



Old Red Museum of Dallas County History & Culture



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Final phase of restoration begins

Old Red prepares for return to public life

Old Red Courthouse entered the final phase of restoration to public life in early October, when Dallas County Commissioners approved construction on Phase 2, the finish-out of the interior in preparation for installation of Old Red Museum of Dallas County History & Culture. Signing with Thos. S. Byrne General Contractors followed soon thereafter and construction crews were on site by Halloween.

Nearly half the funding for construction is provided by the Old Red Foundation, the non-profit corporation established in 1997 to create the museum and manage the use of the renovated building for public and civic events.

Foundation Chairman David Biegler said, "Dallas County's history shows that important advances involve public and private interests acting in concert and this is a great example of achievement through such partnership.

The devotion and resources the landmark building receives from the community is matched by the support County officials have shown for its restoration." Mr. Biegler, involved with the project for more than a decade, is delighted by the Commissioners Court actions. "Old Red will resume its important place in this community, perhaps the most important role it has ever fulfilled, and today the Court ensured that will be achieved soon," he said on the occasion.

Phase 1, the structural renovation, began in spring 2001 with exploratory demolition, followed by hazardous material abatement and the restoration of exterior stonework and interior walls and arches to their original condition. Ceilings and floors were restructured and load tested. The last stage of Phase 1, ending last spring, actually began the finish-out process through the installation of new window frames and glass to match the original 1890 style.

Phase 2, the finish-out, involves restoring all interior features: walls to be wainscoted and plastered; floors to be surfaced; and ceilings restored to their original appearance, replete with crown and panel molding.

A new mechanical infrastructure will be installed, providing HVAC, power, telephone and data services to all reaches of the 70,000 square feet interior.



Annually, the State Fair of Texas parade kicks-off at Old Red

Dallas County Judge Margaret Keliher said, "I'm delighted that this project is moving ahead. The restoration of Old Red to its 19th Century condition and style will return it to its proper status as the jewel in the crown of Dallas. It will be particularly exciting to see the clock tower back in place as it was in the 1890s, which has already been approved as the next phase of the project. This joint project of Dallas County, the Old Red Foundation, and the State of Texas gives us an outstanding building for all of Dallas County to enjoy."

From the outside, the greatest change will be in the restoration of the Old Red Clock Tower, removed in 1919. Although a "Phase 3" renovation, funding from the State of Texas and Texas Historical Commission will allow its construction coincident with Phase 2. Reinstalling the Grand Staircase will make the most dramatic change for visitors entering the Romanesque-style building. The staircase did more than access the four levels of the building: it was a grand architectural feature, the center of attention, from which speeches would be given and announcements made.

James Pratt Architecture - Urban Design is the project's chief architect, whose work on restoring Old Red spans three decades.



Historic Courtroom at Old Red honors Hatton W. Sumners

Hatton W. Sumners (1875-1962), one of America's most influential legislators, representing Dallas County for 34 years - from the Wilson to the Truman administrations- will be recognized in the naming of a restored courtroom in Old Red Courthouse, affirmed by Dallas County Commissioners and supported by the Dallas legal community.

Old Red Foundation Chairman David Biegler said, "Hatton Sumners' role in Dallas' progress was vital, and restoring a beautiful courtroom in his honor through the support of the legal community speaks to the mission of the Old Red Foundation: a public-private partnership to return Old Red Courthouse to its proper role as a center of civic life. We are immensely grateful to the leadership of the foundations and firms who have made it possible through their largesse."

The courtroom will serve educational and jurisprudential roles. Designated a "visiting court," it will occasionally host civil proceedings. At other times it will be available for moot court hearings, educational seminars and presentations.

Congressman Sumners was the 'jurist's jurist,' having served on, and chaired, the House Judiciary Committee longer than anyone else in American history. During his tenure, he served both Dallas County and the nation's legal profession, helping both progress into the modern era.

Old Red Courthouse, the location of Sumners' first office, is the most appropriate place in Dallas County to honor his memory, suggests Sumners Foundation Chairman James Cleo Thompson, Jr. "Old Red was home to Hatton Sumners. His career in public service began here, and he felt a great attachment: while a congressman, his Dallas residence was a block away from Old Red, at the Bradford

Hotel. The Hatton Sumners Foundation is grateful to Dallas County Commissioners and Judge Margaret Keliher for this most appropriate recognition of one of Dallas' greatest public servants," concluded Thompson.

