The historic W. C. Williams Building, built in 1909, was recognized as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) during a ceremony in Palacios on Saturday, July 30. The building has been a cornerstone and anchor of the commercial and cultural life of Palacios and Matagorda County for 107 years. The ceremony was sponsored by the Matagorda County Historical Commission (MCHC). Attending the ceremony were members of the commission, including Ona Lea Pierce, Chairman and David Holubec, County Marker Chairman. Matagorda County Judge Nate McDonald, Palacios Mayor Glenn Smith, Pam Oliver, Executive Director of the Palacios Chamber of Commerce, and the Rev. Eric Young, Pastor of Agape Family Outreach Church, also took part in the ceremony. In addition several descendants of the Williams and Gillen families were in attendance.

The UNT Digital Projects Unit recently completed a scanning project of the Palacios Beacon newspaper back to 1911. The Beacon project and the UNT sponsored Portal to Texas History provided much of the historic research leading to the Williams Building RTHL designation. The building was built by W. C. “Billy” Williams, a childhood friend of well-known western author, Charles Angelo Siringo (1855-1928). Siringo mentions several references to W. C. Williams, whose nickname was Billy, his wife, Martha Alice Franz Williams (1860 – 1952), and his father, John Aaron Williams (1816 – 1865), in his book, A Texas Cowboy or Fifteen Years on the Hurricane Deck of a Spanish Pony (1886). Billy Williams and Charlie Siringo were born and grew up on Matagorda Island in a section called Dutch Settlement (German Settlement). As they grew older, both young men remained infatuated with their childhood friend, Martha (Martha Alice Franz Williams (1860 – 1952). As it turned out, Billy got the girl and Charlie got the cowboy and Pinkerton detective career.

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