

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Sherman Building
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Sherman-Jones Building; Nueces Building

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 317 Peoples Street
CITY OR TOWN: Corpus Christi **VICINITY:** N/A **NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A
STATE: Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** Nueces **CODE:** 355 **ZIP CODE:** 78401

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (nomination) (request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (meets) (does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (nationally) (statewide) (locally). (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

 State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___meets ___does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Signature of commenting or other official

Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

___ entered in the National Register

___ See continuation sheet.

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ See continuation sheet

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain): _____

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: NA

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: Commerce/Trade = Business (office building)

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: Domestic = Multiple dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and Early 20th Century Movements: Skyscraper

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS BRICK
ROOF ASPHALT
OTHER CAST STONE, STONE/granite/marble

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-#).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- X **A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- X **C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUES, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Commerce, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1929-1960

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1929; 1937

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: Herbert G. Sherman; William Whitby Jones

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Hardy & Curran (1929); Brock, Roberts & Colley (1937)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-# through 8-#).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-# through 9-).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	14	658208	3075710

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The Sherman Building site is comprised of Lots 7 and part of 8, Block 4, Beach Portion. The site is bounded on the north by Peoples Street, on the south by part of Lot 8, on the east by Lot 6 and on the west by Chaparral Street.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The nomination includes all property associated with the building since its construction in 1929-30.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Maria Watson Pfeiffer

ORGANIZATION:

DATE: February 6, 2010

STREET & NUMBER: 213 Washington Street

TELEPHONE: (210) 222-1586

CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78204-1336

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-#)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-#)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure- through Figure-)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Nueces Loft Apartments, LP, William Hoover, general partner

STREET & NUMBER: 13411 FM 1560N

TELEPHONE: (210) 771-8194

CITY OR TOWN: Helotes

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78023

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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

DESCRIPTION

The Sherman Building, begun in 1929 and completed in 1930, is a 10-story, rectangular structure constructed of concrete and tan brick with cast stone, granite and terra cotta detailing. It is situated at the southeast corner of Peoples and Chaparral Streets, a prominent location in downtown Corpus Christi, Texas. The primary elevation faces north on Peoples Street.

The building was constructed by H.G. Sherman, a Corpus Christi developer who was responsible for many of the city's prominent commercial and residential structures in the first two decades of the 20th century. Originally constructed as a 6-story office building, it was raised to 10-stories in 1937. Architects for the building were Hardy and Curran (1929) and Brock, Roberts and Colley (1937), both of Corpus Christi. The transition between the old and new structure is virtually seamless. The building's primary elevations on the north and west are decorated with elaborate cast stone detailing consisting of belt courses, spandrel panels, and rondelles.

The primary entrance to the Sherman building opens directly onto Peoples Street. There is also a corner entrance to the first floor commercial space and a secondary entrance on Chaparral Street. The building was used for offices until the 2006 when it was purchased for conversion to residential use. The renovation was completed in 2009. The original hallway layout and door and window partitions opening onto the hallways have been retained, together with original tile paneling in the third floor hallway. Terrazzo floors in the lobby and all hallways have been uncovered and restored. The vestibule and elevator lobby are plainly finished. The ground floor of the building contains the leasing office and remaining commercial space is unfinished pending tenant finish-out. Upper floors now house 64 loft and two-bedroom living units.

The Sherman Building is a 10-story, rectangular structure constructed of concrete and tan brick with cast stone, granite and terra cotta detailing. It is situated at the southeast corner of Peoples and Chaparral Streets in downtown Corpus Christi, Texas. The primary elevation faces north on Peoples Street. Originally constructed as a 6-story building, the structure was raised to 10-stories in 1937. The transition between the 1930 and 1937 structures is virtually seamless. At the time of the remodeling, the original decorative cast stone cornice appears to have either been removed and reinstalled or replicated to give the "new" building the same appearance.

The exterior of the building is largely intact to its 1937 appearance. All original double hung wood sash windows were retained and restored during the recent renovation. Six missing windows were replicated. The renovation included restoration of original ground floor fenestration that had been destroyed or hidden for many years. Show windows have been returned to their 3-part configuration. At the street level, windows are separated by columns with tall gray granite wainscoting. Glazed blue tile panels are set below the show windows. The blue tile seen today replicates damaged original tile work. (Original remaining tiles were retained behind the replacement tiles.) Molded wood panels above the windows separate them from multi-paned transom windows that originally emitted light to the lease space. The transoms are topped by elaborately molded decorative cast stone panels. Window frames are painted yellow to match original paint. A plastic, back lit sign over the entrance reads, "Nueces."

