

## Maverick Building



<i>Property Name:</i>	Maverick Building
<i>County:</i>	Bexar
<i>Address:</i>	606 N. Presa
<i>City:</i>	San Antonio
<i>Date Listed:</i>	1995-01-24 00:00:00.000
<i>Reference Number:</i>	94001593
<i>To SBR:</i>	1994-11-19
<i>Vicinity:</i>	no
<i>Status Code:</i>	1
<i>Status:</i>	Listed
<i>To NPS:</i>	1994-12-13 00:00:00.000
<i>Date Notified:</i>	
<i>Local Significance:</i>	yes

<i>State Significance:</i>	no
<i>National Significance:</i>	no
<i>Architect:</i>	Harrington, L., and Company; Schoenfield, Charles

*Narrative:* The Maverick Building (1922) is an irregularly shaped (approximately 55' X 110'), 9-story reinforced concrete, masonry and cut stone building with a full basement and a flat built-up roof. It is one of San Antonio's early skyscrapers constructed in the first phase of the "tall building" style dominated by structure and function. The building has a 3-story base and a simple shaft, but lacks any capital, terminating in a plain brick parapet. The four elevations are all of identical red brick. Only the 3-story base on the north and west elevations is decorated using cut- stone veneer with Corinthian pilasters and an unadorned molded cornice. The fenestration consists of regularly spaced 2/2 double-hung cypress sash windows with cut-stone sills. The interior, typical of the period, includes a lobby with marble detailing and decorative plaster molding; a cast iron, open stairway; ceramic tile corridor floors; oak and glass office partitions; and security vaults. As a speculative building constructed on a limited budget, it was noted at the time for its "simplicity," but remains a prominent local example of the skyscraper period, among the city's tallest in 1922.

The Maverick Building is at the southeast corner of North Presa and East Houston Streets, a prominent downtown commercial location just two blocks west of Alamo Plaza. Except for ground floor alterations ca. 1950 and interior demolition on the third floor, it retains a high degree of integrity as a 1920s office building that remained viable for almost 60 years. Two metal signs spelling "Maverick" are mounted on the north and west sides of the roof with a wooden flagpole on the north side. All three are Contributing objects.

The Maverick Building occupies the prominent southeast corner of North Presa and East Houston Streets, the latter being one of two major east/west thoroughfares in downtown San Antonio. As the tallest building on Houston Street between Alamo Plaza (two blocks to the east) and Navarro Street (two blocks to the west), the Maverick building is a prominent feature. Surrounding buildings are primarily 2- story, with some 3- and 4-story buildings interspersed. These span a wide range of construction dates from the late 19th century through the 1980s, with the majority constructed ca. 1910 through 1930.

The Maverick Building's primary facade faces west on North Presa Street. The building occupies the entire site -- Lot A-6, NCB 416-- which is slightly irregular, measuring approximately 55'X 110'. The building is separated from the San Antonio River to the south by College Street.

The first floor interior is divided into four principal spaces--the office building entry lobby and three large commercial spaces. The lobby has a marble base and wainscot, smooth finish plastered walls and ceilings, and a continuous plastered crown mold with dentils. There is a bank of three elevators and an open staircase to the second floor that retains its original appearance. The staircase features cast iron newel posts with 1-inch balusters and a wooden handrail. The treads are of smooth-cut unpolished marble.

The commercial spaces, modernized ca. 1950, contain no historic fabric. The basement housed the boiler room, fuel bin, and utility service room, and in the 1920s and 1930s, a cafeteria.

The space between the elevator bank and the Houston Street elevation was originally 2-stories, but was divided into two floors ca. 1950. As a result of this division, there are offices both north and south of the elevator lobby on the second level.

The original office building finishout is typical of the period. Detailing includes mosaic tile floors and marble trim in the corridors and fixtures such as mail chutes and security vaults. The office layout consists of a central 6-foot wide corridor running north/south with a mosaic tile floor. The corridors have a marble base, sand-finished walls and ceilings, and continuous oak chair rails and picture moldings. The interior window jambs, door jambs, doors, and transoms are also oak. The windows, transoms, and door inserts are Florentine glass.

