

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Mayfair Building

Other name/site number: Fair Park Auditorium, East Texas Fair Auditorium, Women's Home Demonstration Building, Mayfair Club

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 411 Fair Park Drive, Building B

City or town: Tyler

State: Texas

County: Smith

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐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

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official / Title

9/11/24
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

Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public - Local

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium

Current Functions: RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium

7. Description

Architectural Classification: OTHER: 1-Part Commercial Block

Principal Exterior Materials: BRICK, WOOD, FIBER CEMENT BOARD

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-9)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations: NA

Areas of Significance: Entertainment/Recreation; Architecture

Period of Significance: 1929–1974

Significant Dates: 1929, 1938

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

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

Architect/Builder: Gentry, Augustus Callahan (designer); Hill, Sam R. (contractor)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 10-17)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheets 18-21)

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:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 0.50 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 32.346030 Longitude: -95.324410

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property is a 0.5-acre subset of a 39.163-acre parcel owned by the city of Tyler, the whole of which is identified as "Block 667 Lot 2A, 10" in Smith Central Appraisal District records. The nominated area includes the footprint of the building and a small area around it, illustrated on the aerial map on page 22 of this nomination.

Boundary Justification: The Mayfair Building is part of a row of closely spaced buildings and includes the original footprint and additional areas on the west, north, and east sides to ensure that additions and the front setback from the curb are included.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Steph McDougal, principal consultant, and Jenn Beggs, associate
Organization: McDoux Preservation LLC
Street & number: 18214 Upper Bay Rd. #58114
City or Town: Houston State: TX Zip Code: 77058
Email: steph.mcdougal@mcdoux.com
Telephone: 833-623-7737 ext. 1
Date: September 9, 2024

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets 22-28)

Additional items (see continuation sheets 29-40)

Photographs (see continuation sheets 41-60)

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.

Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photograph Log

Property: Mayfair Building
Address: 411 Fair Park Drive, Building B
Tyler, Smith County, Texas
Photographer(s): Steph McDougal (interior, 7/23/24) and Gregory Smith (exterior, 7/25/24)

- Photo 1.** Front façade, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 2.** Oblique view of front façade with vestibule, camera facing west.
- Photo 3.** Oblique view of northeast elevation, camera facing west.
- Photo 4.** Oblique view of northeast elevation, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 5.** Northwest (rear) elevation, oblique view, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 6.** Northwest (rear) elevation, camera facing east.
- Photo 7.** Southwest elevation, oblique view, camera facing east.
- Photo 8.** Southwest elevation, oblique view, camera facing east.
- Photo 9.** Front and southwest elevations, oblique view, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 10.** Interior of vestibule, with original ticket window and interpretive panel, camera facing north.
- Photo 11.** Original ticket window, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 12.** Ticket booth, looking into vestibule through ticket window, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 13.** View from main entrance, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 14.** Concession stand after restoration.
- Photo 15.** Coat check counter after restoration.
- Photo 16.** Electronics closet behind coat check counter (former coat check room),.
- Photo 17.** Ceiling detail with restored pendant lights.
- Photo 18.** Stage with doorways to green rooms and historic dressing room, camera facing north.
- Photo 19.** Stage with doorways to green rooms and historic dressing room, camera facing east.
- Photo 20.** Side of stage detail with doorway to historic dressing room.
- Photo 21.** Doorways to historic dressing room (left) and Green Room #1 (right).

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Photo 22. Green Room #1 (next to historic dressing room), camera facing northeast.

Photo 23. Historic dressing room, view from dance floor doorway, camera facing north.

Photo 24. Historic dressing room, view of mirror where Elvis Presley was photographed in 1955, see Figure 15, camera facing northeast.

Photo 25. Doorway to Green Room #2, camera facing north

Photo 26. Green Room #2, interior, camera facing northwest

Photo 27. Seating platforms in south corner of hall next to concession stand, camera facing south

Photo 28. Southwest wall with roll-up doors, camera facing southeast

Photo 29. Hall from west corner, camera facing east

Photo 30. Hall from west corner, camera facing southeast

Photo 31. Seating platform north of stage, with accessible ramp and doorway to Green Room #2, camera facing north.

Photo 32. Detail view of painted edge of seating platform, camera facing north.

Photo 33. Doorways at rear (northwest) wall, camera facing northwest.

Photo 34. Restroom lobby at rear (northwest) wall, camera facing northwest.

Photo 35. Men's restroom doorway, camera facing north.

Photo 36. Men's restroom interior, camera facing northwest.

Photo 37. Women's restroom doorway, camera facing west.

Photo 38. Women's restroom interior, camera facing northwest.

Photo 39. Storage room doorway, west corner, camera facing west.

Photo 40. Storage room interior, camera facing northwest.

Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Description

The Mayfair Building is an auditorium/dance hall with an interior volume of approximately 14,000 square feet, most of which is comprised of a wooden dance floor, tiered stage, and two levels of seating platforms that surround the southwest and northwest sides of the dance floor in a sweeping curve. Built in 1929, the Mayfair's current interior plan is the result of a major renovation in 1938. The building's modest brick façade is decorated with simple vertical and horizontal elements, rectangular inset panels, and square blind windows. A later wood-frame vestibule shelters the front entrance and ticket window. The Mayfair Building meets the definition of a "historic Texas dance hall," as established by the nonprofit organization Texas Dance Hall Preservation, and retains excellent historical and architectural integrity. It was rehabilitated by the City of Tyler in 2022–2024.

