

Waxahachie History

I love to look at and tour old buildings, so the question of my favorite part of Waxahachie history is an easy one. When we first moved to Waxahachie, we visited the historic downtown district. I loved the old houses and immediately understood why Waxahachie is called the Gingerbread City. The Ellis County Courthouse is probably my favorite building in Waxahachie. It is beautiful, and its history is as amazing as its architecture. Since I am planning to go into the College of Architecture at Texas A&M University, I did some research on the courthouse and discovered that it was built in 1895 and incorporated stunning advancements for the time. Most courthouses from that era had a more closed in feel to the first floor. This was done to support the weight of the courtroom above. The builders of the Ellis County Courthouse incorporated an open concept in the building. They moved the courtroom on the second floor to the side, leaving the center of the building open to the bell tower. This also assisted in ventilation for the building. Cool air from the first-floor windows was funneled through the building, and exited through the bell tower, keeping the building much more comfortable in the summer than others from that time period. The exterior of the building is just as impressive. The designers incorporated pink and gray granite as well as pink and gray sandstone in the design, giving the courthouse a beautiful exterior that can be seen for miles. The building was restored in 2002, and the restoration effort included acquiring the granite and sandstone from the original 1895 quarries.

As I walked around and looked closer at the exterior, I began to notice many faces in the exterior walls and spirals. Some of the faces were really pretty, but others looked very strange, almost ugly. This made me wonder why they were there, so I began to research this and

discovered that no one really knows for sure. Some believe that the faces are there in no particular order, or for no special reason. Others believe that there is a fascinating reason for them. Since there is no concrete evidence to support the reasoning behind the faces, speculation, and eventually legend, began. According to the legend, the stone worker who was carving the faces was staying at a boarding house in Waxahachie. The stone worker fell in love with the granddaughter of the lady who ran the boarding house. The feeling was not mutual, and the granddaughter shunned his advances. Feeling rejected, the stone worker began to make the faces uglier and more grotesque. There are over twenty faces carved into the exterior of the Ellis County Courthouse. Some are female, others are male, and some look almost demonic.

The more I learn about the Ellis County Courthouse, the more I want to learn and understand. I will continue to research this amazing structure, and seek to understand more of the unique designs that set this building apart from other courthouses of the time. Due to these interesting and amazing features of the Ellis County Courthouse, it has come to be known as one, if not the most interesting and unique courthouses in Texas.