

## Alamo Plaza Historic District – National Register Nomination

Texas Historical Commission (THC) ATLAS  
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Alamo Plaza Historic District

*Reference Number:* 77001425

*Resource Name:* Alamo Plaza Historic District

*Other Name:* See Also: Alamo, The

*Address:* Roughly bounded by S. Broadway, Commerce, Bonham and Travis Sts.

*Restricted:*

*City:* San Antonio

*State:*

*County:* Bexar

*Ownership:* PRIVATE

*Resource Type:* DISTRICT

*Number of Contributing  
Buildings:* 48

*Number of Contributing  
Sites:* 0

*Number of Contributing  
Structures:* 1

<i>Number of Contributing Objects:</i>	0
<i>Number of Non-contributing Buildings:</i>	1
<i>Number of Non-contributing Sites:</i>	0
<i>Number of Non-contributing Structures:</i>	0
<i>Number of Non-contributing Objects:</i>	2
<i>Federal Agency:</i>	U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
<i>Park Name:</i>	
<i>Related Multiple Property Listing:</i>	
<i>Nominated Name:</i>	STATE GOVERNMENT
<i>Certification:</i>	LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER
<i>Certification Date:</i>	1977-07-13 00:00:00.000
<i>Significance Level:</i>	NATIONAL
<i>Significant Person:</i>	
<i>Circa:</i>	
<i>Significant Dates:</i>	1871
<i>Cultural Affiliation:</i>	
<i>Architect:</i>	Multiple
<i>Other Description:</i>	
<i>Applicable Criteria:</i>	EVENT; ARCHITECTURE/ENGINEERING
<i>Criteria Considerations:</i>	RELIGIOUS PROPERTY
<i>Areas of Significance:</i>	COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT; COMMERCE; MILITARY; TRANSPORTATION; ARCHITECTURE; RELIGION
<i>Architectural Style:</i>	LATE VICTORIAN
<i>Current Function:</i>	RECREATION AND CULTURE
<i>Subfunction:</i>	MUSEUM
<i>Historic Function:</i>	DOMESTIC; RELIGION; GOVERNMENT; COMMERCE/TRADE
<i>Historic Subfunction:</i>	DEPARTMENT STORE; RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE; HOTEL; POST OFFICE
<i>Foundation Material:</i>	CONCRETE
<i>Wall Material:</i>	STUCCO
<i>Roof Material:</i>	METAL
<i>Other Materials:</i>	LIMESTONE
<i>Other Certifications:</i>	

*Other Documentation:* NATIONAL REGISTER; NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

*Period of Significance:* 1900-1924; 1875-1899; 1850-1874; 1825-1849

*UTM Zone:*

*UTM Easting:*

*UTM Northing:*

*Acreage:* 300

## **Alamo Plaza Historic District**

Located in the center of downtown San Antonio, adjacent to the HemisFair Plaza on the south, and to the San Antonio River on the west, is the commercial area that grew up around Texas' most famous shrine, The Alamo. The Alamo Plaza Historic District contains the Alamo chapel, a public plaza once part of the mission courtyard, and the surrounding commercial structures built mainly in the late 19th century and early 20th century. The boundaries basically include the buildings immediately surrounding Alamo Plaza bounded by south Broadway, east Commerce, Bonham and Travis, including a building one block to the east, the Crockett Hotel, and another building one block to the north, the Turn Verein.

Originally Alamo Plaza was part of the courtyard of the Mission San Antonio de Valero founded on this site in 1724. By 1761 the mission buildings consisted of the convent, chapel, granary and the Indian quarters. The chapel, begun in 1744, was destroyed by a storm a few years later. Although the building is dated 1758 the towered chapel was still under construction when poor design caused a partial collapse. It was never completed. Encompassing the north end of what is now part of the Alamo Plaza district, the mission buildings and courtyard were enclosed and the missionaries and Indians lived within its walls. Activities waned after 1765 and by 1793 the Spanish secularized the mission and divided the lands. Serving the military, rather than as an ecclesiastical headquarters during the early 19th century, the abandoned mission quartered troops of the Spanish and Mexican Army, and finally the rebellious Texas forces in 1836. Following the Battle of the Alamo in the Texas War for Independence, the fortifications had been destroyed and most of the buildings were in ruins. For a while squatters took advantage of the unsettled conditions and moved onto the plaza and in the building ruins that surrounded it. An 1840 account of the plaza described a deserted area with only a few *jacales* on the west side, but by 1848 there was a long row of adobe, flat-roofed buildings running from what is now the Post Office (17) to H.L. Green Department store (9). After Texas was annexed to the United States, the government took over the grounds and used them for quartermaster purposes. The present facade of the Alamo chapel dates from the 1849 restoration.

