



Symphony Guild's Tour of Homes set for Dec. 10

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

Four Big Spring families will be opening their homes for guided tours this holiday season, as the Big Spring Symphony Guild prepares to hold its annual Holiday Tour of Homes Sunday, Dec. 10.

Guild president and spokesperson Janice Bond said she and the rest of the Guild's members are looking forward to the tour.

"The Guild members will be acting as tour guides, with two

of us at each home," said Bond. "It's a lot of fun for us. Even though we have to work through the actual tour, we'll get a preview of the homes prior to the tours, so it's really exciting."

Bond said the tour, which has been a part of the local holiday season since 1981, will feature four local homes, including 2829 Hunter's Glen, the home of Amy and Michael Beech; 1213 E. FM 700, home of Donna and Skip Burcham; 610 Edwards Boulevard, home of Leslie

Elrod; and 2511 Fisher Street, the home of Brenda and Duane Thomas.

"These home owners have been so gracious in opening up their homes for the tour," said Bond. "It takes a lot of time and money to decorate the homes, and they do this gratis."

"We were unable to hold the tour last year because we couldn't get enough homes, but guild members have been out soliciting these home owners and we feel like this year's tour is going to be very special."

According to Bond, the tours will begin at 1:30 p.m. and continue through 3:30 p.m., with a reception to immediately follow at the First Presbyterian Church — located at Runnels and Eighth Street — until 5 p.m.

Those in attendance will also get the chance to see the First Presbyterian Church Choir — directed by Mike Michell — perform at 4 p.m.

"Tickets are \$10, and there will be a map to each of the homes on the back of them,"

said Bond. "This is a fundraiser for the Guild, and more than 80 percent of the money we manage to raise will go directly to the Big Spring Symphony Association."

Tickets for the tour are available at First Bank of West Texas, Heritage Museum, the *Big Spring Herald* and at any of the participating homes on the day of the tours.

For more information on the tours, contact the Big Spring Symphony Guild office at 263-4033.

Company outlines plans for Settles Hotel building

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

Area residents may very well see the second-coming of the historic Settles Hotel, as a Dallas-based company has purchased the property and plans to renovate the structure into a mixed use commercial and residential complex.

The Settles Hotel Development Company — fronted by Big Spring native G. Brint Ryan — agreed to purchase the structure from the city of Big Spring for \$75,000 nearly two weeks ago, following approval from the city council.

According to a press release issued by Ryan Monday morning, preliminary plans for the historic downtown building include commercial and residential use of the property, with retail space available on the first and second floors.

Ryan said building amenities currently under consideration include a fitness center, full service restaurant and a conference center. The hotel's ballroom and lobby are expected to be restored following the original architectural plans drawn up in the 1920s.

"The Settles Hotel Development Company (SHDC) has retained a team of leading experts in historical preservation, downtown revitalization and economic development," said Ryan. "Troy Tompkins, a Big Spring resident and investment advisor, is also part of the team and was instrumental in negotiations with the city of Big Spring and Moore Development."

"This is one of the most exciting — and challenging — real estate development projects that exists

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Big Spring native G. Brint Ryan — manager of the Settles Hotel Development Company — announced Monday the historic Settles Hotel will be renovated into a mixed use commercial and residential complex.

HERALD photo/Thomas Jenkins

Food drive

With cupboards bare, Salvation Army needs all the help it can get

By THOMAS JENKINS

Staff Writer

With holiday goodies already dancing like sugar plums in the minds of many area residents, one local charity is doing its part to make sure the less fortunate don't find themselves with empty pantries this season.

The Big Spring Salvation Army will hold its annual food drive beginning Monday and continuing through Friday, Dec. 8, and with the Christmas holiday already on the horizon, this year's effort couldn't come at a more critical time.

"Our goal this year is to collect 27,000 cans," said Capt. Russ Keeney. "Last year, with hurricanes Rita and Katrina having just happened, we collected less than half that number, and right now the cupboards are bare. Every bit of the food we raised last year has been used and we've had to make several trips to get more. We're wiped out."

Keeney said the food collected during the drive will help make the Christmas holiday a little brighter for area residents having trouble putting food on the table, not to mention provide emergency food for the coming year.

"The food we collect during the drive goes into our Christmas emergency food boxes," said Keeney. "They are for people that would not normally have any food for Christmas. The boxes will have a lot of canned food in them."

