

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Comanche Downtown Historic District

Other name/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bounded by West College Avenue, North Pearl Street, Oak Avenue, and the rear property line along North Mary Street

City or town: Comanche

State: Texas

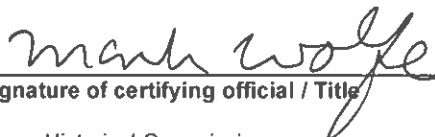
County: Comanche

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

	State Historic Preservation Officer	5/24/23
Signature of certifying official / Title		Date
Texas Historical Commission		
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government		

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
48	13	buildings
1	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	5	objects
49	19	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

6. Function or Use

(See continuation sheet 6)

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late Victorian: Italianate, Romanesque Revival; Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival; Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Commercial Style; Early Modern: Modern Classical; Mid-Century Modern Nonresidential: Modern; Other: One-Part Commercial Block, Two-Part Commercial Block, Two-Part Vertical Block; No Style

Principal Exterior Materials: STONE, BRICK, CONCRETE, WOOD, STUCCO, ASPHALT

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-36)

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: G

Areas of Significance: Community Planning and Development, Commerce, Architecture (*local*)

Period of Significance: c.1883-1974

Significant Dates: c.1883, 1926 (post office), 1938 (city hall), 1941 (courthouse)

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): NA

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): NA

Architect/Builder: Architects: Hedrick, Wyatt; Hinton, J. B.; Ford, Powell & Carson Architects

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 37-47)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 48-50)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other -- Specify Repository: Comanche County Historical Museum, Comanche Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 17.22 acres

Coordinates: (see continuation sheet 51)

Verbal Boundary Description: (See continuation sheets 51, 53-55)

Boundary Justification: (See continuation sheet 51)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Jay Firsching, Senior Associate
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Date: 05/06/2022

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 52-56)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 57-86)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 5, 87-123)

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Comanche Downtown Historic District
City or Vicinity: Comanche
County: Comanche
State: Texas
Name of Photographer: Jay Firsching (unless otherwise noted)
Date: October 2021 (unless otherwise noted)

Photograph 1 – Comanche downtown district from the southeast. Camera facing northwest.
Photograph 2 - East square facing east. Camera facing east.
Photograph 3 - 108-110 N. Austin St (Contributing), Camera facing east.
Photograph 4 - 120 N. Austin St. (Contributing). Camera facing east.
Photograph 5 - 124 N. Austin St. (Contributing). Camera facing east.
Photograph 6 - 200 N. Austin St. (Non-Contributing). Camera facing north.
Photograph 7 - 219 N. Austin St. (Contributing). Camera facing southwest.
Photograph 8 - 109 S. Austin St. (Contributing). Camera facing west.
Photograph 9 - South square facing south. Camera facing south.
Photograph 10 - 100 E. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing southeast.
Photograph 11 - Masonic Temple 100 W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing southwest.
Photograph 12 - Comanche County Courthouse 101 W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing north.
Photograph 13 - 106-112 W. Central Ave. (Non-Contributing). Camera facing south.
Photograph 14 - 114 W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing south.
Photograph 15 - 118 W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing south.
Photograph 16 - 132 W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing south.
Photograph 17 - 134A W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing southeast.
Photograph 18 - 134B W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing east.
Photograph 19 - 120 E. Grand Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing southwest.
Photograph 20 - North square facing north. Camera facing north.
Photograph 21 - Grand Ave. facing east. Camera facing east.
Photograph 22 - 101-103 W. Grand Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing northwest.
Photograph 23 - Mistrot Building, 113 W. Grand Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing north.
Photograph 24 – 117-119 W. Grand Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing north.
Photograph 25 - West square facing west. Camera facing west.
Photograph 26 - Houston Street facing south. Camera facing south.
Photograph 27 - 107A N. Houston St. (Contributing). Camera facing northwest.
Photograph 28 - 129 N. Houston St. (Non-Contributing). Camera facing southwest.
Photograph 29 - 201 N. Houston St. (Contributing). Camera facing northwest.
Photograph 30 – 125 W. Grand Ave. (Non-Contributing). Camera facing north.
Photograph 31 – 106 N. Austin St. (Non-Contributing). Camera facing west.
Photograph 32 – 311 N. Austin St. (Contributing). Camera facing west. (Alyssa Gerszewski, THC, 9-16-2022)
Photograph 33 – 301 W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing north.
Photograph 34 – 135 W. Grand Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing north.
Photograph 35 – 205 W. Grand Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing north.
Photograph 36 – 200 W. Central Ave. (Contributing). Camera facing south.
Photograph 37 – 112 N. Austin St. (Non-Contributing). Camera facing east.

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Commerce/Trade: Business, Specialty Store, Professional, Financial Institution, Department Store, Restaurant, Warehouse
Domestic: Hotel
Social: Meeting Hall
Government: Government Office, City Hall, Fire Station, Correctional Facility, Post Office, Courthouse
Recreation and Culture: Theater
Industry/Processing/Extraction: Communications Facility
Landscape: Plaza
Education: Library

Current Functions:

Commerce/Trade: Business, Specialty Store, Professional, Financial Institution, Restaurant
Government: Government Office, City Hall, Fire Station, Courthouse
Education: Library
Landscape: Plaza, Street Furniture/Object
Vacant/Not in Use
Other: ATM, Courthouse Columns

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

Narrative Description

The Comanche Downtown Historic District encompasses approximately 17.22 acres in the central business district of Comanche, the seat of Comanche County, Texas. The district is roughly bounded by West College Avenue on the north, North Pearl Street on the east, Oak Avenue on the south, and rear/west property line along the west side of North Mary Street on the west. It contains a high concentration of historic resources that reflect its role as a commercial and political hub, as well as the evolution of the community from c.1883 to the 1970s. The district is organized in a Shelbyville courthouse square plan with the Comanche County Courthouse at the center with several other commercial buildings lining the square. Other prominent governmental buildings include the former U.S. Post Office one-half block east of the square, the Comanche City Hall and Fire Station one-half block to the north of the square, and the old Comanche County Jail one block west of the square. A variety of architectural influences are represented in the district including Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Modern Classical among others, and the majority of resources are 1-part or 2-part commercial buildings constructed of limestone with storefronts composed of cast iron, wood, glass, and brick. The district was largely built out by 1945 and post-war modern development is represented by the 1960s bank buildings on or just off the square, and by the 1974 O'Neil Ford-designed Comanche Public Library a block north of the square. Many of the commercial buildings received storefront alterations over the years to accommodate the changing nature of retail businesses, and a few non-historic resources were added outside the period of significance. The district is composed of 68 resources including 61 buildings, 1 site, 5 objects, and 1 structure. There are 48 contributing buildings and 1 contributing site (roughly 72%), with the remaining 19 resources (roughly 28%) counted as non-contributing. Despite changes over the years, the Comanche Downtown Historic District retains sufficient historic integrity.

General Overview of Historic District

Comanche, Texas is centrally positioned in Comanche County located roughly 80 miles southeast of Abilene, 100 miles northwest of Waco, and 100 miles southwest of Fort Worth. The Comanche Downtown Historic District is located on all or portions of eleven city blocks. Comanche is laid out around a courthouse square based on the Shelbyville square plan with a square grid and the principal commercial streets bounding the square on four sides (Maps 1-6, Figures 2-4, Photograph 1).¹ The district features both 1-part and 2-part commercial blocks, along with one example of an enframed window wall, four government buildings, and two modern bank buildings. The commercial buildings define the outer perimeter of the square and uniformly line the sidewalks. One vacant lot where a building once stood is located at the east side of the square. A high density of buildings is maintained around the square, and thus it retains the appearance, feeling, and setting of a typical courthouse square in Texas.

A series of fires from the 1880s through the 1940s resulted in the loss of the community's earliest commercial buildings. Most of the buildings in the district date from between c.1883 and 1945. Several of the late 19th-century properties reflect 20th-century modifications. Both 1-part and 2-part commercial blocks are well-represented in the district, and local Texas limestone is the primary building material. Most facades are brick or stucco. Typical alterations include modernization of storefronts, most commonly with the use of aluminum frame plate glass windows, the application of modern material to the ground floor, replacement canopies, or the covering of transoms. The application of inappropriate or non-historic materials to some buildings compromises the historic integrity. Severely altered buildings are non-contributing since their character-defining features are no longer apparent. Historic properties are well-distributed across the district with the north and south sides of the square having the highest concentrations.

¹ Robert Veselka, *The Courthouse Square in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000) 32-36.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

Government Buildings

The most prominent building in the district is the Comanche County Courthouse (Resource 2; Figure 30, Photographs 1, 12) at the center of the courthouse square. The Modern Classical building was designed by renowned Fort Worth architect Wyatt Hedrick and completed in 1941 with the assistance of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It replaced the 1856, 1860, 1879 and 1891 county courthouses. The two-story building is constructed of reinforced concrete and locally quarried ashlar stone and has a flat roof. Two wings flank a central mass which serves as the location of the main entrance. Original windows and doors seem to be intact on the primary and rear elevations. This was one of several WPA projects that benefitted Comanche including widespread street paving, new natural gas infrastructure, and the completion of the 1938 Comanche City Hall and Fire Station (Resource 50; Figure 29; Photograph 7). The two-story building is located on Austin Street one block north of the courthouse and is characterized by a fossil stone veneer over a concrete and steel structure. Other historic government buildings include the 1926 U.S. Post Office (now Comanche Police Department), which displays both Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission Revival design characteristics (Resource 58; Photograph 19) located on East Grand, and the old 1903 Comanche County Jail and Annex (Resources 22 and 23; Photograph 33) at 301 West Central.² All these government buildings in Comanche retain a high degree of integrity except for the jail. The jail's fortress-like Romanesque Revival design was simplified in 1948 with decorative elements above the cornice line removed and the roof flattened. It remains a contributing resource.

Courthouse Square

Courthouse Grounds (Contributing Site, Resource 1)

The courthouse square was laid out by Ransom Tuggle in 1858, however the configuration seen today likely dates to the late 1870s or 1880s when the oldest intact resources were constructed around the 1879 courthouse (Map 6, Figures 1-2, Photograph 1). The 1941 courthouse sits on an octagonal piece of land with several notable elements (Photograph 12). Three monuments are positioned along the south elevation of the courthouse. The largest is the American Veterans War Memorial, dedicated in May 1989. Centered in front of the main staircase is the Comanche County Officers monument and at right is the c. 2002 Confederate Veterans monument. All were added outside the period of significance and are small in scale and are not large enough to be included in the resource count.

The rest of the block forms a larger paved square defined by parking, sidewalks, and curbs frames the immediate courthouse property. The "Fleming Oak" (Figures 13, 25) at the southwest corner of the square is said to have provided shelter to a young Martin V. Fleming during an 1854 conflict with Comanche Indians. Years later when the square was being paved, Martin prevented contractors from removing the tree. It now sits at the center of Bicentennial Park (named in 1976) constructed on the southwestern corner of the square. Several state and local historical markers, a repaired and partially reconstructed public well (Figure 25), and a large stone with attached leg irons from the county's original calaboose are present at the southwest corner but too small to be counted individually. The most prominent resources are the four columns from the 1891 courthouse (four non-contributing objects, Resources 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d), and "Old Cora" (non-contributing building, Resource 3), which is believed to be the county's first courthouse from the town of Cora. Originally built in 1856, Old Cora was repeatedly moved and expanded, then moved to the square and restored in 1986. A large digital non-historic sign (Resource 5) reading "Welcome to Comanche" is visible at the south side of the square and counted as a non-contributing object due to age. Other non-historic signage, sculptures, benches, light poles, and flagpole are also present but too small to be counted individually.

² The current Comanche Post Office lies outside the historic district.

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South Side of Square

The south side of the square (Figure 25; Photograph 9) was largely spared by the disastrous fires faced by the community and includes the district's oldest buildings. The 2-part building at 118 W. Central (Resource 13; Photograph 15) was completed in about 1883 and its 2-part neighbor to the west at 122 W. Central (Resource 14) c.1890. Both buildings are of limestone construction typical of the area, although 118 has a stuccoed primary elevation that mimics bush-hammered dressed stone with tooled margins. Ornamentation on 122 includes a pressed metal cornice, iron window hoods, and iron columns at the storefronts. Also constructed c.1890 is the Fleming Meat Market Building (Resource 17; Photograph 16) at 132 W. Central. It is the district's only enframed window wall composition with rusticated stone piers and a decorative metal cornice. Comanche National Bank (Resource 18; Figure 25, 26, 27; Photograph 17), added in 1892, is next door at 134A W. Central. One of the district's most distinctive commercial buildings, the brick 2-part building includes Romanesque Revival rusticated sandstone details. It retains a high degree of integrity but is missing the original pyramidal corner tower. The bank constructed a simple but elegant two-story office building (Resource 19; Photograph 18) directly to the south in 1909. It displays the characteristics of a 2-part building but with the typical first floor storefronts replaced by a series of office fronts. Originally separated from the bank by an open iron staircase, this feature was later partially enclosed. At the east end of the block is the district's largest commercial building, the 1910 Masonic Temple (Resource 9; Figure 24; Photograph 11).

West Side of Square

The west side of the square (Figures 5, 8, 12, 13; Photograph 25) was the first to be populated with permanent stone buildings. The oldest block at the north end was destroyed by fire and replaced with the three existing 1-story structures. The Majestic Theater/Ritz Theater (Resource 28) and Green-Huett (Resource 30; Photograph 28) are now covered with modern materials and are considered non-contributing. Green-Huett and the theater both appear to have been clad with Carrera Glass at some point, but it is unclear how much of these historic materials or those from earlier periods remain behind the existing wood. The Chilton-Harelik Building (Resource 29) had its wood slipcover removed exposing the 1948 façade and is considered contributing. At the center of the block is a 1-part brick building (Resource 27) that replaced two earlier buildings after 1949. Newspaper accounts indicate the current composition was completed for Ben Franklin's in 1963. The three remaining 1-part buildings on the west square share some unifying details indicating they were remodeled over time to give them a more cohesive appearance. After fire destroyed the Higginbotham Brother's building at the corner in 1930, the company constructed a beautiful new building with Spanish Colonial Revival detailing (Resource 24; Figures 9, 10, Photograph 27). It appears at least some of the original exterior walls were retained as part of the new building. The small building to the north (Resource 25) was constructed c.1910 and remodeled to resemble its neighbor. The William Reese/Durham's Pharmacy Building next door at 111 N. Houston (Resource 26) was completed in 1903 but also remodeled. All three buildings have parapets capped with red barrel tile and pent roofs.

North Side of Square

The north side of the square (Figure 15, 16; Photograph 20) also includes some of the city's earliest surviving buildings, although several were heavily modified and now represent later periods. The most prominent is the First National Bank /Scurry Grocery at 101-103 W. Grand (Resource 47; Figure 17, 18, 19, 23; Photograph 22). The 2-part Italianate design was completed in 1891 and displays elaborate pressed-metal ornamentation on its highly detailed brick facades. Storefronts include decorative cast iron columns, plate glass windows, and multi-light transoms. The original composition included additional space for a retail storefront to the west of the bank with office space above. While the overall integrity is high, the cantilevered turret at the southeast corner is missing. The 1-part building next door at 109 W. Grand (Resource 46) originally had an iron and pressed metal primary elevation. The c.1900 building was refaced in c.1920 with brick and retains a high degree of integrity from that period. The C. L. Mistrot Building at 113 W. Grand (Resource 45; Figure 20; Photograph 23) is a 1-part composition completed in 1893. The dressed limestone primary elevation was later stuccoed, but remnants of the original storefront elements remain including iron columns and multi-light transoms. At 115 W.

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Grand (Resource 44) is a hardware store building completed in c.1900. This beautiful 1-part composition includes pressed metal ornamentation, cast iron columns, and storefronts with transoms. The building was restored for use by the Comanche Economic Development Corporation. Next door, what was originally a large 2-story stone building completed around 1890, the John Tate Building (Resource 43; Photograph 24) was damaged by fire in 1942 and the second floor eventually removed. The 1-part composition has mid-20th century modern modifications. The Jim Cox building at 125 W. Grand (Resource 41) is of limestone construction with cast iron hoods over its second-floor windows. The 2-part composition has suffered the loss of its original windows, storefronts, and metal cornice, and a balcony is now attached at the second floor and it is non-contributing. At the corner, the J.W. Greene Building (Resource 40; Figure 6; Photograph 34) is a 1-part building completed in 1893 but heavily damaged by fire in 1937. The existing 1938 composition is of blended red textured brick and includes plate glass storefronts and transoms. The rubble stone walls of the original building, now partially stuccoed, are still visible on the remaining elevations.

In the northwest corner of the square are the 2-part Brightman Building (Resource 32; Figure 14; Photograph 29) completed in 1891 and *The Comanche Chief* Building (Resource 31; Photograph 35) completed in c.1900 and remodeled in 1960. Brightman is a 2-part building of heavy limestone construction. The metal ornamentation at the second-floor windows and cornice is missing and the storefront is heavily modified, but it still conveys its historic design. *The Comanche Chief* newspaper occupied the building next door in 1960 and the 1-part primary elevation of stucco with simple ornamentation reflects that period.

East Side of Square

The east side of the square (Figure 23; Photograph 2) along Austin Street includes three contributing buildings, all of which replaced earlier construction destroyed by fire. The 1-part building at 108-110 N. Austin (Resource 62; Photograph 3) was completed c.1910 and is of stone construction with a brick primary elevation. While the original canopy is missing, the decorative cast iron columns, multi-light transoms, and corbeled brick cornice remain intact. The Knights of Pythias Building at 120 N. Austin (Resource 60; Photograph 4) was completed in 1913 after a major fire in 1912 destroyed the 2-story buildings at the north end of the block. It is among the most intact of the district's 2-part buildings and displays the typical characteristics of the type but with more formal early 20th-century brick detailing and second-floor windows that are grouped tightly together in a central bay. The George W. Tate Building at 124 N. Austin (Resource 59; Photograph 5) replaced the other buildings destroyed in the 1912 fire but was not completed until 1920. It is a broad 1-part building with three storefront bays, the center bay emphasized with a slightly raised parapet. The front elevation is composed of brick with recessed panels, brick corbelling, and replacement storefronts. Now housing a single business, it historically provided lease space to multiple tenants and was home to a wide variety of Comanche businesses including dry goods, a department store, restaurants, a confectionery, a bowling alley, and a movie theater.

