

The Round Rock Commercial Historic District is an assemblage of small commercial buildings, mainly of limestone ashlar, in the business section of a Central Texas town. The 22 contributing structures included herein were mainly constructed in the last quarter of the 19th century, and include handsome vernacular and Italianate stone buildings originally used for retailing, offices, saloons, and meeting halls. The colorful history of Round Rock in the later 19th century is embodied in this commercial historic district.

The Round Rock Commercial Historic District is a concentration of 25 stone--masonry, predominately one-story, commercial buildings built during the last quarter of the 19th century. Stylistically, the buildings differ from many other Central Texas towns where brick was more commonly used. The vernacular, commercial architecture is characterized by stone masonry, load-bearing walls. The parapeted cornices are simply detailed in stone, and conceal sloping roofs. Originally both sides of the Main Street had tin-roofed, continuous store-front canopies the full width of each business establishment. Scattered remnants of these canopies remain in place, although most of the facades have been slightly altered. The district is visually defined by similarities in use, design, materials, scale, period of construction, and relationship to the street and sidewalk. With the exception of the Nelson Hardware building, with its handsome facade fabricated in St. Louis, the buildings in the district are all the work of local builders and craftsmen.

The historic district forms an appropriate rectangle, bounded on the west by the east side of May Street, and on the east by a group of governmental buildings. The alley between Main Street (formerly Georgetown Avenue) and Liberty Avenue forms the northern boundary, while the alley between Main Street and Bagdad Avenue forms the southern limits of the district. There is an extension at the southwestern corner of this rectangle which includes property located just south of the alley between Main Street and Bagdad Avenue. This property faces directly onto Mays Street, while the rest of the nominated property faces onto East Main.

Main Street has been the center of the city's commercial activity since the new town of Round Rock was developed in 1876 at the southern terminus of a railroad line. The 100-foot-wide Main Street runs parallel with the railroad tracks less than two blocks away, located on a gentle slope south of Brushy Creek.

The section of Main Street included in the district was platted to serve as the commercial center of New Round Rock, as it was called until 1891. A spurt of building construction in 1876 and again in 1880 virtually completed the 100 block of East Main Street, leaving only a few lots vacant. Alleys running parallel with Main Street separate the historic district from the rest of the block.

Active for over 107 years, Round Rock's commercial buildings underwent intense retail use, alternating with periods of vacancy. Several structures burned during the 19th century, leaving only masonry walls standing. Fire was a cause for drastic alterations especially in the case of the two buildings on the northwest corner of the intersection of Lampasas and East Main Street. Following a fire sometime between 1916 and 1925, the two-story building occupying the corner site was reduced to 14-foot stone walls; about 1920, brick veneer was applied to the exposed

stone street walls of buildings at 116 and 118 East Main. This marked the first major use of brick within the downtown historic district. Alterations to other buildings include the painting of stone walls, applying stucco, the remodeling of store entrances and display windows, and the removal and/or replacement of storefront canopies. Store owners invariably "modernized" their buildings to make their store attractive by standards of their time. Such modernizations have resulted in changes to the interiors of the majority of the structures in the district, although the Economy Drug Store's interior (circa 1905) has survived virtually untouched, complete with original soda-fountain stools.

Previous uses of the buildings include the selling of groceries, clothing, notions, furniture, crockery, dry goods, confections, drugs, millinery, metal, harnesses, paints and oils, gentlemen's furnishings, feed, hardware, fruit, jewelry, and coffee. Trades and services formerly found in the buildings include banks, post office, professional offices, auto repair, tin shop, telephone exchange office, cobbler, carriage trimmer, barber shops, cleaning-and-pressing, and restaurant. Pool halls, saloons, and general stores were common occupants. The most unusual resident was a broom factory. Lodges and meeting rooms were prominent uses of the second floors of several of the two story buildings.

Some of the buildings which characterize the district are:

Old Broom Factory (#11)

The Old Broom Factory is a two-story, limestone building in Italianate style prominently located on the northeast corner of Mays Street and East Main. On the front facade the arched openings of the first floor are semicircular, while those of the second floor are segmental. The front facade is capped by a stepped parapet of stone. The stone around the openings is coursed, dressed ashlar with a drafted margin. The windows have a dropped keystone in the arch above, and four-over-four lights. The Sanborn Insurance maps indicate that the building was built in 1880. Currently the structure is being restored, and a missing arch has been rebuilt.