"The cans that are left

over is what we use throughout the year for people that come in and don't have any food. We usually try to give them enough to last two weeks."

Participating is simple, according to Keeney, with drop off locations located at local businesses and schools.

"We have several locations that are participating," said Keeney. "People can drop off their canned goods at any of the local schools. The local Sonic Drive-ins are also drop-off points, along with the Salvation Army office."

Keeney said Big Spring High School will also be helping out this year.

"Big Spring High School will be putting on a winter concert at 7 p.m. on Dec. 11 and they're dedicating that performance to the Salvation Army. They're asking for people that attend to bring at least one can of food, and they will have a table where cans can be dropped off."

"Last year, during the concert, we managed to collect 300 cans. This year we're setting our goal on 500 cans."

As the organization drives toward its 27,000-can goal, Keeney said he believes the need is going to be greater this holiday season and throughout 2007.

"I think the need for these emergency food boxes is going to increase over the coming year," said Keeney. "I think we're going to see a lot more need this year."

For more information, call 267-8239.

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at citydesk@bigspringherald.com

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SANTA COMING TO MALL

Big Spring Mall will welcome Santa beginning Dec. 2.

Santa will be available for children from noon until 4 p.m. Dec. 2, 9, 16 and 23. Also on those dates, the Salvation Army will have a gift wrap area for donations.

December 9, the Big Spring High School and Big Spring Junior High choirs will perform from noon until 3 p.m.

Mall shoppers are also invited to view an art display presented by the Big Spring Evening Lions Club on behalf of junior high students.

Shoppers are also encouraged to participate in a food drive hosted by Sears. Donations will go to local food bank.

TOUR OF HOMES SLATED

The Big Spring Symphony Guild will hold its annual Holiday Tour of Homes Sunday, Dec. 10.

Featured will be four local homes, 2829 Hunter's Glen, the home of Amy and Michael Beech; 1213 E. FM 700, home of Donna and Skip Burcham; 610 Edwards Boulevard, home of Leslie Elrod; and 2511 Fisher St., the home of Brenda and Duane Thomas.

Tickets are available at First Bank of West Texas, Heritage Museum, the Big Spring Herald and at any of the participating homes on the day of the tours.

For more information on the tours, contact the Symphony office at 263-4033.

MUSEUM PLANS NATIVITY

Heritage Museum will celebrate the Christmas season with "Silent Night, Holy Night — A Walk-Through Nativity," beginning at 5 p.m. Dec. 2.

Inspired by a children's book, the nativity will feature different scenes depicting events surrounding the birth of the Christ child, said Tammy Schrecengost, curator of the museum.

The scenes will feature artwork by local resident Lenita Fryar and costumes donated by First United Methodist Church.

Visitors can watch the annual Herald Christmas Parade from the museum — where refreshments will be served — before or after touring the nativity.

Moore Board to consider applications during Wednesday meeting

By THOMAS JENKINS
Staff Writer

Personnel matters are expected to be the focus of Wednesday's meeting of the board of directors for Moore Development of Big Spring, as the agency continues the search for an executive director. With more than a dozen applications for the position already received, Moore Board President Larry McLellan said

the board is in the process of narrowing the field of hopefuls. "We received 14 applications," said McLellan. "We eliminated seven during our last meeting and received another application in the past couple of weeks. So right now we're studying the remaining eight and possibly still looking for some additional applicants out there." The board began its search more than a month ago when

former executive director Kent Sharp announced he would be leaving for a similar position in Gainesville. McLellan said the board hasn't received many applications over the past several weeks, possibly due to the onset of the holiday season. "We've only received one application since our last meeting, so I'm not really sure what the likelihood of getting more is," said McLellan. "I feel like

we're making some headway. We've gone from 14 to seven — and now to eight — so we have a list to work with now." The board is expected to review the applications during an executive session. Also on the agenda for the meeting is consideration of the financial report and investment report for October. The board is also expected to hear requests from Forsan Independent School District and a request

from the Settles Hotel Development Company, which recently purchased the local landmark. The meeting is expected to begin at 5:15 p.m. Wednesday in the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce board room, located at 215 W. Third Street. Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at citydesk@bigspringherald.com

Former congressman's book chronicles historic courthouses

By MICHAEL GRACZYK
Associated Press Writer

WHARTON — When Wharton County Judge W.J. Croom and his commissioners announced plans to build a new courthouse, rancher Able "Shanghai" Pierce raised such a ruckus the governor had to call in the Texas Rangers to keep the peace. When Pierce later got an injunction to save the old wooden courthouse, the judge and commissioners cut a hole in the roof in an effort to flee and avoid being served, but the judge got stuck in the hole.