The first and second floors are separated by a decorative cast stone course that extends around the building. The main entrance is surrounded by gray granite. A modern aluminum door and window assemblage is inset to the top of the

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transom height. This predated the 2006-09 project. The corner entrance at Peoples and Chaparral Streets has been restored. That entrance is recessed behind a square column that supports the corner.

The north (Peoples Street) elevation contains nine bays. Each floor has two windows per bay. All windows are double-hung, wood sash in a 1:1 pattern. Windows in the corner bays are separated by wide brick piers, while the windows within the other bays have a smaller separation. The windows in the corner bays have flat brick headers and plain cast stone sills. A decorative, cast stone belt course separates the first and second floors of the building on both the north and west elevations. There are cast stone rondelles above the second floor windows in each of the two corner bays. Floors in the center seven bays are separated by decorative cast stone spandrel panels that accentuate the building's verticality. Windows in the center seven bays are topped by pedimented window heads of decorative cast stone at the tenth floor level. The building is topped by a stepped parapet capped with molded terra cotta.

The building's west elevation (Chaparral Street) is organized into four bays. Each bay contains two windows on every floor and all of the windows are double-hung wood sash in a 1:1 pattern. Detailing is identical to that of the north elevation with one exception. The molded decorative cast stone panels over the transom windows is only partially intact. The remainder has been replaced with plain plaster. This damage predated the recent renovation. The decorative belt course separates the first and second floors and cast stone and rondelles are set between second and third floor windows in the corner two bays. The windows in the corner bays have flat brick headers and plain cast stone sills, while windows in the center two bays are separated by decorative cast stone spandrel panels. Windows in the center two bays of the west elevation are topped by pedimented cast stone window heads matching those on the north elevation. The stepped parapet capped with molded terra cotta also tops the west elevation. The secondary entrance at the southwest corner of the ground floor is topped with a plain aluminum awning. The doorway is of modern aluminum. Adjoining this is a taller, painted metal service door. The original doorway was removed prior to the recent renovation.

The east (rear) elevation of the building is narrower than the west (secondary) elevation, giving the appearance of a larger building. The molded belt course that separates the first and second floors wraps around the building's northeast corner, providing the only detailing on the east elevation. The elevation is plastered and painted. At least a portion of this secondary façade was constructed of red brick. From left to right the second through tenth floors of the east elevation contain paired, double hung, wood sash windows, two single windows, and another pair of windows. First floor openings are at the clerestory height. A full height metal fire escape provides egress. One window on the first floor behind the fire escape has been filled.

The south elevation is irregular in shape. As explained above, the Chaparral Street (west) elevation is a full bay wider than the east (rear) elevation, owing to the fact that it steps back a two bays at the southwest corner. At the southeast corner of the base, the building protrudes slightly into the alley separating it from the adjoining property. The fenestration on the south elevation is comprised of paired and single double hung, wood sash windows in a 1:1 configuration. The center portion of the south elevation rises above the roof level to accommodate mechanical equipment. The shaft is vented through two louvered openings on each floor. One pair of windows has been filled on each floor near the elevator shaft. The south elevation is painted. It appears that this elevation was constructed of red brick. A full height fire escape was added on the south elevation during the recent renovation to meet health/safety requirements.

Much of the building's original interior integrity was lost prior to the recently completed renovation. The lobby is plainly finished. Walls are faced in white marble and the floor is light terrazzo with dark insets and perimeter banding. The original mailbox is located in the southwest corner. Elevator doors are modern. A concrete stairway at the southeast

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corner provides access to the upper floors. A concrete mezzanine level was added above the corner lease space, probably in the 1950s. The mezzanine wraps around the elevator core and was possibly added as utility space. The mezzanine was retained in the recent renovation, but was cut back from the transom windows.

The upper floors were largely remodeled and/or demolished during earlier renovation projects. The recent renovation retained and/or restored the original hallway pattern. All hallways retain their original terrazzo flooring which is comprised of lighter panels framed in darker perimeter banding. Original transoms and multi-colored decorative tile wainscoting are intact on the third floor. Solid doors leading from the third floor hallway into the living spaces were retained where original or replicated. The ten floors contain 64 living units—40 loft units and the balance 2-bedroom units.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sherman Building, located at the southeast corner of Chaparral and Peoples Streets in Corpus Christi, Texas, was constructed by prominent Corpus Christi real estate developer Herbert Grant (H.G.) Sherman. Construction began soon after the stock market crash of 1929 and was completed in 1930 in spite of the deepening financial crisis. Sherman selected the local architectural firm of Hardy and Curran to design the building, located on the most prominent corner in downtown Corpus. By 1931, the Sherman Building was occupied by oil and insurance companies, doctors, real estate companies and the offices of Sherman's various companies. In 1935, the building was sold to South Texas rancher and developer, William Whitby (W.W.) Jones and his family, who added another four floors to the building, bringing the structure to 10 stories. The Jones-Sherman Building, as it became known, continued to provide office space for a variety of local businesses through the 1960s. The current owner renovated the building and converted it to 64 living units in 2009. The Sherman Building reflects the period of economic prosperity that post-dated the opening of Corpus Christi's deep port in 1926, and is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A (local level) in the area of commerce as a high rise office building that served the community for over seventy years. It is also nominated under Criterion C (local level) in the area of architecture as one of only two tall buildings of the pre-World War II era remaining in Corpus Christi that retains its integrity. It is a good, representative example of commercial design incorporating an eclectic mix of decorative motifs, and is the only tall building designed by the short-lived Corpus Christi firm of Hardy and Curran that is known to remain standing.

