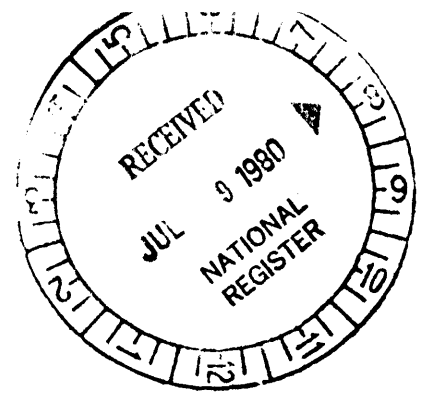


4. DOWNTOWN CHEVRON STATION
300 East Clinton Avenue

Stevens Oil Company
Bill Stevens
P. O. Box 326
Huntsville, Alabama 35805

Lot 1, Block 23, Old Town; 100' (Clinton) X 60' (Greene)
16 538050 3843230

1919: Architect/Builder unknown
1929 and 1938: Enlarged



DESCRIPTION

The Downtown Chevron is a detached, one-story brick structure built as a filling station in 1919. It is located on a corner lot, and the original square building has a rectangular wing extending diagonally toward the corner to provide easy drive-in access from both streets. The low, hipped roof extends beyond the building to provide shelter for the gas pumps and has deep eaves with exposed rafters underneath. The doors have three vertical lights in the transoms, and the windows also have three vertical lights over a large single pane. In 1929 the station was enlarged to the east along Clinton by the addition of a garage large enough for two cars. One of the garage doors has been bricked in now. In 1938 another extension was made to provide one large garage space at the end of the previous one. The garage area has a flat roof and multipaned windows set in metal sashes. The entire station is set on a concrete foundation, and the ceiling and partitions in the office are of beaded board.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Downtown Chevron is the oldest filling station extant in downtown Huntsville and has been in continuous use as such since its construction. It was one of the first structures built specifically to serve the automobile and is the only such structure of this earliest building phase to survive. It predates the era of standard designs sent out by the oil companies for their stations, and its original design was created to blend with the neighborhood. It is constructed of the same dark red brick used locally at the time for both commercial and domestic structures. The windows are a variation of the typical bungalow type, having vertical panes in the upper sash. Stylistically it hits a happy medium between commercial and residential design, having the scale, roofline, and individual elements of a cottage but combined in such a manner as to leave no doubt as to its function.

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Continuation:

Its diagonal placement on a corner lot with the hipped roof extended to shelter the pumps makes it a prototype of the drive-in building form which developed in response to the era of the automobile--a concept that has in the years since become ubiquitous with fast food franchises, motels, and all the other structures that now line our highways.

The original portion of the station was designed to function merely as a filling station for the sale of gasoline, but as the filling station evolved during the 1920s into a full service center for the repair and maintenance of the automobile, the addition of enclosed service bays became necessary. The two additions of the Downtown Chevron reflect this expanding role of the station.

The service station as a building type is particularly vulnerable to demolition by virtue of its small size, the vagaries of the motor oil business, and the general attitude that gas stations are undeserving of serious consideration. On the contrary, the early filling stations pioneered a new building type and function that forms the very heart of our modern, automobile-dependent society. The filling station, probably more than any other structure, is representative of 20th century American life.

The Downtown Chevron station is important locally for its early role in defining the form of the drive-in structure designed for automobiles rather than pedestrians and is further distinguished by being one of the few early stations still fulfilling its original function in its original location. The station should be recognized for its pioneering part in the transformation of Huntsville from a small pedestrian town to a modern, highway-oriented city.

