

NORTH-EVANS CHATEAU  
(Chateau Bellvue)  
(Austin Women's Club)  
708 San Antonio Street  
Austin  
Travis County  
Texas

HABS TX-3549  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
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FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## NORTH-EVANS CHATEAU (Chateau Bellvue) (Austin Women's Club)

HABS No. TX-3549

**Location:** 708 San Antonio Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas  
It is located at latitude: 30.271058, longitude: -97.747360.  
This coordinate was obtained on 11 April 2013, using Google Earth. The datum is WGS84. The location has no restriction on its release to the public.

**Significance:** As a part of the Bremond Block Historic District, the North-Evans Chateau remains as one of Austin's few surviving large-scale Victorian residences. Its eclectic Romanesque Revival exterior and elaborate interior reflect the style fashionable in late-nineteenth century high society.

**Description:** The North-Evans Chateau sits at the corner of San Antonio Street and West 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The building, originally three stories fronting San Antonio Street, has grown overtime to become a multi-level complex. The simple massing of the building is enhanced by porches, two superimposed bay windows and tower, and cornices and crenellation. A limestone porch serves as the primary entrance into the building.

The exterior rubble was quarried in Round Rock, Texas. Local craftsmen of central Texas carved the elaborate doors and interior woodwork; the sliding doors and wainscoting are made of the now extinct curly pine while the decorative grillwork is made of cherry wood. Pressed copper ceilings can be found in much of the original parts of the building. Stained glass is featured in the entrance hall, in the skylight above the staircase, and in the dining room. The entrance hall, the east and west parlor rooms, and the staircase are the most decorative of all the rooms; the upper floor and subsequent additions are less ornate. However, many of the rooms feature ornate fireplaces decorated with marble, painted ceramic tile, and various metals.

**History:** The original section of the North-Evans Chateau was built in 1874 by Mr. and Mrs. Harvey North; the North's would call their French chateau Bellevue Place. The original architect is unknown. The North's, however, were unable to realize fully their vision due to financial constraints, resulting in a smaller building than they had originally planned. Harvey North passed away in 1881, and in 1884 his wife Catherine sold the property to Augusta and William Gaines, the editor and owner of the Daily Democrat Statesmen newspaper. In 1892 the house was once again sold, purchased by Major Ira H. Evans and his wife Frances Hobart.

Ira Evans served as a union soldier during the Civil War, attaining the rank of Major and receiving the Congressional Medal of Honor. Following the war, Maj. Evans was discharged from service in 1867. Within two years he entered politics;

at the age of 25, he became the youngest Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives. In 1871 Evans was ousted from the legislature due to controversy over a proposed bill. He left politics and began his business career, starting with a role as General Manager of the Texas Land Company in 1872. By 1875 Evans had made great strides in his career, becoming the Director of the Consolidated International & Great Northern Railroad Company, a position he held for 32 years. In 1885 his position led him to Austin, and only 5 years later Evans became one of the founders of Austin National Bank. In 1892 Evans and his family purchased the North's home, Bellevue Place, as their permanent residence. They hired the distinguished San Antonio architect Alfred Giles to make major revisions and renovations to the home, creating an architectural showpiece through the addition of large stone porches, interior stained glass, and intricate woodwork. Giles's work, often characterized by eclectic the use of styles, was particularly influenced by the Romanesque Revival style made popular by the architect Henry Hobson Richardson. His addition finally realized the grandeur of the North's original vision. Evans used the new and improved chateau not only as a residence, but also as a meeting place for many of the local organizations he was involved in. Numerous local civic and social groups were founded at the Chateau, including the organization that has now become the Texas Historical Commission.

In the spring of 1928, representatives of local Austin women's organizations convened at the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the creation of a center and associated club where they could assemble. The Austin Woman's Club was officially founded on April 25, 1928, and Mrs. Sam J. Smith was elected the first president of the fledgling society. Committees were created to begin the search for an appropriate venue for their headquarters. Smith advocated for the purchase of the North-Evans Chateau. On March 28, 1929 the newly formed club called a vote and decided to purchase the former Evans residence. In subsequent years the Austin Woman's club held numerous events including teas, luncheons, and rummage sales in order to raise funds to pay off their debt and improve the building. The Woman's Club has made several renovations to the property since they took over ownership, including the additions of a banquet room, an elevator, and a large parking lot on the east end of the building. The Austin Woman's Club has been a responsible steward of the North-Evans Chateau, devoting much of their time and resources to maintaining the structure and preserving its historic character.

**Sources:**

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**Historians:** Rebecca S. Lapham and Thomas H. Garcia, 2010