

The Merrick Building (St. Charles Hotel,
Hollywood Cafe)
301-303 South El Paso Street
El Paso
El Paso County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3309

HABS,
TEX,
71-ELPA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. TX-3309

THE MERRICK BUILDING (St. Charles Hotel,
Hollywood Cafe)

- Location: 301-303 South El Paso Street (Southwest corner of South El Paso Street and West Overland Avenue), El Paso El Paso County, Texas UTM: 13 359040:3514210
- Present Owners: George K. and Seamone A. Haddad, 4400 Fiesta Avenue, El Paso, Texas.
Anis Balesh, 2314 North Stanton Street, El Paso, Texas.
- Present Use: Hollywood Cafe (restaurant/bar).
St. Charles Hotel (residential hotel).
- Significance: Designed by local architects John J. Stewart and William J. Carpenter, the Merrick Building is one of the most extensively detailed buildings in the South El Paso Street area. The building is an example of a commercial structure with Queen Anne and Romanesque details. Constructed during a building boom following the arrival of the railroads in El Paso, the Merrick Building serves as a fine example of El Paso's early architectural heritage.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The Merrick Building was built in 1887. According to a contract between Charles Merrick, owner of the property at the time, and Caples and Hammer, contractors for the building, the first story of the building was to be completed and ready for occupancy by April 1, 1887. The remainder of the building was to be completed by June 15, 1887. The contract was dated January 8, 1887 and was recorded April 20, 1887 in book 32, page 417 of the El Paso County Deed Records.
2. Architects: John J. Stewart and William J. Carpenter. Stewart and Carpenter first appear in the El Paso City Directories in 1888. They are listed together as architects and superintendents and as having an office at the corner of West Overland Avenue and South El Paso Street. Stewart and Carpenter also designed the Myar Opera House which was two buildings south of the Merrick Building. The Myar Opera House, like the Merrick Building, was an ornate structure with Romanesque features. It was constructed the same year as the Merrick Building but was

destroyed by fire in 1905. (Sonnichsen, page 254.)

John J. Stewart came to El Paso in 1881. Later in his career, he was associated with Trost and Trost, El Paso's foremost architectural firm in the early twentieth century. While working with Trost and Trost, Stewart was the supervising architect on the construction of some of El Paso's most prominent buildings; the Roberts-Banner building, the Caples building, the Mills building, the White House Department Store, and the Hotel Paso del Norte. He died at the age of 81 in 1928. (El Paso Times, October 8, 1928, 3:4.)

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is the chain of title to the land on which the Merrick Building stands. The legal description of the property is: Block 33 in the Mills subdivision, 43.333' on South El Paso Street by 134' on West Overland Avenue, northeast corner. Reference is the El Paso County Deed Records, El Paso City-County Building.

1883 Deed recorded May 25, 1883 in
Book 5 page 44
S.W. Boring and Susan M. Boring
to
Charles Merrick
\$6000.

1887 Deed recorded November 1, 1887 in
Book 11 page 456
Charles Merrick
to
Charles H. Deere (Moline, Illinois)
\$20,000 for an undivided one-half
interest.

1888 Deed recorded March 6, 1888 in
Book 18 page 21
Charles Merrick
to
Joseph Magoffin
\$20,000 for an undivided one-half
interest.

1901 Deed recorded October 19, 1901 in
Book 56 page 503
Charles H. Deere
to
Joseph Magoffin
\$12,500 for his undivided one-half
interest (Magoffin owned all of the
property by this point).

- 1967 Deed recorded November 29, 1967 in
Roll 138 page 641
Josephine M. Glasgow (descendant of
J. Magoffin)
to
George K. Haddad, Seamone Haddad,
Anis M. Balesh
\$60,000.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Richard Caples and
Lewis Hammer, general contractors in El Paso, constructed
the Merrick Building at a cost of \$13,575. (Deed Records
Book 32, page 417.) W.G. Warren of El Paso supplied and
completed all the galvanized iron work on the building.
(El Paso County Deed Records, book 32, page 421.)
5. Original construction: The original storefront was
constructed of large panel glass in wood frames with
cast iron columns. The panel glass extended nearly the
entire length of the storefront. The secondary entrance
on the north facade was of panel glass with cast iron
pilasters. (Source: Aultman Collection, ca. 1900
photograph.)