Austin Street is the location of most of the district's off-the-square resources. On the block to the north are several modest 1-part buildings dating to the 1920s and 1940s and the WPA-built Comanche City Hall and Fire Station (Resource 50; Figure 29, Photograph 7). At the far northern end of the district is the 1974 Comanche Public Library (Resource 52, Photograph 32) designed by O'Neil Ford of Ford, Powell & Carson Architects. On the block of Austin to the south of the square and at the rear of the Masonic Temple is a small 1-part office building completed in c.1920 and later used as a tailor shop and auto parts store. The Davenport Hotel/American Legion at 111 S. Austin (Resource 7) was completed in c.1910 with a hotel on the second floor and commercial spaces on the first, one of which housed the U.S. Post Office. It was purchased by the American Legion in 1946 and converted to a lodge hall. This included the construction of a new primary elevation of light brick with windows and false shutters more in keeping with a residential building. Without a distinct separation between the first and second floors it is now only vaguely 2-part in its composition.

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Integrity

The Comanche Downtown Historic District exhibits a high degree of integrity with the majority of the resources within it listed as contributing. All but a handful are of historic age. Of the historic age buildings that are non-contributing, some may be considered contributing with the removal of contemporary modifications. For example, resources 10, 28, 30, and 63 all have slipcovers of wood or metal that prevent the evaluation of underlying materials for National Register eligibility. Resource 41 has an accumulation of modifications to the primary elevation, including a large balcony, that, if removed, may result in a change to contributing status. Photographic evidence indicates that some resources had contemporary slipcovers removed in recent years and can now be considered contributing. This includes resources 29, 40, and 59.

The most common alterations present in the district are storefront modifications, which are minor compared to other Texas communities. Building facades are generally intact with modification limited to the installation of new storefronts of aluminum and glass. Some of the historic brick is painted. By the middle of the 20th century with the proliferation of the automobile and new commercial development outside the core, it was common for downtown building owners to modernize the facade.

Overall, the district remains in its original location at the heart of Comanche and the Shelbyville courthouse square is intact. The historic setting is largely intact except for the intrusion of a few non-historic resources. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are visible in the most architecturally distinctive resources including the 1941 Comanche County Courthouse, the 1926 U.S. Post Office, the 1938 Comanche City Hall and Fire Station, and the old Comanche County Jail, and in the high number of contributing 1-part or 2-part commercial blocks constructed of limestone with commercial storefronts composed of cast iron, wood, glass, and brick displaying Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Spanish Colonial Revival architectural influences among others. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is also readily apparent in the post-war modern development including the 1960s bank buildings on or just off the square, and the 1974 Comanche Public Library a block north of courthouse. The cohesive historic character conveys the feeling of and association with a small town commercial district and seat of county government that developed and evolved from the late 19th century to the 1970s.

Building Inventory

The Comanche Downtown Historic District contains a high percentage of buildings dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Contributing buildings are at least 50 years of age, unless alterations are so severe that the integrity of the original location, setting, design, material, workmanship, feeling, and association have been lost. Even in buildings with altered storefronts, the upper sections of most buildings retain a good degree of integrity.

The resources within the district are listed in the inventory below. Resource number, address, date of construction, historic name, stylistic influence, and contributing/non-contributing status are provided for each. All properties within the district exhibit modifications as is typical of historic-age buildings. Where the dates of such modifications are known, they are indicated. For buildings with substantial visible modifications but where the date is not known, an estimated modification date is given. The inventory corresponds to Map 6 on Page 56.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

Inventory of Resources. C = Contributing, N = Non-contributing.

Res. No.	Address			C/N	Historic name(s)	Style	Date	Description/Historical Data
1	101	W	Central	C	Comanche County Courthouse Grounds	N/A	1858, c.1885	The town of Comanche and the courthouse square were laid out by surveyor Ransom Tuggle in 1858, however the earliest Sanborn map showing the current configuration of the square dates to 1885. Comanche officially became the county seat in 1859. The American Veterans War Memorial, Comanche County Officers monument, and the Confederate Veterans monument, Fleming Oak, large stone, partially reconstructed public well, historical markers, non-historic sculptures, benches, signage, light poles, and a flagpole are visible on the courthouse grounds. These resources are small in scale and are not large enough to be counted individually and apart from the contributing site.
2	101	W	Central	C	Comanche County Courthouse	Modern Classical	1941	The 1941 Comanche County Courthouse was designed by prominent Fort Worth architect Wyatt Hedrick. The two-story building is constructed of reinforced concrete and locally quarried ashlar stone. Two wings flank a central rectangular mass which serves as the main entrance. The symmetrical primary (south) elevation exhibits characteristics of Modern Classical architecture through its simple and abstract ornament and features. The central mass has five bays occupied by paired windows, and each wing has three bays occupied by single windows. The bays are recessed. Main access is provided via a central concrete staircase. The entablature has a clock, and stone lettering at the cornice reads "Comanche County Court House." Each wing has a small balcony at the second floor giving the building a stepped form and the roof is flat. Large

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								eagles ornamenting the facades were fabricated on site by local stonecutter Elmer Webb. Many original doors and windows appear to be intact throughout. This building was one of many WPA projects completed in Comanche.
3	101	W	Central	N	Old Comanche County Courthouse "Old Cora"	Log dog trot	1856/1986	From the THC subject marker: "Soon after the creation of Comanche County in 1856, the town of Cora (10 mi. SE) was platted to serve as the county seat. The courthouse in Cora, typical of many early Texas courthouses, was a 12' 7" x 12" 10", one-room, squared log structure. It served the county until the seat of government was moved to Comanche in 1859. The "Old Cora" courthouse was incorporated into a house built about 1880 and has been moved several times over the years. It stands as a reminder of the now-extinct town of Cora and of early Texas courthouse architecture. Texas Sesquicentennial 1836 – 1986." Non-contributing because it has been reassembled and relocated within the last 50 years.
4a	101	W	Central	N	Comanche County Courthouse Column	N/A	1891/1986	Limestone column from the 1891 Comanche County Courthouse was erected as part of a memorial at the corner of the square in 1986. This is considered 1 non-contributing object because it was moved outside of the period of significance and is now associated with Old Cora, also altered in 1986.
4b	101	W	Central	N	Comanche County Courthouse Column	N/A	1891/1986	Limestone column from the 1891 Comanche County Courthouse was erected as part of a memorial at the corner of the square in 1986. This is considered 1 non-contributing object.

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4c	101	W	Central	N	Comanche County Courthouse Column	N/A	1891/1986	Limestone column from the 1891 Comanche County Courthouse was erected as part of a memorial at the corner of the square in 1986. This is considered 1 non-contributing object.
4d	101	W	Central	N	Comanche County Courthouse Column	N/A	1891/1986	Limestone column from the 1891 Comanche County Courthouse was erected as part of a memorial at the corner of the square in 1986. This is considered 1 non-contributing object.
5	101	W	Central	N	Digital Sign	N/A	c.2021	The welcome/informational sign at the southeast corner of the square existed for several decades but was replaced with a new digital sign in about 2021. Non-contributing object due to age.
6	100	E	Central	C	Dudley Brothers	Spanish Colonial Revival influences	1936	Gail, Thomas, and Eltos Dudley completed their auto dealership at this location in 1936. Dudley Tire Company specialized in the sale of Federal Tires and of Chrysler and Plymouth automobiles. The new store included gas pumps and a service department. The one-story red brick building includes elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival style including pent roofs with red barrel tile on all elevations and heavy scrolled brackets at the columns of the two large porte cocheres on the north and west. The west porte cochere has been enclosed with matching brick. The building now serves as a bank with a drive-through structure added to the south side.

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7	111	S	Austin	C	Davenport Hotel/American Legion	2-part/ Modified	c.1910/ 1946	Originally completed in about 1910, this 2-part building housed a grocery store and the city post office on the first floor and a hotel on the second. The primary elevation was of decorative cast iron and pressed metal. The American Legion bought and remodeled it in 1946 for use as their club building. Modifications to the primary elevation were extensive. The stone and iron facade was removed in favor of a light cream-colored brick. Glass block was used for glazing at the first floor, and second-floor windows were given decorative shutters. A lack of separation between the first and second-floor zones left the building only vaguely a 2-part composition. A small addition/carport was added to the south elevation at an unknown date.
8	109	S	Austin	C		1-part	c.1920	This small 1-part building first appears on the 1930 Sanborn map as an office. Later occupied by Skaggs Fine Tailoring (1946) and Comanche Auto Parts (1947). The simple red brick building has two storefront windows with stone sills on either side of a central 1-door entry. There is a recessed panel in the parapet. Portions of the brick at the parapet are missing.
9	100	W	Central	C	Masonic Temple	2-part	1910	The Masonic Temple was completed in 1910 with retail spaces on the first floor, offices on the second, and lodge rooms on the third. The railway express office was located at the rear of the building for many years. Typical of 2-part vertical blocks, the tall first floor serves as a building base supporting the two floors above. The entire building is of brick construction, including ornamentation, except for Masonic symbols in cast stone at the center of the north and east parapets. The first floor includes retail storefronts with

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								transom windows and is separated from the floors above by a corbeled brick watercourse. The upper facades are divided by brick pilasters that frame rows of regular, paired, double-hung wood windows. The capitals of the pilasters are also of brick with intricate details. A corbeled brick cornice supports a tall brick frieze and stepped parapet. The second-floor windows appear to have been replaced and portions of the first-floor brick have been painted. The west and rear elevations are faced in red brick.
10	106-112	W	Central	N		1-part	1896	Originally a stone building with iron and pressed metal storefronts, the building is now slipcovered. It is not known how much of the original façade is present underneath. Listed as non-contributing due to alterations.
11	114	W	Central	C	State National Bank/City Hall	1-part	c.1900	Constructed in about 1900, this building was home to State National Bank until 1968 and then served as the Comanche City Hall. The stone building has a brick primary elevation. The storefronts include a multilight transom. The upper façade has brick ornamentation including a corbelled brick cornice. Vacant.
12	N/A	W	Oak	C		No style	1950	Concrete block warehouse with gabled roof. Roof and gable ends are covered with corrugated metal. An overhead door is located on the south elevation and a pedestrian door and single window on the west elevation.
13	118	W	Central	C		2-part	c.1883	Originally constructed as a 2-story general merchandise store this 2-part commercial building is the oldest in the district. The stone façade with metal cornice has been stuccoed to appear as dressed stone. First-floor storefronts appear to date to the 1920s. The second floor has three double-hung 4/4 windows.

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14	122	W	Central	C		2-part	c.1890	Sanborn maps indicate this 2-part building was completed in about 1890 as a harness shop. Rusticated stone piers at the first floor divide the storefronts into three primary bays. A smaller bay on the east end of the storefront includes a door with access to the stairway. The upper floor is split-face limestone. Iron hoods ornament the flat heads of the four second-floor windows. There is an elaborate pressed metal cornice. An unusual aspect of this building is its position its neighbor on the east. The cornice does not align with the party wall and the stuccoed facade of the building next door encroaches on first and second-floor openings.
15	N/A	W	Oak	N		No style	1950/c.2000	Sheet metal warehouse. Existing siding, windows and doors on this metal building appear to be relatively recent. Listed as non-contributing because of extensive modifications to the exterior materials within the past 50 years.
16	126	W	Central	C	Perry Brothers	1-part	1905/ 1947	The wood structures on this site burned in 1902 and the existing building was constructed in 1905. The stone building with two separate retail spaces had iron and pressed metal ornamentation on the primary elevation. The building and the one next door to the east were heavily remodeled in 1947 for Perry Brothers. The expansive aluminum and plate glass storefronts are framed with Tennessee Marble panels. There is a cantilevered canopy with a ribbed metal front. The upper facade is scored stucco. The top of the parapet has a shallow cornice with a ribbed motif.

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17	132	W	Central	C	Fleming Meat Market	Enframed window wall	c.1890	Sanborn maps indicate this building was completed in about 1890. Unique to the district this enframed window wall has rusticated stone piers and a metal cornice. The first floor has plate glass storefronts. Above a rod-supported canopy are tall, fixed windows that provided light to the interior gallery. Recently restored as part of the Texas Main Street Program.
18	134A	W	Central	C	Comanche National Bank	2-part/Romanesque Revival influences	1892	The Comanche National Bank was organized in December 1889 with a beginning capital of \$50,000. The primary organizer was John B. Chilton, who met with other local businessmen in his second-floor downtown living quarters to establish the bank and elect a board of directors. The first elected officers were J.B. Chilton, President; T.J. Holmsley, Vice President; W.B. Cunningham, Cashier; and R.V. Neely, Assistant Cashier. Opened to the public in March 1890, the Comanche National Bank saw immediate success, as Comanche was poised for economic growth by the early 1890s. The railroad arrived in 1891, the same year in which the county constructed a new courthouse. Also in 1891, the bank directors purchased the lot on the southwest corner of the courthouse square and constructed this building. Remodeled in 1939, it served the bank's operations until 1969. It was constructed by the same contractors who built the 1891 courthouse. This brick building with locally quarried sandstone trim has Romanesque Revival influences. The original pyramidal tower is missing.

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19	134B	W	Central	C	Comanche National Bank Office Building	2-part	1909	Comanche National Bank completed this office building in 1909. With offices on two floors, it was separated from the bank by an open iron stair. The stairs were later partially enclosed and connected to the bank at the second floor. The brick building differs from typical 2-part compositions in that the first floor has single entry doors and double-hung windows rather than storefronts. The taller first floor with its rod-supported canopy and transom windows is still distinctly separated from the second floor.
20	114	S	Houston	C		1-part	1950	Below the projecting canopy, the lower façade is cream limestone in a Roman brick pattern. The central single-door entry is decorated with a perimeter band of glass block. Two small window openings are glass block. The upper facade is stucco. The canopy is clad in ribbed aluminum
21	200	W	Central	C	Comanche National Bank	Modern	1969	Built by Comanche National Bank as a replacement to its 1892 building. At its dedication, the bank was described as "Southwestern" in design. Main features include the building's heavy, carved entrance doors and the landscape design, featuring native stone, various types of western plants, and a ground cover of volcanic ash. The Modern building is clad in white, king-sized brick in a common bond. Openings are limited to two narrow windows on the east elevation and one drive-through window on the south. These openings take the form of gaps in the wall plane with heavy shade structures projecting through the wall. The shade structures are blocky and lightly ornamented, each with a pair of vertical fins and three small, applied blocks. The main entrance to the bank lobby is at the far northwest corner and features two heavy paired doors with a grid pattern of bas-relief panels with floral medallions. The corner is fully

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								glazed in bronze aluminum storefront on a low bulkhead of white brick. The heavy roof structure matches the projecting canopies over windows, but the wood cladding and ornament has been removed and replaced with flat sheet metal. Now Texas Bank.
22	301	W	Central	C	Old Comanche County Jail	Romanesque Revival	1903	Like many jails constructed during this period, the 1903 Comanche County jail was a fortress-like structure of heavily rusticated stonework with crenelated parapets. The building was constructed by Martin & Moodie. A 1948 modernization flattened the previously gabled roof and removed the stonework above the cornice line.
23	301	W	Central	C	Old Comanche County Jail Annex	No style	c.1950	This one-story building sits immediately to the west of the jail and has stonework matching the historic jail. Sanborn maps indicate it was constructed after 1949. Rectangular in plan, it has two large openings that were intended as vehicle bays, and one pedestrian entrance. These openings were later infilled with CMU and iron work to create additional jail cells. Flat roof has been modified slightly to provide more slope and is covered with corrugated metal roofing.

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24	107A	N	Houston	C	Neely Building/Neely-Harris-Cunningham/Higginbotham Brothers Company	1-part, Spanish Colonial Revival influences	1931	<p>The original 2-story stone buildings on this site were replaced by a large 1-story general merchandise store in about 1900. Originally the home of Neely-Harris-Cunningham, it was later rented to Higginbotham Brothers for use as a department store that included dry goods, groceries, hardware, and undertaking. It also housed the company offices. Fire damaged the building in 1912 and in 1930 another fire destroyed the entire building and its contents. Higginbotham's immediately rebuilt and the existing building opened in January 1931. The handsome 1-part building exhibits Spanish Colonial Revival influences and includes three storefront bays on the east elevation, each with a double door recessed entry and expansive plate glass display windows. A rod-supported canopy and multi-light transoms top the storefronts. Each bay is ornamented with an elaborate Venetian-style hood that appears to be cast stone. The main wall material is painted stucco. The parapets are topped with pent roofs or red barrel tile. It appears the two buildings to the north were later remodeled to unify them with the Higginbotham facade. Each has a pent roof at the parapet.</p>
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25	107B	N	Houston	C		1-part	c.1910	This appears to be a remodeled version of a building constructed in about 1910. It appears to have been modified to better unify it with the Higginbotham Building to the south. The 1-part building has a brick façade with plate glass storefronts, a rod supported canopy, and multilight transoms. Above the transoms is a concrete beam with scrolled brackets mimicking wood. The upper elevation has three equally spaced porthole windows and the parapet is topped with a pent roof of red barrel tile.
26	111	N	Houston	C	William Reese/Durham's Pharmacy		1903/ c.1940	A fire destroyed the buildings on this site in 1902. The ribbed metal canopy indicates the front elevation was modified about in 1940 to better unify the design with the Higginbotham Building to the south. The storefronts appear contemporary. The upper facade is textured stucco with a red barrel tile pent roof along the parapet.
27	117	N	Houston	C	Ben Franklin's	1-part	1963	Sanborn maps indicate this 1-part building replaced two earlier structures after 1949. The existing storefronts appear to be contemporary. The remainder of the primary elevation is brick. Newspaper articles suggest the building was constructed for Ben Franklin's in 1963.
28	123	N	Houston	N	Majestic Theater/Ritz Theater	1-part	1897	A massive fire on Dec 6, 1896, destroyed the five 2-story buildings on the north end of the west side of the square. The original building on this site was constructed in 1881 by contractors Martin and Byrne. The existing 1-story 1-part building was constructed in 1897 as a retail establishment but was converted in about 1916 to the Majestic Theater. A new owner in 1942 converted it to a Ritz Theater. The stone building originally included iron and pressed metal on the primary elevation. It appears it

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								was later refaced with Carrera glass, but the facade is now obscured by a rustic wood slipcover. It is not known what historic materials remain.
29	127	N	Houston	C	Chilton-Harelik Building	1-part	1897/ 1948	A massive fire on Dec 6, 1896, destroyed the five 2-story buildings on the north end of the west side of the square. The original building on this site was constructed in 1874. The new building completed in 1897 took the place of two of those that had been destroyed. The Chilton family owned the building for almost 100 years, leasing the retail spaces out to various tenants. Novit's Department store became the primary tenant from 1939 to 1946 when it was bought out by Lou and Betty Harelik who heavily remodeled the building in 1948. The building retains its expansive plate glass storefronts from that period and its rod-supported canopy. The upper facade is scored stucco resembling dressed stone masonry.
30	129	N	Houston	N	Green-Huett Building	1-part	1897	A massive fire on Dec 6, 1896, destroyed the five 2-story buildings on the north end of the west side of the square. The offices of the Comanche Chief newspaper at the rear of the building were lost in the fire. The existing 1-story 1-part building was constructed in 1897. The site was occupied by J. W. Green & Co from 1881-1967. The Huett family then operated the Service Drug Company in the building until 1977. The stone building originally included iron and pressed metal on the primary elevation. It was later refaced with Carrera glass before being stuccoed. It is now obscured by a rustic wood slipcover. It is not known what historic materials remain.