The first large structure to be built in the plaza was the Maverick house, a two-story, rectangular structure with outbuildings constructed in 1850. The house was built at the north on the current site of the Gibbs Building (16). Little else fronted on the courtyard except old Indian huts and *jacales* until William A. Menger built his house and brewery in the mid-1850s at the southwest corner of the Plaza de Valero, present site of the Menger Hotel. When he built his hotel in 1859, a few more business houses were attracted to the area.

The present size of the open space in the midst of the plaza district is the result of action taken by the city in 1871. That year the Roman Catholic Church sold to the city the old granary building at the southern boundary of the old courtyard, with the condition that the area around it be incorporated as part of the plaza. The city used the building for a police station and jail for a few months, and then demolished it to incorporate the old mission courtyard and the adjoining Plaza de Valero to Blum what is now called Alamo Plaza.

The plaza began as a barren area which, in rainy weather, resembled a quagmire. During the Civil War, the plaza was neglected, but as cattle became important, the square teemed with drovers, cowboys and animals. The first pavement around the square, laid in 1888, consisted of mesquite blocks. A city order in 1887 had erected a public water closet and privy. Alderman A. F. Wulff, a native of Germany who came to San Antonio in 1850, was interested in horticulture. He advocated beautification of this and Main Plaza by landscaping parks in their centers. Thus, at the same time the city council called for building the four paved streets around the plaza in 1888, a garden was planted and 30 iron benches were placed around the square. William Reuter erected the first bandstand in the plaza in 1890 at his own expense. Removed to San Pedro Park in the early 20th century, the structure was replaced in later years by another bandstand. Improvements to the plaza proper are currently in progress. The entire square is being covered with paving blocks and the street in front of the Alamo has been closed and is being incorporated into the square. In addition, a new bandstand (21) has been constructed in the plaza.

The Alamo Plaza area is located in the center of downtown San Antonio and has always been an important focal point of the city. During the late 19th century leading business firms began establishing stores in the area and the majority of buildings within the historic district date from this period. With the changes over the years, such as elaborate cornices, balconies, and awnings, many Victorian buildings have lost their original design features. Windows have been boarded up, ground floors have been remodeled, and whole facades have been hidden. Despite the number of architectural changes to these surrounding commercial structures, the area has a great deal of design potential. In most cases, late 19th century Victorian commercial facades have simply been buried beneath mid-20th century plaster and can be restored to their original character. In addition, there is a uniformity in scale that has been maintained in the district. The west, south and east sides surrounding the plaza contain buildings of one to four stories in height, while the north end is dominated by the taller buildings. Although some later buildings, particularly the Wax Museum in the 100 block of north Alamo and H. L. Green's at 301 Alamo Plaza, detract from the quality of design of the historic buildings, they conform in scale and use to the district and maintain the streetscape. The only non-conforming intrusion located within the boundaries is a filling station at the northeast corner of the district adjacent to the Turn Verein building (19).

Some of the larger buildings in the district have had trouble renting office space in the last few years and two of the buildings in the 100 and 200 block of north Alamo are currently threatened with demolition. However, with the success of the nearby San Antonio River Walk as an important commercial and entertainment area, the adjacent downtown is undergoing revitalization. A University of Texas at Austin architectural class did a thorough design project of the Alamo Plaza District and the city is in the process of considering many of their proposals.

Preservationists hope that future efforts toward revitalization in this area will include restoration, rather than further destruction of the historic resources.

Beginning at the southwest corner of the district the following list is a more detailed description of the buildings included within the district.

1. Dullnig Building, 101-103 North Alamo.

The Dullnig Building is a three-story brick building built in 1883 in the Victorian-Italianate style for George Dullnig, a grocer and dry goods merchant. The Alamo Plaza facade has been completely covered with plaster and the first floor of the Commerce facade has been altered. The second and third floors on the Commerce (side) and Broadway (rear) faces have remained relatively intact displaying stilted arched windows with hood molds. The windows of the central bay have more ornately carved hood molds. The top ten feet of the building is covered with a false facade, where once a cornice crowned the structure.

2. Scholz Palm Garden, 105-109 North Alamo

A two-story, six-bay brick building built before 1891 by Adolph Scholz, the building once served as a bar and garden. The segmental arched openings and brick corbelled cornice are evident on the Broadway (rear) facade, but the main facade has been plastered.