Tyler, the largest city in northeast Texas, is approximately 100 miles southeast of Dallas and 100 miles west of Shreveport, Louisiana. The city is generally organized around a central grid of streets oriented to the cardinal directions. The Mayfair Building, on the East Texas State Fairgrounds, is located just to the southwest of the downtown commercial district, on the south side of SH-31/West Front Street, a major thoroughfare running east-west through the middle of Tyler. The Mayfair Building stands near the north end of the fairgrounds, a collection of 11 buildings and structures that line the west side of Fair Park Drive, south of its intersection with West Front Street.

East Texas State Fairgrounds

The East Texas State Fairgrounds property is within the legal parcel "Block 667, Lot 2A, 10" and contains all of the fair buildings, as well as the land surrounding (but not including) the baseball field, in total comprising 39.163 acres. Fair Park Drive proceeds southwest from its junction with Front Street, before curving widely to the west and continuing to its intersection with South Peach Avenue, where it becomes West Houston Street. Rose Park Drive intersects with Front Street across from South Boon Avenue and curves gently as it proceeds to its junction with Fair Park Drive, where that road straightens out and heads west. The fairgrounds property is west of Fair Park Drive.

The Mayfair Building is identified as Building B within a row of 10 freestanding buildings and structures along the northwest side of Fair Park Drive:

- Building A is closest to SH-31 Front Street. Originally the Arts & Crafts/Women's Building, now Creative Arts. A rectangular exhibit hall, its symmetrical brick front façade features a parapet topped by a triangular pediment over the double entry door.
- Building B, the Mayfair Building, is similar in design to Building A but is larger and features a stepped parapet and a slightly different configuration of decorative features (see detailed description that follows).
- Building C was a small, one-story rectangular building used for horticulture exhibits/contests. It has been demolished.
- Building D, originally the Machinery Building and currently known as the Armory/Flea Market building, has a symmetrical brick façade with a wide triangular parapet that springs from columns at either end.
- Building E, originally the Agricultural Building, is a large rectangular exhibit hall with the most ornately decorated brick façade of all buildings on the fairgrounds, featuring a gracefully curved Spanish Colonial parapet.
- The facades of Buildings B, C, and D appear to be connected, but the adjacent side walls of these buildings are separated by several feet. Larger spaces are present between Buildings A and B and Buildings D and E.
- Building F is a narrow rectangular building currently used for fair security, constructed of buff-colored blocks set in a decorative pattern
- Beyond these exhibit halls, the fair buildings include three covered open-air pavilions and four adjoining livestock barns.

Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Mayfair Building

The Mayfair Building has been known variously as the Fair Park Auditorium or East Texas Fair Auditorium (1926), the Women's Home Demonstration Building (1935–1938), the Mayfair Club (1938–1949), and since at least 1947, the Mayfair Building.¹

Original Configuration (1926-1935)

Plans for the 1926 building indicate a 70-foot by 150-foot wood and steel-framed building, designed to support additions. The steel supports are spaced approximately 16 feet apart and have always been infilled with wood, although the walls were designed to alternatively accommodate brick or concrete within the steel framework.² The original stage reportedly measured 32 feet by 40 feet.³ A basement was constructed below the stage, with a fly loft extending above the roof of the hall.⁴ In 1928, the East Texas Fair Association (EFTA) Building Committee recommended painting the masonry facades of all buildings as part of a ten-year improvement plan.⁵

Alterations (1935-1938)

Few changes were made to the building between 1938-2022. In 1935, the stage was reportedly enlarged to 30 feet by 60 feet, with direct and indirect lighting effects.⁶ In September 1938, a 17-foot by 54-foot addition was built to the northeast side of the building and the auditorium was converted into a dance hall.⁷ The stage was moved from the northwest end of the building to the northeast side. A shed-roofed addition contained restrooms and dressing rooms behind the new stage. Other interior alterations included installing seating platforms on the previously single-level floor along the northwest and southwest sides of the building.⁸ Architect Mark Thacker, in the 2015 *Mayfair Preservation Master Plan*, found that the front façade of the building has lost some elements, including panels painted with vertical bars.⁹ An awning, previously attached to the vestibule gable, once extended to the curb but is no longer extant (Figure 4).¹⁰ Finally, the roof may have been replaced in 1965. Otherwise, the interior of the building remained essentially unchanged until the rehabilitation just completed.¹¹

Primary Configuration (1938–2023)

The front façade (east elevation) is three bays wide and features a stepped parapet (Photo 1). This elevation is clad in its original brick, in a common-bond pattern painted off-white. The rest of the building was sided in blue horizontal vinyl over the original wood siding. Cream-colored vinyl siding covered a front-gabled wood-framed vestibule that projects from the center bay of the front façade, slightly off-center toward the north side of the elevation. The shingled roof of the vestibule's gable had boxed eaves and decorative wooden returns. A corrugated metal shed roof, projecting from the middle of the gable, protected dark brown metal double doors that comprised the front entrance to the building. Above the shed roof, in the peak of the gable, a block letter "B" identified the Mayfair as the second Fair

¹ An agricultural meeting in 1947 is listed at the Mayfair Building, and 1948 Fair planning lists an event at the Mayfair Building.

² Dietz Engineers, LLC, "Structural Assessment of East Texas State Fair Buildings," email report to the City of Tyler, March 4, 2014.

³ "Contract Let for East Texas Fair Auditorium," *The Tyler Journal*, July 9, 1926, 1, texashistory.unt.edu.

⁴ "Amazing Feats of Muscular Skill," *The Tyler Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 21, Ed. 1, September 24, 1926, 8, texashistory.unt.edu, crediting Smith County Historical Society.