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31	205	W	Grand	C	The Comanche Chief Building	1-part	c.1900/ 1960	This 1-part building is of rubble stone construction and originally had iron and pressed metal detailing on the primary elevation. It served a variety of retail purposes before being remodeled with a stucco elevation and occupied by <i>The Comanche Chief</i> in 1960.
32	201	N	Houston	C	Brightman Building	2-part	1891	This 2-part building of rusticated limestone was completed in 1891. It housed a furniture store on the first floor and the Woodman of the World Hall on the second. O. O. Brightman purchased the building in 1911 and it was eventually run by his son as White's Auto Store. The building originally had an elaborate pressed metal cornice, the loss of which detracts from this otherwise handsome building. The storefronts were modified to their non-historic appearance, and two round windows on Houston Street elevation enclosed.
33	205	N	Houston	C	J V Carter Building	No style	1947	This building was created by enclosing the alley next to the Brightman Building. Simple stucco elevation with a row of fixed windows along the parapet forming a transom. Deep projecting metal canopy. An added metal roof detracts from its integrity. First housed Bo-Peep Children's Store. Later a dry cleaner.
34	215	N	Houston	N		No style	1977	Metal and brick commercial building. Non-contributing due to age.
35	217	N	Houston	C		1-part	c.1921	Sanborn maps indicate this building was constructed between 1915 and 1921 and was an automobile sales and service business. The simple brick primary elevation has been stuccoed and is partially obscured by a large, shingled canopy. Storefronts appear to date to the 1950s. There is a non-historic metal addition on the south elevation.

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36	220	N	Houston	N		No style	c.1945	The small gas station portion of this building is of rubble stone construction and adjoining additions on the south and east are of stucco. The additions date to before 1949. The recent addition of a high gable roof seriously undermines the integrity.
37	216	N	Houston	C		1-part	c.1929	Concrete block building with a central entry, metal multi-light windows, canopy, and flat roof.
38	214	N	Houston	N		No style	c.2000	Metal building. Non-contributing due to age.
39	214	N	Houston	N		No style	1979	Metal building. Non-contributing due to age.
40	135	W	Grand	C	J.W. Greene Building	1-part	1893/ 1938	Originally a high style 1-part commercial building, it was heavily damaged by a fire in 1937. Rebuilt in 1938, the primary elevation is of blended red textured brick. Plate glass storefronts include multi-light transoms above and there is a rod-supported canopy. The rubble limestone walls of the 1893 building remain on the west and north but are partially stuccoed. Grocery, then Western Auto, then Service Drug.
41	125	W	Grand	N	Jim Cox Building	2-part	c.1895	This 2-part commercial building has a rusticated limestone façade with cast iron storefronts and cast-iron hoods over the second floor windows. The original pressed metal cornice is missing. It originally housed a meat market on the first floor and a lodge hall on the second. A 1942 fire in the building to the east heavily damaged the second floor and destroyed part of the stock of the Coleman Grocery on the first. Now a retail space on the first floor with a bed and breakfast on the second. A large porch addition and some non-historic siding on the front undermines the integrity making it currently non-contributing

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42	121-123	W	Grand	C	Slider Building	1-part	c.1893/ c.1945	Sanborn maps indicate this stone 1-part building included pressed metal/iron details. It was originally home to a racket shop and was later a hardware store and drug store. By 1930 it was divided into two separate spaces. A 1942 fire in the building destroyed Jane's Grocery and heavily damaged the buildings on the east and west. It was rebuilt and the primary elevation is blended red textured brick. Transoms over the storefronts have been infilled and the brick painted. Two entrances and two storefront windows are visible. The rear elevation of stuccoed rubble stone indicates portions of the 19th-century construction remain.
43	117-119	W	Grand	C	John Tate Building	1-part	c.1890/ c.1950	This building first appears on Sanborn maps as a two-story stone building with a brick primary elevation. Separated by a dividing wall on both floors, the western half housed a hardware store on the first floor and "rooms" on the second. The eastern half housed a saloon on the first floor and offices on the second. By 1908 the IOOF was using the second floor as a lodge hall. In 1942 a fire in the building to the west heavily damaged the second floor and affected the first-floor tenant, the North Side Cafe. Sanborns indicate the second floor remained in 1949 but was removed soon after. The current primary elevation is of scored stucco. Two business storefronts are of roman brick, now painted with central entrances and plate glass display windows. There is a rod-supported canopy over the storefronts. Rubble stone walls of the original building's first floor remain on the east, west, and north.

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44	115	W	Grand	C		1-part	c.1900	Completed in about 1900 for use as a hardware store, this is a rare surviving example of a 1-part commercial building that retains portions of its decorative metal façade. The façade includes cast iron and pressed metal. Plate glass storefronts frame a recessed central entry. There is a rod-supported canopy with transom windows above. Now the Comanche EDC Building.
45	113	W	Grand	C	C. L. Mistrot Building	1-part	1893	Stone building completed in 1893 and home to the Mistrot Dry Goods Company. Portions of the original dressed limestone façade are visible on the east and west sides of the storefronts, but the upper portion has been stuccoed at an unknown date. The original cast iron storefront elements and multi-light transoms remain.
46	109	W	Grand	C		1-part	c.1900/ c.1920	Completed in about 1900 for use as a drug/jewelry store, this 1-part commercial building originally had an iron and pressed metal decorative facade. It appears to have been refaced in about 1920 in textured brick. The wide plate glass storefronts frame a double door central entrance. The storefronts are topped with multilight transoms. There is a rod-supported canopy. Now a real estate and insurance office.
47	101-103	W	Grand	C	First National Bank/Scurry Grocery	2-part, Italianate	1891	The 2-story First National Bank was completed in 1891 and included the bank at the corner of what is now W. Grand and N. Austin, a grocery to the west, and offices on the second floor. The two-part brick commercial building with beautiful, pressed metal details retains a high degree of integrity with one notable exception. The southeast corner of the second floor originally featured a cantilevered turret, now removed. Elaborate cornice and lintels. Plate glass in the storefronts is contemporary but the multi-light transoms above them remain intact. Four over four

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								double-hung windows remain at the second floor, partially covered along primary elevation, but visible along N. Austin elevation. The masonry has been painted.
48	113	W	Grand	C		No style	c.1940	Wood frame half gable building with corrugated metal siding and roof.
49	110	W	Duncan	C		No style	c.1960	Telephone switching building. Rectangular red brick building with flat roof and no fenestrations. The primary, north-facing elevation has two projecting wind walls framing a pent roof with asphalt shingles.
50	219	N	Austin	C	Comanche City Hall and Fire Station	No style, WPA-built	1938	In April 1937, the voters of Comanche approved \$5,000 in bonds for the construction of a fire station. The WPA was to provide an additional \$7,000 and approved plans in August. The 1938 building is fossil stone veneer over a concrete and steel structure. The one-of-a-kind stone was found on the farm of A. P. Farrar seven miles southeast of Comanche. The two-story building was designed with the fire station and city hall offices on the first floor and a community club room on the second. It has a low-pitched gabled roof and concrete beams are expressed in the perimeter walls at the top of the first and second floors. Windows and entrances are trimmed in brick. There is a compatible 1-story addition on the south with four vehicle bays. A 1-story metal addition extends to the west.

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51	301	N	Austin	C	Production Credit Association	Modern	1960/c.2014	The Production Credit Association, a farm and ranch loan cooperative, constructed this modern building in 1960. Designed by J. B. Hinton of Snyder, it is rectangular in plan with a flat roof and broad eaves. At the southeast corner, a portion of the brick wall is rotated 90 degrees creating an exterior vestibule with a storefront of aluminum and plate glass. This wall also serves as the location for the building identification sign. Three fixed plate glass windows on the east elevation provide light to the lobby. Ledge stone with a faux chimney was added to the entrance wall, and exterior brick painted c.2014, but this does not detract from the original design.
52	311	N	Austin	C	Comanche Public Library	Modern, Border Brick vernacular influences	1974	In 1970 Comanche was awarded construction funding under the Library Services and Construction Act with the community providing matching funds. During construction, Comanche National Bank offered the first floor of their old bank building as a temporary library. The new O'Neil Ford-designed library building was dedicated in May 1974. South Texas Border Brick vernacular architecture is reflected in the design. The brick building has a simple rectangular form and flat roof. Ornamentation includes brick pilasters at building corners and a modest brick cornice. The windows are narrow and there are relatively few except at courtyards on the north and south sides of the building. Here Ford preserved two large trees to shade the courtyards and windows from the Texas heat. The building was renovated in 2018 without changes to its character-defining features.

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53	218	N	Austin	C	Straley Electric Co.	1-part	1945	Straley Electric completed this 1-part building in 1945. An electrician, Straley was also a Monitor Appliances dealer. Relatively simple raked face brick building with metal canopy, stucco panel on the upper façade, and two entrances around simple storefront window.
54	214	N	Austin	C		1-part	c.1920	Served as a garage and auto dealership. Built c.1920, the brick façade was stuccoed and aluminum storefronts and canopy replaced c.2021.
55	212	N	Austin	C		1-part	c.1945	1-part building with simple stucco façade and replacement canopy. Original storefront window intact.
56	210	N	Austin	C	Vineyard Building	1-part	1945	Brothers Frank and H. M. (Shorty) Vineyard constructed this building in 1945. Frank operated Modern Way Food Store and Shorty Vineyard's Appliance Store. South portion was later Latham's Dry Cleaners. The simple 1-part brick building has been painted. The storefronts were modernized, and the transoms covered.
57	200	N	Austin	N	Olney Savings	Modern	1980	Constructed for Olney Savings in 1980. Mostly simple rectangular design. Walls are of common bond brick and windows accented with a continuous brick frame with stacked bond at the sides and soldier course at the head and sill. The cornice is a double row of soldier course brick. Windows are fixed in bronze anodized aluminum frames. Arcade visible on southeast corner and drive through porte cochere on the north side. Support columns are of cast concrete accented on two sides with common bond brick. Bank became insolvent in 1988. Currently Comanche City Hall.
58	120	E	Grand	C	U.S. Post Office	Spanish Colonial Revival/Mission Revival	1926	Land was purchased for the new post office building in 1917 but the U.S. Treasury Department did not begin drawing up plans until 1925. The simple but beautiful building has white stucco with a red barrel tile pent roof. The

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								primary elevation has two sets of paired 6/6 windows on each side of a central double door entrance. Ornamentation includes metal panels below the windows and recessed barrel tile vents above each window. Above the entrance is a shallow entablature and raised mission-inspired parapet. A cartouche emblazoned with an eagle is visible at center. Currently Comanche Police Department.
59	124	N	Austin	C	George W. Tate Building	1-part	1920	A massive fire destroyed the 2-story buildings on this site in 1912. Current building was completed by contractor George Sullivan in 1920. Divided into several retail spaces, the building housed a wide range of businesses over the years. Examples include "The Fair" beginning in 1925, Garner-Alvis Company 1925, Roberson sisters 1932, Collins Shoe Shop and Hobert's Restaurant 1934, and Corner Confectionary 1935. The Palace Theater opened with "The Seven Sinners" on December 16, 1936. Others include a bowling alley 1937, Blevins confectionary 1938, and Hoffman department store 1940. The 1-part brick building has been painted blue. The primary elevation is separated into three bays, with the central bay having a slightly raised parapet. The storefronts are not original but include transoms and a metal canopy. The upper facade is ornamented with recessed panels and brick corbeling.
60	120	N	Austin	C	Knights of Pythias Lodge	2-part	1913	In 1912 a massive fire destroyed the block of two-story buildings on the northeast corner of the square. Among those lost was the Knights of Pythias Lodge. The replacement was completed in 1913. Albin Julius Olsson (Olson) of Cisco was the contractor. The 2-part composition has a double door entry with plate glass storefronts on either side. A single door on the north end of the storefront provides access

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								to the stair. Transoms top the storefront as does a rod-supported canopy. A cast stone belt course marks the second-floor sill line. The sill below the centrally placed tripartite window projects slightly and is supported by brick corbeling. The upper facade is defined by brick and cast stone detailing and the stepped parapet capped with a cast stone coping. A cartouche with K of P symbols ornaments the parapet. The first floor was home of <i>The Comanche Chief</i> 1913-1960.
61	112	N	Austin	N		No style	2006	This 1-part commercial block was constructed less than 50 years ago and is non-contributing due to age.
62	108-110	N	Austin	C		1-part	c.1910	A fire destroyed the wood buildings on this lot in 1907. The current stone building with brick facade was completed around 1910 with a printing shop in the north space and a dry goods store in the south. Decorative cast iron columns remain at the storefront, as does the continuous multi-light transom. There is a replacement rod-supported canopy. A corbeled brick cornice ornaments the upper facade. Stone coping has been added to the top of the parapet. The brick is painted.
63	106	N	Austin	N		1-part	1908	Historically two 1-part commercial stone buildings that housed a grocery and clothing store among other tenants. The previous buildings on the site were destroyed by fire in 1907. The original primary elevation is covered with non-historic stucco and wood and replacement storefronts. It appears the party wall between the two has been removed. The condition of the underlying historic materials is unknown. Non-contributing due to significant alterations.
64	100	N	Austin	N	State National Bank ATM	No style	2004	Empty lot with ATM drive-through structure. Non-contributing due to age.

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65	101	N	Pearl	C	State National Bank	Modern/New Formalist influences	1968	State National Bank completed in 1968. Rectangular in plan with walls of light cream brick. The heavy cornice projects slightly and has a fascia of exposed aggregate panels of marble flakes. This heavy roof structure continues over the drive through on the west elevation. The primary, south facing elevation has four tinted, I bronze aluminum frame windows extending from the floor to the cornice. The main entrance on the east elevation is the only opening on that facade and is deeply recessed with paired doors, sidelights, and transom. Raised brick planter beds enhance the building's sense of horizontality. A two-story non-historic addition was constructed to the north in 1986. The addition is sympathetic with horizontal massing that respects the original design. The addition is painted white, further enhancing it as secondary to the original building. J. B. Hinton of Snyder was the architect and James T. Pate the contractor. Currently Prosperity Bank.
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Resource List

Res. No	Address			Historic name(s)	Type	Date	Status
1	101	W	Central	Comanche County Courthouse Grounds	Site	1858, c.1885	Contributing
2	101	W	Central	Comanche County Courthouse	Building	1941	Contributing
3	101	W	Central	Old Comanche County Courthouse "Old Cora"	Building	1856, 1986	Non-contributing
4a	101	W	Central	Comanche County Courthouse Column	Object	1891, 1986	Non-contributing
4b	101	W	Central	Comanche County Courthouse Column	Object	1891, 1986	Non-contributing
4c	101	W	Central	Comanche County Courthouse Column	Object	1891, 1986	Non-contributing
4d	101	W	Central	Comanche County Courthouse Column	Object	1891, 1986	Non-contributing
5	101	W	Central	Digital Sign	Object	c.2021	Non-contributing
6	100	E	Central	Dudley Brothers	Building	1936	Contributing
7	111	S	Austin	Davenport Hotel/American Legion	Building	c.1910, 1946	Contributing
8	109	S	Austin		Building	c.1920	Contributing
9	100	W	Central	Masonic Temple	Building	1910	Contributing
10	106-112	W	Central		Building	1896	Non-contributing
11	114	W	Central	State National Bank/City Hall	Building	c.1900	Contributing
12	N/A	W	Oak		Building	1950	Contributing
13	118	W	Central		Building	c.1883	Contributing
14	122	W	Central		Building	c.1890	Contributing
15	N/A	W	Oak		Building	1950, c.2000	Non-contributing
16	126	W	Central	Perry Brothers	Building	1905, 1947	Contributing
17	132	W	Central	Fleming Meat Market	Building	c.1890	Contributing
18	134A	W	Central	Comanche National Bank	Building	1892	Contributing
19	134B	W	Central	Comanche National Bank Office Building	Building	1909	Contributing
20	114	S	Houston		Building	1950	Contributing
21	200	W	Central	Comanche National Bank	Building	1969	Contributing
22	301	W	Central	Old Comanche County Jail	Building	1903	Contributing
23	301	W	Central	Old Comanche County Jail Annex	Building	c.1950	Contributing