3. Old Joske's Building, 111-115 North Alamo

The original Joske building is a two-story, six-bay brick building (commercial) designed in 1888 by James Wahrenberger. The main facade was plastered during the 20th century, but the original face remains intact beneath the false front.

4. Dreiss, Thompson and Company Building, 117 North Alamo

A two-story, three-bay Victorian commercial building, this structure was erected in 1872 for Adolph Dreiss's drug store. The main facade on Alamo plaza has been covered completely, but the Broadway elevation retains much of its original design. Although the first floor has been altered, the second floor contains three segmental arched windows separated by brick pilasters. A brick corbelled cornice is crowned by an arched parapet of pressed tin containing the company's name.

The two adjacent buildings at 119-121 North Alamo are compatible in scale but their facades have been altered.

5. Vance Building, 207-209 Alamo Plaza

The Vance building is a two-story brick building that was basically rebuilt following a fire in the 1920s or 1930s.

6. 211-215 North Alamo

These three, two-story brick commercial buildings were probably built in the late 19th century. They have been plastered over on the main facade.

#### 7. Reuter Building, 217-219 North Alamo

The Reuter Building is a four-story rectangular building with an angled corner on the main facade, which contained the original entrance. The first (1891) two floors on both the Alamo and Crockett facades have been covered with a false front. The narrow facade facing Alamo Street contains elaborate classical detail. The third floor windows are the most elaborate with a blind balustrade and a complete entablature above each. The windows on the fourth floor contain transoms. Divided into bays by pilasters, this east facade is crowned by a massive stone and metal cornice. Along the north (Crockett) facade the arches of the second floor windows are visible above the false front. The covered third and fourth floor windows have a flat lintel topped by a segmental arch.

#### 8. Old Chamber of Commerce Building, Southeast corner Broadway and Crockett.

This building is a two-story brick early 20th century commercial building with decorative cast concrete vertical members separating the windows on the second floor. Erected in 1919-21, this structure was occupied by the Chamber of Commerce until 1925.

#### 9. H. L. Green's Department Store, 301-305 Alamo Plaza

A two-story, nondescript limestone building, Green's was erected in the 1950s. This was formerly the site of the 1886 Grand Opera House, which was destroyed by fire after World War II. The lavish Opera House was a theatre which seated 1500 and an exclusive men's club, the San Antonio Club, kept rooms in the building.

#### 10. 307 Alamo Plaza

A three-story masonry building, this vacant structure was probably built in the 1950s, replacing the Old Mexican Consulate.

#### 11. 309-315 Alamo Plaza.

A series of one-story buildings. Although the main facades are modern, the structures are possibly the same buildings which are visible in early photographs of the Plaza.

#### 12. Crockett Block, 317-323 Alamo Plaza

Designed by Alfred Giles, this row of four limestone buildings were erected in 1882 for William and Albert Maverick. The three-story buildings are joined visually by a pressed tin cornice, but the facades of the two center buildings have been covered by a false front. Although they have been altered on the first floor, the two outside buildings retain their original arched openings on the second and third floors. Pilasters accentuate the corners of original facades.

### 13. 327 Alamo Plaza

A three-story masonry early 20th century commercial building which replaced the Old Palace Theatre is located on this lot.

### 14. Woolworth's Department Store, 518 East Houston

Woolworth's is a three-story brick building erected in the 1920s to replace the old Maverick Bank Building. Divided into six wide bays on the Alamo Plaza facade the second and third floors utilize fenestration typical of the Commercial Style. Each unit contains a broad central light of plate glass, fixed, and narrow side lights with an opening sash. Each of these lights contains a transom. A frieze and slightly projecting cornice terminate the building. This early 20th century commercial building replaced an elaborate 1886 Victorian structure, designed by Alfred Giles. The bank was the first five-story building in the city and contained continuous balconies at the four levels.

### 15. Moore Building, Northeast corner of Houston and Broadway

The Moore building is a six-story brick building stuccoed and scored to look like stone. Constructed in 1904, the building is basically rectangular with an angled southwest corner to mark the main entrance. Scoring accentuates the angled corner as well as the two flanking bays at the second, third and fourth levels. On both the south (Houston) and west (Crockett) facades fenestration is organized in vertical bands between three-story pilasters that are linked by arches at the top. A small cornice elaborated by terra cotta swag and cartouche motifs marks the fifth floor, while a dentilled cornice emphasizes the 6th floor. Terra cotta details further embellish the divisions between the paired windows on the 5th and 6th floors. Crowning the structure is a projecting pressed tin cornice.