⁵ Bob Murdoch, "History of the East Texas Fair from January 9, 1928, Building Committee report, June 11, 1928, compiled February 22, 1988.

⁶ "Flower Show to be Major Fair Feature," *The Tyler Courier-Times*, September 22nd, 1935, 18, newspapers.com.

⁷ "Permit Issued for New Nightspot at Fair Park," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, September 7, 1938, 3, newspapers.com. The

⁸ Mark Thacker, AIA, *Mayfair Building, Tyler, Texas, Preservation Master Plan*, December 7, 2015, 3.

⁹ Thacker, *Mayfair Building*, 3.

¹⁰ Thacker, *Mayfair Building*, 84

¹¹ Thacker, *Mayfair Building*, 72. This report also makes special mention of the dressing room as a nearly intact element of the building, noting that the mirror, wood shelf, and wood toilet partition are all original elements (Photo 14).

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building along Fair Park Drive; Fair buildings are labeled alphabetically from north to south along the west side of the drive.

In the vestibule, a ticket window is cut through the west wall to the right of the entrance to the hall (Photos 10-12). Once inside, the entrance is flanked by a ticket counter and coat check on the right (Photo 11) and a concessions area on the left (Photos 13-15).

Curved, stepped platforms on the south and west sides of the dance floor provide space for table seating with a view of the stage (Photos 27-29). The elevated three-tiered stage near the center of the northeast wall of the auditorium is 32 feet wide by 18 feet deep and 33 inches high (Photos 18-20). The asymmetrical stage is made up of three stepped, curved platforms with bent-wood sides and oak floorboards that extend slightly beyond the sides at each level. The top tier is both less wide and less deep than the other platforms and is bounded on each side by a low curb. The middle tier is wider than the top tier and bounded on each side by a two-tier round column; the top tier curbs extend to each column and to the floor of the middle tier. The lowest tier is deeper than the middle tier but is slightly less wide, offset toward the front of the building. The stage is accessed by stairs.

Entrances to backstage rooms, including the original dressing room and restrooms, are located on either side of the stage and open into the modest shed-roofed addition on the northeast side of the building (Photos 22-27). Two small storage rooms previously were located behind the primary northwest wall. The entire interior now comprises approximately 10,000 square feet, with 3,753 square feet of this taken up by the dance floor.¹²

A staircase in the south corner of the building is accessed from the upper seating platform (Photo 27), rising to a mezzanine behind the parapet apparently used as a projection room when movies were shown in the auditorium prior to the 1938 renovation. An opening to the hall below probably later accommodated stage lighting; it has now been permanently closed with drywall. No balcony, railing, or other safety barrier protected the single-entry doorway prior to 2023.

Rehabilitation 2022-2024

During the past several years, the Mayfair Building has undergone an extensive \$4 million rehabilitation to bring it up to modern building standards, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Led by Fitzpatrick Architects of Tyler, with Aqueous Engineering, the project included the removal of the small rooms at the rear of the hall to construct a larger space containing a storage area for tables and chairs; ADA-compliant men's and women's restrooms; a mechanical/electrical room; and an additional storage room (Photos 31-40). Both egress doors on the northeast elevation were modified with accessible ramps and handrails, and an accessible landing was constructed in front of the vestibule/primary entrance. Other changes included the removal of a dropped ceiling to expose the entire interior volume, the removal of a single-level platform over the 1938 tiered stage, and the restoration of the dressing room in which Elvis Presley is pictured during his 1955 appearance at the Mayfair Club (Figure 15). Exterior vinyl siding was replaced by painted cementitious siding.

Integrity

The Mayfair Building retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. It is still a primary building within the East Texas State Fairgrounds, and the Fair continues to be held on an annual basis. While some exterior changes have taken place, primarily to secondary elevations, the building retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship since its 1938 renovation, notably in terms of the character-defining features of a dance hall and its interior spaces, including dressing rooms, ticket counter, and concession booth.

¹² Thacker, *Mayfair Building*, 87.

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Statement of Significance

The Mayfair Building has served the Tyler and East Texas community from its completion in 1926 until the early 2000s as the home of significant events related to the East Texas State Fair and the Tyler Rose Festival. While musicians played at the Mayfair as part of Fair and Rose Festival events, they also performed at the building throughout its history as a standalone venue, notably during the years of 1943–1947 when the Fair was suspended during World War II and the Mayfair Club hosted not only East Texas residents but also servicemen in the Signal Corps program and other enlisted men stationed at Camp Fannin. Shortly after the war ended, meetings related to agriculture took place at the building, involving ranchers and farmers from much of East Texas. The dance hall presented scores of important sports figures and musicians, including Elvis Presley at the beginning of his career, when he was touring Texas with the Louisiana Hayride. The building is significant under Criterion A at the local level of significance in the area of Entertainment and Recreation, and is also nominated under Criterion C for architecture, as a rare example of a relatively high-style freestanding dance hall in an urban setting, particularly for its intact stage configuration and wooden dance floor. The period of significance begins in 1926 when the building was completed and extends to 1974 in recognition of its continued use as an important local and regional live entertainment venue.