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24	107A	N	Houston	Neely Building/Neely-Harris-Cunningham/ Higginbotham Brothers Company	Building	1931	Contributing
25	107B	N	Houston		Building	c.1910	Contributing
26	111	N	Houston	William Reese/Durham's Pharmacy	Building	1903, c.1940	Contributing
27	117	N	Houston	Ben Franklin's	Building	1963	Contributing
28	123	N	Houston	Majestic Theater/Ritz Theater	Building	1897	Non-contributing
29	127	N	Houston	Chilton-Harelik Building	Building	1897, 1948	Contributing
30	129	N	Houston	Green-Huett Building	Building	1897	Non-contributing
31	205	W	Grand	The Comanche Chief Building	Building	c.1900, 1960	Contributing
32	201	N	Houston	Brightman Building	Building	1891	Contributing
33	205	N	Houston	J V Carter Building	Building	1947	Contributing
34	215	N	Houston		Building	1977	Non-contributing
35	217	N	Houston		Building	c.1921	Contributing
36	220	N	Houston		Building	c.1945	Non-contributing
37	216	N	Houston		Building	c.1929	Contributing
38	214	N	Houston		Building	c.2000	Non-contributing
39	214	N	Houston		Building	1979	Non-contributing
40	135	W	Grand	J.W. Greene Building	Building	1893, 1938	Contributing
41	125	W	Grand	Jim Cox Building	Building	c.1895	Non-contributing
42	121-123	W	Grand	Slider Building	Building	c.1893, c.1945	Contributing
43	117-119	W	Grand	John Tate Building	Building	c.1890, c.1950	Contributing
44	115	W	Grand		Building	c.1900	Contributing
45	113	W	Grand	C. L. Mistrot Building	Building	1893	Contributing
46	109	W	Grand		Building	c.1900, c.1920	Contributing
47	101-103	W	Grand	First National Bank/Scurry Grocery	Building	1891	Contributing
48	113	W	Grand		Building	c.1940	Contributing
49	110	W	Duncan		Building	c.1960	Contributing
50	219	N	Austin	Comanche City Hall and Fire Station	Building	1938	Contributing
51	301	N	Austin	Production Credit Association	Building	1960, c.2014	Contributing

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52	311	N	Austin	Comanche Public Library	Building	1974	Contributing
53	218	N	Austin	Straley Electric Co.	Building	1945	Contributing
54	214	N	Austin		Building	c.1920	Contributing
55	212	N	Austin		Building	c.1945	Contributing
56	210	N	Austin	Vineyard Building	Building	1945	Contributing
57	200	N	Austin	Olney Savings Building	Building	1980	Non-contributing
58	120	E	Grand	U.S. Post Office	Building	1926	Contributing
59	124	N	Austin	George W. Tate Building	Building	1920	Contributing
60	120	N	Austin	Knights of Pythias Lodge	Building	1913	Contributing
61	112	N	Austin		Building	2006	Non-contributing
62	108-110	N	Austin		Building	c.1910	Contributing
63	106	N	Austin		Building	1908	Non-contributing
64	100	N	Austin	State National Bank ATM	Structure	2004	Non-contributing
65	101	N	Pearl	State National Bank	Building	1968	Contributing

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Statement of Significance

The Comanche Downtown Historic District encompasses approximately 17.22 acres in the central business district of Comanche, Comanche County, Texas. In the years immediately after the Civil War, downtown Comanche became an important political and commercial hub for western and northwestern Texas counties on the edge of the frontier. While Comanche was established in 1858, the existing district reflects the development and evolution of the downtown core from early 1880s through the 1970s. The square was laid out in the Shelbyville plan with several commercial and governmental buildings concentrated around the Comanche County Courthouse. Retail shops, banks, restaurants, fraternal organizations, the city hall and fire station, a hotel, a post office, and a theater populated the district. The square was the heart of the community where Comanche residents could purchase essential goods and access governmental services. The Comanche Downtown Historic District is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Community Planning and Development, and Criterion C in the area of Architecture, at the local level of significance as an intact example of a courthouse square reflecting late 19th and 20th century growth and development patterns, and for its cohesive collection government buildings and 1 and 2-part commercial blocks embodying distinctive characteristics of many architectural styles. The district continued to serve as the commercial and political center of the community and the region into the 1970s. The period of significance spans from c.1883 the date of the earliest building to 1974 the date of the most recent historic building. The district meets Criteria Consideration G because while the Comanche Public Library was completed in 1974 less than 50 years ago, the planning began in 1970.

Comanche County Development

Comanche County is located in central Texas with Mills County to the south, Brown County to the west, Eastland County to the north, and Hamilton and Erath counties to the east. The county and its seat of government are named for the Comanche Indians that once dominated the area. The City of Comanche is located about eighty miles southeast of Abilene.

The Texas legislature formed Comanche County in 1856. The town of Cora was named county seat and the existing log structure "Old Cora" (Resource 3) served as the first county courthouse.³ In 1858 John Duncan offered the county 240 acres in a more central location for the establishment of a new seat of government. The county hired surveyor Ransom Tuggle who laid out the new townsite based on the Shelbyville plan (Figure 2).⁴ Comanche officially replaced Cora as the county seat in 1859 and the first courthouse, a simple wood picket structure, was completed soon thereafter.⁵ While the town was laid out earlier, the courthouse square as seen today dates to the 1880s (Figure 2).

The first decade of Comanche County's history is distinct from the years that followed. While conflict between settlers and Native Americans was common during the antebellum period, the presence of U.S. Army troops allowed for the community to successfully develop. With the onset of the Civil War and the withdrawal of U.S. troops, the area relied on the home guard. With the loss of working men to service in the army, by the end of the war, the county population had dwindled to about sixty.⁶

After the war's end, the return of U.S. troops to the area and the presence of the Texas Rangers brought renewed opportunities for growth. In just five years the county population increased to over 1,000, with the African American

³ John Leffler, "Comanche County," *Handbook of Texas Online*.

⁴ The Shelbyville plan, the most common courthouse square in Texas, was named for a town in Tennessee where the courthouse square plan in the early 1800s placed the courthouse in the center of a full city block surrounded by four streets that intersected at each corner; Robert Veselka, *The Courthouse Square in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000) 32-36.

⁵ J. R. Eanes and Jeanne F. Lively, "Comanche, TX", *Handbook of Texas Online*.

⁶ *Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide: The Encyclopedia of Texas*. Dallas: A. H. Belo Corporation, 1925-1936.

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population, including some formerly enslaved individuals, numbering only about two dozen.⁷ The stability of Comanche on the edge of the Texas frontier made it a political and regional supply hub for counties to the west and northwest. *The Comanche Chief* newspaper was established in 1873 as the region's source of news. The paper remains in operation today and is Comanche's oldest business.⁸ With a prospering agricultural economy, the population of the county grew to over 8,000 by 1880 including an African American population of seventy-nine.⁹ Local contractors Martin and Moodie constructed a new courthouse (Figure 1) on the square in 1879. The two-story 40' by 60' red brick building featured cut stone trim and a dome.¹⁰

Throughout the last two decades of the 19th-century farming and ranching remained the mainstay of the economy. Comanche remained the governmental and commercial heart of the county. By 1885 the Comanche Roller Mill Company was milling flour and ginning cotton.¹¹ Businesses on the square, concentrated primarily on the west side (Figure 2, 5, 8, 12, 22; Photograph 25), reflected the town's role as a supply hub, with general merchandise, hardware, furniture, and grocery stores. Buildings included a block of two-story stone structures facing east toward the courthouse.¹²

Economic Downturn and Race Relations

Official county law enforcement existed in Comanche, but the home guard remained the dominant form of enforcement in the early years. Mob violence sometimes led to extralegal retaliation.¹³ For example, when the outlaw John Wesley Hardin murdered a Brown County deputy sheriff in Comanche in 1874, a mob, unable to find Hardin, lynched his brother Joe and two other associates in his place.¹⁴

Despite the general expansion of agriculture in the early years, largely due to the arrival of the railroad in the county in 1881, economic depressions and severe droughts between the 1870s and 1890s caused many area farms and ranches to fail. Since the area predominantly relied on cotton and cattle, the impacts were detrimental.¹⁵ Land values decreased leading to further economic instability. As a result, local economic, social, and political tensions ran high.

The drought of 1886 was particularly difficult. Political divisions gave rise to a third-party movement led by Comanche farmer Thomas Gaines. The Human Party opposed national banks, railroads, and monopolies viewing them as undemocratic, and demanded changes in the U.S. system of currency, the allocation of public lands, and the distribution of public offices based on the demographics of labor.¹⁶ The Human Party reflected the broader national agrarian reform movement known as Populism and was later expressed in Texas through the People's Party.¹⁷

In this climate of division, the threat of violence in the name of law and order was ever-present. That year, Hazel Dell, the self-proclaimed "toughest town in Texas," located 17 miles southeast of Comanche, became known for vigilante justice toward several of its citizens. The town's mob published a threat in June in the local *Town and Country* newspaper

⁷ Ibid
⁸ John Leffler, "Comanche County", *Handbook of Texas Online*.
⁹ *Texas Almanac and State Industrial Guide: The Encyclopedia of Texas*; Billy Bob Lightfoot, "The Negro Exodus from Comanche County, Texas", *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (January 1953): 407-416.
¹⁰ Leffler, "Comanche County," *Handbook of Texas Online*.
¹¹ Ibid
¹² Sanborn maps.
¹³ Leffler, "Comanche County", *Handbook of Texas Online*; Billy Bob Lightfoot, "The Negro Exodus from Comanche County, Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (January 1953): 408.
¹⁴ Lightfoot, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 56, 407-416.
¹⁵ Roy Sylvan Dun, "Droughts", *Handbook of Texas Online*; Lightfoot, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 56, 407-416.
¹⁶ Bruce Palmer, "Gaines, Thomas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 25, 2022, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/gaines-thomas>.
¹⁷ The strength of Populism in Texas is notable because of the state's coordinated grass-roots efforts as reflected in the Human Party in Comanche, and the eventual formation in 1891 of the nation's largest state alliance organization, the Texas People's Party. Donna A. Barnes, "People's Party," *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed March 24, 2023, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/peoples-party>.

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warning a number of county men to leave within two weeks or face the consequences. They signed their threat the “Committy (sic) of One Hundred.”¹⁸

The rising tensions in the summer of 1886 brought about a dark chapter in Comanche’s history. In July 1886 an African American man, Tom McNeal, was accused of murdering a white woman named Sallie Stevens, and he was pursued and lynched by a mob. Comanche Deputy Sheriff W. D. Cox had attempted to take the man into custody for trial but was dissuaded by mob leader Green Saunders and his shotgun. Afterwards Saunders gave a speech proclaiming that African Americans should be expelled from Comanche County. Riders were dispatched to warn every African American to leave the county by August 6th or suffer the consequences. There was considerable public outcry against the expulsion, including by members of the Human Party. A mass meeting was called on July 27th at which resolutions were adopted condemning the threatened violence and many employers vowed to protect African Americans in their employ. Even with this community support, the threat of racial violence was too high, and African American citizens left the county by the deadline.¹⁹

The unofficial policy was never codified into a local law. As with other sundown towns or counties, the use of exclusionary tactics and the initial absence of, and later low number of African Americans in Comanche County was considered a source of pride for many years and even used as a marketing tool to attract new residents and businesses.²⁰ African American porters working on trains passing through the county were known to hide for fear of a beating or worse.²¹ Racially charged language was common in the local newspaper for many years.²² While these attitudes changed and the events of 1886 forgotten by many in the community, the county’s African American population remained low, totaling 14 residents in 1970.²³

The Railroad, Economic Expansion, and Banking

Railroad construction in Comanche County began in the early 1880s but the Texas Central Railroad bypassed Comanche, instead establishing the new town of De Leon sixteen miles to the north.²⁴ During that time cotton was the primary agricultural crop, and the county population grew to 15,608 by 1890.²⁵ That year the Fort Worth and Rio Grande Railway reached Comanche bringing a direct boost to the local economy. In late 1890 a group of distinguished guests from Fort Worth rode the new line for an inspection of Comanche. Composed primarily of important railroad company representatives and their families, the group also included Fort Worth mayor Peter Smith. While the group was generally impressed with the town, Smith prophetically said of the square: “If you wake up some night at the alarm of fire, look out

¹⁸ Lightfoot, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 56, 407-416.

¹⁹ “Comanche’s Trouble,” *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, August 4, 1886, pg. 3; “A Matter of Simple Justice,” *Fort Worth Daily Gazette*, September 8, 1886, pg. 2; Lightfoot, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 56, 407-416; James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005) 176-177, 181, 185.

²⁰ Lightfoot references a 1907 promotional publication in *The Comanche Chief* touting the county population as all white, Lightfoot, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 56, pg. 416; Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 4, 49; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Volume 1, Population 1910, General Report and Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), Chapter 1, Number of Inhabitants.

²¹ Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 230; “The Tragedy that Caused Expulsion of Negroes,” *The Comanche Chief*, April 24, 1925, pg. 5; “Why Comanche County Banned Negroes Recalled,” *The Comanche Chief*, July 17, 1936, pg. 9; “Editorial,” *The Comanche Chief*, June 19, 1953, pgs. 2, 7.

²² Comanche Chief various issues.

²³ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, Texas, General Population Characteristics*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972). 11,898 total residents were reported as living in Comanche County in 1970. The city of Comanche had 3,933 total residents.

²⁴ Margaret Dudley and Bonnie Tipton Wilson, “St Louis and San Francisco Railway Depot (Frisco Depot), Comanche, Comanche County, Texas,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2017.

²⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Volume 1, Population 1910, General Report and Analysis* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), Chapter 1, Number of Inhabitants.

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your windows, and if these wooden buildings on the north side are on fire, don't disturb the fire. Most of your business blocks are elegant but burn out those shanties" (Figure 2).²⁶

The arrival of the railroad led to a period of economic investment and expansion in Comanche with banks playing an important role. Before the emergence of local banks, merchants had to be extremely flexible with how to accept payment. It was common for stores to have facilities for keeping animals or for the storage of pelts and hides. Some merchants offered banking services of sorts, providing loans, typically at 10% interest to those in need of cash. After the Civil War, private banking in Texas grew. Nationally chartered banks required an initial capital investment of \$50,000 making them far rarer than their private counterparts, but strong economic growth in the last quarter of the century led to a banking boom. Comanche's first bank, First National Bank, was established in 1886 and with the railroad on the way, Comanche National Bank was established in 1890.

Both of Comanche's banks invested in beautiful new buildings in 1891-92. First National built on the northeast corner of the square and their building included an adjoining commercial space housing the Scurry Grocery (Resource 47; Figure 17, 18, 19, 23; Photograph 22). The Comanche National Bank completed a striking new building (Resource 18; Figure 25, 26, 27; Photograph 17) on the south side of the square in 1892. These banks remain some of the most architecturally prominent commercial buildings in the district. The elaborate stonework on Comanche National is said to have been competed by Scottish stonemasons brought in to work on the new 1891 Comanche County Courthouse (Figure 8).²⁷

Designed by Larmour and Watson as a larger replacement to the 1879 courthouse, the substantial new courthouse was a three-story stone building with entrances on all four sides. The building displayed characteristics of Neoclassical Revival and Romanesque Revival architecture and included a tall central clock tower topped by a statue of Justice.²⁸ At about the same time, E. W. Harris constructed a large, high style building at the southeast corner of Austin and Grand. On the first floor, Harris himself operated a grocery store on the corner and rented the remainder to a variety of businesses. The unusual and spacious second floor was left completely open and unfinished for a decade before becoming the home of the Comanche Opera House (Figure 23). The opera house occupied the center of the second floor with a large meeting room on the north end and the Knights of Pythias Hall on the south.²⁹ C. L. Mistrot completed a large one-story stone store building (Resource 45; Figure 16, 20; Photograph 23) on the north side of the square in 1893.³⁰ Mistrot was a partner in the Galveston firm, Mistrot Brothers, a discount, cash only general merchandise chain that eventually operated 35 stores in Galveston and Louisiana.

Comanche's banks continued providing the much-needed capital that facilitated this growth in Comanche's economy. Additional banks were later established. The Farmers & Merchants Bank was chartered in 1903, but was bought out by 1906. A 1903 legislative change to banking rules allowed for the establishment of state-chartered banks, leading to the creation of First State Bank of Comanche in 1910. The bank set up quarters in a commercial building on the south side of the square (Resource 11). First State Bank purchased First National Bank in 1927.

Loss and Rebirth

By 1896 the square was surrounded by mostly stone and brick commercial structures, but the year would mark the beginning of a string of fires that destroyed most of Comanche's earliest buildings. A disastrous fire engulfed the five two-story buildings on the west side of the square (Figures 2, 5, 6, 7) among them the Lasker Building, Duncan Building, Zettlemeyer Building, Carroll Building, and Dora Green Building. The latter included the loss of the offices of *The*

²⁶ "Good Time at Comanche," *Dallas Morning News*, November 28, 1890: 6.

²⁷ Sanborn Fire Insurance maps

²⁸ THC Courthouse Files. The 1891 courthouse was demolished to make way for the 1941 courthouse.