The building originally had a roof garden above the fifth floor with pavilions at four corners. An alley off Houston provided access to the elevator. In 1909, the addition of the sixth floor replaced the roof garden and expansion to the east closed the Houston Street entrance.

### 16. Gibbs Building, 521 East Houston

An eight-story brick building, the Gibbs buildings, was constructed in 1912. The first two stories are scored and are divided from the shaft of the building by a bracketed cornice at the third floor level. The third through the seventh floors contain little ornamentation, but the top floor is articulated by a string-course and elaborate sculptural detail between the windows. Terminating the building is a bracketed cornice with modillions and dentils.

The remainder of the buildings along Houston between Alamo Plaza and Broadway, as well as the buildings along Broadway behind the 300 block of Alamo Plaza, are not significant architecturally or historically, but they are compatible in scale and use.

### 17. Post Office and Federal Building, 615 East Houston

The Post Office is a four-story limestone Renaissance Revival building located in the prominent position at the north end of the Alamo Plaza. The building was designed by Ralph Cameron and built in 1937 by the Works Progress Administration. The ground floor is rusticated and contains the entrances, but the dominant feature of the main (south) facade is the classical colonnade in antis on the second and third floor. A cornice divides this level from the final story.

The Postal Service first moved to Alamo Plaza in 1877 on the northwest corner of the present Joske's block. In 1886, J. Riely Gordon supervised construction of a Romanesque Revival building at this location. The present building replaced the 1886 Post Office.

#### 18. Old Medical Arts Building (Landmark Building), 705 East Houston

A 13-story, steel framed, triangular building designed by Ralph Cameron, the old Medical Arts Building was constructed in 1926. The building contains two wings which form a triangular shape and, rising above the angled corner entrance at Houston and Avenue E, is a three-story, hexagonal tower. The first two floors are faced with stone and contain wide arched window spaces. The upper portion of the building is brick with terra cotta detailing. The Medical Arts Building represents a commercial example of the Chateausque style with its corner tower and steeply pitched mansard front at the top floor, surmounted by cresting and containing the wall dormers with high pinnacled gables. Elements of both the Gothic and Renaissance styles are evident in the detailing. Gothic features predominate in the pointed arched openings of the first two floors and in the upper two floors of the tower. Below the dormers, however, the twelfth floor contains a series of round arched windows. The building has recently been purchased and renamed the Landmark Building.

#### 19. San Antonio Turn Verein

The Turn Verein is a two-story brick building constructed in 1891 and designed by James Wahrenberger. The building is made of Chicago pressed brick relieved by stringcourses, lintels and balustrades of Kerrville limestone. A three-part composition of a recessed bay and projecting ends defines the east (main) facade. Within the wide central bay a slightly projecting main entrance is off center and is defined by a rusticated stone arch. The remainder of the first floor openings have stilted arches with a keystone and rusticated voussoirs. On the second floor above the main entrance are polished granite pilasters that frame a window with a pedimented entablature and square transom. An identical window is contained in the southeast projecting pavilion. The remaining windows have round arched windows supported by small granite columns, and are surmounted with a corbel table. The rectangular building displays a two-story bay window on the south facade. A metal, hipped roof shelters the building.

The building was restored in 1972 by the U.S. Postal Service employees. The floor is of alternating oak and black walnut stripes. The staircase hall at the back of the building is illuminated through stained glass windows. Covering the staircase landing is a hardwood parquet floor laid in a bright pattern of contrasting colors. The ballroom on the second floor and the gymnasium in the basement have not been restored.

#### 20. Cenotaph, North end of the Plaza

A memorial to the Alamo defenders stands in Alamo Plaza about 200 feet from the Alamo chapel. Dedicated in 1940 the design was conceived by Adams and Adams, architects and the sculptured figures were done by the internationally famed Pompeo Coppini. The sixty-foot monument has a white marble shaft atop a 40x12 foot granite base. On the east and west sides of the shaft are figures of the Alamo heroes, with James Bowie, James Bonham, William Barrett Travis, and Davy Crockett in full relief. On the north side is a female figure representing Texas. To the south is the Spirit of Sacrifice. The names of the Alamo heroes and two memorial sentences are inscribed on the base. The Cenotaph was commissioned by the state of Texas as a Texas Centennial project.

#### 21. Bandstand, South end of the Plaza

A recently constructed bandstand by the city which replaces the original bandstand built in the plaza by Wm. Reuter in 1890. The city is also currently covering the entire plaza with paving blocks.