Situated 99 miles southeast of Dallas, the East Texas city of Tyler was established in April 1846, when the Texas legislature also created Smith County. Close to the geographical center of the county, Tyler was declared the county seat and named after President John Tyler. The city and surrounding area are located on land rich with natural resources and, as a result, Tyler's history of prosperity has been primarily based on agriculture and petroleum. In the late nineteenth century, peaches were the prevalent crop in the area, but farmers began planting other crops, as well as roses, which were suited to the soil and climate of Smith County.¹³ Roses became an economic boon to Tyler and were produced on a commercial scale by 1920. Tyler eventually became known as the "Rose Capital of the World," and that industry led to an annual Rose Festival, beginning in 1933.¹⁴ In 1930, the East Texas oilfields also brought great prosperity to Tyler; by the late 1960s, the local economy also benefitted from manufacturing. Tyler now sees over 100,000 visitors a year for both the Tyler Rose Festival and the East Texas State Fair.¹⁵

Criterion A: Entertainment/Recreation

The East Texas Fair

The East Texas Fair traces its roots to 1855, when a fair was held in the Smith County town of Starrville.¹⁶ Around 1876, a Fair Association organized in Tyler and constructed a large one-story in South Tyler for the exhibition of agricultural products. The fair included a flower exhibition, for which prizes were awarded. Tyler continued to host fairs at various locations around the city for several decades, including (in 1910) on the west side of the Courthouse square.¹⁷

In 1911, the Tyler Commercial Club appointed a committee to plan the East Texas Fair, and the East Texas Fair Association (EFTA) organized in 1912.¹⁸ That year, the EFTA and the City of Tyler came to an agreement whereby the City would purchase "not less than 40 and not more than 100 acres of land for a public park and fairgrounds," on which the Association would build structures to give the Fair a permanent home.¹⁹ In May 1912, the City Council

¹³ Christopher Long, "Tyler, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online*, tshaonline.com

¹⁴ Roger Harris, "Rose Industry," *Handbook of Texas Online*, www.tshaonline.org.

¹⁵ Long, "Tyler, TX."

¹⁶ Alice Emmons, "Short History of the East Texas Fair, 1993, correspondence of the East Texas State Fair.

¹⁷ Dr. Albert Woldert, *A History of Tyler and Smith County, Texas*, (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1948), 153-154; Morris Burton, "Fair History Dates to 1855," chapter in unnamed East Texas Fair document, 1965, 13, courtesy Smith County Historical Society.

¹⁸ "Fair Discussed," *The Tyler-Courier Times*, November 29, 1911, 6, newspapers.com; also Emmons, "Short History of the East Texas Fair."

¹⁹ "The City Council and East Texas Fair Association of Tyler, Texas," *The Tyler-Courier Times*, April 20, 1912, 4,

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voted to purchase 81 acres of land from the estate of Colonel William Smith Herndon for the Fairgrounds and a city park, with the hope of attracting visitors and business.²⁰

The Fairgrounds was reportedly “rapidly developed after the land was purchased in 1912.”²¹ By 1919, multiple exhibit halls — including an Arts and Crafts/Women’s Building (now Building A), Agricultural Hall (now Building D), and Machinery Hall (now Building E) — had been constructed, along with a grandstand and bleachers, a poultry building, and barns for hogs and cattle. The 1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows the configuration of the Fairgrounds at that time, including a small dwelling amid what appear to be pavilions on the south curve of Fair Park Drive. The map notes that the fair was held during the first week of October each year and that a caretaker lived on the grounds. The ETFA celebrated its centennial at the fairgrounds in 2015.²²

The East Texas Fair (Park) Auditorium (1926–1935)

In February 1926, architects Ray and Kennedy won a competition to design for the Fair Park Auditorium, but a bond issue to raise \$50,000 for the auditorium and other Fair Park improvements did not pass, and their design was never built.²³ In their initial plans, the auditorium featured a balcony, a basement for dressing rooms, and a total seating capacity of 2,000, with an estimated cost of \$25,000–30,000.²⁴ In July 1926, alternative plans were selected to build the Fair Park Auditorium in time for the coming fair, scheduled for last week in September. Designed by A.C. Gentry of Tyler and an architect identified as “Mr. Thomas” of Dallas (likely A. E. Thomas), the auditorium's final plans called for a building that included a large stage, with room for 1,400–1,500 people.²⁵ According to newspaper accounts, contractor Sam R. Hill was tasked with having the structure’s framing in place by July 27, and the building was scheduled to be completed 30 days later. The cost of the building before paint, plumbing, and lighting was set at \$8,300.²⁶

On September 24, fair performances announced for the auditorium included the DeLiberto Brothers and Company and Willis, a group of male and female acrobats. The troupe was scheduled to perform their acts of tumbling and contortion “upon the large and brilliant lighted stage of the East Texas Fair Auditorium” from September 28 to October 2.²⁷

In February 1928, ETFA discussed painting the new grandstand; in June that year, EFTA the building committee reported that all fair buildings with the exception of the auditorium needed repairs. The following month, Sam R. Hill was awarded a contract to build a new cattle barn, to be finished in August.²⁸ Also in 1928, the ETFA Board added a “Colored Day” to the Fair at the request of African American residents in the county; a petition signed by prominent African American citizens had been presented to the association. The first “Colored Day” was held on Thursday, September 27, 1928.²⁹

newspapers.com.

²⁰ Terri Myers and Kristen Brown, “Tyler Municipal Rose Garden,” National Register of Historic Places nomination, 2019, citing Tyler City Council, Minutes of Meeting, May 3, 1912, Book 3, page 393. Also Burton, “Fair History Dates to 1855,” 13.

²¹ Burton, “Fair History Dates to 1855,” 15.

²² Corey McCoy, “East Texas State Fair is Far Older Than it Seems,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, September 28, 2015, tylerpaper.com.