Originally, the typical office consisted of one room and an ante room with sand finished walls and ceilings and long-leaf pine flooring. In the course of 60 years, the majority of these offices have been altered. All of the wood flooring and mosaic tile have been overlaid with 9-inch vinyl asbestos tile and/or carpet. Water infiltration from the deteriorated roof and open windows has damaged much of the wood flooring and original trim.

Above the second floor, all floors are identical in configuration, with the exception of the third floor that was gutted ca. 1980 in an unsuccessful remodeling effort. Unique to the second through ninth floors are walk-in vaults with smaller combination safes, located next to the elevator lobby for use by building tenants which included insurance companies and manufacturing jewelers.

The Maverick Building's main entrance was on its west side from Presa Street, and included a lighted marquee. Today the marquee is incorporated into a full canopy extending along and Presa Streets that appears to date to ca. 1950. The building did not originally have a canopy, but one appears along Houston Street in a 1929 photograph. It is not known if this canopy extended along Presa Street at that time. The earlier canopy was either entirely replaced or redesigned at some later time.

As originally constructed, the ground level north and west facades consisted of cut-stone pilasters with full height storefront glass. The ground level facade was altered ca. 1950 to include small aluminum display windows surrounded by polished red granite. This is essentially the only alteration to the building's facade.

The second and third stories on the north and west facades consist of a cut-stone veneer displaying stylized Corinthian pilasters with an unadorned molded cornice. The veneer of the north and west facades above the 4th floor, and on south and east facades from the ground floor through the ninth floor is of natural burned red brick manufactured by Alamo Brick Company. The third through ninth floors feature regularly spaced 2/2 double-hung cypress sash windows and trim with cut-stone sills. The building terminates in a plain brick parapet. It was designed to have seven additional floors and an unadorned molded cornice, as seen in an original architectural drawing. Today, iron tie rods extending from the penthouse are evidence of these unfulfilled plans.

Two full-height fire escapes on the east and south elevations were manufactured by Southern Steel Company of San Antonio. Two smokestacks rise the full height of the building--on the east and south sides. The east side stack was a fresh air vent to the basement and is plugged, and the south side stack vented the coal-fired boiler in the basement. A penthouse on the roof houses elevator equipment.

Metal letters spelling "Maverick," one lighted, are mounted on the building's parapet on both the north and west sides. They are not original to the building, but the northern sign appears in ca. 1950 photographs and are dated as ca. 1940. A wooden flagpole rises above the roof on the northern edge. The two signs and flagpole are each a Contributing object.

The Maverick Building is in remarkably good condition except for limited water damage from window and roof leaks, and the third floor interior demolition. The fire escapes need repair, and the ground floor facade requires restoration. The Maverick Building, a viable office building until about 15 years ago, remains a prominent architectural landmark in downtown San Antonio. It is being considered for conversion to apartment use.

The Maverick Building was built in 1922 by the Estate of George M. Maverick (1845-1913) on the site of the old Maverick Hotel demolished in 1921 to extend the Presa Street right-of-way north to Houston Street. The site was part of the extensive land investments of the Maverick Family that, since the mid-19th century, included a great deal of property on what became known as Houston Street. By the 1880s, the Maverick Family was credited as the major developer of this part of downtown.

The Maverick Building was among the first completed as part of the building boom that changed the face of San Antonio's downtown in the 1920s prior to the

Depression. It was noted for its "simplicity of design in marked contrast to office building ideas of ten years ago." Because of its prominent location, and its stature as the tallest building near Alamo Plaza, the Maverick Building dominated the skyline of the northeastern edge of downtown.

The Maverick Building meets Criterion C (local level) in the area of architecture, as an intact, early example of the city's skyscraper architecture, as an early local example of reinforced concrete architecture, and as the only known local example of high-rise architecture by the firm of L. Harrington Company, Architects. It also meets Criterion A (local level) in the area of community planning and development for its association with the modernization of San Antonio's infrastructure in the teens and early 1920s, the city's subsequent construction boom period of construction in the 1920s, and the Maverick Family's role in the development of Houston Street for some 75 years. The period of significance extends from 1922 to 1945.

