



The Legacy of William Sydney Pittman, Texas' First Black Architect



William Sidney Pittman was a trailblazer for Black architects in the early 1900s. He designed over 50 substantial buildings during his 28-year career. The commissions he worked on gained him national prominence in the architecture field at a time when few Black architects practiced.

Pittman's Black contemporaries mainly designed churches for Black congregations; however, Pittman expanded his scope of projects beyond that to include exhibition and meeting spaces, civic buildings, fraternal lodges, manufacturing facilities, and buildings for higher education. Most of his work served the Black community, and he made it a point to use Black construction workers for his projects. Pittman designed many significant buildings in Texas after moving to the state in 1912. A

good portion of those projects have not survived. Those that did are located in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Waco, and Waxahachie.

Built in 1912, Dallas' Beaux-Arts style Knights of Pythias Temple is one of Pittman's most important works in Texas, and it received national acclaim. The Knights were an important Black fraternal organization, and the building was constructed in the Deep Ellum area of Dallas in a former "freedmen's town" settled by formerly enslaved people after the Civil War. The building quickly became a landmark and symbol of achievement for the Dallas Black community. It served as a center for civic, business, and social life at a time when segregation offered few alternatives. Here members could find grocers, doctor's offices, realtors, a dentist, and more. It also featured a grand top-floor auditorium for special events.

The Knights struggled during the Great Depression, and the building was sold in 1944. The Union Bankers Insurance Company purchased the building in 1959 and changed the building extensively. They altered the storefront, removed many of the decorative features of

the building, replaced the original wood windows with metal ones, and painted the entire building gray. Despite these changes to the exterior, the building became a City of Dallas Landmark in 1989 due to its architectural and cultural significance to the Black community.

The temple sat vacant from 1989 until the mid-2010s when redevelopment plans took shape. As part of the redevelopment, the building received extensive rehabilitation as a boutique hotel. With the architectural plans long gone and pieces of the building missing, architects relied on renderings and old photographs of the exterior to restore it as close as possible to Pittman's original design.



The Knights of Pythias Temple in Dallas

The building reopened as The Pittman Hotel in 2020, named for William Sidney Pittman. It stands today as one of Dallas' most important landmarks and an exemplary example of the rehabilitation and reuse of an historic structure.

- David Preziosi, THF President & CEO

*What happened to William Sidney Pittman? What other buildings of his remain in Texas? You can learn all of this and more in THF's President David Preziosi's upcoming article in the April edition of **Authentic Texas** magazine. All Texas Historical Foundation members receive a subscription to Authentic Texas with their membership. [Join today](#) to receive your copy!*





MICHAEL C. DUDA PRESERVATION AWARDS

APRIL | 20TH | 2024



Join Us for the Inaugural Michael C. Duda Preservation Awards Next Month

The inaugural Texas Historical Foundation Michael C. Duda Preservation Awards is just a few weeks away! Join us for this inspirational dinner event on April 20, 2024, at the George W. Bush Presidential Center on the SMU campus, honoring the best in Texas preservation.

The Awards honor the memory of former Foundation board member Michael C. Duda, focusing on projects that have had a substantial impact on Texas heritage preservation. The event will feature the top three winning projects, a special THF Director's Award, and short films highlighting the projects and the lasting legacy of Michael C. Duda.

[Matthews Southwest](#) is the presenting sponsor for the event. Other sponsors include Fritz and Mary Lee Duda, The Lewis and Dilworth Family Fund, The Bangs and Costanza Families, Lee and Candyce Pfluger, the Tillotson and Wahlquist Families, and the Doell and Marz Families.

We are thankful for the support this event has received. We hope you will join us in celebrating the award winners by joining us at what promises to be a fantastic event.

[Sponsorships & Tickets](#)

Grants Update

Friends of the Tye Preston Memorial Library

THF representatives attended the opening event for Canyon Lake Reads 2024, hosted by Friends of the Tye Preston Memorial Library, Canyon Lake. The popular month-long event saw the hill country community read *Bold Crossings*, a work of historical fiction by Texas author Lance E. Osborne. A series of historic site visits and immersive activities supported in part by a THF grant further drew readers into the coming-of-age tale steeped in the landscape and history of 1830s Texas.



*Author Lance E. Osborne reads from *Bold Crossings* at Canyon Lake Reads 2024*



David Preziosi presents THF's grant to Castro Colonies Heritage Association

Castro Colonies Heritage Association

The Texas Historical Foundation presented a grant to Castro Colonies Heritage Association (CCHA), Castroville. The grant supports CCHA's ambitious project to document the 100+ pioneer era structures throughout Medina County built between 1840 and 1890 in an expanded National Register of Historic Places listing. The County is

thought to be home to as many as 150 structures built as development continues to sprawl westward from San Antonio, National Register inclusion will recognize these distinctive structures, which combine local period building techniques with the traditional sensibilities of provincial France to create the region's unique vernacular style.



JUNE 01

GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINE

NOW ACCEPTING REQUESTS FOR UP TO \$8000



Texas Map Society Spring Meeting: All Over the Map

May 3-4, 2024 | Austin, TX



Texas Map Society

The Texas Map Society (TMS) will be convening its Spring Meeting in Austin on May 3-4 at the Texas General Land Office. The meeting will include tours of the Briscoe Center, Ransom Center, LLLAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections Map Collections, and General Land Office. This meeting, organized around the theme of “All Over the Map,” will take an exciting look at a cross-section of cartographic topics, including Public History and Mapping projects at the GLO, map conservation efforts at the Ransom Center, as well as historical cartography centering on the Jeffersonian era, English explorer Charles Wylyde, Indigenous mapping in the Texas-Mexico Borderlands, the impact of the Spanish-American War of 1898 on the cartography of Puerto Rico, as well as student presentations on African Cartography during the Dutch Golden Age, the Cassini Map of France, and the mapping resources of Stephen F. Austin at the Briscoe Center.

For only \$50, attendees will have access to Saturday lectures. Tours of repositories at the University of Texas are available for an additional fee. [Register here.](#)





Partner

Diane Davis
Michelle Parten
Gerald Stanford

Ranger

Jyl & Randall Cain
Egelberto & Pat Preziosi

Institution

Amon Carter Museum and Library
Dr Pepper Museum
Houston Fire Museum
Longview Public Library
The Williamson Museum

A BIG TEXAS-SIZED

Thank You

TO OUR NEW
AND RENEWING
MEMBERS



www.texashistoricalfoundation.org



3003 SWISS AVENUE | DALLAS, TX 75204 | PHONE/FAX: 512.453.2154 | EMAIL:
ADMIN@TEXASHISTORICALFOUNDATION.ORG

Share this email:



[Manage](#) your preferences | [Opt out](#) using TrueRemove®

Got this as a forward? [Sign up](#) to receive our future emails.

View this email [online](#).

3003 Swiss Avenue
Dallas, TX | 75204 US

This email was sent to .

To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.