The first floor interior was originally a large,
rectangular open space. The ceiling was 18' high and was
supported by slender, cast iron Corinthian columns inter-
mittently decorated with bands. The walls were plaster
over brick, and the floors were hardwood.

6. Alterations and additions:

- a. Exterior: The upper portion of the original store-
front has been covered with aluminum siding and a
neon "Hollywood Cafe" sign has been erected. In the
late 1960's and the early 1970's, the lower portion
of the storefront was covered over with concrete,
brick and plaster.

Two cinder block structures have been added to
the rear of the building. According to one of the
present owners, one was added in the 1930' or 1940's
and contained a bar that serviced people in the rear
of the building, the cabaret. (Interview, Anis Balesh.)
These structures are now used for restroom facilities,
storage and freezer units.

- b. Interior: An 1894 fire reportedly gutted the interior
of the third floor and damaged parts of the second
floor and the roof. It is not clear what changes
were made in the structure at this time. (El Paso
Herald, May 11, 1894, 1:8.) The first floor ceiling
has been lowered to a height of 11' from its original
18'. This was done in several stages. Judging from

the architectural style, a mezzanine level was added some time in the 1930's. This level was accessible by a staircase addition on the north wall. This space was partitioned with stuccoed fiberboard to create office space and overlooked the cabaret on the first floor. It is now used as storage space.

The ceiling in the rear and front were lowered in 1964 and 1968, respectively (Interview, Anis Balesh; Building permits), providing space for the evaporative cooler duct system. This effort has completely concealed the Corinthian capitals and the stained glass clerestory windows from the first floor.

The ceilings on the second and third floors were lowered in the 1960's (Interview, Anis Balesh). This concealed the stained-glass transoms above the windows. The transoms over the second- and third-story doorways have been sealed with plaster.

The original staircase to the second and third floors was probably open at one time and had a railing. It is now closed, with a non-supporting false wall.

- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure: According to a local newspaper advertisement, Charles Merrick and his brother owned a men's clothing store in El Paso as early as 1881. (El Paso Lone Star, December 12, 1881.) After the construction of the Merrick Building was complete, Merrick and his brother located their store on the first floor. (Faded paint on the south elevation still reads "Merrick Men's"). Records indicate that Merrick ran into financial difficulty or possibly went bankrupt soon after the completion of his building (El Paso Deed Records, Book 17, page 411). By 1895 there is no Charles Merrick or a Merrick clothing store listed in the City Directory.

Joseph Magoffin bought the Merrick Building in 1888. Magoffin was the son of James Wiley Magoffin, one of El Paso's earliest pioneers. Joseph Magoffin was one of the incorporators of the City of El Paso in 1873. He also served three years as justice of the peace, four terms as mayor, and as collector of customs. He was also vice-president of the State National Bank for forty years.

In addition to serving as a men's clothing store, the first floor of the Merrick Building has been used as a dry goods store, a furniture store, and a hardware store. In 1931 it became the Hollywood Cafe and Nightclub (El Paso City Directories). During the 1930's and 1940's, there was a dance hall, or cabaret, in the back part of the first floor. It has remained a restaurant/bar since 1931 and still retains the name Hollywood Cafe.

The second and third stories have been known as the St. Charles Hotel since 1890. Some sources claim that the St. Charles is the oldest hotel in El Paso (Mangan, page 40).

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Aultman Collection, El Paso Public Library. Circa 1900 photograph showing the east and north fades of the Merrick Building.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

El Paso County Deed Records, El Paso City-County Building.
Book 5, page 44.
Book 11, page 456.
Book 18, page 21.
Book 56, page 503.
Book 188, page 641.
Book 33, page 610.
Book 1, page 179.
Book 17, page 411.
Book 32, page 417.
Book 32, page 421.

El Paso, Texas. Building Permits, Public Inspection Department.

Interview. Anis Balesh, part owner of the Merrick Building. Talked with him several times throughout the summer. He supplied some of the alteration dates.