²⁹ Sanborn Fire Insurance maps

³⁰ Sanborn Fire Insurance maps; Comanche County Museum files; "Comanche Improvements," *Dallas Morning News*, April 04, 1893: 6

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Comanche Chief.³¹ All of these were replaced by one story stone buildings completed in about April of 1897 (Figures 3, 8, 12, 13).³² These were accompanied by a large new general merchandise store for Neely-Harris-Cunningham at the southwest corner of the square in 1900 (Resource 24; Figures 9, 10).³³

Disaster struck again in January 1900 when an explosion destroyed two buildings on the west side of the square and damaged many others. Dynamite stored in the Barnes Building detonated, destroying it and the R. O. Levi store adjoining it. Most buildings on the west side suffered some level of damage to their buildings or stock, and all the west side windows of the courthouse were blown out.³⁴ The west side of the square was struck by fire again in 1901 when three buildings belonging to William Reese and containing his drug store, the Huffman Saloon, and Tom's Restaurant were all destroyed (Figure 3).³⁵ With these losses, between 1896 and 1901 every original building on the west side of the square had been destroyed. More was to come. In January 1902 four frame businesses on the south side of the square were destroyed by fire.³⁶ In 1907 a fire destroyed five frame buildings on the east side including the Levisay Restaurant, Brodie Studio, Jones Barber Shop, and a confectioner.³⁷ In June another fire heavily damaged the E. W. Harris Building.³⁸ In 1912 on the east side of the square the Neely Building was destroyed by a gasoline explosion originating in J. E. Deeley's tailor shop. Also lost were the J. E. Long Studio and Henry Huff Jewelers. In August of 1912, a massive fire destroyed several two-story buildings at the north end of the block. Lost were the Lindsey Building and the Harris Building along with the opera house (Figure 23) and Knights of Pythias Hall. (Figures 4 & 23)³⁹

The losses to Comanche's building stock were substantial, but they did not stall the community's progress. The Comanche National Bank constructed a two-story office building (Resource 19; Photograph 18) behind the bank in 1909. Comanche's largest commercial building on the square, the three-story Masonic Temple (Resource 9; Figure 24; Photograph 11), was completed on the south side in 1910.⁴⁰ The Pythians moved quickly to rebuild after the August 1912 fire, completing a new 2-story building (Resource 60, Photograph 4) in 1913 with their lodge hall on the second floor and the offices of *The Comanche Chief* on the first.⁴¹ The newspaper remained in the building until 1960.

The rise of the boll weevil hampered the county's growth. The county's cotton crops were decimated and as farms failed the population slowly declined from a peak of about 27,000 in 1910 to 18,430 by 1930, while Comanche's population dropped to 2,435 in 1930 from 3,524 in 1920.⁴² Farmers were forced to diversify, resulting in the production of peanuts, poultry products, and fruits as mainstays of the local economy. This diversification left the county better prepared to resist the effects of the Great Depression and left the local economy relatively stable.⁴³

Petroleum production played a limited role in the local economy. The 1918 discovery of oil in Sipe Springs seventeen miles northeast of Comanche brought an influx of oilfield workers. The small town of about 500 people boomed to over 8,000, many housed in a tent city. Comanche itself had no vacant homes or business by the end of 1919 and sought to capitalize on the situation by maintaining its role as a regional hub for the industry. Streets immediately around the square

³¹ "Fire Record", *Dallas Morning News*, December 07, 1896: 6.

³² Sanborn Fire Insurance maps

³³ "Comanche Items. New Building Going up, Marketing of Cotton and a Popular Couple Weds", *Fort Worth Morning Register*, December 12, 1900: 1.

³⁴ "Blaze at Comanche", *Dallas Morning News*, January 02, 1900: 2.

³⁵ "Big Fire at Comanche. Loss of \$13,000 on Restaurant, Saloon and Drugstore Early Yesterday", *Fort Worth Morning Register*, December 04, 1901: 1.

³⁶ "Comanche", *Fort Worth Morning Register*, January 21, 1902: 8.

³⁷ "Fire at Comanche Five Buildings Are Destroyed by Flames Comanche Texas Sept. 7", *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 07, 1907: 1.

³⁸ "Fire at Comanche E. W. Harris Building is Damaged to the Extent of \$5,000", *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 01, 1907: 12.

³⁹ "Fire in Comanche Destroys Four Buildings", *Comanche Chief*, Aug 17, 1912, 1.; "Fire Record", *Dallas Morning News*, September 17, 1912: 2.

⁴⁰ "Civic and Industrial Development", *Dallas Morning News*, May 15, 1909: 7

⁴¹ *Comanche Chief*, February 14, 1913: 4.

⁴² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Volume 1, Population, Number and Distribution of Inhabitants* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931).

⁴³ J.R. Eans and Jeanne F Lively, "Comanche, TX, *Handbook of Texas Online*; Leffler, "Comanche County", *Handbook of Texas Online*.

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were paved in 1920 and efforts were made to improve local roads and railroads.⁴⁴ The Sipe Springs field proved to be shallow and by 1922 the boom was over.⁴⁵

Modern Era

The Texas oil boom, the ubiquity of the automobile, and highway construction had dramatic effects on Texas communities. As people increasingly used automobiles for local commerce, the demand for convenient access and parking prompted the construction of shopping centers outside of central business districts and along major transportation corridors where there was abundant land for new development. Auto-related businesses like gas and service stations, motels, and shipping warehouses also appeared, and became especially prevalent in towns located on major highways. These changes put pressure on traditional downtown businesses. Downtown business owners attempted to compete by modernizing their buildings, updating displays, and even refacing facades with new materials.

Since it was not on a major highway at the time, pressure on businesses and thus modernization in the Comanche Downtown Historic District was more limited. After the oil boom slowed down, the local economy and population stabilized, and some changes and updates did take place. The changes appear to have been more evolutionary in Comanche with remodeling occurring with changes in tenants. Changes to storefronts consisted of replacing aging materials with aluminum and glass.

Federal New Deal funding for municipal and county improvements during the Great Depression led to noticeable changes within the district. WPA programs aided in the construction of a new and modern county courthouse in 1941 (Resource 2; Figure 30, Photographs 1, 12) (Works Progress Administration Project No. 13781), and 1938 city hall and fire station (Resource 50; Figure 29; Photograph 7). The WPA also provided Comanche with resources for the construction of new natural gas infrastructure, sidewalks, and paving.

After WWII, farming and ranching remained strong in Comanche County but changes in production technology and the reduction of the number of farms during the droughts of the 1950s brought a decline in the population that eventually stabilized at around 13,000 by 1980, a level at which it has remained.⁴⁶ Agricultural production and related processing industries remain the primary economic base.

The district was largely built out by World War II, with only a few buildings constructed after 1945. The continuing commercial significance of the square after World War II was illustrated with a few storefront updates and by the new banking facilities constructed there in the 1960s. The Davenport Hotel/American Legion (Resource 7) received a 1946 update, Perry Brothers (Resource 16) was modernized in 1947, and in 1960 *The Comanche Chief* newspaper building (Resource 31; Photograph 35) was altered to its current appearance. Comanche National Bank (Resource 21; Photograph 36) and State National Bank (Resource 65) both completed modern new facilities in the late 1960s. Rather than construct new modern banks outside the district, both chose to reinvest in central business district and built prominent new locations near the courthouse. The bank designs featured convenient parking and drive through teller services. The modern designs were strikingly different from their Victorian-era predecessors with facades of aluminum, glass, concrete or brick, minimal ornamentation, and fixed windows made possible by air conditioning. Olney Savings Association competed a new facility on the northeast corner of the square outside the period of significance in 1980 (Resource 57, Photograph 6,

⁴⁴ "Comanche to be Residence Center Old Town Develops Rapidly as City of Homes for Operators of Sipe", *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 14, 1919: 9; "Comanche Square Paving About Finished", *Dallas Morning News*, September 02, 1920: 4.

⁴⁵ Mark Odintz, "Sipe Springs, TX (Comanche County)", *Handbook of Texas Online*.

⁴⁶ In 1950 the town of Comanche had 3,840 residents and in 1970 there were 3,933 residents, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial Census of the United States, Census of Population: 1950, Volume 1, Number of Inhabitants* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Population, Volume 1 Characteristics of the Population, Part A Number of Inhabitants, Section 2 Missouri-Wyoming, Puerto Rico and Outlying Areas*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1972).

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non-contributing due to age). Olney is notable for becoming insolvent during the Savings and Loan Crisis of the 1980s. The building now serves the City of Comanche.

The completion of the Comanche Public Library (Resource 52, Photograph 32) in 1974 was an important achievement for the citizens of Comanche. Attempts to establish a permanent library were made in 1914 and 1946 without lasting results. In 1960 a group of volunteers again took action to establish a library. With the county's blessing, the new library was set up in the 4-H Club room of the courthouse. With donated funds and books, and with assistance from the Texas Library Commission, the library opened on a six-hour per-week schedule with a collection of 1,500 books. It was operated entirely with volunteer labor, user fees, and private donations, and in five years expanded to 4,800 books. In response to the increasing demand, the city and county finally agreed to take over the library and provide funding for its operation. The Friends of the Library was established as a private fundraising organization to support yearly operations. With the library rapidly running out of space, the community joined together with the goal of constructing a new building. County bond funding of \$15,000 was secured and a lot at 311 N. Austin was donated by the Burton and Dudley families for the building site. In 1970 the community was awarded construction funding under the Library Services and Construction Act with the community providing matching funds.

Community leader, Gail Dudley, is credited with persuading O'Neil Ford of Ford, Powell & Carson Architects to design the new building. Gail's son John Dudley attended Trinity University and the Dudley family became aware of Ford's work. When it came time to select an architect for the library project, Ford "came to mind." Gail called Ford on the telephone and asked him to do the project. Ford immediately said that he thought that would be a good project.⁴⁷ With the completion of the building still years away, the Comanche National Bank offered the first floor of their old bank building (Resource 18; Photograph 17) as a temporary home.⁴⁸ The new library building was dedicated in May 1974.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Comanche Downtown Historic District includes a significant number of contributing buildings, representing common commercial and governmental forms. Most of the buildings date to the late 19th and early 20th centuries with most of Comanche's pre-1890 building stock having been destroyed by fire. The New Deal era is represented by the WPA-built Comanche County Courthouse (Resource 2; Figure 30, Photograph 12) and Comanche City Hall and Fire Station (Resource 50; Figure 29; Photograph 7). The district's newest buildings of historic age include two one-story modern bank buildings built in the 1960s (Resource 21, Photograph 36; Resource 65) and the Comanche Public Library (Resource 52, Photograph 32) completed in 1974.

Most commercial buildings in the district can be characterized as 1-part and 2-part commercial blocks, terminology devised by Richard Longstreth in *The Buildings of Main Street* (2000). As commercial buildings often do not always exhibit the characteristics of high styles, Longstreth's typology is based on facade organization. Architectural detailing may be either prominent, restrained, or absent. Commercial blocks in Comanche are typically composed of brick or stone and are one or two-story. Ornamentation varies widely from simple to complex and many of the older buildings exhibit modifications representing later eras reflecting efforts to update or modernize downtown. Most buildings are occupied and in fair condition.

One-part commercial blocks can be free-standing or part of a row. The one-part commercial block usually consists of one or two windows and a central doorway but can be expressed as larger compositions with multiple storefront bays. False parapet fronts or brick coping often enhance the upper wall, most commonly seen in late 19th and early 20th century examples. Most of the buildings in the district are of this type with the largest 2-part commercial blocks on the square having been destroyed by fire and replaced with 1-part compositions. Among the finest examples of this type is 108-110

⁴⁷ Margaret Dudley, Interview with John Dudley, 2023.

⁴⁸ "Public Library", *Comanche Chief*, August 02, 1973: 40.

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N. Austin Street (Resource 62; Photograph 3). Decorative cast iron columns remain at the storefront, as does the continuous multi-light transom, rod-supported canopy, and corbeled brick cornice in the upper facade. The building at 115 W. Grand (Resource 44) is another good example and is a rare surviving example of a 1-part building that retains its historic pressed metal and cast iron facade. The George W. Tate Building at 124 N. Austin (Resource 59; Photograph 5) is an interesting example of a 1-part building that housed multiple retail tenants. The wide front elevation includes three distinct storefront bays and, like many buildings in Comanche, is of rubble stone construction but with a more formal primary and side elevation of brick. Most of the 1-part buildings in the district are modest with minimal ornamentation.

Two-part commercial blocks can also be free-standing or part of a row. This type is distinguished by its division of the facade into two distinct sections. The ground floor is like a one-part commercial block while the upper portion is commonly punctuated with smaller window openings at regular intervals. The upper floors of these buildings were commonly used for offices, meeting halls, hotel rooms, and apartments. This building type accounts for about 20% of the buildings in the district and most are finer examples when compared to the 1-part blocks. The highest style examples are the Italianate First National Bank Building (1891) at 101-103 W. Grand (Resource 47; Figure 17, 18, 19, 23; Photograph 22). Of brick construction with beautiful pressed-metal and iron details, this two-part commercial building retains a high degree of integrity with one notable exception: the southeast corner of the second floor originally featured a cantilevered turret which is now missing. Plate glass in the storefronts is contemporary but the multi-light transoms above them remain intact. Four over four double-hung windows remain at the second floor but are partially covered. An interesting aspect of the building is that it was constructed with a matching west side with leasable commercial space on the first and second floors. The 1892 Comanche National Bank at 134A W. Central (Resource 18; Figures 25, 26, 27; Photograph 17) is of brick construction with Romanesque Revival-inspired sandstone trim. It retains excellent integrity but the pyramidal roof at the corner pavilion is now missing. The 1913 Knights of Pythias Lodge at 120 N. Austin (Resource 60; Photograph 4) is an outstanding example of a 20th-century 2-part commercial block. It shares the typical physical characteristics of earlier examples, but with more formal and austere brickwork, and windows at the second floor that are tightly grouped and placed in a projecting bay. The district's two oldest buildings are on the south side of the square and are both two-part. The building at 118 W. Central (Resource 13; Photograph 15) was completed c.1883 and is of rubble-stone construction but with the primary elevation stuccoed to appear as formally dressed masonry. Its neighbor at 122 W. Central was completed around 1890 (Resource 14). Rusticated stone piers at the first floor divide the storefronts into three primary bays. A smaller bay on the east end of the storefront includes a door with access to the stairway. The upper floor is split-face limestone. Iron hoods ornament the flat heads of the four second-floor windows. There is an elaborate pressed metal cornice.

One-story **enframed window walls** are similar in form to 1-part commercial blocks except they exhibit modest ornamentation and have little or no separation between the upper and lower sections. The façade forms a simple surround around a central bay of windows. On multi-story buildings, there is also little or no separation between the first and upper floors. While each floor may be demarcated with spandrels, a central enframed section reads as subordinate to the surround. The only example in Comanche is the c.1890 Fleming Meat Market Building at 132 W. Central (Resource 17; Photograph 16). Unique to the district, this enframed window wall has rusticated stone piers and a metal cornice. The first floor has plate glass storefronts. Above a rod-supported canopy are tall, fixed windows designed to provide light to the interior gallery. It was recently restored as part of the Texas Main Street Program.

The 2-part vertical block is a building of at least three stories and composed into upper and lower zones. The lower zone is usually one or two stories and is distinct from the upper floors, serving as a visual base to the architectural composition. The upper zone or "shaft" is treated as a prominent and unified whole rather than a series of stacked stories. The 1910 Masonic Temple (Resource 9; Figure 24; Photograph 11) is the district's largest commercial building and an excellent example of this type.

The Modern Movement of architecture between 1925 and 1950 represented a shift in the design of buildings away from traditional forms and construction techniques. Art Deco and Art Moderne designs embraced a sleek and sharp-edged

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appearance with distinctive decorative details. The International Style represented a rejection of applied ornamentation and the idea of buildings being a set of facades enclosing space. Rather, it embraced the concept of buildings defining both interior and exterior space while providing continuity between the two. As Longstreth described it, buildings were to be designed "...in three dimensions, balancing horizontal and vertical planes (the floors, roof and walls)."⁴⁹ Rejecting the idea of commercial buildings being collections of block faces directly adjoining the street, modern buildings were more often set back from the street creating a softer and more varied relationship with the urban setting.

A good example illustrating the influence of modernism is the 1941 Comanche County Courthouse (Resource 2; Figure 30, Photograph 12). The Modern Classical building was designed by renowned Fort Worth architect Wyatt Hedrick with the assistance of Works Progress Administration replacing the 1879 and 1891 courthouses. The two-story building is constructed of reinforced concrete and locally quarried ashlar stone and has a flat roof. Completed on August 7, 1941, WPA funds totaled \$116,613 and local funds totaled \$67,447.⁵⁰ Large eagles ornamenting the symmetrical facades were fabricated on site by local stonecutter Elmer Webb.

The courthouse serves as an example of Modern Classical design common to Depression-era civic buildings, that arose as architects sought to balance the traditional, revivalist styles popular in preceding decades with a desire to express progress and modernity. While the origin of the style in the U.S. has been traced by scholars like Richard Guy Wilson to Bertram Goodhue's National Academy of Sciences Building (1919-24) and Paul Cret's Folger Shakespeare Library (1928-1932), both located in Washington, D.C., its application in the design of Texas courthouses was a practical response to decades of tradition in the state.

County courthouse development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was shaped by the establishment of new Texas county governments. Communities in newly established counties jockeyed vigorously to be named as the county seat, a designation that brought economic opportunity and political influence. The construction of a monumental courthouse on a town square established the perception of such communities as stable and law-abiding. Significant taxpayer investment in a monumental building also made the relocation of a county seat far more difficult. The resulting "golden age" of courthouse construction firmly established prominent county buildings as part of the Texas identity. New Deal funding infused renewed energy into the construction of public buildings in Texas. New courthouses like the Modern Classical one designed for Comanche County replaced Victorian era buildings characterized by classical forms and ornamentation in a time when modernist design was rising in popularity. Using modernist massing and geometry paired with the application of simplified and abstract classical ornamentation, architects achieved a sense of modernity while embracing familiar and traditional themes.⁵¹ Architect Wyatt Hedrick was perfectly suited to Modern Classical design. Having cut his teeth working with masters of classical design, architects Sanguinet & Staats, he later became a master of modernism.

A handful of examples of post-war modern design appeared in the district as well. In 1960, Production Credit Association (Resource 51) constructed a new modern home at the northern edge of downtown. Ben Franklin's (Resource 27) was a 1-part commercial block added to the west side of the square in 1963. The town's leading banks also constructed new buildings near the square. State National constructed a new bank (Resource 65) in 1968, followed by the new Comanche National Bank (Resource 21; Photograph 36) in 1969. These buildings are firmly post-war modern with asymmetrical massing and the use of concrete, brick, and glass as primary wall materials. The fixed windows reflect the installation of air conditioning as an original design feature. The buildings are set back from the street and with parking and drive-throughs to accommodate automobiles.