Everything ended peacefully in the 1888 squabble. The judge was unstuck. A settlement was reached. A new courthouse was built the following year. Almost 120 years later, that "new" courthouse is nearing completion of its restoration and should be rededicated early in 2007, the latest in a series of restorations of historic Texas courthouses.

The Wharton County Courthouse and its tale are among 100 profiled in "Historic Texas Courthouses," a 276-page coffee table book written by attorney and former Houston Congressman Michael Andrews and illustrated by architectural photographers Paul Hester and Lisa Hardaway. "I've always loved Texas history and have been fascinated by these great old buildings," said Andrews, 62, whose congressional career ended in 1994. "Traveling around the state, I would see these

buildings and always be curious about how did that get there and what happened," he said. "The more I looked into it, I found very little has been written about these individual counties, the architects who designed the buildings and about the buildings themselves, what these structures really meant in early Texas."

What became apparent to Andrews was that for Texans up until about World War II, the county government had a much larger impact on a family's life. The courthouse for a society far less transitory became the repository for someone's life, from birth certificate, marriage license, other legal documents and finally to death certificate.

"It was more than a structure," Andrews said. "But as a structure, the courthouse became the predominant symbol of a county's life, of its culture, of its pride."

As a result, Texas and its 254 counties wound up with some magnificent architecture.

England-born architect Alfred Giles, whose style is marked by symmetry and art, is credited as the designer of the famous landmark courthouse in Presidio County, where cattle outnumbered residents almost 1,000-1 in 1885 when Marfa was selected county seat by a vote of 392-302. The courthouse, described by Andrews as "one of the state's most prized," dominated the landscape.

"There was no town, just the courthouse," Andrews said. "The peo-

Texas courthouse anecdotes and trivia

Here are some interesting tidbits about Texas courthouses, as detailed in the new book "Texas Historic Courthouses":

- Gillespie County, Fredericksburg, 1881: Architect Alfred Giles won a \$50 prize when his design was selected. He asked the prize be given to F.E. Ruffini, whose design county commissioners rejected.
- Maverick County, Eagle Pass, 1885: Dan Duncan became the only convicted killer hanged in the county in 1891, condemned at a trial in the second-story courtroom for killing three women and a young boy whose bodies weighted with rocks were found in the Rio Grande. The tip that led to his arrest came from a cowboy, Picnic Jones.
- Fayette County, La Grange, 1891, and Victoria County, Victoria, 1892, are virtual twins, both designed by James Rieley Gordon.
- Colorado County, Columbus, 1891: A grand ball to mark the building's completion was held in the courtroom, with dinner served by the ladies cemetery association.
- Milam County, Cameron, 1892: When the Statue of Justice was removed from the top of the tower in the 1930s, it was discovered the statue had been used for years for target practice.
- Caldwell County, Lockhart, 1894: Plans for this building were sold to Goliad County for its courthouse, and both were completed the same year.
- Somervell County, Glen Rose, 1894: Total cost was \$13,500. In 1902, a tornado blew down the clocks on the tower and 36 buildings in town, but did no damage to the white limestone rocks quarried from nearby bottom lands of the Paluxy River and used in construction.
- Hopkins County, Sulphur Springs, 1894: Facing a bill of \$75,000 for the new building, county commissioners decided to cut costs by refusing to put clocks in the 100-foot-high tower. Commissioners said if people wanted a clock, they should raise the money themselves. There is no clock, even today.
- Ellis County, Waxahachie, 1896: The building cost \$175,000. In 2002, restoration was completed at a cost of \$10 million.
- Coryell County, Gatesville, 1897: A copper box placed inside the 1,825-pound cornerstone contains, among a number of items, a Bible and a bottle of whiskey.

ple there spent their resources to build this majestic courthouse in the middle of nowhere. It was the way people would find their way across the desert — the sight of this courthouse."

In 1910, a celebration was held at the courthouse to mark the arrival of electricity. And a dance was held in the courtroom.

Other Giles courthouses are in Laredo and Falfurrias.

"Especially toward end of 19th century, when wealth started coming to different counties in Texas, county leaders would compete with each other to see what kind of

majestic courthouses they can build," said Andrews, who describes it as the Golden Age for Texas courthouses.

