

NOT EVEN PAST

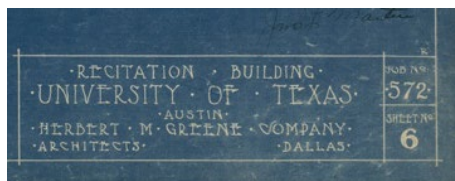


An Architectural History of Garrison Hall

[Tweet](#)

by *Henry Wiencek*

As students and faculty members resume their classwork at Garrison Hall this semester, it is worth examining the iconic building's colorful history and architectural conception. The first stages of Garrison's development began in 1922 as the Board of Regents sought a new campus plan for the university. Although the Board had been employing the eminent New York City architect Cass Gilbert—whose achievements include the U.S. Supreme Court building, the Woolworth Building and various state capitols—pressure from local architects to patronize a Texas firm resulted in Gilbert's termination. Subsequently, the University hired Herbert M. Greene of Dallas, James White of Illinois and Robert Leon White of Austin, who collaborated on a 1924 campus plan that included the future Garrison Hall.



Construction began in 1925 and finished the following year, producing the 54,069 square foot edifice at a cost of \$370,000. Initially known as the "Recitation" building the new structure eventually borrowed its name from George Pierce Garrison (1853–1910), the history department's first chair and a founding member of the Texas State Historical Association. Hired by the university in 1884, Garrison assumed responsibility for teaching the entire history curriculum and earned a reputation for domineering style. Even after the department hired additional faculty in 1891, Garrison refused to allow his colleagues to teach any U.S. subjects.

THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN

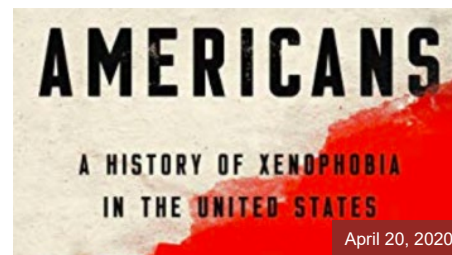
Making History: Houston's "Spirit of the Confederacy"



[More from The Public Historian](#)

BOOKS

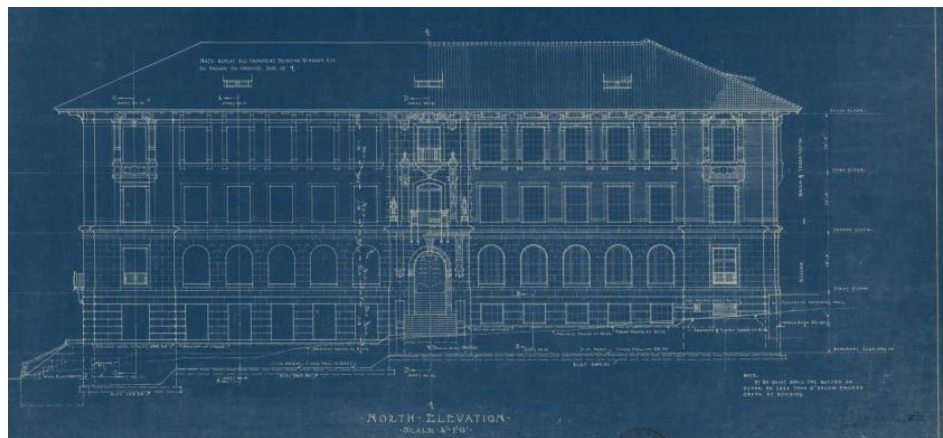
America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States by Erika Lee (2019)