Interview. Octavia Magoffin Glasgow, descendant of Joseph Magoffin, one-time owner of the Merrick Building. July 16, 1980.

b. Secondary and published sources:

El Paso City Directory. Dallas: Hudspeth Directory Company, 1888, 1889, 1890, 1896, 1900, 1925, 1930, 1935, 1940.

El Paso Herald. May 11, 1894, 4:3; May 16, 1894, 1:8; May 21, 1894, 1:7.

El Paso Lone Star. December 29, 1881, 1.

El Paso Times. October 8, 1928, 3:4.

Mangan, Frank. El Paso in Pictures. El Paso: The Press/El Paso, 1971.

Sonnichsen, C. L. Pass of the North. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1968.

White, Owen. Out of the Desert. El Paso: The McMath

Company, 1923.

Prepared by Debra Wolfe
Historian
National Architectural
and Engineering Record
August 1980

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Merrick Building is an extensively detailed building with Romanesque and Queen Anne features. Although its storefront has been modernized, it remains one of the most architecturally significant in the proposed South El Paso Street Historic District (Summer 1980).
2. Condition of fabric: Good, largely intact as originally built.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The Merrick Building is rectangular, 44' (four-bay front) by 97'-2", and is three stories with a basement.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall constructions, finish, and color: The building is constructed of brick laid in common bond with rusticated, random ashlar sandstone facing on the ground floor of the north elevation. The storefront has been covered with aluminum siding and green-painted concrete and brick. The dogwood blossom patterned stained glass windows in transom are intact along the storefront.

There is a tin, simplified acanthus leaf cornice above the first floor on both the east and north facades. A few inches above this cornice and directly underneath the second-story windows is a band of concrete over brick. This banding is repeated above the second-story windows and below the third-story windows. There is plain brick banding above the third-story windows, decorated by a row of sawtooth brick underneath.

Both the east and north facades are decorated with brick pilasters which extend from the top of the first floor to the middle of the third floor where they are capped with tin Corinthian capitals. There are also two corbeled drip moldings which extend below the parapet

on the north facade.

Just below the roofline are red, modular terra cotta panels followed by beige, modular terra cotta panels in a floral pattern. Terra cotta rinceau panels decorate the space between the second- and third-story windows. The red modular terra cotta pattern on the third story is repeated for two rows below the second-story windows on the east facade.

There are two projecting tin bays on both the east and north elevations. Each bay springs from a Moorish-inspired base from the top of the first story. The bays are accented by tin pilasters at the corners and by undecorated inset panels below the windows. There is a simple cornice above the second-story windows. The bay is topped by a tin shingle pattern and a fan-patterned pediment.

4. Structural system, framing: Cast iron columns on the basement and first floor levels support wood frame floors. Exterior walls are load bearing brick with sandstone on the first floor.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is centered on the storefront. The double doors are of wood, painted black, with kickplates at the bottom and windows on the upper portion. There is leather weather-stripping between the doors.

The entrance to the upper stories is also on the east (front) elevation and is flanked by cast iron pilasters. The brown, metal double doors give access to a stairway which runs along the south side of the building.

There is an additional entrance at the western end of the north elevation which is no longer used. The metal double doors are flanked by cast iron pilasters and windows which extend 17'-2". These windows have been painted a light pink, and green plywood doors have been erected over the bottom half. Metal bars have also been placed over the windows, and a decorative metal gate has been placed in front of the door. Dogwood blossom patterned stained glass windows remain in the transom.

b. Windows: The windows on both the east and north facades are double-hung sash. On the east (front) elevation, there are two windows on the second story centered between the two projecting bays and a single window centered above the entrance to the upper stories. The

third story also has one window centered above the upper-level entrance, but has only one window between the projecting bays.

The north facade window pattern is identical on both the second and third stories. There are two sets of paired windows centered between the tin bays. A single window is centered between the northeast corner of the building and the first tin bay. There are three single windows centered on the westernmost bay of the elevation.

The second-story windows on both facades have decorative cornices incised in the concrete banding above them. (The banding above the paired windows on the front elevation has been re-concreted; thus, the cornice does not remain above them.) This same cornice is incorporated above the second-story windows on the projecting bays.