In 1852, only 16 years after the Battle of the Alamo, Samuel A. Maverick, signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, and owner of extensive land holdings, built the family homestead one block east of here on Alamo Plaza. Together with the ruins of the Alamo (Mission San Antonio de Valero), the Maverick house was the only building standing in the area until the first buildings housing the Menger Hotel were erected in 1855. Samuel Maverick's land holdings were extensive, and following his death in 1870, family members continued to operate the Maverick Land Office to administer their investments. After 1922, the Land Office was housed in the Maverick Building.

Until the middle of the 19th century, Houston Street was known as "El Paseo" (passageway or driveway), but it was also called Paseo Hondo (ditch or deep gully), because in rainy weather, it drained all of the land east of Travis Park and north of Alamo Street. (Steinfeldt:66) West of San Pedro Creek, the thoroughfare was called Rivas Street, and it was not until 1851 that a bridge was built across the San Antonio River and the entire length of the street was named Houston. (Heusinger:63)

San Antonio's earliest commercial development was concentrated to the south on Commerce Street. This was likely because the first crossing of the San Antonio River was at the location of today's Commerce Street bridge, and the street connected Plaza de las Armas (Military Plaza) and Plaza de las Islas (Main Plaza) with Mission San Antonio de Valero. The first residential settlements were also concentrated near the plazas, west of San Pedro Creek, and south of the river in La Villita. Houston Street was not considered desirable for development until after the Civil War.

By 1886, The San Antonio Daily Times wrote that "this street is now beginning to be regarded as the principal business street in the city, and will eventually be the business stronghold. The chief objection to Commerce Street is that it is too narrow... another thing in favor of Houston Street is that it is more conveniently

located with reference to the different sections of the city, and public highways outside of the city limits...." (San Antonio Daily Times, December 19, 1886)

The same article stated, "The Maverick brothers... are responsible for the rapid strides which have taken place on Houston Street. Their real estate interests were mostly in that direction, and they set to work to enhance the value of their property, which they did sensibly as any enterprising, progressive and liberal citizen would do."

Among those holdings was the Maverick Hotel, constructed in 1878 on the site of the later Maverick Building, and owned by George M. Maverick (1845-1913), one of 6 children of Samuel A. Maverick. (Jutson:106). George Maverick's building was originally the city's military headquarters until 1881 when it was remodeled as a hotel by noted architect Alfred Giles. Maverick's hotel reputedly "spread the best table in the state." Other buildings constructed by the family on Houston Street included the Soledad Block (1883), the University Block (1883), the George Maverick Storehouses (demolished), the Albert Maverick building (ca. 1875; Alamo Plaza NR District, 1975), and the Maverick Bank Building (demolished). On Alamo Plaza, they built the Crockett Block (1882). (Jutson: 90-106) All of these buildings were also designed by Alfred Giles.

In January, 1920, George Maverick's widow, Mary V. Maverick, and their children, Rena Maverick Green, George V. Maverick, Lucy M. Maverick, Lola Maverick Lloyd, Augusta Maverick Kelley and Lewis A. Maverick, sold the west 55' of Lot A-6, the hotel site, to the City of San Antonio for the purpose of street construction. (BCDR 574:578) The sale included a private alley owned by the Mavericks that connected College Street with Houston Street. The family was to remove all improvements on Lot A-6, presumably the hotel, by June 1, 1921.

The sale of this property by the Mavericks was in keeping with both the family's real estate interests and its commitment to the growth of San Antonio. The property was needed for the extension of Presa Street from Commerce north to Houston Street. Prior to 1920, only three north/south streets connected Commerce and Houston which were then the city's primary east/west thoroughfares. Because San Antonio's business center was moving toward Travis Street (one block north of Houston), it was critical to create more north/south passages. (San Antonio Express February 26, 1922)

The extension of Presa Street was only one of many infrastructure improvements that took place in downtown San Antonio between 1910 and 1920 when new bridges were built and streets realigned, extended, and widened. The 19th century character of downtown was altered to accommodate this change. This impact was most dramatic on the south side of Commerce Street where all the buildings from the River west to Main Plaza were torn down or had their facades demolished and rebuilt. The sole exception was the 5-story Alamo National Bank Building (NR 1984) which was physically moved back 16 feet in 1910.