Otto Reinke Building (#12) The Otto Reinke Building is another prominent Italianate structure built in 1879. It was gutted by fire in 1963, leaving only the limestone walls. The fire-damaged building remained vacant for some time, and in 1970 it was repaired and the interior modernized. Changes in glazing material and window sashes mark several deviations from the original appearance. The round-arch openings on the first floor, the segmentally arched openings on the second floor, the regular, smooth-coursed limestone front with rusticated, projecting quoins all survived the fire and were presented. The full-width, dentilated cornice has a curved pediment in the center.

Economy Drug Store (#21) The Economy Drug Store Building is a singular specimen, for it is a totally unaltered commercial building in downtown Round Rock. It is a one-story, stone building with a cast-iron and pressed-tin facade. The large expanses of glass were undoubtedly regressive for the time and place. The a-b-a rhythm of its openings is repeated in the cornice. The interior balcony, an oak pharmaceutical desk, oak shelving, oak display cases and pressed metal ceilings are all intact interior features, making it one of the few unaltered interiors in the district.

Nelson Hardware (#24) The Nelson Hardware Building is a two-story, stone, Italianate commercial structure on a prominent corner at East Main and Lampasas streets. The cast iron and pressed tin front elevation is a splendid example of the way turn of the century retailers in Central Texas, using standard catalog items, enhanced the appearance of their stores. There is a prominent cornice with brackets and a triangular pediment with the date 1900 stamped on it. The corner entrance to the store is marked by a less prominent pediment. The openings on the stone-masonry portions of the buildings are generally segmentally arched. The building is currently undergoing restoration, and most of the sashes have been removed. The elevation facing the alley is all of stone masonry and is capped by a stepped stone parapet. Individual listings of the buildings within the district Information includes map reference number, the historic name, if known; (present occupant) - address; date or period of construction; category, see Definition of Categories in Item 8; brief physical description.

1. Kopperal's General Store (Fabric Designs) - 101 East Main Street. Built in 1876. Contributing. A small, one-story, stone-masonry building occupying a corner site. The street elevations have been stuccoed and the original openings have been replaced. There have been major alterations.

2. Miller's Exchange Bank (Earl's Brushy Creek Gallery) 103 East Main Street. Built in 1876. Contributing. A small, onestory, stone-masonry building. The front elevation collapsed in the early part of the 20th century and was replaced with a wooden front. The present owner removed the wooden facade, and in 1972 built the existing masonry facade. Major alterations have been made.

3. (Sam Bass General Store, vacant) - 105 East Main Street. Built in 1876. Contributing. This store facade has undergone relatively little alteration. The three-bay front with segmental-arch openings and a simple cornice make this one of the best remaining one-story buildings.

4. (Maschall and McNeary), Attorneys- 109 East Main Street. Built in 1885. Contributing. A small, one-story, stone masonry building. This is a simple, two-bay building with round arches. It has been relatively unaltered.

5. (Round Rock Printing) - 111 East Main Street. Built between 1916 and 1925. Contributing. This is one of the rare uses of brick. The brick appears to be a facing over stone. The vestiges of a cornice and the a-b-a rhythm of the openings outweigh the alterations which have been made.

6. (Round Rock of Music)- 113 East Main Street. Built cat 1920. Non-Contributing. This building is intrusive, as remodeling has destroyed the original front facade.

7. (Gus's Drug Store) - 115 East Main Street. Built in 1885. Contributing. A small, one-story, stone-masonry building that has been stuccoed. The original openings have been replaced and a metal facade placed over the cornice. The building has undergone several alterations.

8. The Fair (vacant) - 117 East Main Street. Built in 1891. Contributing. A long, one-story, stone-masonry building with handsome, arched openings on the alley elevation. The front has undergone alterations, including the addition of a concrete beam spanning the door and display areas, but the current owners are working with historic photographs to restore the three round-

arch openings.

9. (Robertson's Gift Shop) - 119 East Main Street. Built in 1881. Contributing This is a one-story, stone-masonry building that has been stuccoed, possibly at a quite early date. The openings have been relatively unaltered.