Corpus Christi, Texas: 1839-1906

Corpus Christi originated as a small trading post that was established in 1839 during the Texas Republic. It was incorporated in 1846, became the county seat of Nueces County, and after some organizational problems, was reincorporated in 1852. By 1860, the town had approximately 1,200 residents. Lacking a deep port, the economy relied on the transport of goods from large ships anchored off-shore using shallow-draft vessels that could navigate among the barrier islands. When the Union blockaded the Texas Gulf coast during the Civil War, Confederate blockade runners were able to offload goods in Corpus and transport them overland to Mexico. The Union army eventually seized Mustang Island and occupied Corpus at the end of the war.¹ After the Civil War, dredging allowed larger ships to access Corpus and the railroad arrived in 1875. These developments, together with general economic improvement in the post-war years, helped the city prosper. Corpus grew in population from 4,700 in 1900 to over 8,000 in 1910.

Some of the city's growth was attributable to its promotion as a resort destination. Expanded rail connections brought leisure visitors to the Texas coast and some stayed permanently. This rapid growth created the need for new construction both in the commercial and residential sectors. The downtown area between the waterfront and tall bluff to the east was filled with 19th century homes and businesses, while the area above the bluff provided building sites for larger, more expensive homes. It was this prosperity and boosterism that apparently drew Herbert Grant (H.G.) Sherman (1864-1945) and Simon Arthur Freeborn (1876-1928) to Texas from Wisconsin in the first decade of the 20th century.

¹ Tyler 4:332-333.

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The Freeborn-Sherman Development Company

H.G. Sherman and his wife, Belle, traveled to Corpus Christi, Texas, from their home in Wisconsin, for a vacation in April 1906. Texas offered the Shermans relief from the cold weather as well as a promising real estate market. Sherman recalled their arrival in Corpus in a 1929 interview.

Our visit to Corpus Christi was not for the purpose of investing, but more on a vacation and pleasure trip from cold Wisconsin... Real estate was quite lively at that time... we naturally got the fever and purchased several tracts of land, then went back [to Wisconsin] for the summer, but came back in the fall of 1906 and have been a voter and tax payer ever since.²

H.G. Sherman formed a partnership with builder and architect, S. Arthur Freeborn and began investing in real estate. Prior to coming to Corpus, Freeborn and Sherman lived in Richland Center, Wisconsin. Sherman, the older of the two, was enumerated on the 1900 Wisconsin census as a provision dealer, and Freeborn, then 24 years old, was a nurseryman who was living with his widowed mother. By 1910, S. Arthur Freeborn and his mother were also living in Corpus.³

The two men formed a partnership that operated first as Freeborn and Sherman and, in 1917, was incorporated as the Freeborn-Sherman Development Company (1926-28). Sherman wrote of their early business ventures.

One of our first ventures was in leasing the four lots which were grown up to weeds from the Meuly estate and building some eight or ten cottages. These lots are the ones now occupied by the Nixon office building and the Montgomery Ward building.⁴

H.G. Sherman also described other tracts of land acquired by the partnership. Some of the land was vacant property that became the site of new suburbs, while other parcels were on the bay front and downtown. Existing structures on these sites were either remodeled or demolished. Among Freeborn and Sherman's projects were Nueces Bay Heights, the Nueces Hotel, and Rose Hill Cemetery. The partners also helped develop Furman Avenue, where both men lived. Sherman developed Country Club Place, an upscale subdivision, as well as Loma Rosa and Juarez, segregated neighborhoods for African American and Hispanic residents.⁵

One site purchased by Freeborn and Sherman was the property in downtown Corpus at the southeast corner of Chaparral and Peoples Streets. In 1924, Freeborn-Sherman Development Company held a corporate meeting to

² Corpus Christi *Caller Times* (CCCT), September 22, 1929.