#### 22. The Alamo

This block contains the Alamo chapel building which has been restored and houses a museum. Several other buildings were erected in 1936 and a part of the old wall was reconstructed. The remainder of the block is covered by formally landscaped gardens and reveals part of the old Acequia system. (see National Register submission, The Alamo, Bexar County, a NHL).

#### 23. Lady Bird Johnson Fountain

This fountain honoring Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson was dedicated in 1974.

#### 24. Crockett Hotel, 201 East Crockett

The Crockett Hotel was originally a six-story brick building, but a remodeling in 1927 added the seventh-story. A cornice with wide modillioned eaves surmounts the original six floors. Built in 1909 the hotel was designed by Padgett. The west facade is broken into two planes following the configuration of the block and the corner entrance at Bonham and Crockett is rounded.

#### 25. Menger Hotel, 204 Alamo Plaza

Built in 1857 the Menger was originally a two-story limestone building designed by John Fries. Located at the southwest corner of the block the building later expanded to a three-story building at this corner. Alfred Giles is responsible for this later design. The west facade of the original building is now a three-story, three-bay structure. The slightly projecting central bay is crowned by a pedimented parade. The first floor contains a central door flanked by two windows, while the second and third floors each contain three round arched openings. The end bays contain two flat arched windows on each floor and these pavilions are capped by a bracketed cornice. Iron balconies extend at the second and third floor levels. Additions to the north and east have been made several times in the 19th and 20th centuries and the hotel now fills the entire block.

A lavish three-story space in the Menger lobby, illuminated by a stained glass, leaded skylight, dominates the old part of the hotel. The solid block of hotel buildings is broken in the center by an interior courtyard of walkways through dense tropical foliage.

#### 26. Joske's Department Store, Commerce at Alamo

Encompassing almost the entire south block of the plaza is Joske's Department Store, a four-story, U-shaped concrete structure with a stylized parapet. The present structure incorporates the 1888 brick building, designed by Alfred Giles, that stood at the southeast corner of the block. Joske's shared the north side of the block with the old 1877 Post Office, but in the 1950s Joske's expanded and remodeled, building on the entire block, except for the property of St. Joseph's Church.

#### 27. St. Joseph's Church and Rectory, 623 East Commerce

Designed by G. Friesleben and Theodore Giraud, St. Joseph's Church was erected between 1868 and 1876. The limestone structure is a Gothic Revival, basilica plan church, dominated by a central entrance tower with a slate and copper roof. The third pastor of the church, Father Henry Pefferkorn, painted the Stations of the Cross which hang at the sides of the church and the Assumption of Mary and Ascension of Christ that hang at the front. He also designed the first altar and choir loft, replaced the canvas windows with glass, and installed a pipe organ. In 1898, Jacob Wagner built a spire designed by James Wahrenberger.

Adjoining the church is the limestone rectory, a two-story rectangular structure with a roof of intersecting pitches. Pedimented gables mark the center of the east facade and terminate the roof pitch on the south and north facades. The building is further embellished by quoins, dentils, segmental arches over the openings, and by the second floor balcony on the east facade.

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The buildings and spaces that compose the Alamo Plaza Historic District chronicle the role this area played in the development of the city of San Antonio. From mission courtyard, to battlefield, to neglected residential area, to transportation center, and finally to commercial area, the district reveals a diverse history. In addition, the area serves as the setting for the famous monument to Texas independence--the Alamo.

In 1718 Franciscan missionaries combined two older Spanish missions, San Antonio de Padua and San Francisco Solano to create the new Mission San Antonio de Valero on a site believed to have been on the bank of the San Pedro Creek in present day San Antonio. After a hurricane destroyed the buildings on the old site in 1724, the Franciscans relocated at the site now called Alamo Plaza. However, the Spanish abandoned the idea of colonizing the area with a series of missions and presidios and in 1793 the mission was partially secularized.

In the early 19th century the function of the old mission compound changed from religious activities to military. Beginning in 1803 a company of Spanish soldiers from Alamo del Parras, Coahuila, Mexico, occupied the abandoned mission, using its buildings as barracks. The name

"Alamo" given to the old mission complex probably originated from this association. According to some historians, the name was derived from a grove of cottonwood trees growing on the banks of the Acequia, "Alamo" being the Spanish word for cottonwood. In 1813 Alamo Plaza became an arena in the fight for Mexican Independence from Spain. During the Gutierrez- Magee Expedition of 1812-13, a filibustering expedition against Spanish Texas, the Republican Army took San Antonio in March of 1813 and made the Alamo their headquarters. However, when the Royalist Army recaptured the city in August, the victorious army used the mission's square as a prison pen for those in the city who had aided the Republicans. Over 800 prisoners were executed and the savage butchery was thereafter known as "la noche triste."