²³ “Fair Park Auditorium and More Paving for Tyler Up to the Voters,” *The Tyler Journal*, February 12, 1926, 1; “Street Bond Carried— Fair Issue Defeated,” *The Tyler Journal*, March 19, 1926, 1; both from texashistory.unt.edu.

²⁴ “Ray and Kennedy, Local Architects, Win on Plans for Fair Park Auditorium,” *The Tyler Journal*, February 12, 1926, 1, texashistory.unt.edu.

²⁵ *The Tyler Journal* reports the local architect as A. G. Gentry, but this is likely a typo and Augustus C. Gentry, a civil engineer and architect who worked for the state highway department in Tyler from 1932–1938, designed the building.

²⁶ “Contract Let for East Texas Fair Auditorium,” *The Tyler Journal*, July 9, 1926, 1, texashistory.unt.edu.

²⁷ “Amazing Feats of Muscular Skill,” *The Tyler Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 21, Ed. 1, September 24, 1926, 8, texashistory.unt.edu, crediting Smith County Historical Society.

²⁸ Bob Murdoch, “History of the East Texas Fair from January 9, 1928,” Board of Director’s Meeting, June 30, 1938, compiled February 22, 1988.

²⁹ Murdoch, “History of the East Texas Fair from January 9, 1928,” Meeting of May 14, 1928, compiled February 22, 1988.

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Conversion for Use as the Women's Home Demonstration Building (1935-1938)

In 1935, EFTA converted the auditorium into an exhibition space for Smith County women's home demonstration clubs. W. O. Cox, agricultural manager for the Tyler Chamber of Commerce, spoke to 150 women from clubs around the county while they were on retreat at Burns Lake. Mr. Cox assured the women that changes to "the old auditorium" would provide them with space large enough for their exhibits at the fair that year.³⁰ The flower show display, planned for the auditorium's stage, was touted as a notable attraction that year and featured local nursery stock with roses as the focus. A planning committee hired a landscape artist; designed in the style of an outdoor garden, the walls of the auditorium building were covered with wild murdock, and six tree trunks appeared to grow through the roof. Special features included a bird bath, goldfish pond, and miniature Japanese teahouse.³¹ The auditorium was known as the Women's Home Demonstration Building until 1938, when it began to host Tyler Rose Festival Queen's Ball.

The Mayfair Club (1938-1943)

In June 1938, five years after the first Tyler Rose Festival, the City Park Board made plans to build a municipal rose garden at the East Texas Fairgrounds.³² The celebration included a parade, a rose show, and the coronation of the Rose Queen.³³ A local event promoter, Max Gilfillan, wanted to find a home for the Queen's Ball and a football dance associated with the Festival. In June 1938, he approached the ETFA with a proposal to lease the Women's Home Demonstration Building for five years and renovate the auditorium, creating an "amusement center." In order to finance the alterations to the building, estimated to cost \$10,000–15,000, Gilfillan would present events in the building year-round to pay back his investors. His agreement with EFTA stipulated that the Association would have use of the building each year during Fair week, and that no entertainments brought in would damage any improvements that were made. Despite some concern from the board that the community would object to events running past midnight on Saturday nights, the contract was signed.³⁴

In September 1938, the *Tyler Morning Telegraph* reported that a permit had been granted to construct a dance hall at the Women's Home Demonstration Building, calling it "a new nightspot." Gilfillan, by then managing the Tyler Entertainment Company, received permission to use the building from both ETFA and the City of Tyler; he promised that the building would be ready for the Queen's Ball.³⁵ By September 18, Joe Reichman, "the Pagliacci of the piano," and his orchestra were scheduled as the topline entertainment for the Queen's Ball on September 30, to be held "in the new nightclub that Max Gilfillan is planning to make the entertainment center of East Texas." The evening also featured a floor show by a ballroom dance team; Virginia Cooper, singing star of the 1937 Follies; a skating act on a tabletop; the Peggy Clare Trio; and comedian Chaz Chase.³⁶ The building became known as The Mayfair Club at that time.

The club hosted acts from around the country. Playing "Tyler's new Mayfair Club" on October 19, Nick Stewart and his orchestra came to Tyler from an extended engagement in Los Angeles, where they were featured on the NBC radio network.³⁷ The Mayfair hosted major orchestras, local musicians, and nationally recognized musical artists for decades, presenting entertainment during the Fair as well as year-round.

³⁰ "Smith County Women Pleased with Farm Home Beautification Contest," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, August 16, 1935, 6, newspapers.com.

³¹ "Flower Show to be Major Fair Feature," *The Tyler Courier-Times*, September 22nd, 1935, 18, newspapers.com.

³² "Municipal Rose Garden at East Texas Fairgrounds is Mapped by City Park Board," *The Tyler-Courier Times*, June 12, 1938, 6, newspapers.com.

³³ Christopher Long, "Texas Rose Festival," *Handbook of Texas Online*, www.tshaonline.org.

³⁴ Bob Murdoch, "History of the East Texas Fair from January 9, 1928," Board of Director's Meeting Minutes June 30, 1938, compiled February 22, 1988.

³⁵ "Permit Issued for New Nightspot at Fair Park," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, September 7, 1938, 3, newspapers.com.

³⁶ "Order of the Rose will see that Queens Ball Properly Staged During Rose Festival," *the Tyler-Courier Times*, September 18, 1938, 13, newspapers.com.

³⁷ "Nick Stewart and Band to Play at Mayfair Friday," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, October 19, 1938, 3, newspapers.com.