³ Ibid; United States Bureau of the Census, 1900. Simon Freeborn's father, Samuel Irvin Freeborn, was a beekeeper and nurseman (United States Bureau of the Census, 1880). It is possible, but not been established, that the Sherman and Freeborn families were related either by birth or marriage. H.G. Sherman was married to a woman named Lorena in 1900, and S. Arthur Freeborn's sister was named Lorena. Though these women were different in age, it is possible that this was a shared family name. Research to date has proved inconclusive.

⁴ CCCT, September 22, 1929.

⁵ Ibid.

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issue real estate notes secured by the property. It is assumed these notes were used to finance some of the company's many projects.⁶

Freeborn and Sherman's portfolio of projects was still expanding when S. Arthur Freeborn and his wife, Nellie, moved to San Antonio in about 1918 or 1919. It is not clear how active he remained in the business. Freeborn became ill with leukemia, and in 1926, H.G. Sherman took over the company stock. Sherman subsequently did business under the name, H.G. Sherman Land Company. He also established the Wood Sherman Construction Company.⁷ S. Arthur Freeborn died in San Antonio in 1928 at the age of 52. H.G. Sherman described his former partner:

Mr. Freeborn was a builder and architect and remodeled and built a good many houses and store buildings, which at that time, were considered very fine.⁸

Corpus Christi: 1906-1929

The town that H.G. Sherman and S. Arthur Freeborn helped develop in their early years in Corpus was devastated by the hurricane of September 14, 1919. The storm killed some 400 people and badly damaged the North Beach area and business district. In the storm's aftermath, city leaders committed themselves to realizing the long-held dream to construct a deep water port they hoped would revitalize the local economy. Their determination, coupled with rebuilding opportunities created by the storm and the robust economic climate of the 1920s, provided momentum for efforts that transformed Corpus Christi. Led by former mayor and Corpus Christi *Caller* publisher, Roy Miller (1884-1946), the city gained passage of legislation that assured port construction. As mayor, Miller had already spearheaded extensive public works projects including the Broadway Bluff Improvement (NR 1998), storm sewers, paved streets, and a municipal water system⁹

The opening of the port enhanced the already healthy building climate that affected Corpus and other Texas cities in the years before the Great Depression. The city's population grew from 10,522 in 1920 to 27,742 in 1930. It was during this period that the city's skyline was transformed by the construction of modern buildings that towered over older structures that had weathered the hurricane. Prior to the 1920s, most of the city's buildings were no taller than three stories. The tallest was the 6-story Nueces Hotel (1913).¹⁰

Shortly before the port opened in 1926, the San Antonio *Express* carried an article heralding the first "skyscraper" in Corpus. The paper predicted correctly that 12-story Nixon building in the Uptown District would "establish a

⁶ Nueces County Deed Records (Deed Records) 146:598-600.

⁷ Ibid; United States Bureau of the Census, 1920; San Antonio *Light*, August 29, 1928, 5-B. The Freeborns' son, S. Irving Freeborn, was born in 1917 in Corpus (Texas Bureau of Vital Statistics, Birth Record 15858).

⁸ CCCT, September 22, 1929.

⁹ Victoria *Advocate*, August 5, 1955, 5-A; Long, "Corpus Christi, Texas," *The New Handbook of Texas*, 2:332-33; Texas Historical Commission, Broadway Bluff Improvement National Register nomination. Roy Miller arrived in Corpus in 1905. He was editor of the Corpus Christi *Caller* from 1907-11, was president of the Commercial Club, and served as mayor from 1913 until 1919. Miller's vision for Corpus, influenced by the City Beautiful Movement, resulted in widespread beautification efforts and infrastructure improvements.

¹⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1920 & 1930.

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commercial center between the main, lower portion of Corpus Christi and the old business section of Leopard Street.” The Nixon building was soon eclipsed by the 14-story White Plaza Hotel (1929) just across the street.¹¹ Construction was also taking place below the bluff in the old business district. In 1928, a 103-room addition was made to the 6-story Nueces Hotel, located on Peoples Street between Water and Chaparral. The following year, the 9-story Medical Professional building opened on Chaparral Street.¹²

The Corpus Christi *Caller* reported in 1929:

Corpus Christi’s rapidly growing skyline has been greatly augmented during the past three years, and especially since the opening of the deep water harbor here, by the investment of millions of dollars in construction of new buildings. New classes of construction of every type have been erected, signaling the great development that has been underway.¹³

It was not until 1942 that Corpus Christi’s skyscrapers of the 1920s were overshadowed by a new and taller structure—the 20-story Robert Driscoll hotel located on the bluff adjacent to the White Plaza.

H.G. Sherman and the Sherman Building: 1929-30

It was in this robust, pre-Depression era that H.G. Sherman finalized plans for his own modern building. Sherman and S. Arthur Freeborn had arrived in Corpus shortly after Roy Miller, and participated in the city’s economic transformation. By the time the port opened in 1926, the partners had already developed many residential and commercial properties. That same year Sherman, assumed Freeborn’s stock in their company and it was dissolved in 1928.