⁴⁹ Richard W. Longstreth. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000:126-127.

⁵⁰ RG 69 photos Texas Work Projects Administration, District 8, Picture S-7806, Official Project number 65-1-66-116, Work Project number 13781, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/141324854@N04/albums/72157666432930812>

⁵¹ National Register Files: Jack County Courthouse.

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The Comanche Public Library (Resource 52, Photograph 32) is two blocks north of the square. Completed in 1974, the modern design is a good representation of the architectural philosophy of O'Neil Ford who, at the time of the design, was a partner in the firm of Ford, Powell & Carson Architects. Newspaper accounts indicate Ford, Powell & Carson architect Carolyn Peterson worked closely with Ford on the project. Ford's work was shaped by his appreciation of early Texas architecture in which he saw honesty and simplicity of design. They tended to be built of locally available materials and, by necessity, responded to the climate in which they were built. An emphasis was placed on function rather than ornamentation. These ideas paralleled those of the 20th-century modern movement which rejected ornamentation in favor of functional forms and buildings. The design of the Comanche Public Library is a modern interpretation of South Texas Border Brick vernacular architecture found in places like the border town of Roma, Texas. The brick building has a rectangular form and flat roof. Ornamentation is limited to simple brick pilasters at building corners and a modest brick cornice. The windows are narrow and there are relatively few except at courtyards on the north and south sides of the building. Here Ford preserved two large trees to shade the courtyards and windows from the Texas heat.

*Wyatt C. Hedrick*⁵²

Wyatt Cephas Hedrick (1888-1964) was a Virginia native educated at Roanoke and Washington & Lee Colleges before starting an engineering career in 1910. A job opportunity with Stone and Webster Engineering brought him to Fort Worth in 1913, and by 1914 he had already established his own firm which he operated until 1921. During that time, he established a strong working relationship with the prolific architectural firm of Sanguinet & Staats which eventually brought him in as a partner. Sanguinet, Staats & Hedrick had offices Fort Worth and Houston. Hedrick launched his own firm in 1925 with offices in Dallas, Houston and Fort Worth, and in 1926 bought out the Sanguinet & Staats practice. Hedrick eventually grew his firm into a national enterprise that was the third largest in the country.

Building on the mentorship of his former partners, Hedrick designed buildings in a wide range of styles, both revivalist and modern. He became known for his Moderne buildings and in many cases was commissioned to remodel existing buildings to give them a more modern appearance. His work at the Comanche County Courthouse reflects his mastery of a wide range of styles. The Modern Classical design exhibited a blend traditional monumental forms with simplified and modernized interpretations of building ornamentation.

Hedrick's body of work is impressive and includes the following notable examples: Fort Worth's Worth Theatre (with Alfred C. Finn, 1927), Lone Star Gas Co. Building (1929), Hollywood Theatre (with Alfred C. Finn, 1930), Aviation Building (1930), Central Fire Station and Fire Alarm Signal Station (1930), Texas & Pacific Terminal and Warehouse (1931), Will Rogers Memorial Center (1936) and City Hall (1938), (both in association with Elmer G. Withers), and Mrs. Baird's Bakery (1938). Others included the Shamrock Hotel in Houston (1949), the Sterick Building in Memphis, Tennessee (1930), scores of school and university buildings, Scott and White Memorial Hospital in Temple, and U.S. Air Force bases in Iceland and British Guiana.

*O'Neil Ford*⁵³

O'Neil Ford (1905 – 1982) was arguably one of the most prominent architects to have come from Texas. In his long and distinguished career, he achieved both popular and critical success, yet retained a strong life-long link to his hometown of Denton. Born Otha Neil Ford in Pink Hill, Texas in 1905, he moved to Denton in 1917 after the death of his father. His mother, Mrs. L.B. Ford, kept boarders in their home at 304 W. Avenue "D", just west of the campus of North Texas State

⁵² Christopher Long, "Hedrick, Wyatt Cephas," Handbook of Texas Online; Sanguinet and Staats-Hedrick Collection, Architecture and Planning Library, University of Texas at Austin; Judith Singer Cohen. "Texas 50." *Texas Architect* (Nov./Dec. 1989): p. 58.

⁵³ Mike Cochran, A Catalog of the Architectural Works of O'Neil Ford in Denton. City of Denton Historic Landmark Commission, 1992; National Register Files Fairhaven Retirement Home.

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Teachers College (now the University of North Texas). A graduate of Denton High School, Ford attended N.T.S.T.C. for two years, studying English and Physics. Financial problems forced him to withdraw from college, but he continued his studies through a correspondence course while working at Dyche's Corner, a hamburger stand at the corner of Avenue "A" and Hickory Streets. In 1926, Ford took a position as an assistant to Dallas architect David Williams with whom he worked until 1931. His first work with Williams was drafting for the old First Presbyterian Church on South Elm Street (demolished in 1965). The first residence he designed was built in 1929 on North Bell Avenue. In this period, Ford designed an open-air theater for the campus of N.T.S.T.C. and two structures that were never built, a 130-foot memorial tower and a student center. Ford and his partner Arch Swank designed several residences in Denton in the late 1930s, but the high point of their Denton work in this period was the design and construction of the Little Chapel in the Woods on the campus of the College of Industrial Arts (now Texas Women's University). It was the chapel, completed in 1939, which would propel Ford into a position of national prominence. Eleanor Roosevelt spoke to a crowd of 4,000 at the dedication on November 1, 1939. Ford's list of achievements is considerable. Among his best-known works were the Little Chapel in the Woods, Trinity University in San Antonio (NRHP 2018), Skidmore College in New York, the Denton Municipal Building, the Tower of the Americas in San Antonio, the Bell Tower at the University of Dallas, and Texas Instruments buildings in Dallas, Italy, France, and England. In 1960 Ford was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. He was appointed to the National Council of the Arts by President Johnson and in 1974 would be declared a "National Historic Landmark" by the Council, the only individual ever so honored. Ford lectured at Harvard and Cambridge, became a Professor of Architecture at the University of Virginia, and had a chair in architecture named after him at the University of Texas at Austin.

Late in his career, Ford recalled the influences of his days in Denton and credited his pursuit of the creative life with his fascination with the Denton County Courthouse. Ford said, "I used to just stand there, wondering how they ever got it up I was in Denton just the other day ... so I went over to look at the courthouse again and still don't know how they ever did that blasted, blessed thing." O'Neil Ford's practice included The Ford, Powell & Carson Architects partnership in San Antonio. Among his commissions with that partnership was the Comanche Public Library completed with architect Carolyn Peterson in 1974. Ford died in 1982 in San Antonio.

Summary

The Comanche Downtown Historic District, located in the central business district of Comanche, Texas is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Commerce and Community Planning and Development, and Criterion C in the area of Architecture, at the local level of significance as an intact example of a courthouse square reflecting late 19th and 20th century growth and development patterns, and for its cohesive collection government buildings and 1 and 2-part commercial blocks embodying distinctive characteristics of many architectural styles. The period of significance spans from c.1883 to 1974. The district meets Criteria Consideration G because while the Comanche Public Library was completed in 1974 less than 50 years ago, the planning began in 1970.

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 17.22 acres

Coordinates:

1. Latitude: 31.899318°N Longitude: -98.605675°W
2. Latitude: 31.899328°N Longitude: -98.604163°W
3. Latitude: 31.899738°N Longitude: -98.604155°W
4. Latitude: 31.899740°N Longitude: -98.604493°W
5. Latitude: 31.899949°N Longitude: -98.604489°W
6. Latitude: 31.899948°N Longitude: -98.603965°W
7. Latitude: 31.899320°N Longitude: -98.603956°W
8. Latitude: 31.899318°N Longitude: -98.603354°W
9. Latitude: 31.898344°N Longitude: -98.603340°W
10. Latitude: 31.898348°N Longitude: -98.602818°W
11. Latitude: 31.897485°N Longitude: -98.602826°W
12. Latitude: 31.897479°N Longitude: -98.603317°W
13. Latitude: 31.896685°N Longitude: -98.603305°W
14. Latitude: 31.896677°N Longitude: -98.604504°W
15. Latitude: 31.896839°N Longitude: -98.604507°W
16. Latitude: 31.896834°N Longitude: -98.604998°W
17. Latitude: 31.897062°N Longitude: -98.605007°W
18. Latitude: 31.897059°N Longitude: -98.605547°W
19. Latitude: 31.897472°N Longitude: -98.605551°W
20. Latitude: 31.897472°N Longitude: -98.606687°W
21. Latitude: 31.897716°N Longitude: -98.606675°W
22. Latitude: 31.897715°N Longitude: -98.605668°W
23. Latitude: 31.898336°N Longitude: -98.605664°W
24. Latitude: 31.898450°N Longitude: -98.605661°W
25. Latitude: 31.898456°N Longitude: -98.605476°W
26. Latitude: 31.898892°N Longitude: -98.605465°W
27. Latitude: 31.898899°N Longitude: -98.605670°W

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Comanche Downtown Historic District includes approximately 17.22 acres and is roughly bounded by West College Avenue on the north, North Pearl Street on the east, Oak Avenue on the south, and the rear property line along the west side of North Mary Street on the west. The boundary of the district is shown as the yellow lines on Maps 3-5 on pages 53-55.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary of the Comanche Downtown Historic District includes the highest concentration of historic properties with a good degree of integrity associated with the growth and development of Comanche as a commercial and governmental center. Generally, properties immediately beyond the district boundary are not historically part of the commercial and governmental development of downtown Comanche, lack integrity, are not present in a high enough concentration to provide visual continuity, or are less than 50 years old.

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Maps

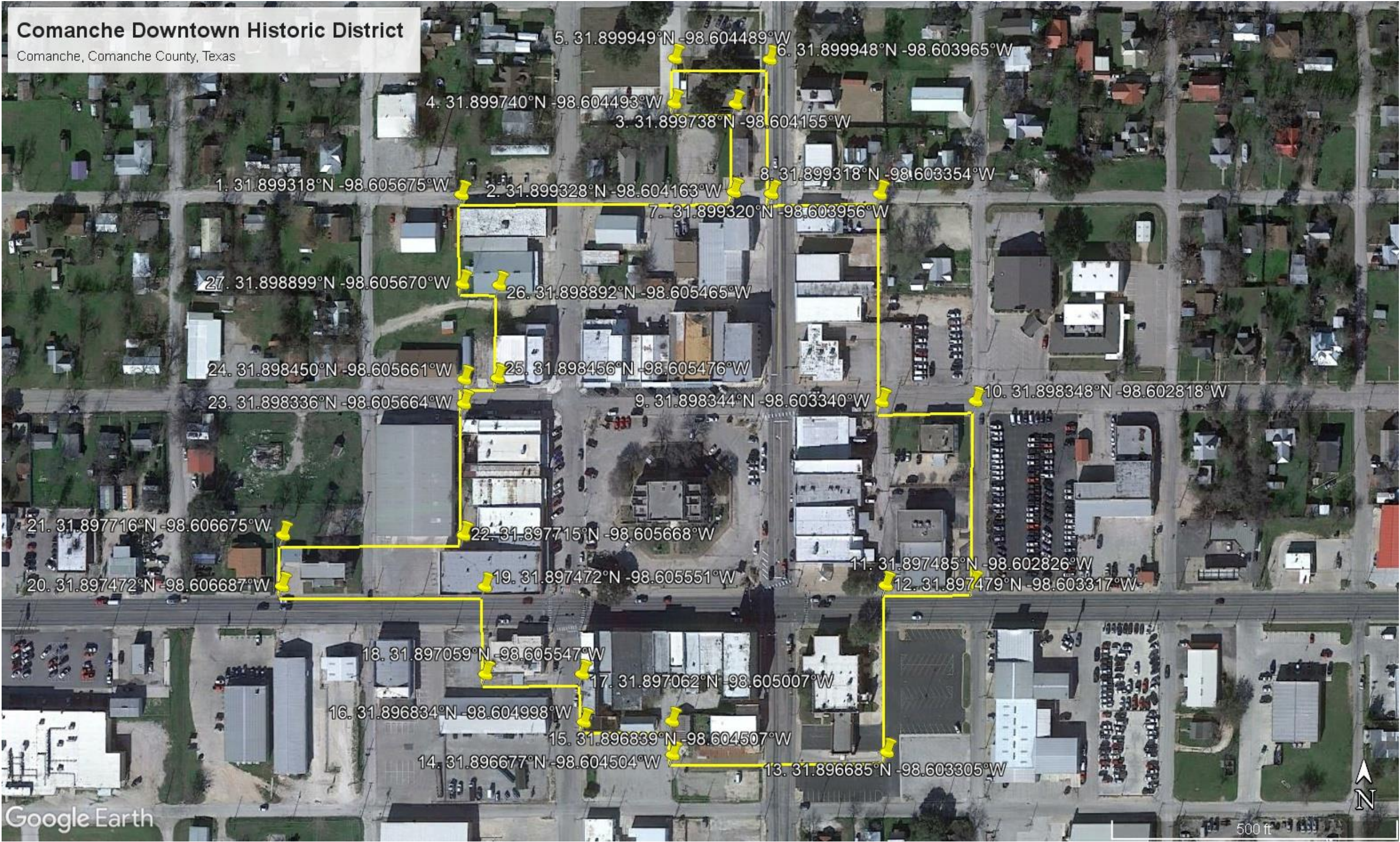


Map 1: Comanche County Texas



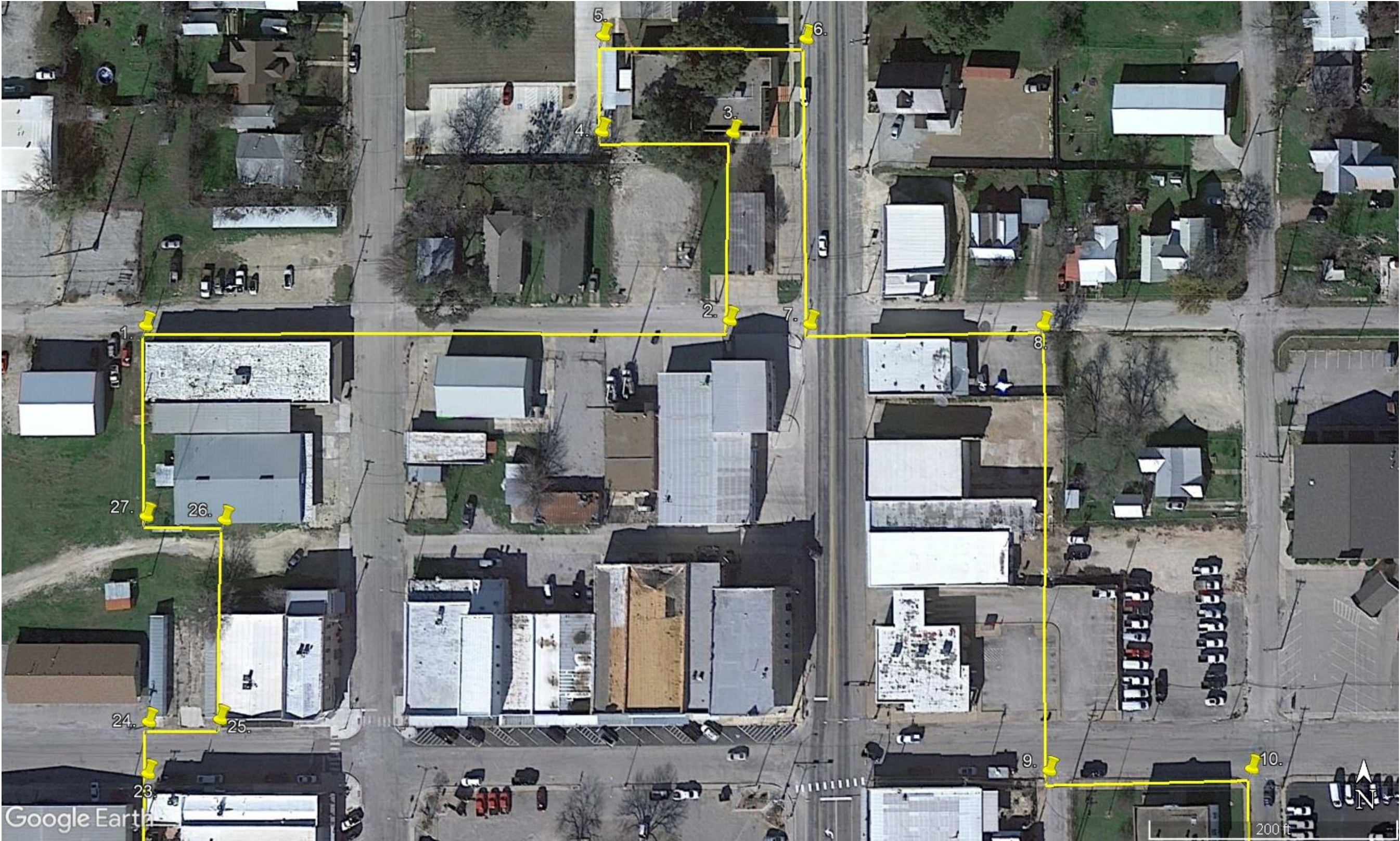
Map 2. USGS topo map with Comanche Downtown Historic District highlighted in red.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