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The Mayfair Club during and after World War II (1943-1947)

Although the East Texas Fair was suspended from 1943–1947, due to World War II, the Mayfair Club stayed open. The Tyler area hosted a large number of U.S. servicemen during the war. In March 1942, the U. S. Army began a contract with Tyler Commercial College to train 300 enlisted personnel as high-speed radio code operators. The program was later expanded to train an additional 1,700 radio operators, including Air Corps and anti-aircraft artillery personnel.³⁸

In December 1942, construction began on Camp Fannin, an Army infantry replacement training center located 10 miles northeast of Tyler.³⁹ The base received Army personnel beginning in March 1943, and more than 200,000 men trained there between May 1943 and December 1945.⁴⁰ Local news reports detailed the construction at the 14,000-acre facility, which involved hundreds of buildings and 20 miles of roadways, creating one of two training facilities of such a size in the United States.⁴¹

The Mayfair Club hosted national and local orchestras, including African American musicians, throughout the war years. Nat Towles, a nationally known African American bandleader, brought his 15-piece orchestra to the Mayfair while on a tour that included Army camps.⁴² The local Texas College Collegians, a 10-piece orchestra of African American musicians from Texas College in Tyler, also played at the club.⁴³ The nightclub offered various specials, including occasional discounts for servicemen and their dates, enticing them to come to the “air-cooled Mayfair.”⁴⁴

The Mayfair Building (1948–Present)

In September 1948, the East Texas Fair returned with its 33rd annual event. At least 12 committees were involved in planning the 1948 Fair; the Buildings Committee, which included Sam R. Hill, reported that all buildings were in excellent condition and that all of them had been decorated for the upcoming festivities. The Mayfair Building was set aside for petroleum exhibits.⁴⁵ In mid-August, billboards were placed in eight East Texas cities to advertise the return of the fair.⁴⁶

The East Texas Fair continued to hold separate admission days for African Americans. For example, both the 1950 and 1951 programs included a “Negro Day” on the Thursday of Fair week. In 1951, African American schoolchildren were admitted free before 6:00 p.m. that day, and the schedule featured performances by African American public school and college students from Tyler and East Texas. The Friday of Fair Week was designated as “School Children’s Day (White)”. In 1952, the Thursday was called “Negro Achievement Day,” and Friday was again listed as “School Children’s Day (White).”⁴⁷

The Mayfair began presenting sporting competitions after World War II. Golden Gloves regional boxing contests were held in the venue from 1948 through at least 1952.⁴⁸ In March 1955, Buddy Turman, a professional heavyweight boxer

³⁸ Emmons, “Short History of the East Texas Fair”; also Philip L. Dibert, “World War Two Comes to Tyler,” in *The Chronicles of Smith County*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1963, 3–10. The Signal Corps Detachment officially ended in Tyler in July 1943, when Third Company B completed its 13-week training course.

³⁹ Anonymous, “Camp Fannin,” *Handbook of Texas Online*, www.tshaonline.

⁴⁰ Camp Fannin Association, “About Camp Fannin,” Camp Fannin Texas, <https://campfannin.net/about/>.

⁴¹ “First Officers, Men Move into Camp Fannin,” *The Kilgore News Herald*, April 29, 1943, 1, 3, newspapers.com.

⁴² “Towels’ Orchestra to Play at Mayfair,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, January 15, 1943, 6, newspapers.com.

⁴³ “Texas Collegians to Furnish Music for Saturday Dance,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, March 12, 1943, 11, newspapers.com.

⁴⁴ Advertisement, “Mayfair Club,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, July 30, 1943, 9, newspapers.com.

⁴⁵ “Fair Represents Work of Many Committees,” *The Tyler Courier-Times*, September 12, 1948, 49, newspapers.com.

⁴⁶ “Billboards Advertise East Texas Fair,” *The Tyler-Courier-Times*, September 12, 1948, 49, newspapers.com.

⁴⁷ “1950 Program East Texas Fair,” *The Tyler Courier-Times*, September 10, 1950, 36; “The Program,” *The Tyler Courier-Times*, September 9, 1951, 34; “Fair Program,” *The Tyler Courier-Times*, September 7, 1952, 40; all articles accessed at newspapers.com.

⁴⁸ “Leading East Texas Cities Represented in Golden Gloves Bouts,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, January 30, 1948, 8, newspapers.com; also “Eastex Boxers Prepare for Golden Gloves,” *The Tyler Courier-Times*, January 6, 1952, 6, newspapers.com.

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from Tyler, fought Jim Saddler at the Mayfair; the undercard included African American boxers. Turman was the main event and won by technical knockout (TKO) in the second round.⁴⁹

Tyler also was part of the Houston–Dallas professional wrestling circuit, and wrestling matches were held at the Mayfair beginning in April 1951. Wrestling legend Fritz Von Erich (1929–1997, born Jack Barton Adkisson in Jewett, Texas, about 90 miles southwest of Tyler) had top billing at the Mayfair in 1969, having come directly from the Dallas Sportatorium; his signature move was called “the Iron Claw.”⁵⁰

In addition to various entertainments, agricultural groups in the community met at the Mayfair. In December 1947, the newly organized Heart of East Texas Agricultural Council held their first general meeting, with a barbeque, at the building. The council was formed to promote the agricultural welfare of Smith County and Tyler and to assist various agricultural agencies in their programs.⁵¹ From January 31–February 28, 1952, the Smith County Agricultural Agent Ben Browning and the East Texas Agricultural Council presented weekly farm clinics at the Mayfair, in lieu of community meetings, with 200 East Texas farmers in attendance at the final clinic.⁵² On March 18, 1952, the charter meeting of the East Texas Farm and Ranch Club drew 112 people representing 12 East Texas communities to the Mayfair.⁵³

In 1991, ETFA decided to add an Academic Rodeo to its 1992 program,⁵⁴ and in 2005, it reorganized as the Park of East Texas, Inc., a nonprofit parent company of both the East Texas State Fair and Academic Rodeo.⁵⁵ While the East Texas State Fair is still held at the fairgrounds, the Mayfair Building has not been actively used since the last Fair and Rose Festival events were held there in 2006.

