

NARRATIVE HISTORY
OF
BUILDING AT 101-103 NORTH ELM
DENTON, TEXAS

The townsite of Denton was created in early January, 1857. It was divided into thirty-three blocks in addition to a public square or courtyard. The lots around the public square were auctioned off beginning January 10, 1857. The lot which is now 101-103 North Elm was the last lot sold. The purchase price of this lot was \$60.00, making it the most expensive lot on the square; all other lots having been sold at prices ranging from \$25.00 to \$30.00.

In 1857 a building was built on the property at 101 North Elm which contained a store owned by J. M. Smoot. In this store originated the "great fire of 1860". The following account of this fire appeared in the Houston Telegraph on July 21, 1860:

About half past three o'clock p.m. on the 8th a fire was discovered in the counting room of the store of James M. Smoot situated on the corner of Elm and Hickory Streets at the southwest corner of the public square in the town of Denton. A stiff breeze at the same time sprang up from the southwest and in a few seconds the stores of Messrs. S. and H. Jacob and Messrs. Baines and Mounts were up in flames...The whole west side of the public square, with the solitary exception of Messrs. Blount and Skruggs store in the extreme northwest corner, is in ashes...Mr. Smoot saved comparatively nothing; books and all were burned... \$50,000.00 will not cover his loss.

Following the fire of 1860 and the destruction of the J. M. Smoot store there was situated on the lot a large dry goods store belonging to R. M. Collins. From approximately 1871 to approximately 1880 the property in question housed J. C. Smith & Co., merchants, a firm of J. C. Smith, J. M. Blount and Dr. C. W. Hughes.

The brick building now standing at 101 North Elm was constructed in or around 1880, making it one of the very first brick buildings built in Denton. In 1883 the brick building now standing at 103 North Elm was built. Sometime in the 1920's the two buildings were joined giving the present appearance of one building.

The brick building now standing at 101 North Elm was originally occupied by C. M. Greenlee Dry Goods Store. Since then it has housed many firms: Joe Kimbrough, Sr., the Mississippi Store, Lee Douglas Drugs, the Grand Leader, the Service Drug Stores, Fultz News Agency, Denton Typewriter Exchange, Franklin Ladies Shop and the Austin Shoe Store. In addition to the use of the downstairs portion by the above and other firms, the upstairs portion of the building was occupied by various doctors, dentists, lawyers, realtors and insurance agencies.

The criterion for historic landmark designation which we feel that the property meets are as follows:

1. The location is the site of a significant historic event, to wit: The origin of the great fire of 1860.
2. It has an identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city, to wit: J. M. Blount.

J. M. Blount was one of the first businessmen of Denton. Mr. Blount came from Mississippi and settled in the town of Denton in 1857. He assisted in the laying-out of the county seat of Denton and was later elected county judge; he held the office of county judge for several terms. He was a state senator in 1866 and later held several city and county offices.

3. Due to the fact that the existing building was one of the very first buildings built in Denton still standing and because of its location at the intersection of Elm and Hickory Streets, we believe that it exemplifies the economic heritage of the City of Denton.

The information contained in the above narrative was obtained from the following sources:

1. History and Reminiscences of Denton County by Ed S. Bates, McNitsky Printing Co., Denton, Texas, 1918.
2. History of Denton, Texas from Its Beginning to 1960 by C. A. Bridges, Texian Press, copyright 1978.



SQUARE

1874



1883



West side ↑ North side ↓