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Perry, White face off in November

Governor Rick Perry will face former Houston mayor Bill White in the November General Election after both men staved off opponents in the March 2 primaries.

U.S. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison conceded the Republican nomination to 10-year governor Perry about three hours after polls closed as Perry garnered about 52 percent of the statewide vote with half of the precincts reporting.

White's lead over busi-

nessman Farouk Shami in the Democratic primary was far more considerable, as he easily won the nomination with about 75 percent of the vote.

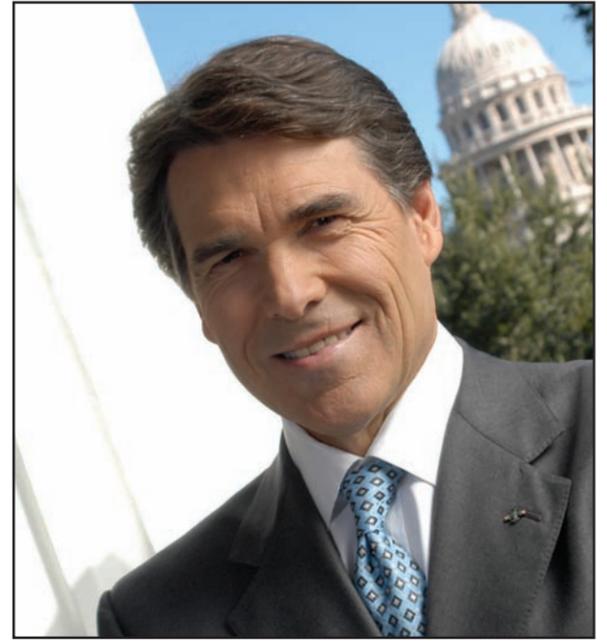
David Porter unseated incumbent Victor Carillo in the Republican primary for Railroad Commissioner.

Democrat Hank Gilbert will face incumbent Todd Staples for ag commissioner.

Results of statewide and local primary races can be found on page 10A.



Democrat Bill White will challenge 10-year Texas governor Rick Perry in November



Texas Governor Rick Perry defeated two major opponents in the March 2 Republican primary.

Who designed Robertson Plantation?

By TIM FLEISCHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

They know the tinner's name who did the standing seam roof.

They know who made the 11,000 shingles for the original barn came.

The windows, sashes and shutters came from Houston.

They know that, as well.

They have records of just about everything.

"The Colonel didn't throw away anything," restoration specialist Gregory Free told Salado Historical Society members March 1 at a general membership meeting.

Free is leading the research into and restoration of Salado's Robertson Plantation, acting on behalf of the sixth generation of the family that had such a great influence on Salado.

But what he doesn't yet know yet is simple: who designed the antebellum mansion.

The frontier mansion was built near the banks of the Salado Creek less than a decade after the last known Indian raids in central Texas.

"We don't know who the architect was," Free told the more than 100 members gathered at the Salado Civic Center to hear the restoration specialist about what is perhaps Salado's best and least-known resource.

The Robertson Plantation was built by Col. Elijah Sterling Clack Robertson in the late 1850s. Construction on the main house finished in 1860, built of siding from the Lost Pines area of Bastrop.

The slave quarters, stable and kitchen/smokehouse/dining area were built of the ubiquitous native limestone of the area. "It was plentiful and cheap because it did not have to be transported," Free said.

Other materials, including the metal roof, the windows (about 56 of them) and the siding were transported overland from Houston and other areas.

Free spoke about the challenge of building a home of this stature in this area which was not much more than frontier.

"Colonel Robertson was dedicated to what he envisioned Salado to be," he said, "and invested him-

self in that manner."

That investment of time, money and labor - slave labor as the place was a Plantation -- has stood near the banks of Salado Creek since then.

Free said that because the property has remained for more than 160 years in one family, it has been well kept for the most part.

Its history has been well chronicled and kept by the descendants and many others, as well.

During the Depression, the Robertson Plantation was studied in-depth as part of a works program called the Historic American Buildings Survey. Of the homes in Texas that were part of that survey conducted from 1936 to 1940, the Robertson Plantation was the most drawn in detail and number. Architectural drawings (some to scale) exist of all the details of the home and outbuildings. In fact, all of the moldings are drawn to scale, Free said.

Free said that while the name of the architect of the Plantation is not known, the style is showing itself to be more French Colonial than Palladian.

Pointing to the small rooms on either side of the front and rear recessed galleries -- cabinets, as they were called, Free said that design is more likely to be found in the colonial architecture of West Africa and Louisiana than in the rest of the south. He showed photos of a home built in Key West in 1844 as another rare example of a home with four cabinets, although all of these were on the second floor. The Robertson Plantation has eight cabinets, or small rooms, in its symmetrical design.

The small rooms served as an office, stranger's rooms, dressing rooms and later, with the advent of indoor plumbing, bathrooms.

"This is not a typical antebellum southern mansion," he said, adding that it is unique in its architecture for this part of the state.

"There is a Creole person involved somewhere in the design of this house," he said.

Free points also to the latticed gallery in the back of the house and the French doors (eight pairs of them)



Restoration specialist Gregory Free says that the Robertson Plantation shows a great deal of influence of French Colonial architecture.

in the main chambers of the house as more of the French influence.

Free wondered aloud if the French influence may have come from a slave owned by Robertson. In fact, in hopes of finding the designer of the home, Free followed a particular name to Robertson County, where one man by the given name of Benijah was sharecropping on land owned by the Robertsons.

Free explained his hopes of finding the elusive French influence on the home in the man who was listed in the 1880 census.

But when he saw the signature, which was very refined and "indicative of

a man who was well-educated," he knew it was not to be.

It was illegal in Texas to educate slaves. It was illegal to own a slave who had been educated elsewhere.

"This was not the signature of an illiterate former slave," Free said.

But Free will continue to seek out the unnamed designer of the Robertson Plantation as part of his work to restore the property. "You have to know what was first done," he said.

And in discovering that, the story of this architectural and historical gem that has stood watch over Salado for so many years unfolds.



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INSIDE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS	2B
CLASSIFIEDS	1C
FORUM	2A
OFF THE RECORD	2A
SHOPPING MAP	4B

March 8 is Last Day to File

March 8 is the last day for candidates to file in any of the three local races which will be decided on May 8. Salado voters will choose two school district trustees, two aldermen and a mayor and three library district directors. Applications are available at the offices of each governing entity. The last day to register to vote in the May 8 election is April 8. The first day of early voting is April 26.

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