Abner Cook Wins Bid to Build a Mansion for the Texas Governor
September 1854. Master builder Abner Cook was low bidder at $14,500 and has won the contract to build a home for the Texas governor.

The Texas Legislature earlier authorized $17,000 for the project - $14,500 for the house and $2,500 for furnishings. The architect for the home is Richard Payne. Payne's original plans were too expensive and only after considerable alteration has it been possible to find a contractor who would build the home for $14,500.

Cook plans to build the exterior walls using buff-colored bricks produced from clay at the nearby Colorado River. Framing and flooring will be cut from pine trees near Bastrop.

Governor Holds Open House at the New Mansion
August 24, 1856. Last evening Governor Elisha Pease held an open house at the newly completed Governor’s Mansion. Mrs. Pease was not in attendance and when asked about her whereabouts, the governor said that she was visiting relatives in Connecticut. He admitted that the citizens of Austin were seeing Mrs. Pease’s new home before she did.

Governor Pease was obviously pleased with the mansion. He guided the citizens of Austin through it much as any other proud owner of a mansion during Gov. Pease’s administration. First families may decorate the private quarters to accommodate their needs. Since serving as United States senator, Sam Houston has consistently maintained that it is important to the State of Texas that it remains in the Union. He told the press that his views on the critical situation were in conflict with the majority views of the citizens of Texas and, therefore, the citizens would best be served by another governor.

Mrs. Houston also revealed that the governor’s Texas supporters and even President Lincoln, who helped to keep him in office in his use of force if necessary. Mrs. Houston believes that the Governor burned Lincoln’s letter in the Library fireplace.

Governor Houston knew that the end was near when, on Tuesday, the Secession Convention decreed that all state officials must sign an oath of loyalty to the Confederacy.

Last evening, family friends helped the Houston’s pack. Mrs. Houston confided to them that it was particularly hurtful to hear people ridiculing her husband when the same people earlier had praised him as the “Hero of San Jacinto.”

Governor Sam Houston Resigns
March 3, 1861. Governor Sam Houston has resigned as governor of the State of Texas. Announcing his resignation, Governor Houston said that he was remaining true to his strong belief in maintaining the Union. Since serving as United States senator, Sam Houston has consistently maintained that these wooden elements were painted white or off-white. An 1886 photo shows the brick painted to provide a seal from moisture. The photograph dated 1890 (above) shows the wooden elements painted various colors. Because there was no color photography, there was no way to determine what colors were used.

This year, an exterior finish study has helped solve the mystery. By taking tiny samples, paint and placing them under a microscope, an expert has determined that there have been as many as twelve layers of paint to the present day. Colors used at various times include red-browns, grays, and dark greens. Even a pale blue was used on the brick.

From 1912 to the present, the house has been various shades of white or off-white with green shutters.

The musicians, known previously as the Light Crust Doughboys, became the Hillbilly Boys in 1938 when O’Daniel became president of Hillbilly Flour. Governor O’Daniel will continue his popular radio show with the band while he is governor. They broadcast on Sundays from the back parlor of the mansion.

Mansion Tradition
The first meal that each governor and his or her family take at the mansion is the midday meal on inauguration day. The outgoing governor has this meal prepared and left to welcome the new family into the mansion.

Texans Proud of Refurbished Mansion
April 14, 1982. The Governor’s Mansion reopened to the public today, furnished in the elegant style in keeping with its stately Greek Revival architecture. When Governor and Mrs. William Clements moved into the mansion, they found it structurally unsound and shabbily furnished. At Governor Clements’ urging, the state legislature appropriated $1,000,000 for renovation work. Mrs. Clements and some Friends of the Governor’s Mansion traveled to his state to help raise funds for furnishings and interior decoration.

The $3,000,000 raised was used to restore historic state-owned pieces such as the Sam Houston bed and Stephen F. Austin’s desk and to purchase 19th century museum-quality antiques. Texans can be proud of their beautifully restored Governor’s Mansion.

The public rooms of the mansion will now remain the same throughout each new administration. First families may decorate the private quarters to accommodate their needs.