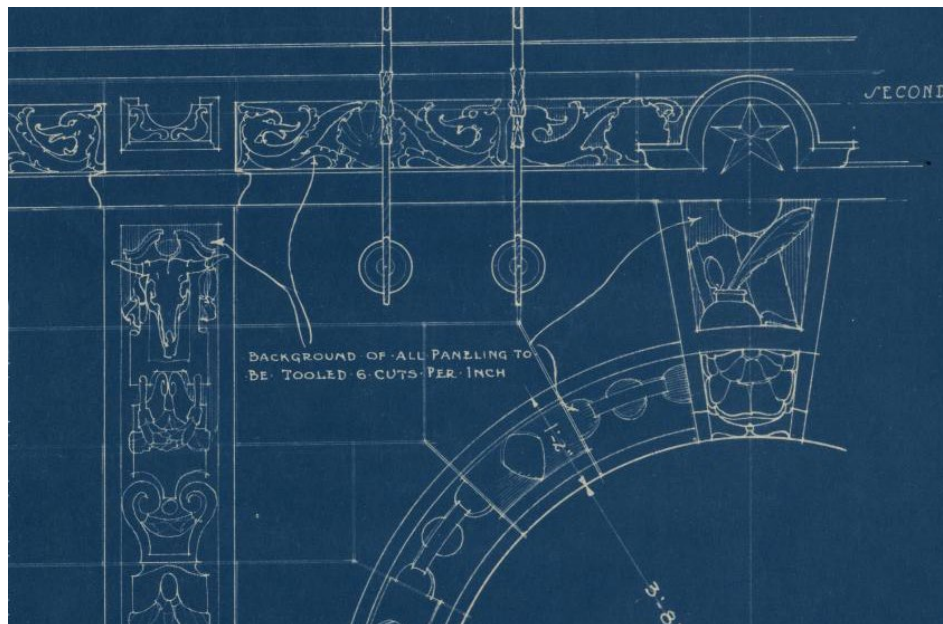
[More Books](#)

DIGITAL HISTORY

Más de 72: Digital Archive Review



The building's design blended classical aesthetics with Texas iconography—pairing wide archways and Ionic flourishes with renderings of cacti, steer skulls and 32 Texas cattle brands. Texas pride is also evident on the second floor's exterior, which is adorned with the names of prominent state figures: [Stephen F.] Austin, [William Barret] Travis, [David G.] Burnet, [Sam] Houston, [Mirabeau B.] Lamar, and [Anson] Jones.



Throughout its existence, Garrison has accommodated numerous departments, including English, government, psychology, sociology, philosophy, economics and history—its only continuous occupant. However, Garrison has also housed other, less desirable, elements of the university as well. William Battle, Chairman of the Faculty Building Committee, described these "residents" in an October 1931 letter to Goldwin Goldsmith, the Architecture Department's Chair: "I noticed that the north entrance to Garrison Hall is a harboring place for bats. It is evident to the senses of both sight and smell." Responding one



[More from Digital History](#)

FILMS & MEDIA

[Ayka \(Dir: Sergei Dvortsevov, 2018\)](#)



[More from Films & Media](#)

TEXAS

[A \(Queer\) Rebel Wife In Texas](#)

week later, Goldsmith lamented that “I do not see how to protect the entrances from these loathsome creatures, but Miss Gearing tells me that the Comptroller’s office has an excellent way of dealing with them. It is apparently by using fire-extinguishing apparatus.” Fortunately for Garrison’s present occupants, the University resolved this unintended infestation.



March 11, 2020

[More from Texas](#)



In 2008, Garrison underwent an extensive renovation that modernized its facilities while restoring its historic features. In addition to its remodeled interior, the building also resides amidst a very different University of Texas. The UT tower, completed in 1937, now dominates the campus; and no longer do students use the halls for “loitering and smoking” as history professor Walter Prescott Webb (1888–1963) once observed. Nonetheless, Garrison maintains a strong continuity with its history and functions as both a figurative and *literal* time capsule: the building’s hollow cornerstone contains university newspapers, correspondence and ephemera dating back to the early 20th century.

Photo Credits:

All photos courtesy of:

The University of Texas Buildings Collection

The Alexander Architectural Archive

Works Cited:

Nicar, Jim, Texas Exes, UT Heritage Society, and UT History Central, "An Ode to Garrison Hall"

Steinbock-Pratt, Sarah, "Some Notable Personalities in the History Department"

Posted October 12, 2012

More [1900s](#), [Art/Architecture](#), [Blog](#), [Discover](#), [United States](#)

19th century **20th Century**
 African American History american history Asia
 Asia & Middle East book review Brazil British Empire
 China Civil War **Cold War** Colonialism communism
 cultural history **digital history** Early Modern Europe
Europe film gender **history** History of Science
 immigration India Islam **Latin America**
 Latin American History Mexico **Not Even Past**
 Public History **race** religion Russia **slavery** Texas
 Texas History Texas History Day **Transnational**
 Twentieth Century History **United States**
US History USSR Womens History
 world history **World War II**

NOT EVEN PAST is produced by
 The Department of History
 THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
 We are supported by the [College of Liberal Arts](#)
 And our **READERS**

DONATE

CONTACT

All content © 2010-present NOT EVEN PAST and the authors,
 unless otherwise noted

Sign up to receive bi-weekly email updates

BOOKS

FILMS & MEDIA

THE PUBLIC HISTORIAN

BLOG

TEXAS