

THE NORTH SIDE SQUARE ITALIANATES

22. DONEGAN BLOCK
105-109 North Side Square

105:
T. A. Blackwell
105 1/2 North Side Square
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

107-109:
Mrs. Jane K. Lowe
210 Williams Avenue
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Lots 5, 6 and 7, Block 27, Old Town; 100' (North Side Square) X 100'
16 537940 3843065

1870: Architect/Builder unknown
1928: Edgar Love, Huntsville, architect for remodeling
A. F. Hill, Huntsville, contractor
1967: Harvie Jones, Huntsville, architect for renovation

and

23. RAND BUILDING
113 North Side Square

Douglas C. Martinson and George M. Beason, Jr.
115 North Side Square
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Lot 3, Block 28, Old Town; 26' (North Side Square) X 100'
16 537960 3843070

1883: Architect unknown
Messrs. Mastin and Winston, Huntsville contractors

DESCRIPTION

The Donegan Block is an attached, two-and-one-half-story, brick structure of Italianate Revival design. The facade is divided into four bays by shallow brick pilasters which were faced with cast iron on the street level; only remnants of these remain. Each bay has three windows; the second floor windows are of tall, narrow proportions and have round heads. Heavy roll moldings with a keystone wrap around the top of each window. The attic floor also has three openings per bay, but these are short, squat, shuttered vents with segmental arched tops, roll moldings and keystones. A high, bracketed, metal cornice projects beyond the wall surface. The first floor has been altered several times; but, during the most recent renovation, an attempt was made to restore the three eastern bays in a manner consistent with the upper facade. The ground floor of the western bay has been recessed, arcaded and painted. The bays are 25 feet wide and the cornice is 32 feet high. The roof slopes toward the rear where the building is only two stories high.

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Continuation:

The Rand building is also a two-story, attached, commercial building of Italianate Revival design. Built of brick painted gray, it has a facade 26 feet wide. The three windows of the second floor are set in a frame of raised brick; they have segmental arched tops while the hoods are arched on the bottom and straight across the top. A tall, bracketed metal cornice painted white terminates the building. The ground floor has been updated with large plate glass windows bordered with black glass. The recessed entrance is centered. A panel above a metal awning displays the store's name. The building is now occupied as a dress shop.

SIGNIFICANCE

These two buildings illustrate the Italianate Revival style as applied to commercial buildings in a small town, where clients and builders tended to interpret the high styles in a simplified manner. Huntsville in the 1870s and 80s had a population of not quite 5,000 people; it had no trained architects and most building designs were in all likelihood the product of local builders. The result was that the high styles were considerably modified in practice and that commercial architecture in Huntsville during the second half of the last century was predominantly Italianate. There were several instances of Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne structures, but they remained exceptions rather than forming the impetus for a new direction, and they were designed by outside architects.

The Italianate commercial building was constructed of brick and had tall, narrow proportions, although of a less exaggerated nature than antebellum structures. The vertical emphasis of the facade was repeated by the second story windows, although this tendency gradually decreased as the century progressed. The wall surface was unadorned except for pilasters which divided the facade into bays, three windows wide: the Italianate structure in Huntsville was always conceived of as a multiple of the three window unit. The double hung windows were treated as individual elements, each of which sharply pierced the wall plane; the window-tops were either rounded or segmental and ornamented with a projecting cast iron hood, usually with keystone. Most Italianate stores were of two floors, although Donegan's was an exception--being one of the first buildings erected following the Civil War, its design probably was influenced by a lingering taste for the exceedingly tall, narrow proportions of antebellum buildings. The attic in this case has been supplied with segmental vents which further enhance the picturesque quality of the facade. A bracketed metal cornice of considerable projection tops each structure. These applied metal cornices were traditional in Huntsville, even into the first years of the 20th century, although they became progressively simpler as the last century ended.

These two buildings are locally significant because they demonstrate in their materials, scale, and design the Italianate

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Continuation:

Revival style which prevailed for thirty years in commercial building. The entire Square at the turn of the century was filled with similar structures, but remodeling and rebuilding have destroyed the vast majority of them. Donegan's and the Rand building are Huntsville's finest surviving examples of the period, one hundred years ago, when Italianate was the predominant style for commercial architecture.