After dissolving his partnership with Freeborn, H.G. Sherman made plans to construct a high-rise office building on land he already owned at Chaparral and Peoples Streets. The property was occupied by one of Corpus Christi’s oldest and most historic buildings. It reportedly dated to 1855 and had withstood bombardment by a Union ship in August 1862. The local press reported, “The razing of this building marks the passing of almost the last landmark on Chaparral Street and one of the oldest buildings in the city.”¹⁴

On September 11, 1929, Sherman’s own firm, Wood Sherman Construction Company, was given the contract to build the \$214,000 structure. It was financed with twelve notes secured by the building lot and twenty one acres of other property. The notes, executed in September 1929, totaled \$214,200.¹⁵ H.G. Sherman anticipated enlarging his building at a later time, and constructed it with a foundation to accommodate additional stories. Sherman stated:

¹¹ San Antonio *Express*, April 11, 1926; March 22, 1930. The structure was developed by S. Maston Nixon and designed by the well known San Antonio firm of Adams and Adams. An 8-story building known as the Cotton Exchange was connected to the original Nixon building in 1935.

¹² CCCT, “Progress Edition,” September 28, 1929.

¹³ *Ibid*, September 28, 1929.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁵ Deed Records 70:265-71.

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The other six stories will be added at a time when it is felt that a building of such proportions is needed in Corpus Christi...¹⁶

It was estimated that it would take 150 days to complete the building, with a target date of March 1, 1930. The stock market crashed six weeks after Sherman awarded the construction contract and it is not known if this caused any delays. Though the exact completion date is not known, the building was well occupied when the 1931 Corpus city directory was published. Tenants included oil and insurance companies, doctors, real estate agents and various small businesses. The Sherman Land Company and building office were on the third floor and Sherman Wood Construction Company on the sixth floor.¹⁷

The Architects and Architecture

H.G. Sherman chose the Corpus Christi architectural firm of Hardy and Curran to design his imposing office building. The structural engineering firm was San Antonio-based W.E. Simpson Company and the mechanical engineer was Loyd D. Royer. Unfortunately, the Simpson Company, now HDR, no longer has the structural plans for the Sherman Building.¹⁸

Nat W. Hardy (1888-1960) and Claude Lee Curran (1889-?) practiced in Corpus from at least 1927 until 1931. Architect Nat Hardy was born in Virginia, but was living in Waco with his parents in 1900. C. L. Curran was a civil engineer. He was born in Pennsylvania, moved to Michigan, and then came to Texas in the 1920s. In 1920, Curran lived with his parents, wife, and young son in Battlecreek, Michigan. He was listed as an architect and engineer for a contracting firm. It is not known where either Nat Hardy or C.L. Curran received their training.¹⁹

The building Hardy and Curran designed for H.G. Sherman reflected an eclectic mix of elements that typified Texas office buildings of the period. Steel frame and later, reinforced concrete, construction had made it possible to build multi-story structures far taller than those of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As early as 1914, there were buildings in Texas' largest cities that ranged from twelve stories (Adolphus Hotel, Dallas, 1912) to twenty stories (Amicable Building, Waco, 1911). While such buildings proliferated throughout the state, the economic base of Corpus could not support their construction until the period of recovery that followed the 1919 hurricane and the boom that post-dated the 1926 port opening.²⁰

Corpus Christi's skyline already featured tall buildings when H.G. Sherman began construction. As previously noted, the 9-story Medical Professional Building (1929) stood two blocks to the south on Chaparral Street, and the 6-story Nueces Hotel (1913/1928) stood just north of Peoples Street. The 12-story Nixon building (1926) and 14-story White Plaza Hotel (1929) looked down from the bluff onto the older business district.

¹⁶ CCCT September 28, 1929.

¹⁷ Interstate City Directory, Corpus Christi, Texas, 1931.

¹⁸ HDR to Maria Watson Pfeiffer, 2006.

¹⁹ United States Bureau of the Census, 1900& 1920; World War I Draft Registration Records, Michigan; Texas Bureau of Vital Statistics Death Records 25696.

²⁰ Henry, 131-140.

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H.G. Sherman's building was modest by comparison with these structures, but located as it was on the busiest corner in downtown Corpus, the two prominent facades were decorated with an eclectic mix of design elements. The building's Art Deco-influenced cast stone belt course separating the base from the upper floors, and more classically influenced rondelles and spandrel panel decorations were all applied to an otherwise typical and plain brick structure that shared motifs common to many office buildings of the period. It stood on a tall base and was topped by a decorated parapet. The structure's verticality was highlighted by projected piers and decorated spandrel panels in central bays. Though the fenestration pattern differed from Hardy and Curran's 1928 addition to the Nueces Hotel (now demolished), the two buildings both utilized a tall base, decorated parapet, and strong verticality. The Medical Professional Building, which also emphasized its verticality, had a different fenestration pattern and was less decorated. The Nixon Building, designed by the San Antonio firm of Adams and Adams, was a more massive structure that spanned an entire city block.