In July 2014, East Texas State Fair (ETSF) President John Sykes approached the City of Tyler about demolishing the Mayfair Building and the Creative Arts Building (Building A, formerly known as the Women’s Building). While the city owned the land, ETSF was responsible for maintaining the buildings. ETSF reported that it was not economically feasible to restore the building, due to roof issues and a lack of air conditioning. However, the city responded that they had no plans to demolish either building, and in June 2022, the Tyler City Council approved a renovation of the Mayfair Building.⁵⁶

Performers at the Mayfair (1926–1973)

Tyler’s music scene in the 1930s and 1940s benefited greatly from the long tenure of Tyler Municipal Band and John Tyler High School band leader John Franklin “Doc” Witte (1885–1952). Professor Witte began playing the cornet in college and continued his musical studies with professional cornetists after graduation. Eventually he joined a touring minstrel show, and then Patrick “Pat” Conway’s Ithaca Band (of Ithaca, New York) before joining the John Phillip Sousa Band. Witte began teaching music in Tyler in 1908 and continued until his death in 1952.⁵⁷ The Tyler Municipal Band included men and women, and many of the Municipal Band members also played in the Tyler Symphony Orchestra.⁵⁸ A 1938 article containing profiles of band members indicated that most of them had begun studying their instruments with Witte in elementary school. The breadth and depth of the music education program in Tyler appears

⁴⁹ “Turman Shells Sadler with Rights for TKO in Second Round,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, March 19, 1955, 6, newspapers.com.

⁵⁰ Advertisement, “Mayfair Building,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, March 18, 1969, 10, newspapers.com.

⁵¹ “HETAC Sets First Meet Here Tuesday,” *The Tyler Courier-Times*, December 7, 1947, 45, newspapers.com.

⁵² “Etex Farmers Hear Miller at Final Clinic,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, February 29, 1952, 24, newspapers.com.

⁵³ “Charter Meet Held by Farm, Ranch Club,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, March 19, 1952, 1, newspapers.com.

⁵⁴ “Edwards Named New President of ETexas Fair,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, June 1991, 1, 2, newspapers.com.

⁵⁵ East Texas State Fair, “Our Mission,” www.etstatefair.com/p/about/our-mission.

⁵⁶ Kelly Gooch, “Mayfair Building Plays a Big Part in Area History,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, July 27, 2014, www.tylerpaper.com; Zak Wellerman, “Tyler City Council Moves Forward with Process of Renovating Historic Mayfair Building,” June 8th, 2022, online at cbs19.tv.

⁵⁷ “Band Director Succumbs,” *Waco News-Tribune*, February 8, 1952, page 4, newspapers.com

⁵⁸ “Doc Witte, Tyler Band Head Has Colorful Record Woven Around Local Music Growth,” *Tyler Courier-Times*, June 26, 1938, 14, newspapers.com.

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to have produced so many talented musicians over the course of Witte's 44-year tenure that the Mayfair Club was able to consistently present weekly dances with a mix of local bands and touring acts until the big band era ended in the 1950s.

Trumpet player Raymond Douglas Rhone (1918-2007) studied under Witte from the age of six and played in both the high school band and orchestra. As an adult, he worked as a stenographer for the Cotton Belt Railroad and, later, as a bank clerk. Rhone was leading his own orchestra by the time he was 20, and the group headlined at the Mayfair after it reopened in 1938. By mid-1940, Rhone and his orchestra were playing at the Mayfair on a nearly weekly basis, serving essentially as the house band until Rhone enlisted in the U.S. Army in December 1943 and, after the war ended, through 1946.⁵⁹ Rhone's band played the Mayfair over 50 times, more than any other group.

Other bands that played at the Mayfair from 1926-1962 on a regular or recurring basis included:

- Ernie Prichard Orchestra (1938-1940)
- Herman Waldman Orchestra (1939-1944)
- Cokie Hughes Orchestra (1943)
- Lynn Barton Orchestra (1943-1945)
- Will Rollins Orchestra (1945-1946)
- The Plainsmen (gospel) (1959-1967)

With rare exceptions, the Mayfair Club served exclusively white audiences during the period of significance. Nearly all of the performers appearing at the Mayfair Club were white, and only five shows featuring African American musicians took place there prior to the end of segregation. The Mayfair's "new manager" Hugh Cooper brought Andy Kirk and his Twelve Clouds of Joy to Tyler from Chicago on September 9, 1940; on January 16, 1943, the Nat Towles Orchestra played the Mayfair. In March that year, two shows featured the Texas College Collegians, a jazz group at Texas College in Tyler formed by Samuel Player V, who went on to play in the house band at boxer Joe Louis' Rhumboogie Club in Chicago.⁶⁰ In 1955, the Soul Stirrers and the Original Gopelettes presented a gospel concert at the Mayfair, and Bo Diddley and the Fabulous Corvetts headlined on December 19, 1962. The Mayfair was an almost exclusively white venue for sporting events, as well: one wrestling match, in April 1951, advertised a special section for African American audience members, and a Black boxer named Sporty Harvey competed in a June 1955 match.⁶¹

