

## Railroad Produce Depot – narrative – by The Texas Historical Commission

Originally constructed to serve as a giant "cold cellar", the building has barn-like characteristics, in that it is twice as long as wide (38x80 feet), is made of local limestone and is banked into a hill to have grade level loading doors on two floors as well as a basement. Produce was loaded on three sides through a variety of doorways which served areas accessible to traffic. Capped by a sheet metal "boom town" front with awning, an imbricated piedmont metal shingle roof and a small rectangular ventilating cupola, the building had few windows to allow the infiltration of light or the escape of its subterranean cold. The inaccessible north wall has no doorways, only windows, and these were fixed and structure and carried it by a cedar timber roofed tunnel to a nearby creek. Inside, water passed through the porous stone floor to the same collection system. Simple wooden floors supported by a central beam and a chain operated lift completed the interior. The rough un-plastered ashlar native limestone walls measure 21 inches thick.

Presumably altered in the period when it was owned by W.W. Pearce (1903-09), the "rehabilitation" included the addition of refrigeration, a cooling tower and a concrete floor with necessary machine footings. By opening the arched doorway into a large rectangle with a concrete loading dock and by carving two rude windows at ground level, the southern wall was made more accessible for motor vehicles. Externally, the building retains this appearance. Inside, the machinery and lift have been removed and a large ramp, partial floors and large open spaces now dominate the interior.

Built to serve as a storage building for fresh vegetables grown in the area, the Railroad Produce Warehouse is a good example of the type of structures which marked early Texas railroads. While the age of this particular building is yet unknown, the style and use of native design and materials suggests its construction at the time the trackage was laid in 1879. It remains a remarkable example of energy efficiency because of its functional design. Half underground, it has fixed, double glazed windows on the south. It has a low percentage of wall devoted to fenestration. The controllable roof ventilators to the east, south and west, the evaporation of water on the lower walls and the large tunnel were also used to control temperature. Its architecture exhibits well the awareness required before the advent of artificial cooling.

Surrounded by an ice plant, railroad depot, the county's major lumberyard and laundry, the Railroad Produce Warehouse was perhaps the least significant structure. Now, as the final vestige of this commercial development, its mass retains strong lines and it comprises the primary element in a modest landscape. The addition of refrigeration at the turn of the century and the increased access did little to save the commercial aspect of the building or the area; freight moved to other trackage. By 1935, after producing no revenue for several years, it was converted to Aderhold Machine & Gin Company where casting, welding and other repair of farm equipment was performed. Aderhold sold the building in 1944. Conveyed to Smith Cattle Company in 1955, it operated at the Georgetown Oil Mill and later, as The Georgetown Oil Mill Grain Warehouse. An area sculptor, Robert Lancaster, used it as a studio in the 1960's. Presently used as a warehouse, the owners plan to retain the exterior facade as they convert it to a dwelling and commercial units utilizing the inherent energy efficiency as a major design element.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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