UPDATE: Perry Family Moves into Mansion
February 16, 2001. Governor Rick Perry and his family have moved into the mansion since the Bushes departed for Washington and the White House. George W. Bush resigned as governor on December 21, 2000, upon becoming President-elect of the United States. Rick Perry was sworn in as governor later that same day. He and his wife, Anita, have two children. Governor Perry is the 40th governor to reside in the mansion.
Dear Citizens of Texas,

While the arson at the Governor’s Mansion left many Texans heartbroken, I have been overwhelmed by the support and encouragement from my fellow Texans to restore this historic home. Recently, I announced the “Texas Governor’s Mansion Restoration Fund,” a non-profit organization established to raise money for the rebuilding of this National Historic landmark. I will chair the fund and have named Pamela Wilford as vice-chair.

While it is still too early to determine the cost, the restoration of the Mansion will take the support of all Texans. Funding to rebuild the Mansion must come from legislative appropriations, and private funds will be used to restore and preserve its historic fabric.

With your help, the Governor’s Mansion will again be restored for the enjoyment and inspiration of all proud Texans.

Warmest regards,

Anita Perry

Texas Governor’s Mansion Restoration Fund

Governors, past and present, gathered at the Mansion. Former governors Preston Smith, Dolph Briscoe, William Clements, Mark White, Ann Richards, and Governor Rick Perry stand behind former First Lady Rita Clements, First Lady Anita Perry and former First Lady Linda Gale White.

Governor Perry Vows to Rebuild Texas Governor’s Mansion
June 11, 2008. Gov. Rick Perry vowed that the fire-scorched Texas Governor’s Mansion will be completely rebuilt “whatever it costs.” Gov. Perry also said he wants to know why state security measures failed to protect the 152-year-old home. His comments in front of the blackened and gutted mansion came as state and federal arson investigators continued to review grainy surveillance footage from Sunday’s pre-dawn blaze.

“As long as I’ve been the governor ... few sights have left a deeper impression on me than the charred remains of this genuine Texas treasure,” Gov. Perry said. At a morning news conference, the Governor pledged to “rebuid this magnificent structure” through a combination of legislative appropriations and private fundraising, an effort that will be spearheaded by First Lady Anita Perry. “It’s still too early to estimate the magnitude of the replacement cost,” said Rep. Rob Eissler, R-The Woodlands. “But certainly this is a monument to our history, a monument to the people who have lived there.” Those sentiments were shared by other lawmakers.

While restoration estimates are not available, preservation architects have said museum-quality restorations of comparable historic homes have cost as much as $20 million.

On Wednesday, Gov. Perry struggled for words as he described a series of phone calls notifying him and his wife of the blaze. “At that point in time, we did not know whether it would burn to the ground,” he said. When Gov. Perry learned the fire was arson, his emotions “went from heartache to pretty [darn] mad.” This was his family’s home and a place where children have “slid down banisters and chased pets in the yard” for more than a century.

Warmest regards,

Anita Perry

Governors Preston Smith, William Clements, Mark White, Ann Richards, and Governor Rick Perry stand behind former First Lady Rita Clements, First Lady Anita Perry and former First Lady Linda Gale White.

Historic Texas Governor’s Mansion Burns, Arson Suspected
June 8, 2008. Statement by Gov. Rick Perry and First Lady Anita Perry regarding the fire at the Texas Governor’s Mansion:

“We are heartbroken by the fire that has ravaged the Texas Governor’s Mansion. It has not only been our home for the past eight years, but has stood as a symbol of Texas pride throughout its history. Though it can certainly be rebuilt, what Texas has lost today can never be replaced.”

Texas Governor’s Mansion Restoration Fund

Restore a Texas Treasure

TOLL FREE 1.866.771.5829 www.TexasOnline.com

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If you would like to make a tax deductible donation by check or money order, please mail it to:

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Former Texas Governors Speak Out About Mansion

Former governor Dolph Briscoe, Jr. recently recounted one of his most cherished memories. At age nine he accompanied his parents on a visit to the Governor’s Mansion as overnight guests of then Governor Ross Sterling. Spending the night in the Mansion and sleeping in Sam Houston’s four poster bed inspired the statesman and rancher to fulfill his dreams and grow up to become governor.

“When I first heard about (the fire), I got a terrible feeling — just like that day in February 1983 when I got word that the Capitol was on fire,” said former governor Mark White of Houston. “This is not just Texas history. It is priceless Texas history.”

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