In May 2004 unusually strong winds caused the front wall to buckle, and the building was closed for safety reasons.

"We hope our designation will raise awareness of the need to save Jefferson Playhouse and of its importance as a symbol of the city's heritage," said Elizabeth Grindstaff, president of Preservation Texas, Inc., a statewide partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "Like the other structures on our list, Jefferson Playhouse represents an eminent need and an important opportunity for positive action."

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 named its first list of endangered historic sites in 2004. Three sites on the inaugural list already have benefited from the listing through energized conservation efforts, commitments for restoration, and additional funding.

The 2005 list of *Texas' Most Endangered Historic Places* includes:

## **CENTRAL TEXAS**

### **●Congress Avenue Historic District, 1839**

#### **Austin, Travis County**

Congress Avenue is one of the most important and recognizable streets in Texas. Its birth can be traced to 1839 with Edwin Waller's plan to build Texas' new capitol city. Congress Avenue is and has been home to many architectural jewels designed by Jacob Lamour and other noted architects, though many of these properties have been razed. A popular tourist destination, it is seen by many who travel to Austin and who admire the impressive capitol of Texas. With few protected buildings and no guidelines for compatible new construction, changes are eroding the character, sense of scale and design of Congress Avenue. The City of Austin only recently amended its ordinance to make historic districts feasible and thus the avenue's streetscape has no local protection. Though designated a National Register District in 1978, additional, uncontrolled changes will jeopardize its continued eligibility for the designation.

### **●Zedler's Mill, 1874**

#### **Luling, Caldwell County**

The historic Zedler Mill site represents Texas' industrial heritage. Located on the banks of the San Marcos River, this architectural treasure was built in 1874 and originally included a sawmill, a gristmill, and a cotton gin. Today the Zedler Mill complex consists of the 1900 Fritz Zedler home and seven other structures on nine acres. Architectural features include wooden feed shutes, wooden pulleys, massive beams, two-story internal grain bins, and belt-and-cup type grain elevators. All machinery was driven by waterpower from Leffel water wheels. The City of Luling purchased the mill in 2003. The site is endangered due to years of neglect.

### **●Winkler House, circa 1845**

#### **Castroville, Medina County**

Winkler House is a pristine pioneer dwelling dating from the colonization period of Castroville, circa 1845. The house is unique in that it has not been updated or remodeled. It has its original roof shingles, the tin roof added in the 1880s, and the original dog-trot log barn adjoining the house. This building is important to the community and state as it is one of the few surviving original Alsatian immigrant homes. Located within the boundaries of the City of Castroville Historic District and National Register Historic District, Winkler House is endangered due to neglect.

## **DALLAS/FORT WORTH METROPLEX**

### **●Residential Teardowns in Inner-City Neighborhoods**

#### **Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

#### **Dallas, Dallas County**

With bungalows, Tudor Revival styles as well as modern houses, Dallas' early 20<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods are experiencing a significant loss in residential fabric. Literally each week, houses are demolished to make way for new McMansions or houses taking advantage of the larger allowable building envelope. The neighborhoods of Vickery Place, North Preston Hollow, and Lakewood Heights have lost as many as one-third of their older houses. The adjoining cities of Highland Park and University Park also are experiencing an alarming number of teardowns in some cases losing important architectural landmarks like the Howard Meyer designed house at 4400 Rheims Place. The City of Dallas is working with local preservationists and neighborhood organizations to abate the flood of demolitions with local zoning and land use planning tools. Despite these efforts, the demolitions continue at a steady pace throughout the Dallas area.

### **●Iron Bridges of Collin County, circa World War I**

#### **Sister Grove Creek, Collin County**

The iron bridges of Collin County are the last one-lane, World War I era, iron open-truss bridges to cross Sister Grove Creek. They are still in their original locations. The bridges serve the last truly wild and scenic roads in Collin County. Each is 60 feet long and has no builders' plates and

no prefabricated and riveted assemblies that one would expect in commercially built bridges. All fastenings and joints are made by square headed nuts and bolts. The bridges serve the last undeveloped areas in Collin County and represent the use of local labor and raw materials in construction. They are slated for demolition.

●**Wayside Church at Trezevant Hill, 1930s**

**Fort Worth, Tarrant County**

The Wayside Church is the last remaining building representing the early African American community known as Trezevant Hill. The church was the site of the pioneering and historic African American radio and television ministry of Bishop R. E. Ranger from the 1930s through the 1950s. Bishop Ranger was a nationally known gospel preacher for 75 years. Wayside Church is the site of the first national and international Black Gospel Radio Ministry in America -- at one time reaching an audience of six million. It is also the oldest church of its denomination in Fort Worth. The church is threatened by inappropriate development and lack of maintenance.

