

19. MILLIGAN BLOCK
201-203 East Side Square

East Side Square Professional Building Office Complex
Leon Crawford, Partner
3125 University Drive
Huntsville, Alabama

North 44' of Lot 1, Block 33, Old Town; 44' (East Side Square) X 100'
16 538020 3843075

1900: Architect/Builder unknown
1930: C. E. Baxter, Huntsville, contractor for remodeling

DESCRIPTION

The Milligan Block is a two-story, two-bay, brick commercial structure which fronts 44 feet on the Courthouse Square and sides 100 feet on Randolph Street. Each bay is now treated as a separate unit on the ground floor facade. Both are slightly recessed; the northern one has a shingled shed roof over a central door flanked by two multi-paned bay windows. The south bay has a round-topped window on either side of double doors under an open pediment while the surrounding wall is of light stone facing. Continuous brick pilasters that define the bays are terminated at the top by a metal cornice. The bays, of unequal width, each have three round-topped windows on the second floor; the sills are formed by a stringcourse of light ashlar which runs across each bay. This is repeated by another course of quarry-faced stone that forms the base from which the arch of each window springs. A semi-circular brick arch accented by a keystone defines each window. The side elevation is broken into bays and continues the second floor elements and cornice. The building is painted a pinkish-beige and is in a good state of repair. It is occupied by offices.

SIGNIFICANCE

In Huntsville, the Italianate, or a variation thereof, remained the basic commercial style throughout the second half of the 19th century for the vast majority of small, locally owned businesses. The more elaborate Queen Anne and other high Victorian revival styles were for the most part too expensive for small merchants and probably required the services of an architect, which would not have been readily available. By the end of the century, the Italianate was nearly exhausted, although its basic form persisted to be transformed into the Commercial Brick style--an adaptation that the Milligan Block illustrates admirably.

This block retains the use of shallow pilasters to divide the facade into bays of three windows each. However the vertical emphasis of the Italianate has been modified to the point that the building has become a static grid defined by the unbroken pilasters and the repeated horizontal elements of the cornice and the masonry courses. Another holdover from the 19th century is the applied metal cornice, although it is no longer bracketed and here functions more as a horizontal cap to the total compo-

MILLIGAN BLOCK
201-203 East Side Square
Huntsville, Alabama

Continuation:

sition. The windows are round-topped in the 19th century manner, but the usual projecting hoods have been replaced by a simple treatment of flush brick arches, accented only by a contrasting masonry keystone. Although the windows are still separate openings, they are visually linked within each bay by the introduction of two continuous stone courses.

In brief, the Victorian influence can be seen in the basic composition of the structure, the arched windows, and the applied metal cornice. However the strong horizontal elements and the use of both the structural features and the structural materials to provide the ornamental treatment are characteristic of the Commercial Brick style, as is the introduction of masonry to provide a textural and color contrast with the brick. Although the ground floor facade has been treated in an insensitive manner, it is not irreversable and has not been extended to the upper facade, which is beautifully maintained.

The Milligan Block is significant because it illustrates the transition period from the vertical complexity of 19th century architecture to the horizontal restraint of early 20th century buildings. Transitional buildings such as this are as important as examples of fully matured styles for they demonstrate the process by which styles evolve, and they are often, as here, attractive structures that contribute to the variety of the streetscape while sharing common characteristics with both the older and the newer buildings in the block.