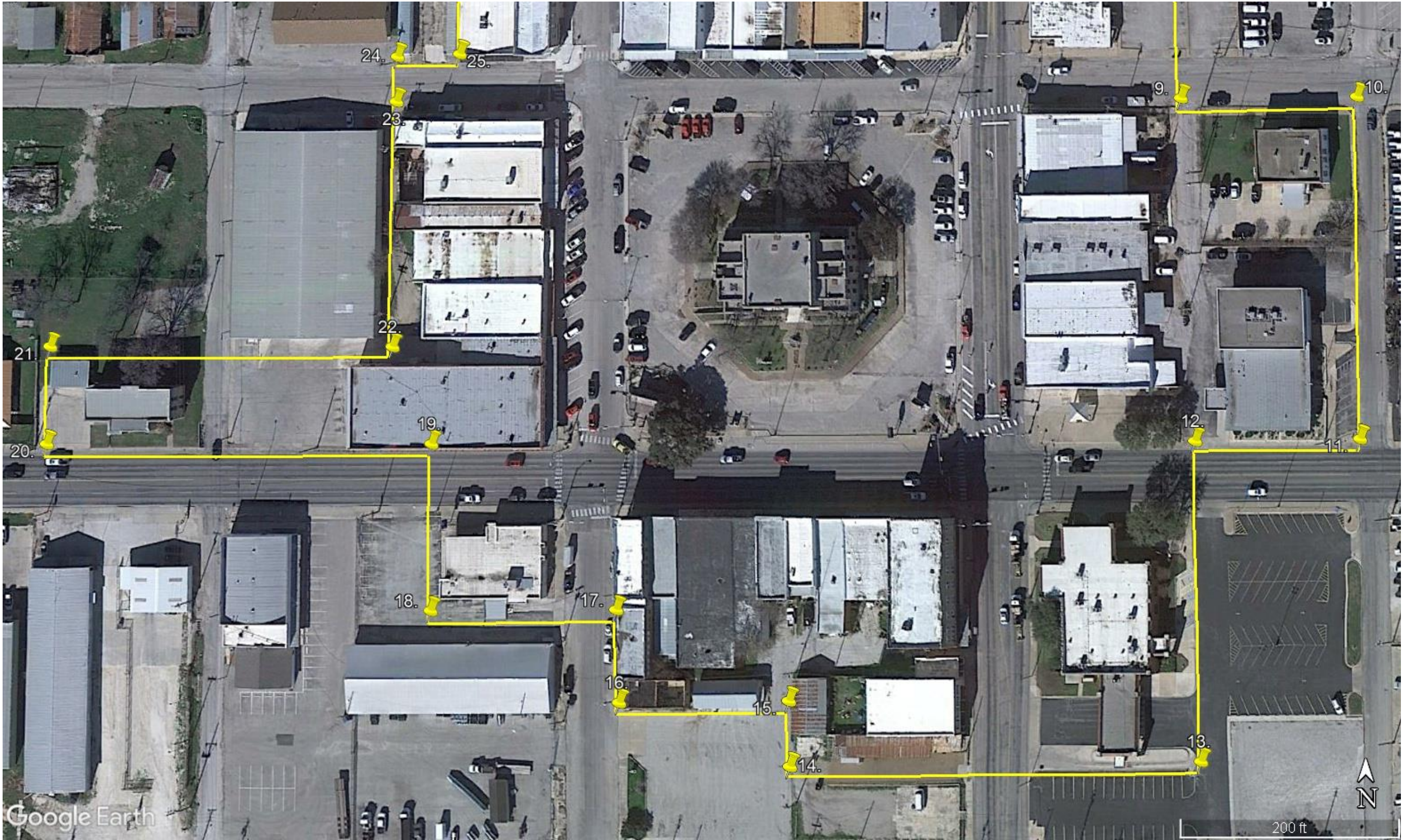
Map 3. Google Earth Map, accessed March 30, 2023.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



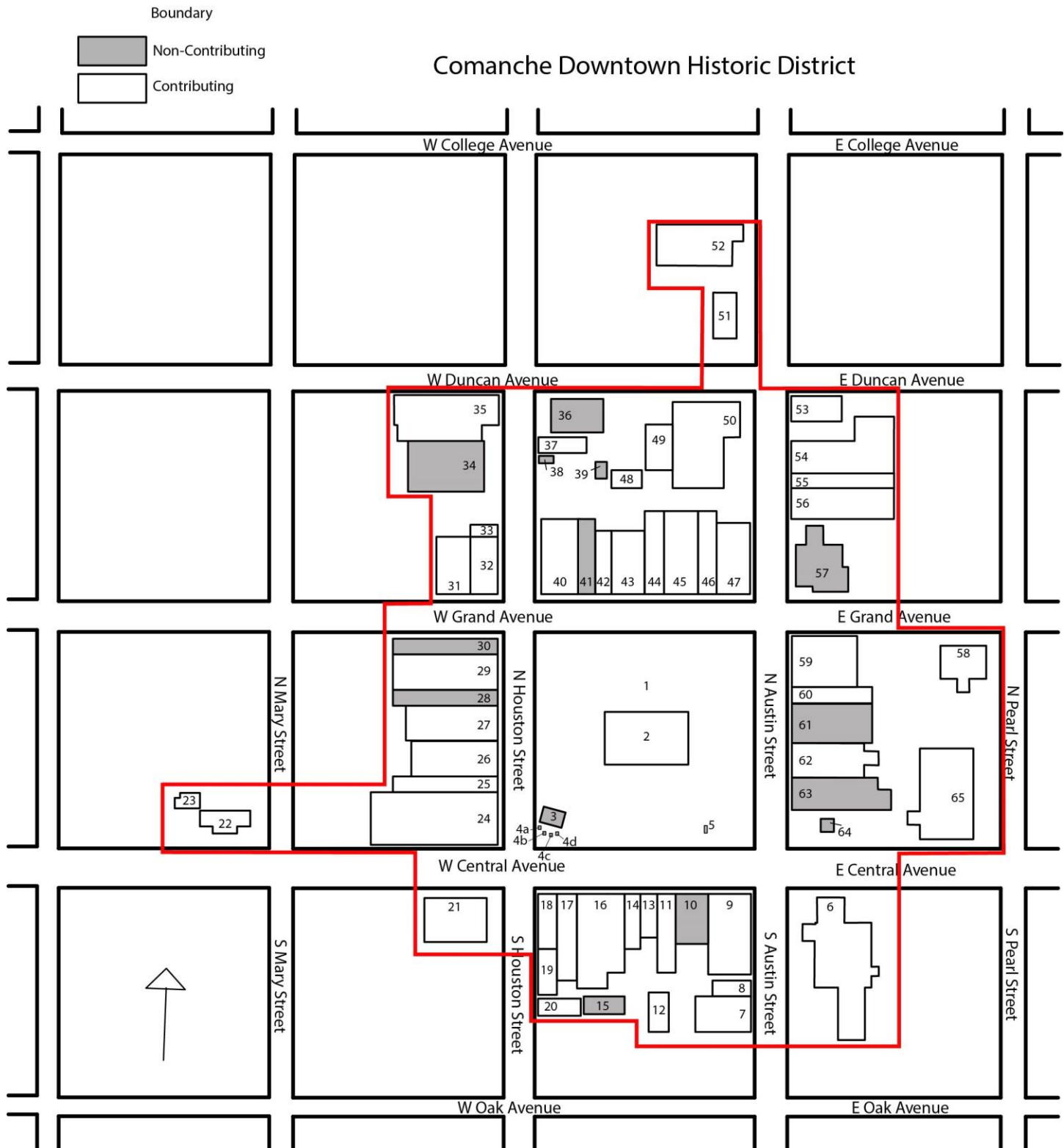
Map 4. Google Earth Map showing boundary to scale, accessed March 30, 2023.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Map 5. Google Earth Map showing boundary to scale, accessed March 30, 2023.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Map 6. Contributor/Non-contributor map. Map not to scale.

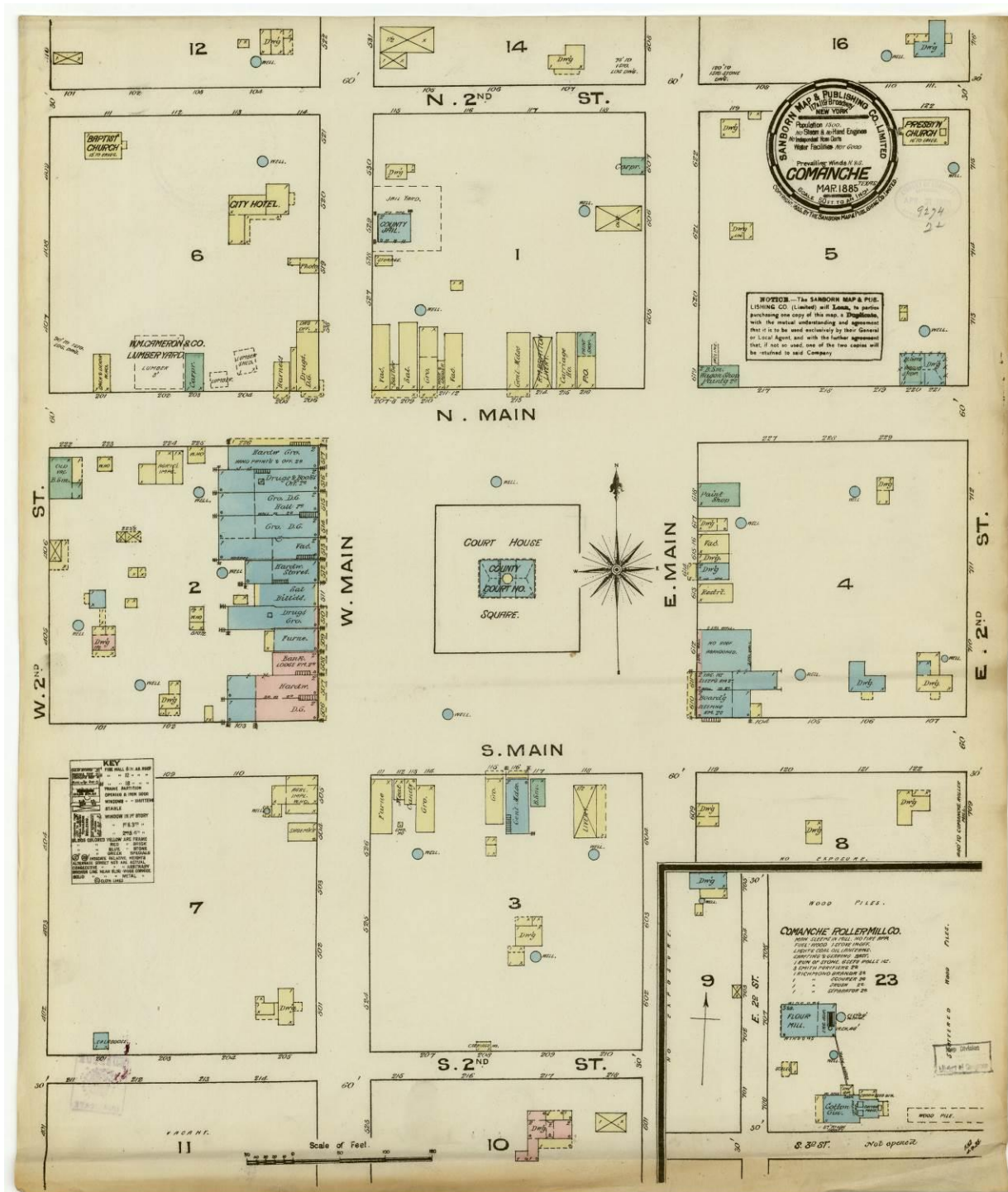
Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

Figures



Figure 1 – The 1879 courthouse (date unknown)
Comanche County Historical Museum

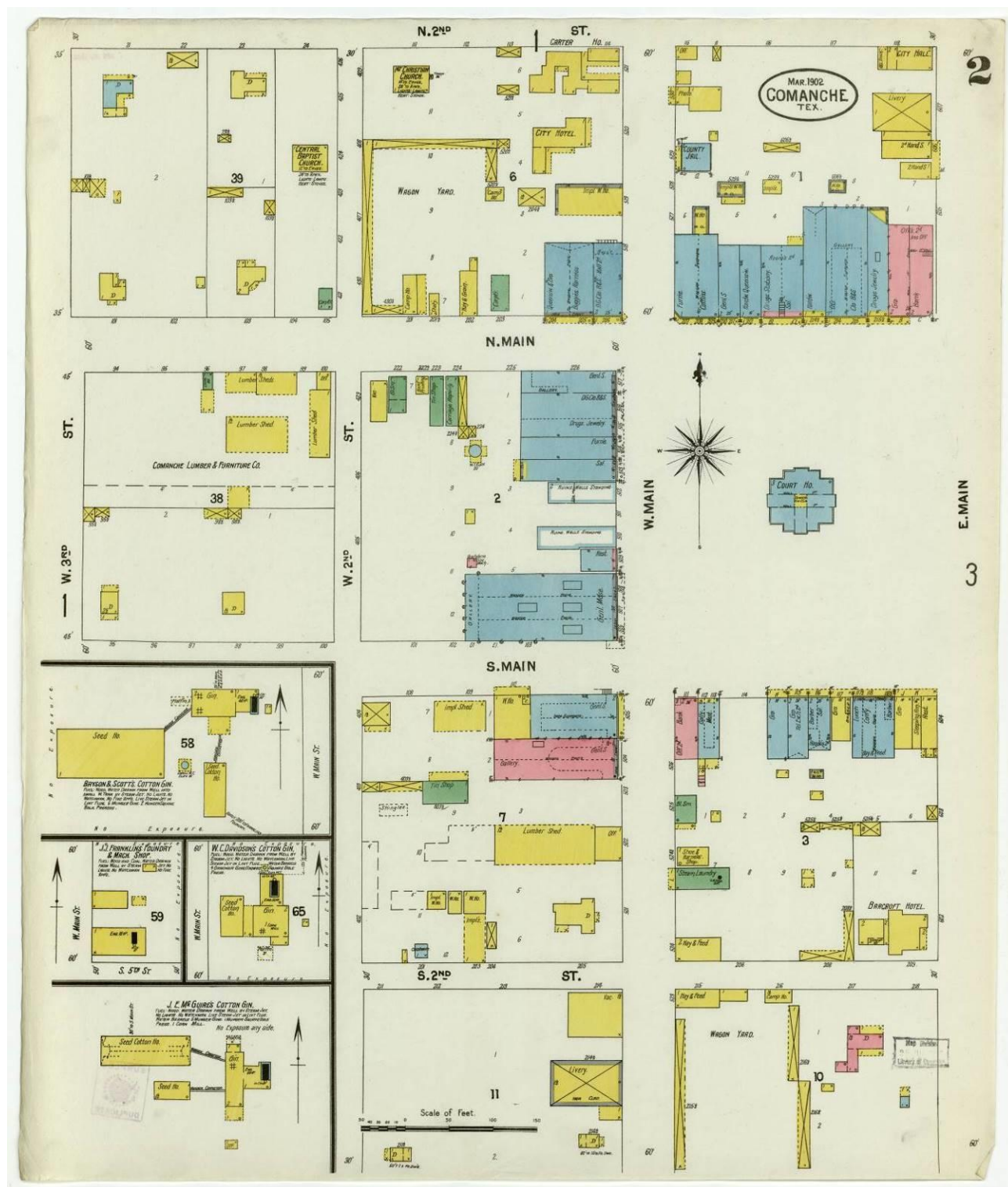
Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

Figure 2 - Comanche in 1885. The 1879 Courthouse remains at the center of the square and principal development is on the west side.

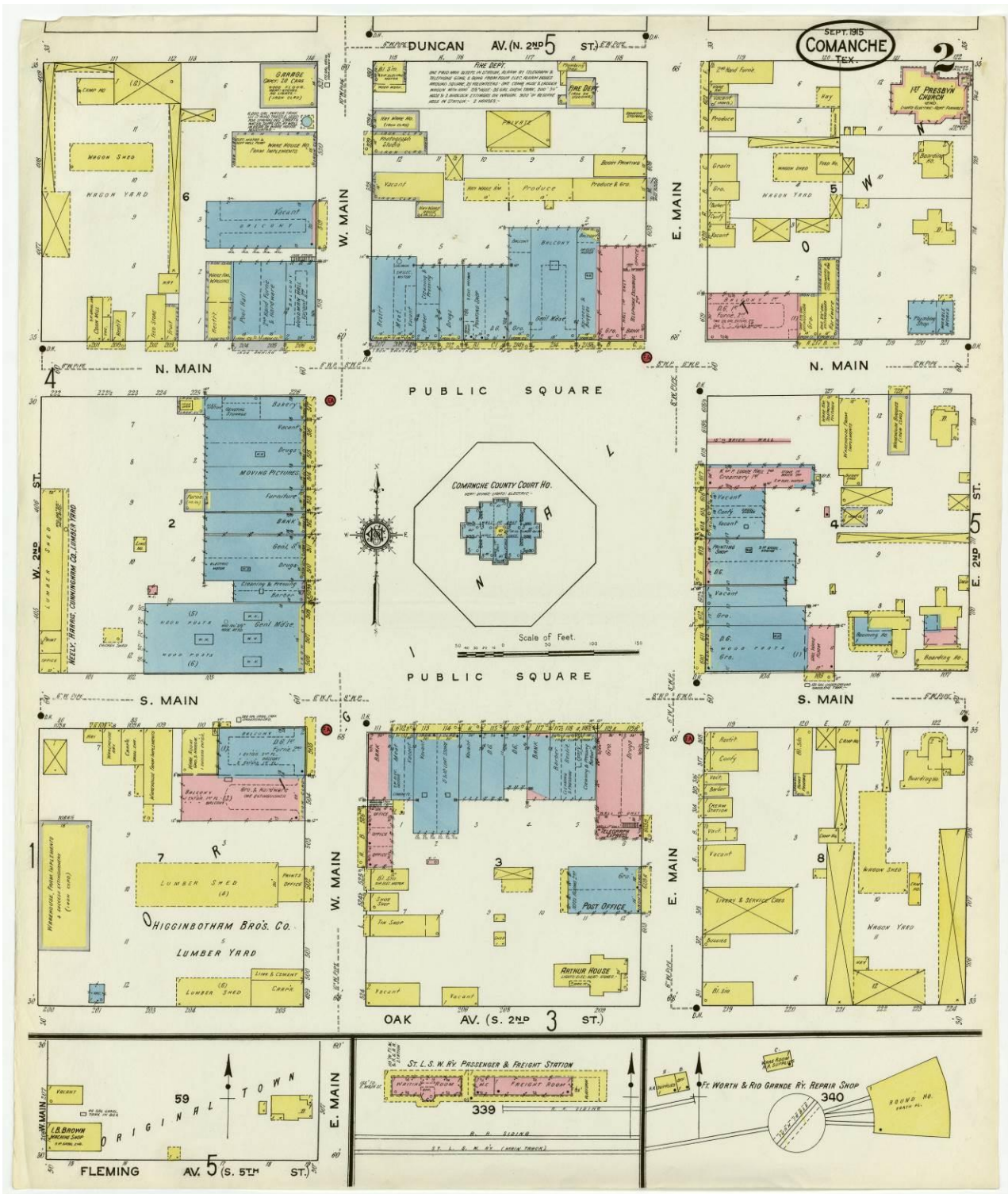
Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