The Mavericks retained ownership of the hotel property that remained after the Presa Street extension. They first considered rebuilding a hotel, but in July 1921, it was announced that an 8-story office building would be constructed. (San Antonio Light July 3, 1921) The Maverick Building, apparently the last constructed by the family in downtown San Antonio, was described by the San Antonio Express as "...notable for the simplicity of line which is a marked contrast to office building ideas of ten years ago." (San Antonio Express December 3, 1922)

The building was designed by Lou Harrington (1872-1950) who was born in Paw-Paw, Michigan, and educated at Northern Indiana College and Purdue University. He began his architectural practice in San Antonio in 1909, serving as local manager for Sanguinet and Staats from 1909 to 1913. (New Encyclopedia of Texas:725) During his college years, Harrington worked with the Big Four Railroad, and remained with the company after his schooling, serving as First Assistant Division Engineer of the Chicago Division. He was later employed by the Boston Pneumatic Service Company as office engineer, and then went to work for the Santa Fe Railroad. While with the Santa Fe, he engaged in bridge construction and engineered 3-span bridges across the Colorado River at Glen Flora and Ballinger, the Sabine between Kirbyville and DeRiter, Louisiana, the Leon River at Belton, and a 2-span bridge across the Pecan Bayou at Brownwood.

Harrington came to San Antonio in 1906 in his capacity as bridge and building engineer for the Santa Fe, and remained with the company until joining Sanguinet and Staats in 1909. He served with that firm until 1913, when he entered a partnership with the architect H.A. Reuter which lasted until 1916. During this period in his career, Lou Harrington was credited with the construction of buildings such as the Gibbs Building (1908-09) (Alamo Plaza NR Historic District, 1976; built on the site of the old Maverick Home) and Rand Building (1912-13) (Main/Military Plaza NR Historic District, 1979), both designed by Sanguinet and Staats. His residences included those of Harry H. Rogers, T.C. Frost, and R.L. Ball, all built ca. 1915 in the Laurel Heights/Monte Vista residential area north of downtown.

After he entered the firm of Reuter and Harrington in 1913, and subsequently established his own practice in 1916, Lou Harrington was credited with the design and engineering of "some three hundred buildings" between 1916 and about 1930. Harrington designed buildings in many other South Texas cities, among them Laredo (including the new Hamilton Hotel, NR 1992), Nixon, Yoakum, Lampasas, and Del Rio. In San Antonio, in addition to the Maverick Building, his commercial work included the Delaware Punch Factory and the Woodlawn Ice Factory plant (both standing) and the Steffer Baking Company and Finck Cigar Building (both demolished). (New Encyclopedia of Texas)

Though Lou Harrington was associated with the construction of numerous prominent local buildings during his affiliation with both Sanguinet and Staats

and H.A. Reuter, the Maverick Building is the only major work in the city directly attributable to L. Harrington Company, Architects.

The Maverick Building was built by Hedrick Construction Company and Charles Schoenfeld. (San Antonio Light July 3, 1921) From 1914 to 1922, Wyatt C. Hedrick (1888-1964) operated the construction company that excavated the foundation of the Maverick Building. Hedrick later entered partnership with Sanguinet and Staats which became known as Sanguinet, Staats and Hedrick, and was the sole proprietor of the business following the retirement of his two partners in 1926. (University of Texas Architectural Drawings Collection profile) This Fort Worth-based architectural firm revolutionized commercial architecture in Texas through their "skyscraper" designs.