Sumners was elected Dallas County Attorney in 1900, working in the then-new Red Courthouse.

Challenging the liquor and gambling interests (he wanted them to close once a day for six hours), he made enemies who forced him out in 1902. Returning in 1904, his second two-year term saw the fruition of his crusade against the "industries of idleness." In 1906 he returned to private practice but six years later was convinced to run for Congress.

He served in the House of Representatives through the Depression, the New Deal, and both World Wars before returning to Dallas in 1947.

The first legislation introduced and passed by Hatton Sumners was to designate Dallas as a customs port of entry. Later, he would be the congressional point person for the drive to bring the Federal Reserve Bank to Dallas.

Appointed to the House Judiciary Committee in 1919, he became Chairman in 1931. His path would likely have led to the Supreme Court, but in blocking President Franklin Roosevelt's "court packing" plan, he admittedly "cashed in" his political chips. A long-time ally of FDR, Sumners also provided a graceful legislative resolution to the crisis, one that allowed the most senior judges to retire, clearing the way for the President's desired appointees.

The restoration of the courtroom in Old Red is being made possible by support from the Dallas legal community. Please see the related article on page four.

Harlemwood, Dallas

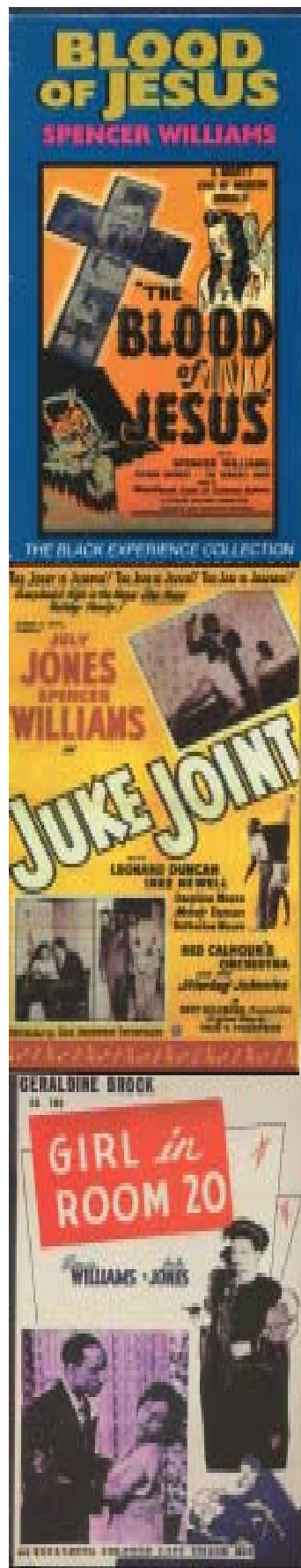
When Spencer Williams, African American actor, writer and vaudeville performer, met Dallas-based film distributor Alfred Sack, they struck a partnership that would produce an opus of historically significant films and offer Dallas its most unusual nickname yet: Harlemwood.

Williams, from Vidalia, Louisiana, had been a successful singer and recording technician at the time talkies began replacing silent films. He began writing and acting in Hollywood films featuring African American actors in the 1930s.

Sack had started Sack Amusement Enterprises in 1920, moving it from his native San Antonio to Dallas, also in the 1930s. Sack specialized in films for African American audiences, and became a major producer of these through the 1940s.

Working together, Williams and Sack produced ten films, shooting primarily in the Dallas area. With subject matter ranging from religious drama to mysteries to comic farce, and including many musical performances, the films have become more important than their entertainment value. They document, with a rare unembellished honesty, the culture, lifestyles and living conditions of the African American community. Film critic Thomas Cripps has written that *The Blood of Jesus*, for example, is “an exemplar of Southern Black fundamentalism, untrammelled by white intrusion.”

Following the social changes of the late 1940s, ‘race films’ ceased to be a viable industry, and their existence slowly ebbed from cultural consciousness. Many of these films were lost to posterity, until, three decades later, a twist of local fate brought them back to life. In 1983, SMU professor and film historian G. William Jones received a call about a stack of films turning to dust in a Tyler, Texas warehouse. A quick trip out to the warehouse



brought back exciting news – a number of the films were reclaimable and were potentially the work of the “Harlemwood Studios,” the name Sack gave to his production company.