The Nixon building addition and Sherman Building are the only known examples of taller buildings designed by Hardy and Curran. All buildings attributed to Hardy and Curran date to the 1927-1930 period. The firm's other known work, primarily in Corpus, included institutional buildings, theaters, small commercial structures, and private residences. Identified buildings include the Melba Theater, Henne Brothers' store building, the R&R theater, the Peel funeral home and Corpus Christi high school. The firm also designed a hotel in Alice, Texas, and a school in Edna, Texas.²¹

The firm of Hardy and Curran was still listed in the 1931 Corpus Christi city directory, but it is assumed that it ceased operation during the Depression. Nat Hardy continued in the development business. After World War II, he and his partner, John Zerr, were joined by Hardy's son-in-law, Mark Bratton, in the development of the East Cliff subdivisions.²²

The Sherman Building: 1930-1979

The economic crisis of the Depression resulted in H.G. Sherman's default on his note payments. By April 1935, he had only made one payment of \$3,000. The building was sold on the courthouse steps to note holders that included members of the extended Jones family.²³

William Whitby Jones (1858-1942), a rancher, financier and developer, owned the Nueces Hotel on the opposite corner from Sherman's building. Jones was raised in Goliad and came to Corpus Christi in 1905 from Beeville. Jones was actively involved in the community. He served on the executive committee of the committee that succeeded in completing the deep water port and as a member of the port's first navigation committee. He was president of the Alice State Bank and First National Bank in Hebronville. At the time of his death, Jones had extensive ranch holdings near Hebronville.²⁴

As originally planned by H.G. Sherman, W.W. Jones enlarged the building in 1937, though only four, and not six, stories were added. The almost seamless addition to the building—which became known as the Sherman-Jones Building, and later the Jones Building—was designed by Brock, Roberts and Colley, a short-lived Corpus firm.²⁵

²¹ Stephen Fox to Maria Watson Pfeiffer, March 9, 2006. This information is drawn from the Texas General Contractors Association Monthly Bulletin.

²² http://www.b26.com/marauderman/mark_pritchard_bratton.

²³ Deed Records 215:110-12.

²⁴ Texas Historical Marker, 1983; CCCT January 26, 1938 & July 18 & 24, 1942; Heines, 98-99. The hotel, which survived the 1919 storm, was severely damaged by Hurricane Celia in 1969 and was demolished in 1971.

²⁵ Corpus Christi Public Library, McGregor Collection, F4 2.37, Jones-Sherman Building presentation drawing.

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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Architects Victor Brock and E.E. Roberts were joined in 1936 by architect and city planner, Richard S. Colley. Colley moved to Corpus in 1936, and remained with Brock and Roberts until 1938. Colley then established his own practice and became noted for his regional designs and innovative use of the lift slab method of construction. Brock and Roberts were joined by W.H. Anderson in the firm of Brock, Roberts and Anderson which officed on the tenth floor of the Jones Building.²⁶

W.W. Jones' heirs continued to own the building after his death in 1942. The Sherman Building was occupied during the 1940s and 1950s by a diverse array of tenants including independent oil operators, insurance and financial firms, lawyers, doctors, accountants, and title companies. As in many cities nationwide, the downtown area of Corpus began to decline in the 1960s and 1970s. By the late 1970s, the City of Corpus maintained the largest amount of square footage in the building.²⁷

The Nueces Building: 1979-2009

The Jones family entered into an earnest money contract with Billy Sweetland in 1978 that resulted in the sale of the building to Leslie E. Simon's Temet Corporation in 1979. Simon, a long-time Corpus Christi resident, named the structure the Nueces Building.²⁸ The Nueces Building remained in use as an office building, but lost tenants as the surrounding area continued to decline. The building was purchased in 2001 by 317 Peoples Street Limited, a company led by real estate broker and investor, Matthew Cravey. The group continued to operate the office building until March 2006, when it was sold to Nueces Loft Apartments led by William Hoover. Renovation of the building into 64 living units was completed in 2009. Only the ground floor retail space remains unfinished.²⁹

Corpus Christi's 20th Century Tall Buildings in 2009

The majority of Corpus Christi's 20th century tall buildings have either been demolished or had their integrity compromised. Only the Sherman building and Medical Arts building, now known as Sea Gulf Villa, retain their integrity.³⁰ The other structures are as follows:

- Nueces Hotel- demolished, 1971
- White Plaza Hotel- demolished, 1962
- Nixon Building- standing but surrounded by a connecting 21-story office tower and 66-story parking garage
- Robert Driscoll Hotel- stripped to frame and clad in black glass, 1974

²⁶ Tyler: 2: 212-13; Interstate City Directory, Corpus Christi, Texas, 1940.