The Maverick Building was constructed during a period of prosperity and growth in San Antonio, Texas, and the nation, accompanied by a tremendous local building boom that continued until the Depression. Due to lower bank rates, building operations throughout the country reported a steady increase. Short term loans were as low as 5% and long term notes were about 3%. (San Antonio Light, April 2, 1922) The local papers reported that "Property sales at the rate of two and a half million dollars monthly and building permits at the rate of half million dollars every 30 days summarize real estate activity in San Antonio for the first half of 1921. In no other city of Texas has the basis of real estate valuation maintained the high rate sustained in San Antonio. The dollar invested in San Antonio real estate is one of the dollars which has not depreciated since the armistice." (San Antonio Express July 3, 1921)

Extensive development took place in San Antonio's downtown and near-downtown area at this time. During early 1922, San Antonio's building permits set a record high. Major downtown buildings constructed in 1921-22 were the Central Trust Company Building (NR 1982), the Woolworth Building (Alamo Plaza NR Historic District), and the Frost National Bank Building (Main/Military Plaza NR Historic District). The Maverick Building and Frost National Bank Building (by Sanguinet and Staats), constructed concurrently and both begun in August, 1921, were compared in the local press as representing a new and modern approach to office building. (San Antonio Express December 3, 1922)

This "new and modern approach" increasingly included the use of reinforced concrete construction. San Antonio's 19th century business houses were most often constructed in the old, timber loft style, with short spans dictated by the capacity of wooden members. Prefabricated cast iron had replaced frame construction in the late 19th century, allowing taller, sturdier buildings to be constructed. When cast iron proved susceptible to fire damage, methods of "fireproof" construction were developed. (Banham: 21-45) Pioneers in reinforced concrete construction such as Ernest L. Ransome, experimented with techniques that allowed not only for stronger, safer buildings, but large expanses of windows and unprecedented levels of interior light, which particularly transformed factory construction. The strength, safety, simplicity, and economy of concrete



construction soon surpassed the use of frame, masonry and steel as predominant buildings materials. (ibid:63) Ransome's Reinforced Concrete Buildings, published in 1912, detailed his "patent system" of numerous components- a "kit of parts" to support a series of superimposed floors. His system allowed for a number of different column types and heights. (ibid:75)

The exact relationship of these innovations to the design of the Maverick Buildings, and other local buildings of the period has not been researched, but Ransome's influence appears to have been felt in San Antonio. This new style of construction, which soon became the dominant building method in the country, is seen locally in numerous concrete frame commercial and industrial buildings built during the years of prosperity and modernization following World War I until the Depression.

The Maverick Buildings has been touted as "the largest steel reinforced concrete building in the world" at the time of its construction, but this is unlikely. (The San Antonio Conservation Society Newsletter n.d.). However, though older, notable examples of reinforced concrete construction are found in San Antonio, such as the 1919 San Antonio Drug Company Building (NR 1994, 7-Story), the Maverick Building still represents an early example of this technique, and if not the city's tallest reinforced concrete building in 1921- 22, it was surpassed by only one or two. Among the city's new buildings of that period, the Maverick Buildings was exceeded in height only by the Frost National Bank Building (1922, 12-story, steel frame), the Central Trust Company Building (1918, 12-story, steel frame and reinforced concrete), and the Clower Building (1910, 10-story, reinforced concrete). In addition to the San Antonio Drug Company Building, others of lesser height pre-dating the Maverick Building using reinforced concrete construction included the City Public Service Building (3-stories; 1921) and the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company (4-stories; 1919). Soon after the Maverick Building was completed, more buildings were constructed using this technique including the Straus-Frank Company (1923) and the G.A. Duerler and Company (1926).