No official use was made of the building and plaza from the late 1820s until 1835 when the sites figured prominently in events of the Texas Revolution. Mexican General Martin Perfecto de Cos, sent to San Antonio by dictator General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna to crush the rebellious Texans, converted the mission compound into a fortress in late 1835. However, in the Siege of Bexar, December 5-9, 1835, Texas soldiers defeated the Mexican troops and forced the surrender of Cos. An infuriated Santa Anna, led his army of almost 5000 men against the Texas forces at San Antonio in February 1836 and after a 13-day siege finally massacred the 187 men defending the Alamo on March 6, 1836. The restored chapel has since served as a tangible reminder of the men who fought in the Texas war for Independence, which finally culminated with the Texas victory at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. The reconstructed buildings now function as museums containing many of the relics uncovered on the Alamo grounds.

Following the Texas War for Independence the mission ruins and courtyard were seemingly abandoned by both the church and the city. New settlers took advantage of the unused buildings for shelter and a few *jacales* and adobe houses sprung up in this area in the 1840s. Badly neglected, however, the plaza was primarily a rundown residential area located some distance from the center of town. After the U.S. annexed Texas in 1845 the government took over the remains of the Alamo structures. With only the walls of the chapel remaining, the U.S. Army rebuilt the parapet. The present facade actually dates from the 1840s reconstruction. The federal government used the buildings and grounds for quartermaster purposes from 1848 until the Civil War and again after the War until 1876. Under an act of April 23, 1883, Texas purchased from the Roman Catholic church the Alamo church property and placed the Alamo in the custody of the city of San Antonio. This arrangement continued until January 25, 1905, when the Texas Legislature passed a resolution ordering the governor to purchase that part of the old Alamo fortress occupied by a business concern. It was further ordered that the governor should deliver the property thus acquired, with the property then owned by the state (the chapel of the Alamo), to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.

The 1850s brought new life to the square with the erection of the Samuel Maverick House in 1850 and the Menger Hotel in 1858. Samuel Maverick, one of the Alamo defenders who escaped death because he was elected to attend the Convention of 1836 which drafted the Texas Declaration of Independence, was obsessed with the desire to live by the Alamo. He built the first large house on the plaza, a stone dwelling on the present site of the Gibbs building (16). Maverick's home at the corner of the Alamo grounds was the first encouragement of development in the area. Across Houston Street from his homestead, Maverick owned a lumber yard, and in 1886 he constructed a commercial building on this site. The first five-story building

in San Antonio, the Maverick Bank building was designed by Alfred Giles and housed a bank on the first floor and rented offices on the upper floors. This building was replaced in the 1920s by the Woolworth Department store (14).

The next substantial permanent structure erected on the plaza was the Menger Hotel (25). William A. Menger opened a brewery north of Blum Street on the plaza in 1855. The brewery was the only one in this part of the southwest and was one of the first manufacturing enterprises in the city. Menger also opened a cooperage works for the manufacture of barrels for his beer. Menger's wife ran a boarding house and because of the popularity of the business, Menger chose to replace it with a two-story stone hotel erected at the corner of Blum and Alamo Plaza. With its opening in January 1859, the Menger Hotel brought elegance to the Plaza for the first time and within a year an addition had to be made to the building. The hotel again expanded in 1875, incorporating the first Turn Verein building, constructed by San Antonio Germans to the north of the Menger. The hotel has seen a number of additions in the 19th and 20th century. Famed for its excellent meals and beautiful patio garden, the Menger was San Antonio's most prominent hotel in the 19th century. With its location at the stage and later street rail terminus and across the plaza from the 1886 Grand Opera House, the hotel housed many famous visitors. In 1898 Theodore Roosevelt recruited volunteers here for his "Rough Riders" to fight in the Spanish-American war. In the 1930s the building was allowed to deteriorate and prospective buyers took an option with plans to destroy the hotel in the 1940s. However, due to immense public support from people in San Antonio and around Texas, the option was not taken and in 1943 W. L. Moody, Jr. of Galveston bought and restored the hotel.