10. Voight and Brady Grocery; also historically, W.J. Walsh General Merchandise (Kelly's Cleaners) - 121 East Main Street. Built in 1877. Contributing. This building was originally mapped as a two-story structure, as verified by remaining physical evidence and historical photographs. This building was stuccoed quite early.

11. Shucy's Furniture Store; also known as Old Broom Factory (vacant) - 100 East Main Street. Built in 1880. Contributing. This two-story, ashlar limestone building is one of the handsomest and most prominent in the district. It is undergoing restoration.

12. Otto Reinke Building (Round Rock Travel and Tours, and Round Rock Leader) - 102 East Main Street. Built in 1879. Contributing. This is another prominent two-story building of the district.

13. (Round Rock Insurance and John's Barber Shop) - 104 East Main Street. Built in 1947. Contributing. Although this building is less than 50 years old, its use, scale, and parapet qualify it as contributing to the district.

14 & 15. (White's) - 108 & 110 East Main Street. Both were built in 1880. Non-contributing. Unsympathetic and recent board-and-batten upper facade.

16. (Round Rock Leader) - 112 East Main Street. Built in 1881. Contributing. This building is one of the few buildings in the district where the openings have not been altered. For this reason the building is classified as contributing even though the cornice has been altered.

17. (Bo-Kay Florist)- 114 East Main Street. Built in 1881. Non Contributing. Although this building is more than 100 years old, a few alterations have been made.

18. (Round Rock Professional Building) - 116 East Main Street. Built in 1880. Contributing. This building is classified as contributing even though the stone front was covered cat 1920. The addition of the brick veneer at that time was in keeping with the scale and style of the district. These alterations were further changed later. The brick cornice remains intact.

19. (First National Bank) - 118 East Main Street. Built in 1880. Contributing. This building is classified as contributing because the handsome, 1920's brick veneer facade is more than 50 years old. The scale and architectural style contribute in a positive way to the historic district.

20. Anderson-Nelson Company (Photocopy & Mike Faulk and Associates, Architects, in the west half; vacant in the east half) - 200 East Main Street. Built between 1902 and 1909. Contributing. This cast iron facade that incorporates large expanses of glass for display windows

is an fine example of a turn-of-the-century retail facades. The building has undergone relatively few alterations.

21. Economy Drug Store (Quick Pharmacy) - 204 East Main Street. Built between 1902 and 1909. Contributing. This building has been in continual use as a pharmacy since it was built. There have been no interior or exterior alterations The store-front canopy is intact, and many pharmaceuticals from the earliest years of operation are displayed inside.

22. Dr. Gregg's Office (vacant) - 206 East Main Street. Built in the 1930s. Contributing. This structure is more than 50 years old, and makes a positive contribution to the entire district because of its use, style, and scale.

23. Andrew J. Palm House (Round Rock Chamber of Commerce) 208 East Main Street. Built cat 1873; Contributing. Built cat 1873; moved to this site in 1976. The Palm House is similar to other vernacular residences found near the Commercial District in its early days; an older residential neighborhood begins a block east of this structure, which was recently restored.

24. Nelson Hardware; "The Co-op" (vacant) - 203 East Main Street. Built in 1900. Contributing. This two- story limestone building is architecturally important because of its pressed-metal facade.

25. Old Post Office Building (Masonic Lodge #227) - 107 South Mays Street. Built in 1878. Contributing. This two story building has ashlar limestone on the front and a handsome corbeled brick parapet above. The first-floor openings have round arches, while the openings on the second floor are segmentally arched.

The Round Rock Commercial Historic District is a well-preserved downtown area. First known as New Round Rock, in 1876 the town was laid out south of Brushy Creek in the limestone country of Central Texas. It grew up as a city linked to the International and Great Northern Railroad, and its population grew to 1400 by 1890. After 1900 the town fell into a gradual decline which lasted until recent times, when a second period of growth began which is still underway. With a high concentration of vernacular and Italianate commercial architecture, the district retains much of its original character. Its constituent buildings serve as memorials for the early businesses and citizens of the area.

Originally the first settlement at Round Rock was located just north of Brushy Creek on the road now known as Chisholm Trail. This site was chosen because the stone ford there was widely known as a safe place to cross the creek, and the Military Road (named "Chisholm Trail" in 1968), which was laid out during the 1840s, made it a natural place for a town to grow up. In the 1850s the road became known as the Austin-Georgetown Road. This earliest settlement was known as Brushy Creek from 1847, when it was established, to 1854, when its name was changed to Round Rock. When the new town of Round Rock was laid out in 1876, south of Brushy Creek, it was named New Round Rock and the original settlement became known as Old Round Rock.