The third-story windows on both facades have semicircular arches. The central, third-story window on the east facade and the easternmost window on the third story of the north facade have projecting, terra cotta keystones. The third-story bay windows have segmented arches.

6. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is flat with tar paper covering. There is a parapet with a pediment detail centered on the north elevation. It is decorated with terra cotta and corbeled brick and is topped by a tin, circular medallion. The western corner of the pediment detail is missing. A circa 1900 photograph shows that there were, at one time, corbeled, decorative chimneys on either side of the pediment and that a similar parapet existed on the east (front) elevation (Aultman Collection, ca. 1900 photograph).
- b. Cornice: The tin cornice along both the east and north facades is decorated with dentils and medallions in the form of consoles. There is a tin acroterion at the south corner of the east facade.

7. Other features: Along the front and portions of the north side are amethyst-colored glass bullseye sidewalk lights illuminating the basement level.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basement is a large, open room with stone walls and a dirt floor. Cast iron, Tuscan Doric columns on concrete bases support wooden floor joists.
- b. First floor: The front portion is a restaurant/bar with a serving counter on the south wall, a bar on the north wall, and restaurant booths in the center. Kitchens are located along the south wall, extending from the central portion of the room to the rear of the building.

A flat arched opening at the rear of the restaurant area opens onto the cabaret, a large, open space at the rear of the building. The secondary storefront entrance on the north facade serves as an emergency exit from the cabaret.

- c. Second and third floors: The second and third floors are each subdivided into ten hotel rooms which measure approximately 20 square feet each. Four rooms on each floor feature projecting three-sided bays. There are two restrooms on the west wall

In the center of the third floor plan is a balcony with decorative railings overlooking the second floor. This opening permits light from the skylight above to reach the second floor. Each floor has an interior room on either side of this lightwell. Each of the rooms features a standard double-hung wooden sash window which opens onto the lightwell.

2. Stairways: There is one enclosed stairway leading to the second and third stories. It is located on the south side of the building and is entered through the south entrance on the east elevation. Another stairway under this one leads from the first floor to the basement.
3. Flooring: The hardwood floors on the first floor are covered with multi-patterned, multi-colored vinyl asbestos tile, asphalt, and concrete. The second- and third-story floors are vinyl asbestos sheeting over hardwood.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The bar area on the north wall of the first floor is covered with modern paneling. The remaining wall space is beige-colored rough plaster with random particle board. There are pale green, rough plaster walls on the second and third floors.

There is a particle board ceiling suspended from the original ceiling on the first floor. The second and third floors have painted dry wall ceilings suspended from the original ceilings.

5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Doorways on the second and third floors feature convex moldings and wood panel doors.
 - b. Windows: Rooms on second and third floors which face lightwell feature standard double-hung wood sash windows.
 6. Original and notable features: There are remnants of the original plaster and base molding in the second-story storage closet located underneath the staircase. There is a circa 1930's wooden Hollywood Cafe menu hanging in the restaurant area.
- D. General setting and orientation of site: The Merrick Building faces east at the southwest corner of South El Paso Street and West Overland Avenue.

Prepared by Debra Wolfe
Historian
National Architectural
and Engineering Record
August 1980

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the South El Paso Street Project in El Paso, Texas was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), National Architectural and Engineering Record (NAER), of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS) in cooperation with the City of El Paso. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS and Kenneth L. Anderson, principal architect, the documentation was conducted by project supervisor Paul D. Dolinsky (HABS Washington, D.C. office), project historians Patricia Torres (HABS Washington, D.C. office) and Debra Wolfe (Case Western Reserve University), Community Planner Richard L. Solomon (University of Cincinnati), architectural foreman Dwight H. Burns (Texas Tech University), architectural technicians Ann Louise Barr (University of Arizona), Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Thomas M. Hocker (The Catholic University of America), and Sandra L. Sherrill (Auburn University), and architectural photographer David J. Kaminsky. The project was completed in the HABS field office in El Paso, Texas during the summer of 1980.

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**ADDENDUM TO
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(Hollywood Cafe)
301-303 S. El Paso St.
El Paso
El Paso County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3309

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
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