Alamo Plaza underwent the transition from basically a residential area to a transportation center in the 1850s. The major stagecoach lines maintained their terminals on the plaza and later the first street railway system in the city operated between the square and San Pedro Springs. After the railroad began to dominate travel in the late 1870s and 1880s, the stage lines disappeared and commercial businesses began to replace transportation as the most important activity of the Alamo Plaza district. But the businesses were slow to come to the area. Prior to 1870 most of the business firms and stores clustered around Main and Military Plaza. However, to serve the residents and military personnel living around the Alamo, the city built a market house in the Plaza de Valero (joined with the Alamo Plaza in 1871). Other businesses in the area in the late 1860s were the lumber yards, livery stables, and a dry goods and grocery store. Even with the increase in commercial activity in the 1870s, many of the firms dealt in transportation and transportation services.

The plaza gained added significance when the San Antonio Post Office moved to the Plaza on December 22, 1877. The postal service occupied the first floor of the Gallagher Building, which had just been built at the south end of the Plaza where Joske's now stands. The location of the Post Office brought more people to the area and served as an incentive for more businesses to locate there.

The same year that the Post Office came to the plaza, Honore Grenet bought the site of the old convent foundations immediately north of the Alamo chapel and built a two-story frame building with double galleries around two sides and crenellated turrets at the corners. The first floor housed Grenet's wholesale grocery business, long the largest grocery in the southwest, while the

second floor contained the Alamo museum of Gustavo Toudouze. Grenet's clerks often gave tours of Toudouze's museum and the Alamo ruins. In 1886 Grenet's heirs sold the building to the Hugo and Schmeltzer Co. When the company went out of business and the city condemned the building in 1903, a controversy developed because a syndicate had formed to buy the site and additional land to the east to erect a hotel. In order to save the famous site as a monument to Texas history, rather than the site of a resort hotel, Clara Driscoll (the National Register submission, "Laguna Gloria", 12-6-75) bought an option on the property until the title was eventually acquired by the State in 1905. The State then gave control and custody of the area to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas.

The plaza also developed as a center of social and cultural events in the late 19th century. The location of the prominent Menger Hotel influenced several social clubs to find meeting space in the vicinity. The San Antonio Turn Verein, a German athletic and social organization, erected their club right next to the hotel in 1872 and eventually built a larger structure (19) north of the Alamo Plaza on Bonham in 1891. Another organization, the San Antonio Club, moved into rooms on the second floor of the Gallagher Building in 1882. Built in 1886 the Grand Opera House, located at the present site of H. L. Green's (9), brought additional splendor to the plaza. The opening of the opera house brought many road shows to the city and leading figures of the stage performed in this theater. The San Antonio Club relocated their exclusive men's club into this building. The building was demolished in the 1950s after it was largely destroyed by fire.

The largest concentration of buildings within the district dates from the late 19th century. Listed below are some additional buildings that are historically significant.

#### The Dullnig Building (1)

Built in 1883 for a grocer and dry goods merchant, George Dullnig, this building was the first steam-heated structure in San Antonio and contained one of the first elevators. Dullnig erected a 100-foot iron water tower five hundred feet behind his property on the river. Convinced the steam pump supplying heat and energy to his building did not have to be on the premises, Dullnig placed the machinery near his water tower and piped the steam five hundred feet to his store. The steam heated the structure, operated one of the first elevators in San Antonio and supplied the hydraulic pressure for the Dullnig coffee-roasting plant on Loyosa Street (now south Broadway).

Dullnig, a native Austrian who immigrated to Texas with his parents in 1853 when he was seven, had established a successful retail shoe business at the age of 18 and eventually expanded into groceries. His business occupied the first and second floors by 1907, displacing an earlier dental office. Also, Schafer and Downey ran the Alamo City Business College on the third floor for many years.

#### Scholz Palm Garden (2)

Sometime before 1891, Scholz's Palm Garden, a two-story glass-enclosed building with a bar in front and a garden full of palms, banana plants and ferns behind, was erected adjacent to the

Dullnig Building. The restaurant run by Adolph Scholz featured German bands which gave concerts four nights a week.

#### Dreiss, Thompson and Co. Building (4)

In 1872, Adolph Dreiss bought a lot on Alamo Plaza and erected a three-story building to house a retail drug establishment he had operated since 1867. Dreiss had entered the business as a clerk in a drug store owned by Dr. R. A. Dryden and had later run a store at the southwest corner of Alamo and Commerce before building his own store. Dreiss took his father, Albert, and Edward, into the business which sold such specialties as the "Elixir of Life" and "Dead Shot for Screw Worms." In 1888, Albert Dreiss entered a partnership with Galveston druggists Thompson and Ohmstede, forming a wholesale drug division and creating the firm Dreiss, Thompson, and Company. The remodeled Dreiss building included an elaborate rear facade, which is still visible, but the main facade has been plastered.