²⁷ Corpus Christi city directories, various years.

²⁸ Deed Records 1687:166; CCCT March 8, 1979. The *Caller Times* reported that Billy Sweetland had "struggled for financial and other support for years to revitalize the 400 block of Peoples Street into an area of new retail shops." The Temet Corporation was the parent company of Tex Metals Company, a scrap metals brokerage business which exported to Mexico.

²⁹ Deed Records 2001003896 & 2006011605. Matthew Cravey registered "The Nueces Building" as an assumed name in 2001 (Deed Records 2001600280).

³⁰ Andrew Dimas, Corpus Christi Historic Preservation Office, to Maria Watson Pfeiffer, March 8, 2010.

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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

Conclusion

The Sherman Building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A (local level) in the area of commerce as a high rise office building that served the community for over seventy years. Constructed by developer, H.G. Sherman, during the early days of the Great Depression, and enlarged by prominent South Texas businessman, W.W. Jones, in the late 1930s, it reflects the period of economic prosperity that post-dated the opening of Corpus Christi's deep port in 1926. It is also eligible under Criterion C (local level) in the area of architecture as one of only two tall buildings of the pre-World War II era remaining in Corpus Christi that retains its integrity. It is a good, representative example of commercial design incorporating an eclectic mix of decorative motifs. The Sherman Building is the only tall building designed by the short-lived Corpus Christi firm of Hardy and Curran that is known to remain standing.

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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

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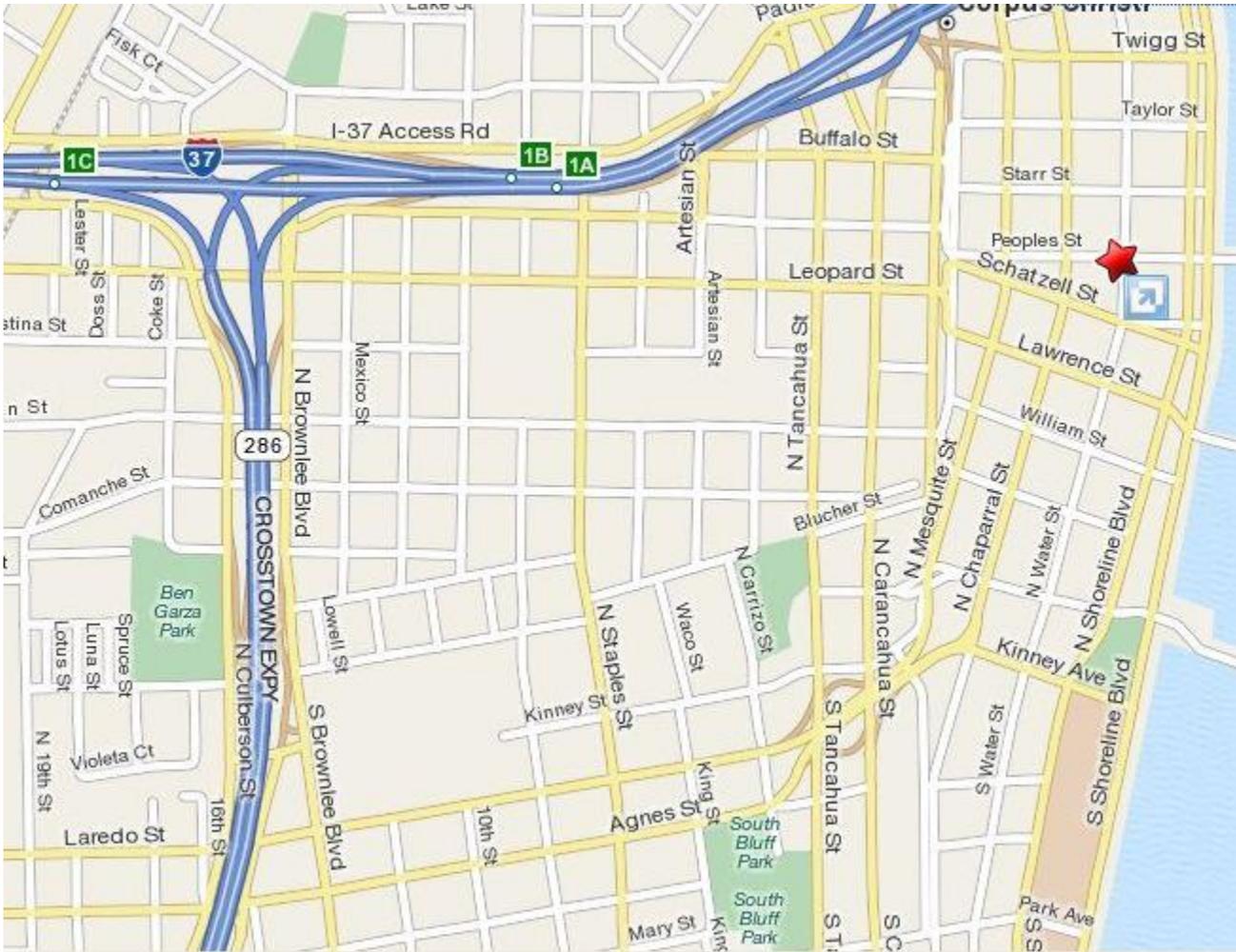
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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