**HOUSTON AREA**

**Near North Side Neighborhood, 1880-1890s**

**Houston, Harris County**

The Near North Side neighborhood, located just north of downtown Houston, is a significant residential development begun in the 1880s-1890s with the expansion of the adjacent Hardy Rail Yards. With the decrease of rail traffic and increase in suburban development, the neighborhood began to decline after World War II. Today only a handful of residents still live in the neighborhood that was altered drastically in 1954 by the construction of the Elysian Viaduct. The viaduct was built over the Elysian Street right of way and residents live virtually underneath the overpass. The Texas Department of Transportation is conducting surveys to widen the North Freeway, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority is planning an extension of light rail through the neighborhood. The proposed expansion would displace residents, hamper local revitalization efforts, compromise the tax base and result in the demolition of blocks of historic houses, including properties eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

●**San Jacinto School House, 1948**

**Walker County**

***Endangered school house, representing other endangered historic Texas school houses***

Established in 1900 for grades one through seven, the San Jacinto School district built a "two-room" two-story school house in 1913. The building allowed for classrooms, a stable to accommodate horses and a canning house on the property. In 1948, the school district demolished that building and built the three-room building that exists today. In 1961 the San Jacinto School House was deeded to the West Sandy Community Center of Walker County. It has since been used for social gatherings, live musical entertainment, voting, and other community activities. Community members see the building as an example for creating awareness in rural communities to the plight of rural schools and their potential reuse in today's society. The San Jacinto School House and the Crabbs Prairie School House are the only remaining rural schools in Walker County. San Jacinto School House is threatened by neglect and vandalism.

**WEST TEXAS**

●**St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, 1910-11**

**El Paso, El Paso County.**

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing property in the Rio Grande Avenue Historic District, the property represents the last Mission Revival style building in El Paso designed by architect Henry Trost. Its iconic tower is a mainstay in this neighborhood, which has already lost many of its residential properties for the parking lot sprawl required by "big box" churches. The building was constructed in 1910-1911 as a Presbyterian Church and later served as the sanctuary of the St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church. The building has been seriously neglected, and the current owner acquired the property with the intent to raze the structure for parking.

**●Sanderson Railroad Depot, 1883**  
**Sanderson, Terrell County**

The Sanderson Depot, constructed in 1883, preceded the town that grew around it. In fact, the town itself was named after the president of the intercontinental railroad construction company. It was a terminal for Southern Pacific Railroad operations for a century, but SPRR moved the crew-change terminal in 1995, devastating the local economy. Today, Sanderson remains a scheduled Amtrak stop on the cross-country route from Miami to Los Angeles, but the depot is no longer a public facility. Abandoned and vandalized, the depot is deteriorating.

**EAST TEXAS**

**●Jefferson Playhouse, 1866**  
**Jefferson, Marion County**

In the 1880s, Jefferson was one of the largest cities in Texas, and the Jefferson Playhouse is one of the most important historic buildings remaining from that period. Listed as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1965 and on the National Register in 1971, its beautiful Greek Revival two-story arched windows and interior woodwork are original. Father Jean Giraud built the structure in 1866 as one of the earliest Catholic convents and schools. In 1965 the Excelsior Foundation purchased and renovated the property. It has been used for cultural and educational events and was viewed regularly by tourists and school children. In May 2004 unusually strong winds caused the front wall to buckle, and the building was closed for safety reasons.

**●Bloomburg State Bank Building, 1916**  
**Cass County**

***Representing all historic endangered bank buildings in Texas***

Bloomburg State Bank, organized as the only bank in Bloomburg in 1908, moved into its newly constructed three-story building in 1916. The “new” three-story bank was and is the tallest building in Cass County and housed the telephone office and the Masonic Lodge. At one time, the bank served counties in Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. After the owner of the building gave it to the City in 1968, the City considered it a liability and planned to demolish it. Concerned citizens purchased the building for \$1.00 to save it from demolition. Vacant for 20 years, the building is deteriorating due to lack of funds to properly repair it.

Bank buildings were important early structures because they were located at the heart of the town and represented an established and prosperous community. Partly because of the same drive to convey growth and prosperity, however, many Texas banks have been compelled to build larger and more modern facilities, demolishing or abandoning their historic buildings. Stripped of their purpose and their prideful place in the community, vacated historic banks like this one in Bloomberg often become the victims of neglect.

**LAREDO AREA**

**●Rancho San Francisco. Circa 1850**  
**Near San Ygnacio, along the banks of the Rio Grande**  
**Zapata County**

Rancho San Francisco is a 40-acre Hispanic ranching site that includes two native sandstone buildings from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The larger of the structures dates to circa 1850, when Native Americans still closely contested the borderlands, and the second, constructed in 1874, shows remnants of what may have been an original hipped roof with wooden shingles. Rancho San Francisco is significant for the study and interpretation of the Hispanic ranching traditions tied to Mexico, which greatly influenced those in Texas. The majority of its materials are still intact. Its rural wooded setting along the river is reminiscent of the days of an untamed, isolated frontier. Though its condition is now stable, long-term protective stabilization is needed.

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](http://www.thc.state.tx.us).

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

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