Transferred to safety film in 1985, and recently digitized for even greater restoration, the G. William Jones Film & Video Collection of the Hammon Arts Library, SMU, has made the films available to a far wider audience than ever envisioned in their original release.

Harlemwood productions filmed in Dallas are believed to include *The Blood of Jesus* (1941), *Brother Martin* (1942), *Marchin’ On* (1943), *Go Down Death* (1944), *Of One Blood* (1944), *Beale Street Mama* (1946), *Dirty Gerty From Harlem* (1946), *Girl In Room 20* (1946), and *Juke Joint* (1947)



Film still from *The Girl in Room 20* (1946) with Spencer Williams

The stories of Spencer Williams and Al Sack, of Harlemwood Studios and Dallas County’s role in ethnic film will be a featured, multi-media exhibit at Old Red Museum of Dallas County History & Culture. Professor Jones wrote, “Although most Americans remember Spencer Williams only as Andy Brown on the short-lived CBS Television version of *Amos N’ Andy* (1950-53), his work in Texas during the 1940s was his most significant achievement.” Old Red Museum intends for this greater story to be told and lastingly remembered.

Foundation and Law Firms Fund Sumners Courtroom Restoration

Nearly three-quarters of the \$1-million goal in restoring a historic courtroom has been pledged by Dallas County foundations and legal firms, beginning with a Major Benefactor leadership grant of \$250,000 by the **Hatton W. Sumners Foundation**.

Benefactors pledging more than \$50,000 to the restoration include **Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP; Haynes and Boone, LLP; Jackson Walker LLP; Jenkens & Gilchrist PC; Jones Day; Locke Liddell & Sapp LLP; Thompson & Knight Foundation; and Winstead Sechrest & Minick PC.**

Additional support has been pledged by Carrington, Coleman, Sloman & Blumenthal LLP.

The Sumners Foundation has maintained as low a profile as its namesake congressman (his staff's greatest challenge was to convince him to campaign for re-election), but it has supported a wide variety of programs that touch nearly all Dallas County residents.

The purpose of the Hatton W. Sumners Foundation is "to encourage the study, teaching and research into the science and art of self-government, to the end that the American People may understand the fundamental principles of democracy and be guided thereby in shaping governmental policies."

The Foundation supports programs and activities that result in an increased understanding by the public of the benefits of individual freedom and civic and personal responsibility, and the corresponding threat to liberty posed by a lack of informed, active participation by citizens at all levels of government.

The Hatton W. Sumners Foundation, Inc., has granted more than \$13-million to Dallas County organizations, supporting youth character-building programs throughout the community, and scholarships at colleges, universities and law schools throughout the region and the nation.

Campaign over \$12-million

The Campaign to Make History at Old Red has received **\$12,004,282** in gifts and pledges toward the goal of \$13.7-million. Major Benefactors (\$100,000 and greater) include:

**Crystal Charity Ball 50th Anniversary
Linda & Mitch Hart
Federal Economic Development Grant
EDI Special Projects Grant**

Summerlee Foundation

Hillcrest Foundation

**The Rosine Foundation Fund of
Communities Foundation of Texas**

Anonymous

Meadows Foundation

Pauline Allen Gill Foundation

Hoblitzelle Foundation

Bosque Foundation

The James M. Collins Foundation

The Hatton W. Sumners Foundation

The Eugene McDermott Foundation

Rosewood Foundation

TXU

Bank of America

Belo Foundation

The Constantin Foundation

Dallas Foundation

**The Patrick & Beatrice Haggerty
Foundation**

**The Margot W. and Ben H. Mitchell Fund
of Communities Foundation of Texas**

Simmons Family Foundation

**Roy and Christine Sturgis Charitable and
Educational Trust**

Texas Instruments Foundation

We are grateful for the support of all donors at all levels; a list of benefactors is found on our website, www.oldred.org.

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Scaling History

Fundraising campaigns traditionally indicate progress on a thermometer of giving. We scaled ours against the march of time of Dallas County history. Our current total of pledges and gifts brings us to the year 1983.

OLD RED MUSEUM OF DALLAS COUNTY HISTORY & CULTURE

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