Figure 3 - Sanborn Fire Insurance map showing the square in 1902 with ruined buildings on the west side.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Original located at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin

Figure 4 - Comanche downtown district in 1915 with ruined buildings at northeast corner.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 5 - West side of square c.1892
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 6 - J. W. Greene Building at the northwest side of the square c.1885
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 7 - Northwest corner of the square after the December 1896 fire.
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 8 – Courthouse and west square c.1900
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 9 – Neely Harris Cunningham (Resource 24) c.1900
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 10 – Neely Harris Cunningham interior (Resource 24) c.1900
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 11 – Farmers Merchants Bank Interior c.1900
Comanche County Historical Museum.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 12 – West square c.1950 (postcard)

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 13 – West square with Fleming Oak c.1978 (postcard)

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 14 – Brightman Building (Resource 32) c.1905
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

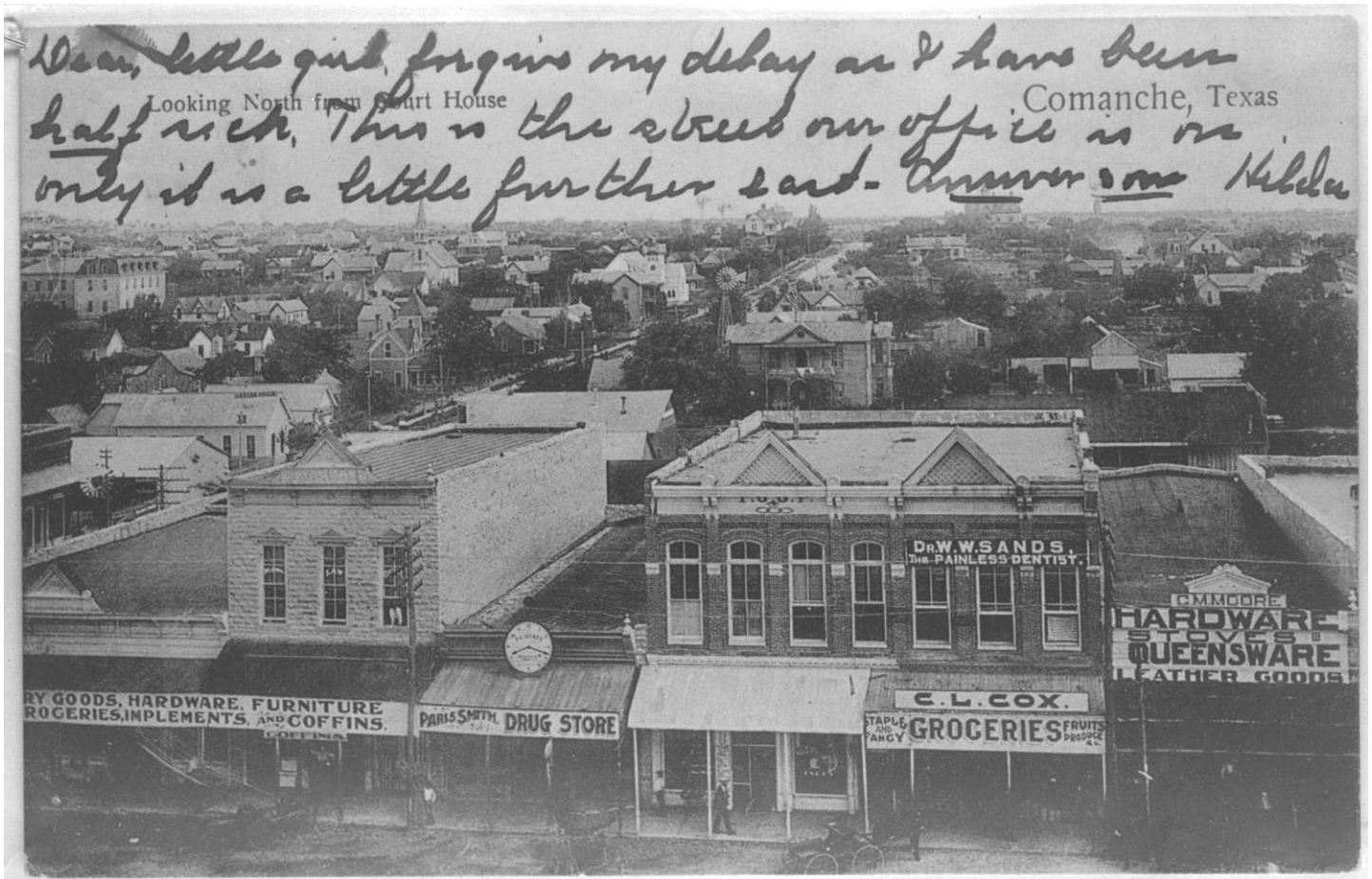


Figure 15 – North side of square c.1900 (postcard)

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 16 – North side of square c.1900 (postcard)

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 17 – Northeast corner of the square with First National Bank (Resource 47) on the left.
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 18 - First National Bank (Resource 47). Scurry Grocery occupied the west (left) bay of the building. c.1900
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 19 – John Jay and family at the First National Bank (Resource 47) 1910
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 20 – C. L. Mistrot Building (Resource 45) (later the Martin Building) 1909
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 21 – The Comanche and De Leon Band pose on the square c.1920 (facing north)
Comanche County Historical Museum



Figure 22 – Detail of Figure 21 showing buildings on the north and west sides of the square.
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 23 – Photo by Brodie Studio showing the east side of the square c 1900. The two-story building at top center housed the Comanche Opera House before being destroyed by fire in 1912. First National Bank (Resource 23) is visible on the left.

Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 24 – Southeast corner of the square in 1910 with the three-story Masonic Temple (Resource 9) at right of center. Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 25 – The southwest corner of the square c.1905 with a partial view of the south side of the square. The Fleming oak and public well are visible with the Comanche National Bank (Resource 18) in the background.
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 26 – Teller area of the Comanche National Bank (Resource 18) c.1902. W. B. Cunningham is seated on the left. Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



COMANCHE NATIONAL BANK---1901
Across the Street of Fleming Oak.
E.E.Anthony,W.B.Cunningham,and
?
Donated by Cathy Anthony Culpepper,
Granddaughter of E. E. Anthony.

Figure 27 – Interior of the Comanche National Bank (Resource 18) in 1901
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

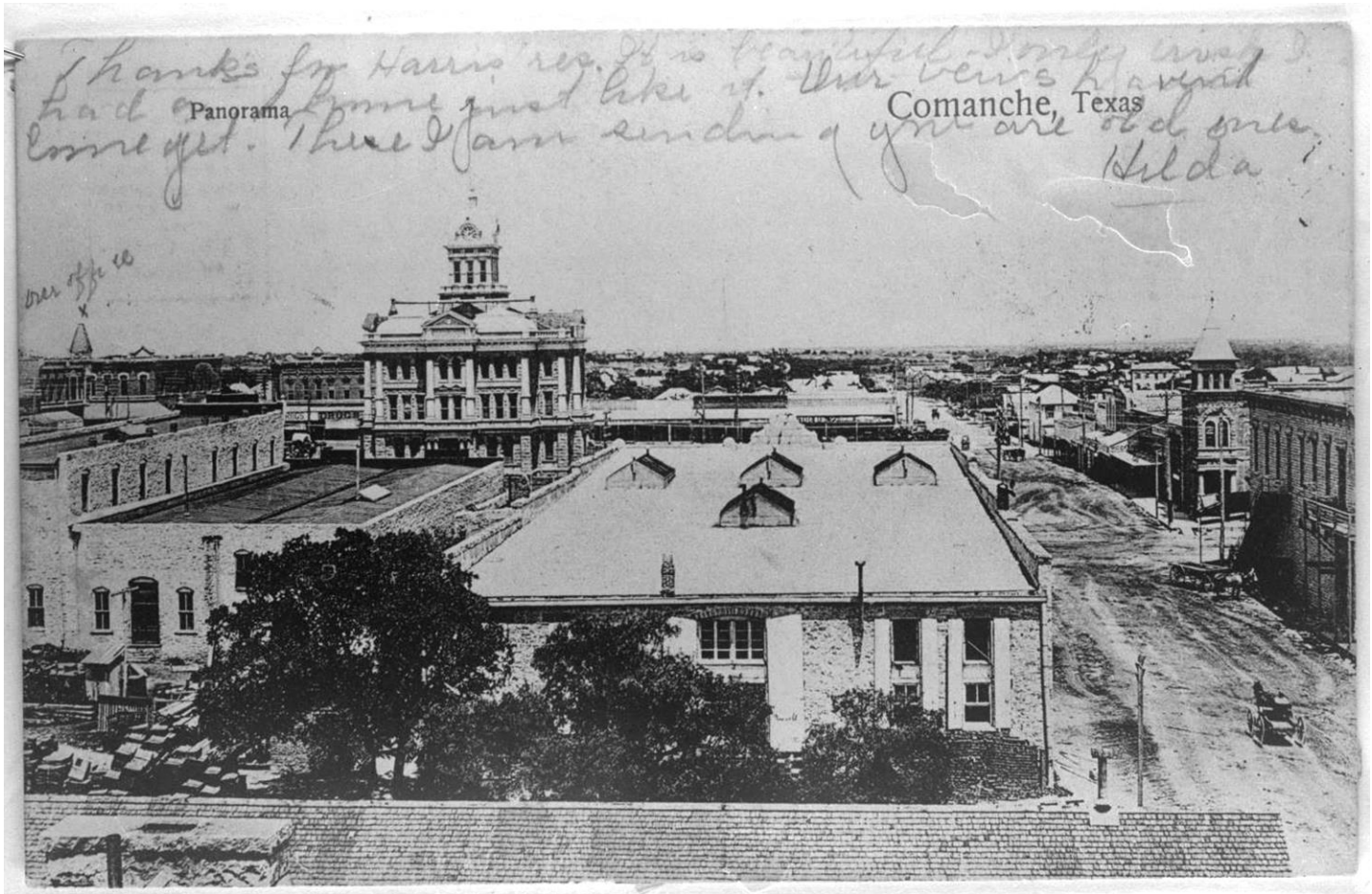
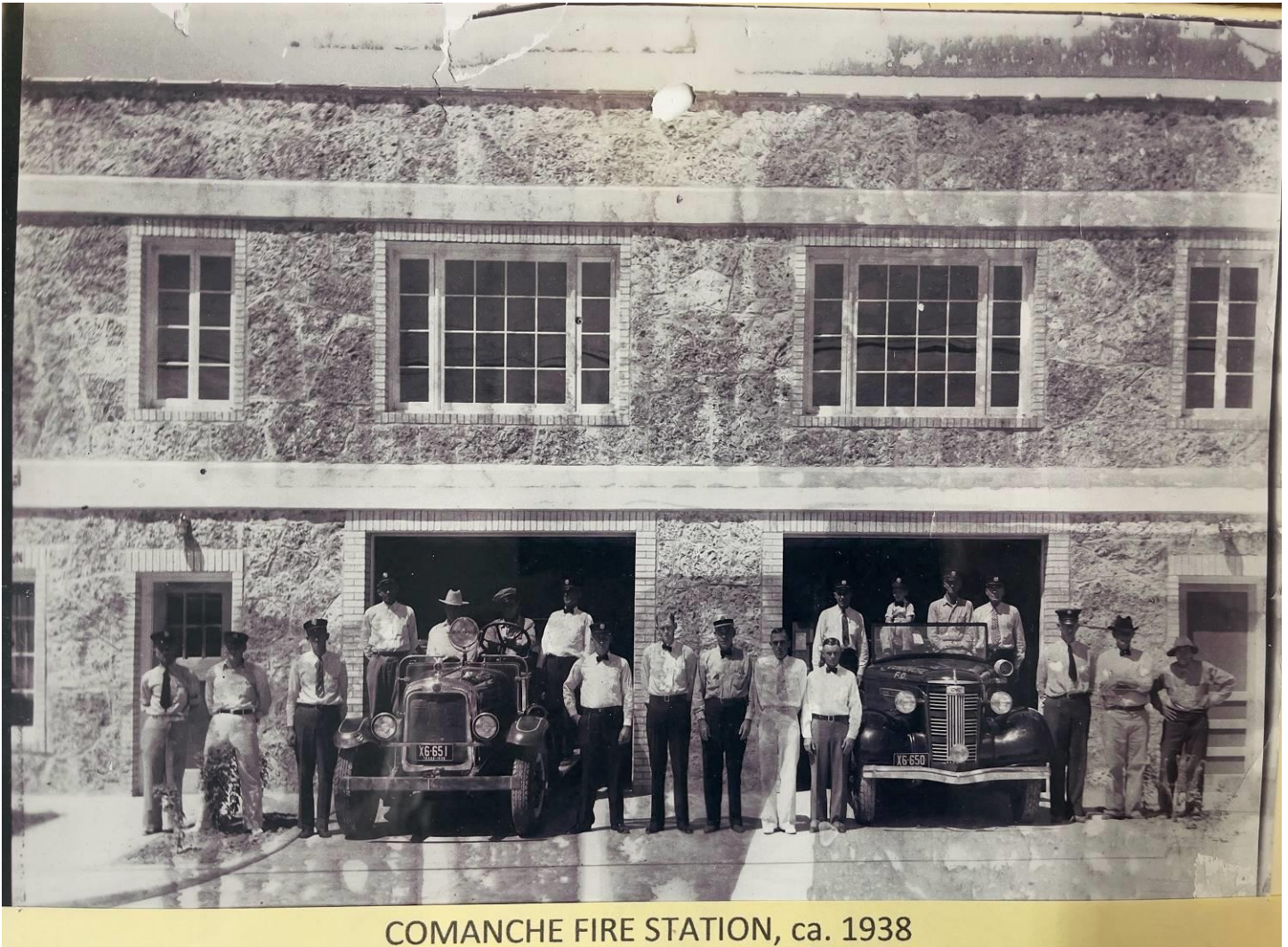


Figure 28 – A view of downtown from the roof of the jail and across the roof of the Neely Harris Cunningham Building c.1900 (postcard)

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



COMANCHE FIRE STATION, ca. 1938

Figure 29 – Fire crews pose in front of the Comanche City Hall and Fire Station (Resource 50) in 1938
Comanche County Historical Museum

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Figure 30 – Comanche County Courthouse (Resource 2) upon completion July 25, 1941, RG 69 photos Texas Work Projects Administration, District 8, Picture S-7806, Official Project number 65-1-66-116, Work Project number 13781, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/141324854@N04/albums/72157666432930812>

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas

Photographs



Photograph 1 – Comanche downtown district from the southeast. Camera facing northwest.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 2 - East square facing east. Camera facing east.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 3 - 108-110 N. Austin St. (Resource 62, Contributing), Camera facing east.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 4 - 120 N. Austin St. (Resource 60, Contributing). Camera facing east.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 5 - 124 N. Austin St. (Resource 59, Contributing). Camera facing east.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 6 - 200 N. Austin St. (Resource 57, Non-Contributing). Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 7 - 219 N. Austin St. (Resource 50, Contributing). Camera facing southwest.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 8 - 109 S. Austin St. (Resource 8, Contributing). Camera facing west.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 9 - South square facing south. Camera facing south.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 10 - 100 E. Central Ave. (Resource 6, Contributing). Camera facing southeast.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 11 - Masonic Temple 100 W. Central Ave. (Resource 9, Contributing). Camera facing southwest.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 12 - Comanche County Courthouse 101 W. Central Ave. (Resource 2, Contributing). Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 13 - 106-112 W. Central Ave. (Resource 10, Non-Contributing). Camera facing south.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 14 - 114 W. Central Ave. (Resource 11, Contributing). Camera facing south.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 15 - 118 W. Central Ave. (Resource 13, Contributing). Camera facing south.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 16 - 132 W. Central Ave. (Resource 17, Contributing). Camera facing south.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 17 – 134A W. Central Ave. (Resource 18, Contributing). Camera facing southeast.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 18 - 134B W. Central Ave. (Resource 19, Contributing). Camera facing east.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 19 - 120 E. Grand Ave. (Resource 58, Contributing). Camera facing southwest.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 20 - North square facing north. Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 21 - Grand Ave. facing east. Camera facing east.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 22 - 101-103 W. Grand Ave. (Resource 47, Contributing). Camera facing northwest.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 23 - Mistrot Building, 113 W. Grand Ave. (Resource 45, Contributing). Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 24 – 117-119 W. Grand Ave. (Resource 43, Contributing). Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 25 - West square facing west. Camera facing west.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 26 - Houston Street facing south. Camera facing south.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 27 - 107A N. Houston St. (Resource 24, Contributing). Camera facing northwest.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 28 - 129 N. Houston St. (Resource 30, Non-Contributing). Camera facing southwest.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 29 - 201 N. Houston St. (Resource 32, Contributing). Camera facing northwest.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 30 – 125 W. Grand Ave. (Resource 41, Non-Contributing). Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 31 – 106 N. Austin St. Resource 63, (Non-Contributing). Camera facing west.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 32 – 311 N. Austin St. (Resource 52, Contributing). Camera facing west.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 33 – 301 W. Central Ave. (Resources 22 and 23, Contributing). Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 34 – 135 W. Grand Ave. (Resource 40, Contributing). Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 35 – 205 W. Grand Ave. (Resource 31, Contributing). Camera facing north.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 36 – 200 W. Central Ave. (Resource 21, Contributing). Camera facing south.

Comanche Downtown Historic District, Comanche, Comanche County, Texas



Photograph 37 – 112 N. Austin St. (Resource 61; Non-Contributing). Camera facing east.