In 1876 the International and Great Northern Railroad extended its service as far south as Round Rock. The new town site was platted by the Texas Land Company to coincide with what was then the southern terminus of the line. The impact of the railroad was so rapid that a tent city sprouted in 1876 at the new site. The initial downtown building boom, lasting five years, produced at least 13 stone masonry buildings of one and two stories. Stylistically, the buildings differ from those of other central Texas towns where brick was more commonly used. By 1878, Round Rock had 14 general stores, four drug stores, four lumber yards, one baker, and six hotels. The rail-road tracks were located south of the downtown. There were numerous wood-frame commercial structures located on Bagdad Avenue, on West Main Street, and on Mays, Lampasas, and Shepard where they intersected Main Street. There was train service three times a day between Georgetown and Round Rock by 1895. By 1903 there were six rail lines in Williamson County, widespread changes such as shifts in population, increased land values, faster development and these brought better communications, and the shipment of large amounts of commodities. Towns like Old Round Rock, which were bypassed by the railroad, declined.

New Round Rock grew to a population of 1,200 by 1878, to 1,438 by 1890. A continuous decline through the first half of the 20th century was reflected in the 1900 Census, which listed 1,139 people. By 1920, the population had been reduced to 900. The City of Round Rock was incorporated in 1912.

In 1960 the recorded population of 2,348 was approximately twice that of 1878. After a modest increase in 1970 to 2,811, the 1980 census revealed an impressive gain with 12,740 people recorded. Recent economic developments have brought prosperity to the area again. Round Rock's proximity to Austin, and its location on a major interstate highway, have contributed to its status as a popular commuter town for many who work in the capitol city. Projections for 1990 are for continued population increases and concomitant development. In the past this development has tended to be large scale, and tended to occur in peripheral areas and along major highways. Many downtown businesses have been attracted to the new retail strip developments, and the resulting exodus has endangered the vitality of the downtown commercial area.

One of the earliest industries attracted to new Round Rock was a commercial lime manufacturing plant owned by William Walsh. His first lime burning kiln was near Austin, but upon discovering a more suitable grade of limestone near Round Rock, he moved his business there in 1876. At the same time another important business was established, the Round Rock Broom Factory. It operated for many years, and occupied the two-story building at 100 East Main Street. Corn for making the brooms was imported from other states. Many of the merchants in Old Round Rock simply moved their businesses to new Round Rock. By 1877, New Round Rock had the following businesses: George M. Dilley Lumber, H.B. Sheppard General Merchandise (Sheppard was prominent in Old Round Rock), Tobin Drugs, Forwood & Cottingham Lumber, August Globber Hardware, Captain J.D.S. Morrow merchant, Henry Albert Highsmith Livery, M.D. Miller Exchange Bank, Round Rock Headlight (newspaper), Round Rock Hotel or Hart Hotel, E.P. Robinson Hardware & Dealer in Hides, bankers W.S. Peters and P.G. Peters, and attorney J.H. Robertson.

Significant Buildings and Organizations:

The Masonic Lodge #227 Building (#25) -

The Masonic Lodge #227 built the structure at 107 South Mays in 1878. The two-story, stone-masonry building was apparently built to house the lodge meeting space on the second floor while the first floor served as lease space. The fine quality of the brickwork detailing of this building represents an imaginative interpretation of the Italianate style, and contrasts with the austere limestone walls. One long-term tenant was the United States Post Office. To this date the Masons continue to meet in the building. The first floor is vacant now.

The Old Broom Factory (#11)

The original use of the building was as a dry goods, grocery, and general store. By 1885, Shuey's-Furniture occupied the building. By 1896, the first floor was used by a confectionery and the second floor by an unnamed lodge. There is conflicting information on the dates of occupancy by the Round Rock Broom Factory. By the turn of the century it was occupied by the broom factory, until 1912 when the factory was relocated. At the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, the broom company became famous when it earned a gold medal for a broom designed and manufactured in Round Rock.

