

36. DUNNAVANT'S BUILDING
100 North Washington Street

Earl E. Cloud, et al
Suite 368, Central Bank Building
Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Lot 4, Block 13, Old Town; 50' (Washington) X 150' (Clinton)
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1905: Edgar L. Love, Huntsville, architect
1927: C. E. Baxter, Huntsville, contractor for remodeling

DESCRIPTION

The Dunnavant's Building sits on a corner lot having a frontage on Washington Street of 50 feet and running along Clinton Avenue 138 feet. It is of brick construction, has three floors, a mezzanine, and full basement. The second floor facade has two groups of four rectangular windows each; this grouping is repeated on the third floor except the windows are smaller and are linked by brick arches which form a scallop pattern across the facade. A simple cornice of open brickwork creates an asterisk design along the top. The window arrangement on the side wall is a slight variation of the front while the first floor has a long row of small, evenly spaced arched windows. There is a side entrance near the rear. The ground level facade has been altered several times but originally had a large brick pier at each corner and a low pier topped by two columns in the center. Entrance was on either side of this center support to a recessed doorway. The display windows were flush with the outer face of the corner piers. In the late 1950's the exterior was covered with aluminum siding, but this was removed in 1979 and the brick is being repaired.

Inside a mezzanine encircles the perimeter of the first floor. The ceiling is of plain stamped metal squares with a floral patterned square at intervals.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Dunnavant's Building was erected by Terry Brothers and Rogers, a local dry goods company, in 1905 from a design by Huntsville architect Edgar Love. It was originally of brick and milled construction according to the Weekly Mercury which reported that "carpenters are now placing the heavy timbers for the second floor."¹ The building was extensively remodeled in 1927 by contractor Charles E. Baxter who had a "force of men at work building an entire new front, besides the rearrangement of the interior."² However, drawings and photographs of the building indicate that the only exterior changes ever made to the building were confined to the entrance and display windows on Washington Street. In 1940 a fire started in the paint department on the third floor and did considerable damage to this floor and the roof. At that time the roof was replaced and repairs were made throughout the structure. Three months

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Continuation:

after the fire Dunnavant's reopened for business.

Terry Brothers and Rogers changed partnerships several times until P. S. Dunnavant gained control of the store in 1925. Dunnavant's has been the premier department store in Huntsville for many years and remained in this downtown location even after opening a branch store. In 1975 after P. S. Dunnavant died, the downtown store was closed; however, the building now has new owners, who are currently rehabilitating it for office use.

Dunnavant's was probably the first major commission Love received after his mentor and partner Herbert Cowell returned to Illinois. It is a well organized composition executed in brick and having a strong horizontal orientation. The window arrangement is identical on the two upper floors providing a continuity to the facade while the scale and treatment of the windows are varied. The cornice is built up of various courses of decorative brickwork. Dunnavant's shares many features in common with the Commercial Brick style, but the large proportion of glass in the wall plane and the general overall effect suggest that a much stronger influence came from the multistory commercial buildings of Chicago and New York. This is one of the major structures of downtown Huntsville, and its renovation will provide a tremendous boost to other rehabilitation projects and to the health of the downtown as a whole.

¹ May 10, 1905, p.8
² Weekly Times, January 13, 1927, p.3