"At no other time in Texas history has public architecture so clearly defined an era," Andrews writes. "Many of the elegant and monumental buildings that remain still dominate and symbolize their communities today, just as they did when their doors first opened."

There's plenty of history associated with the courthouses, as Andrews details.

In 1948, a young Texas congressman named Lyndon Johnson began

his successful U.S. Senate campaign in front of the Shelby County Courthouse. In 1922, Nathan Lee became the last convicted killer in the state to be legally hanged, in front of the Brazoria County Courthouse for killing a local farmer.

Stan Graves, director of the Texas Historical Commission's courthouse preservation program, noted the courthouses were the center of public life.

"All across Texas, it's kind of like the white churches of New England," he said. "That's our version here in Texas — the county courthouse, the building most little towns focus on."

With the assistance of the decade-old program, 35 courthouses have been restored. Another 75 have completed their master plans, the first step in the process, and 15 are ready for construction. More than 200 are listed as historic, including some that have been abandoned or replaced.

Wharton's courthouse, about 75 miles southwest of Houston, had frayed electrical wiring and old natural gas lines, making it a fire risk. And it had weak walls and foundation that threatened its stability.

As part of the three-year restoration, stucco applied years ago was scaled off. Building additions, including an entire floor that split the original two-story courtroom,

have been removed. And a cupola lost generations ago has been restored, including installation of four clocks, one for each side of the cupola, powered by an ornate series of gears and pulleys and wires and weights originally built in 1889.

At least once a week, Paul Shannon, the county maintenance supervisor, climbs into the clock tower, slips about a foot-long wrench with a matching metal bar and hand cranks the clock. He also makes sure the time is correct, so a large bell echoes across the coastal prairie at exactly the top of every hour.

"If I'm a few seconds off, I can stop time from happening in Wharton County," he laughs. "I am the timekeeper."

For Andrews, people like Shannon illustrate the importance of the courthouses.

"What's really special about these buildings, unlike any other historic sites in Texas, is that the history is continuing," Andrews said. "These buildings still serve the purpose today that they did at the time they were built."

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anywhere. We plan to restore the property and nominate it for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. We also plan to replace the Texas Historical Landmark Marker that was removed from the building many years ago."

Ryan, who is the founder and CEO of Ryan & Company, one of the largest state and local tax consulting firms in North America, said interest in the project has remained high since its inception.

"There has been strong interest in the project, including two major lease commitments," said Ryan. "I am very appreciative of the strong support and encouragement we have received from Mayor Russ McEwen, the city council and Moore Development.

"As a native of Big Spring, I am fully aware of the challenges this project brings. I understand

many local residents will be skeptical about this project, especially considering the number of failed attempts to renovate the Settles over the years. Nevertheless, I am confident it won't be long before some very fortunate Big Spring residents will be residing at Big Spring's premier address — the Settles Hotel."

The city of Big Spring and SHDC are expected to execute a definitive purchase agreement in December with environmental abatement and structural work set to begin shortly after, according to Ryan.

Ryan said his company has also begun searching for artifacts from the hotel.

"A search for building artifacts is under way and SHDC will consider purchasing artifacts from individuals and businesses that may be in posses-

sion of such items," said Ryan. "We're interested in original building materials, such as marble flooring, wrought iron railings and doors, as well as furnishings, dinner ware or other items marked with the Settles Hotel emblem or logo."

"The Heritage Museum has offered to return the original lobby chandelier and SHDC is in discussions with the museum to reacquire this important historic artifact."

The 15-story hotel — which opened its doors in 1930 — has been vacant since the early 1980s.

Contact Staff Writer Thomas Jenkins at 263-

7331 ext. 232 or by e-mail at citydesk@bigspringherald.com

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Holy spirit, you who solve all the problems, who light all roads so that I may obtain my goal, you who give me the Divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me, and that in all instances of my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all the things and to confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you even in spite of all material illusions. I wish to be with you and all my loved ones in eternal glory. Thank you for your blessings and your mercy toward me and mine.

Say this prayer 3 days and after 3 days, favor will be granted, even if it appears difficult. Prayer should be published immediately after favor granted.

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J.L. "Toby" White, 74, died Saturday. Funeral Services will be at 10 a.m. Tuesday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial with military honors will be at the Coahoma Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. Monday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Billy Green, 77, died Sunday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

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