The Fair (#8)

The Fair was built sometime between 1886 and 1890. E.P.M. Robinson, whose initials EPR appear on the cornice is the owner credited with having it built. The most significant and enduring ownership of the building started in 1900 when the Walsh family, whose lime-manufacturing laborers were paid with tokens to be exchanged for goods, operated a "company" store on these premises until 1950.

The Nelson Hardware Building (#24)

This structure was originally built to house a private banking, hardware, and lumber business owned by several prominent families in Round Rock, including J.A. Nelson, C.A. Nelson, W.E. Henna, O.L. Brady, O.A. Voight, and J.E. Gustafson. John A. Nelson's bank was successful from the beginning, although the bank was discontinued in 1922. Later occupants of the building include a chicken hatchery, and a milk producers' cooperative (whence the recent common name, "The Co- op"). There is conflicting information on when this building was built. The front of the building clearly bears the date 1900, but the Sanborn maps indicate a stone building there, built in 1881. Architecturally the most pretentious structure in the district, the Nelson Hardware Building retains its finely detailed cast iron and pressed-tin facade, fabricated by the Mesker Brothers of St. Louis. This lively interpretation of the Italianate style represented the most up-to-date taste, and was sure to attract the attention of the passerby.

The First National Bank(#18)

Sanborn insurance maps and historic photographs indicate that this originally was a two-story stone building, built in 1880, that housed a store selling dry goods, clothing, groceries, and notions. The use remained the same through 1909, and then sometime between 1909 and 1916 a fire or some other natural catastrophe destroyed the roof and second-floor framing. The 1916 Sanborn map for Round Rock shows a roofless structure with 14 foot stone walls. By 1925 the building had brick facing on two elevations, a concrete floor, and was occupied by a bank.

Definition of Categories:

Contributing:

A great majority of the buildings (22 of 25) in the district are classified as contributing. This category includes structures which are over 50 years old, which retain a significant amount of their historical and architectural integrity, and which reflect a vernacular commercial architecture. Some buildings have been classified as contributing in spite of a moderate amount of exterior alteration.

Non-contributing:

Only three structures are grouped in this category.

These buildings are over 50 years old, but severe alterations have destroyed all of the original detailing, and fenestration. Their appearance detracts from the historical character of the district. Justification of the Boundaries. The district includes virtually all of Round Rock's central retail area. The boundaries have been determined to obtain the highest concentration of little altered, historic commercial buildings.

Generally, residential neighborhoods and vacant land bound the district to the north. The outhern and western boundaries are bordered by areas of mixed use and vacant land. The eastern edge is bounded by governmental buildings.

DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point being the intersection of the north right-of-way line of East Bagdad Avenue and the east right- of-way line of Sotuh Mays Street;

Thence, with the east right-of-way line of South Mays Street in a northwesterly direction in a straight line to the intersection of the east right-of-way line of South Mays Street and the centerline of the alley running parallel to and lying between East Main Street and East Liberty Avenue;

Thence, with the centerline of said alley in a northeasterly direction in a straight line to the intersection of the centerline of said alley and an imaginary north extension of the east property

line of Lot number 5, Block 21 of the City of Round Rock;

Thence, with the east property line of Lot number 5, Block 21 of the City of Round Rock and its imaginary extensions in a southeasterly direction in a straight line to the intersection of an imaginary south extension of the said east property line and the south right-of-way line of East Main Street;

Thence, with the south right-of-way line of East Main Street in a southwesterly direction in a straight line to the intersection of the south right-of-way line of East Main Street and the east property line of Lot number 12, Block 10 of the City of Round Rock;

Thence, with the east property line of Lot number 12, Block 10 of the City of Round Rock in a southeasterly direction in a straight line to the intersection of an imaginary south extension of said property line at the centerline of an alley running parallel to, and lying between, East Main Street and East Bagdad Avenue;

Thence, with the centerline of said alley in a southwesterly direction in a straight line to the intersection of the centerline of said alley and an imaginary north extension of the east property line of Lot number 9, Block 9 of the City of Round Rock;

Thence, with the property line of Lot number 9, Block 9 of the City of Round Rock in a southeasterly direction in a straight line to the intersection of said east property line and the north right-of-way line of East Bagdad Avenue;

Thence, with the north right-of-way line of East Bagdad Avenue in a southwesterly direction in a straight line to the intersection of the East right-of-way line of South Mays Street, the Point of Beginning, and containing 4.23 acres of land, more or less.

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