

# *La Salle County*

## *Historical Significance*

The most prominent building in LaSalle County Texas is the historic courthouse designed and built by architect Henry T. Phelps in 1931. The LaSalle County Courthouse is located in the center of Cotulla, Texas. The County seat is located on the original trade route through Texas, El Camino Real, crossed the river approximately 3/4 mile south of the courthouse and continued right by the courthouse, as documented in the "Diary of Padre Morfi, dated 1778."



As noted in placement in the National Register, July 11, 2007, "The County Courthouse sits in top of the highest hill in Cotulla and serves as a testimony to aspirations of both the LaSalle Commissioners and architect Henry T. Phelps."



The Texas Legislative formed LaSalle County from Bexar District in February 1, 1858 and named it for French Explorer René-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de LaSalle. This region had developed a reputation for lawlessness. The U.S. Army established a short lived outpost, Fort Ewell (founded in 1851), where the road crossed the Nueces to help protect travelers against outlaws and continued conflicts with Native American Tribes.

The original County Seat was established in 1881 about one and a half miles from Fort Ewell at the Guajuco Ranch. One year later, in 1882, the County Seat was moved from Guajuco Ranch to Cotulla. Joseph Cotulla founded the town site of Cotulla in 1881. On January 10, 1882, lots were auctioned off at the railroad depot adjacent to the right of way to the railroad. The railroad had not come this far south at that time. The town and the courthouse sit west of the railroad tracks. The International and Great Northern Railroad arrived in Cotulla in 1883 over one year after the town was founded.

The current courthouse is the fourth courthouse to be built at the current location and communicates a message to the residents of the county and travelers that law and order was present. The prominent building has been the center for Cotulla's development as well as development for transportation routes from other recorded town sites in the county and neighboring communities.

LaSalle county spent all of the formative years on road and bridge work, purchasing right of ways for the development of county, state and federal road system to include LaSalle as the find link to the paved of present day IH 35, the Pan American Highway 1931, as a network of roads extending from Alaska, Canada, and the United States to Mexico continuing as far down as Chile. The opening celebrations were held in July 4, 1931.

The courthouse continues to be the center of Cotulla's political and social life.

Joel Rodriguez  
La Salle County Judge