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Masons level cornerstone for Ellis County Sub-Courthouse in Ennis

Under a clear blue sky on this windy but sunny Saturday afternoon, members of the Ennis Masonic Lodge #369 hosted city and county officials for a Cornerstone Leveling Ceremony at the new Ellis County Sub-Courthouse in Ennis.

“This is the same ceremony used since 1836 when the organization was first instituted in the Republic of Texas,” said Past Grand Master M. Boyd Patterson, Jr. “It is designed to help you understand about freemasons and to help us recall our obligation to contribute to the wellbeing of the public.”

During the ceremony, Masons applied the tools of their ancient trade, checking the stone with a square, a level, and a plumb and declaring that “the craftsmen have done their duty.”

“I find this cornerstone well formed, trusty and true,” announced Patterson.

The ceremony continued with application of corn, wine, and oil to the stone, signifying nourishment, refreshment, and joy.

The ceremony noted that the use of cornerstones predates Masonry by several centuries and is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments, citing Isaiah 28:16 and Mark 12:10 specifically. George Washington, a Masonic Grand Master, leveled the cornerstone for the new Capitol Building in 1793, during his presidency. Similar ceremonies were held when the Texas State Capitol Building was built, in 1895, and again when it was expanded in 1994.

The ceremony reminds us that if we are to build a lasting structure, whether physical or spiritual, it must rest on a firm foundation.

Officials on hand for the ceremony included Ellis County Commissioner Bill Dodson, pct. 2; Judge Bill Woody, Justice Court pct. 1; Ennis City Commissioner James ‘Red’ Sanders, Ward 1; and Ennis City Manager Steve Howerton. Cindy Ermatinger, a run-off candidate for 40th District Court also attended, as did county employees George Brocker and Diana Buckley.

“We really appreciate you taking your time to visit us to present this cornerstone to us, on a beautiful Saturday,” said Dodson. “We appreciate the stones, and I thank you for all the people of Ellis County and for the Commissioners’ Court.”

The facility will house a variety of county offices, including Justice of the Peace pct. 1, Constable pct. 1, Tax Office, County Clerk, Veterans' Services, and Indigent Health Care. It also includes a meeting room large enough to accommodate town-hall style gatherings.

"Commissioners, City Manager, with our thanks we extend our congratulations in the sure knowledge that (this building) will serve the citizens of the county well," Patterson concluded. "Brother Bill Woody is the primary beneficiary – thank you for helping to arrange this. I know you will continue to be a faithful servant for some time to come."