#### Building at 215 North Alamo (6)

Before 1891, Franc I. Meyer built a wholesale and retail liquor store on the west side of the Plaza just south of the Reuter property. His wine cellars had a storage capacity for 100,000 gallons--the largest and finest in Texas at the time. Meyer eventually moved to a larger structure on North Street. He was the largest importer of Rhine wines in San Antonio, and the principal dealer in California products. At an early San Antonio International Exposition, his wine display won first premium.

#### Reuter Building (7)

Built in 1891 for William Reuter's saloon, "Billy's Bar," the Reuter Building was considered one of the finest buildings in San Antonio. The former dance hall of the Knights of Pythias remains on the fourth floor. Reuter built the first bandstand on Alamo Plaza at his own expense in 1890.

#### Crockett Block (12)

The architect Alfred Giles designed the Crockett Block, now four commercial establishments, for brothers William and Albert Maverick. Construction of the building began in 1882 on property deeded through a priest to a carpenter who sold the land to Samuel Maverick, father of William and Albert. The structure was described as "one of the most beautiful and conspicuous of San Antonio's well-proportioned business houses." The Crockett Block has always been occupied by commercial establishments. Of particular note was the cigar store of Rafael Diaz. A Cuban exiled for political reasons from his home in Havana, Diaz established his business in 1868. He produced "La Flor de Diaz," for many years the most popular cigar sold in San Antonio. After 32 years of exile, Diaz continued to contribute his wealth to finance the revolution in Cuba.

#### U.S. Post Office and Federal Building (17)

The United States Postal Service has operated in San Antonio from Alamo Plaza since 1877 when the post office located in the building recently erected by Peter Gallagher at the northwest

corner of the present Joske's block. In 1886 J. Riely Gordon designed a new building for the north side of the plaza. The present building replaced the Gordon design in 1937. Designed by Cameron, the building was built by the Works Progress Administration program. It is designed around a central courtyard in a Classical Revival style Turn Verein (19)

The Postal Service now also occupies the old Turn Verein. Designed by James Wahrenberger, the two-story brick building was erected in 1891 as a gymnasium and social center for the San Antonio Turn Verein. The lower floor was once occupied by cafe and cloak, reading, assembly and billiard rooms. The second floor contained the ballroom. The San Antonio Turn Verein sponsored the first Turnfest--or gymnastics competition--in Texas in 1873. The organization originated with Ludwig Jan in Germany, who hoped to increase the physical and mental strength of his people to enable them to defeat Napoleon. The San Antonio organization was a social and gymnastics club for the early German settlers and their descendants.

#### Joske's Department Store (26)

Joske's came to the plaza in 1873 with Julius Joske's dry goods establishment. A building on the west side of the plaza (3), designed by James Wahrenberger in 1888, was outgrown in ten months and the Joske brothers, Albert and Alexander, commissioned Alfred Giles to design a new structure for the northeast corner of Alamo and Commerce. The three-story red brick building replaced Ed Steve's lumber yard, founded in 1866 and the best-known establishment in San Antonio by 1871. Until the 1950s Joske's shared its block with the Gallagher Building, constructed by Peter Gallagher for the Post Office in 1877. In the 1950s Joskes expanded and remodeled, building on the entire block except the site of St. Joseph's Catholic Church.

#### St. Joseph's Church and Rectory (27)

San Antonio's German Catholics built this church in 1868 after they were refused the use of the Alamo Chapel by the Army who maintained the building for supply storage. Delayed by a hurricane that devastated San Antonio, St. Joseph's was finally dedicated and opened for worship in 1871. For 30 years the church stood without a steeple, until one was erected in 1898 to complete the design.

Still functioning as a church for German-Americans at the advent of World War I, St. Joseph's caught the brunt of anti-German feeling which spread across the nation. During this period many parishioners feared for their safety and began attending Mass in other parts of the city. As the German-Americans withdrew to other Catholic churches around the city, non-German names began to appear on church rolls, including those of many Mexican-American families. In 1945, when German had fallen into disuse as the language of St. Joseph's and the church rolls had declined to only a few German families, the parish was changed from its historic role as the national church for German-speaking San Antonians to a conventional territorial parish. It was in this year, however, that the parishioners took a decisive stand against selling out to their powerful neighbor, Joske's. The department store, from small beginnings, had already bought St. Joseph's Academy and other church property for its expansion, and now it dominated the block with several separate buildings. Joske Brothers offered to purchase the church and rectory, but the offer was refused. Today, the historic old church across from HemisFair Plaza attracts many

tourists and conventioners, along with its mixed congregation of Blacks, Anglos, and Mexican-Americans.

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