Though the Maverick Building was among the city's tallest, it was never termed a "skyscraper" in contemporary accounts. At that time, the term "skyscraper" carried negative connotations in the local press, and such buildings were considered intrusions on downtown. In 1992, San Antonio prided itself as having "been spared skyscraper congestion" (San Antonio Express, December 3, 1992). San Antonio was noted as the "only one of the four leading Texas cities which never has let the skyscraper idea interfere with its building judgment... the day of skyscraper has passed, and in San Antonio's case this city is fortunate that it never arrived." It was postulated that limited skyscrapers would spare San Antonio the congestion of other cities, creating a diffuse business area and solving "not only the traffic problem, but also the worse problem of congested values." The Maverick Building was completed in Spring, 1922, and the Maverick Land Office, administered by Alvert, Robert, and William H. Maverick, occupied a portion of the building. The building's first tenants also

included the Medina Valley Irrigation Company, the Jefferson Standard Life Company and other insurance firms, various doctors, and the Grayburg Oil Company. The Maverick Building continued to be a popular office location for many years. In 1927, architects Bartlett Cocke and Marvin Eickenroht, who had both been draftsmen for The Kelwood Company the previous year, shared an office in the Maverick Building. Though by 1936 they occupied separate offices, Cocke remained in the building until at least 1942, and Eickenroht stayed until 1968. Both were noted for their work with the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1936, work that was performed from these offices.

Other early tenants included the Fuller Brush Company, the Texas Unemployment Compensation Commission, the Christian Science Reading Room and the Social Security Regional Office. Numerous insurance companies, accountants, and lawyers were tenants of the building throughout its history. Long term tenants included Zale's Company which leased the ground floor in April, 1950, and remained for 30 years; Millinery Stores, Inc. which operated Sibyl's Hat Shop and whose first lease of ground floor space dated May, 1938, was extended in August, 1962 until the shop closed in the late 1970s; and Florsheim Shoe Stores which leased ground floor space in May, 1960 and remained until 1977. (BCDR 5053:340; San Antonio City Directories)

The Maverick Building's ground floor and office space was fully occupied until the 1970s when San Antonio's downtown experienced marked decline. In 1979, it was sold to former Governor Price Daniel who planned to renovate the building for residential or apartment/office space, just as he had the old Riverside Hotel immediately to the southwest. These plans were not realized, and in 1982, Daniel sold the building to his partner Millie Carr. (San Antonio News, August 5, 1983). Ironically, Carr and her investors planned to renovate the building as The Maverick Hotel after the earlier building on the site. Again, these plans, and a second hotel scheme in 1985, were not realized. The building has remained empty since 1981, and is now scheduled for renovation as apartments. It is still called The Maverick Building--one of only two bearing the family name (the other being the Albert Maverick Building one block east at 515 East Houston Street). The building retains a high degree of integrity, with few changes--primarily ground floor alterations to accommodate Zale's storefront.

The building's architectural significance derives primarily from its exterior appearance. The cut stone stylized Corinthian pilasters and veneer with an unadorned molded cornice extending to the third floor level provide a distinctive base for the simple red brick building that rises above. Inside, the lobby's marble base and wainscot, continuous plastered crown mold with dentils, and open staircase with marble treads, cast iron newel posts and balusters all convey the typical lobby style of the period.

Though the unsuccessful renovation project in the early 1980s resulted in demolition of the third floor interior, the remaining floors are still partitioned as described in the previous section. Hallway detailing is typical of the period (oak

and glass doorways, marble bases and plaster walls and ceilings).

The Maverick Building is located just north of the Presa Street bridge constructed in 1922, and one block west of the Alamo Plaza National Register Historic District. In addition to the Historic District, individually listed National Register properties nearby include the San Antonio Casino Club Building (NR 1980), two blocks to the south; the D.H. Barr Building (NR 1984), two blocks to the north; and the Majestic Building (NR 1975) and Central Trust Company Building (NR 1982), one and two blocks to the west respectively.

The Maverick Building is significant under Criterion C at the local level because of its reinforced concrete construction and simplicity in "skyscraper" design which was noted as a departure from earlier local architecture, as well as its association with Lou Harrington as the largest, most prominent local work directly attributable to this architect. It is also significant under Criterion A at the local level for its association with the dramatic changes in San Antonio's infrastructure ca. 1920, the subsequent local building boom of the 1920s, and its ties to the Maverick Family, largely credited with the development of Houston Street where the building occupies a prominent location. It remains an important and intact example of early high-rise architecture in San Antonio, the tallest building on four blocks of this major thoroughfare, and is essentially unchanged since its construction.

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