The Sherman Building, c. 1935
West elevation looking east
The McGregor Collection, Corpus Christi Public Library



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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

The Sherman Building, 1937
Brock, Roberts and Colley presentation drawing of addition
The McGregor Collection, Corpus Christi Public Library



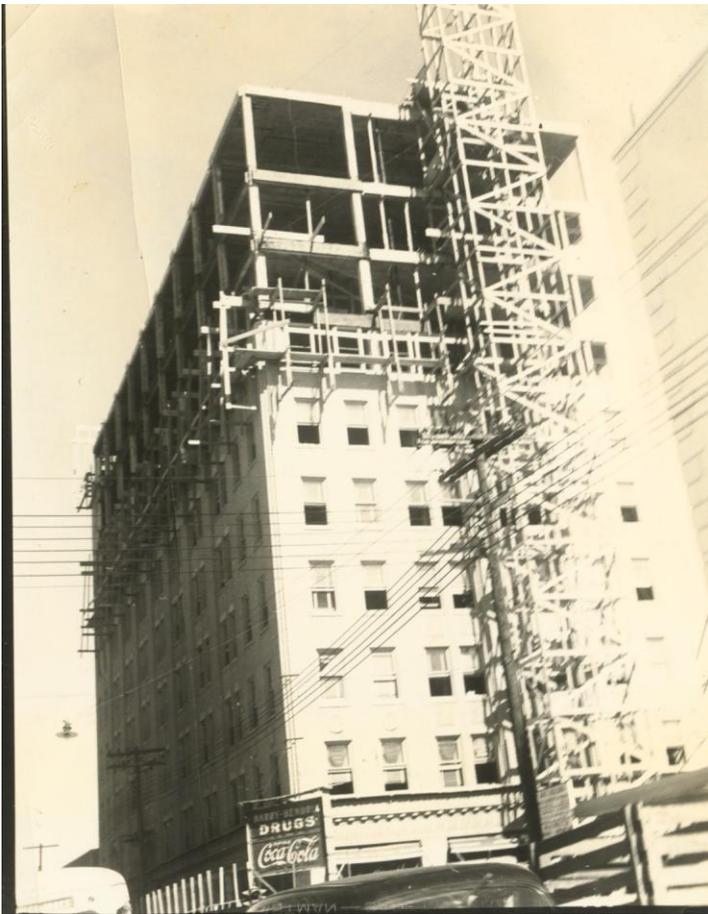
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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

The Sherman Building, 1937
West elevation looking east, addition in progress
The McGregor Collection, Corpus Christi Public Library



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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

The Sherman Building
West elevation looking east, March 11, 1941
The McGregor Collection, Corpus Christi Public Library



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Sherman Building
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas

PHOTO LIST

The Sherman Building
317 Peoples Street
Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas
Photographed by Sharat Camacho (except as noted)
February 2010

Photo 1
Northwest corner
Camera facing southeast

Photo 2
Primary entrance (north) entrance
Camera facing south

Photo 3
West elevation
Camera facing east

Photo 4
Southeast oblique
Camera facing northeast

Photo 5
East elevation
Camera facing west

Photo 6
Southwest corner, cast stone detail
Camera facing northeast

Photo 7
Third floor hallway detail
Camera facing west

Photo 8
First floor window detail
Photographed by Maria Watson Pfeiffer
Camera facing southwest

Photo 9
Sign detail (north elevation)
Photographed by Maria Watson Pfeiffer
Camera facing east

Photo 10
Lobby
Photographed by Maria Watson Pfeiffer
Camera facing southwest

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Sherman Building
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Floor Plans (2205)

1. The Sherman Building, first floor plan
2. The Sherman Building, mezzanine floor plan
3. The Sherman Building, floor plan, lower levels
4. The Sherman Building, floor plan, upper levels
5. The Sherman Building, floor plan, third floor plan