In 1955, a young Elvis Presley performed three times at the Mayfair while touring Texas as part of the Louisiana Hayride radio show. Presley had signed with the Hayride in November 1954 for two shows every Saturday night, broadcasted from Shreveport, Louisiana. Between those shows, during the week, Elvis and his two sidemen, guitarist Scotty Moore and bass player Bill Black, toured neighboring states. The musicians played four or five nights a week and, in one three-month period from late 1954 to early 1955, logged more than 25,000 miles by car. Booked to play the Mayfair by Gladewater disc jockey Tom Perryman, the future King of Rock and Roll appeared there on January 25, May 23, and August 8, 1955, along with opening act Jim Ed and Maxine Brown.⁶² The January show was part of a tour that included stops in Hawkins, Longview, and Gaston, Texas. In May, Elvis and company played the Mayfair the day

⁵⁹ U. S. World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947, Raymond D. Rhone, Serial No. 1246, Order No. 3830, Tyler, Texas, October 16, 1940; also U. S. Census Bureau, 1940 Census, Tyler, Smith County, Texas, J. P. No. 1, Block 4, Enumeration District No. 202-8, sheet 13A.

⁶⁰ "Mayfair to Stage Midnight Dance; Andy Kirk to Play," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, August 31, 1940, 2, newspapers.com; "Towles Orchestra to Play at Mayfair," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, January 15, 1943, 6, newspapers.com; "Texas Collegians to Furnish Music for Saturday Dance," March 12, 1943, 11, newspapers.com; Spike Gillespie, "Fame of Hall," *Texas Monthly*, October 1998, <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/fame-of-hall/>.

⁶¹ Advertisement, "Wrestling," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, April 24, 1951, 7, newspapers.com; "Turman - Harvey Tiff Shaping Up as Sellout," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, June 2, 1955, 9, newspapers.com.

⁶² James Wilkins, "The King Comes to Tyler: 1955," *Chronicles of Smith County, Texas*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Winter 1999. Also, Frank Page with Joey Kent, *Elvis: The Louisiana Hayride Years, 1954-1956*, (Parsippany, New Jersey: Louisiana Hayride Inc., 2006), 10-12.

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after they performed at Magnolia Gardens in Houston, Texas. The third Elvis show at the Mayfair was the start of a weeklong tour of East Texas.⁶³ Elvis was photographed in the Mayfair's dressing room during his time at the club (Figure 15).

The Mayfair became a popular venue for country music, with performances through at least 1975 by Barbara Mandrell, David Allan Coe, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, The Rhythmairs, Tex Ritter, Charlie Pride, Faron Young, Willie Nelson, Big Bopper, Carl Perkins, Loretta Lynn, Grandpa Jones, Ernest Tubb, Minnie Pearl, and Jim Reeves.⁶⁴

Other Tyler Venues

The Mayfair Building is one of only two extant entertainment venues in Tyler that served the community during the early- and mid-twentieth century. Others included:

- Willowbrook Country Club, 3205 West Erwin St. (opened in 1922, building replaced in 1962)
- Blackstone Hotel Ballroom, corner of Broadway Ave. and East Locust St. (opened in 1928, demolished in October 1985)
- Mack's Town Tavern, originally located at 2824 West Erwin St., relocated "beyond the city limits on the West Dixie Highway" (exact address unknown) in 1937; name changed to Rose City Dinner Club in 1947⁶⁵
- American Legion Hall, 309 E. Ferguson St (a renovated building opened in December 1949; now demolished)

The Tyler High School Auditorium, now known as the D. K. Caldwell Auditorium, is the only other known venue that hosted touring theater companies and other significant events since at least 1940 and still provides the community with entertainment space today. With seating for more than 1,700, it was constructed with a balcony level. While no records have been located stating that the balcony of this auditorium was utilized for the separate seating of African Americans, using balconies in entertainment venues for this purpose was common in the United States throughout segregation.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Mayfair Building is significant at the local level for its high-style interior—unusual for a dance hall in Texas. Documentation and observations of Texas dance halls by the author and other architectural historians have established that the exteriors of these buildings are often nondescript, while the interior often features a complex exposed roof framing system as the primary design feature.⁶⁶ The Mayfair's exterior is similarly modest, but the interior of the Mayfair Building is relatively sophisticated. Curved elements which reflect a Streamline Moderne influence include the stage (Photos 18-20), coat check and concession stand counters (Photos 14, 15), and shelving within the concession stand (Photo 14). The Streamlined aesthetic popular in the 1930s included simple organic forms, long lines, smooth continuous surfaces, and an emphasis on horizontality, all of which are found in the 1938 update to the Mayfair Building.⁶⁷

The sweeping curvilinear design of the seating areas (Photos 27-29) lends an air of elegance not found in many Texas dance halls. Most of these buildings are comprised of a single-level space, with a large dance floor that occupies the main portion of the building and tables and chairs for seating that either encroach upon the dance floor or are located in additions open to the dance floor. The Mayfair is the only dance hall in Texas identified to date (by the author and

⁶³ Scotty Moore, "Mayfair Building, Tyler, TX," 2013, <http://www.scottymoore.net/tyler.html>. Moore was Elvis' longtime guitar player and toured with him beginning in 1954.

⁶⁴ Sheree Kidd, Email report on archival information to Smith County Historical Society, December 17, 2013.

⁶⁵ "Dining at New Town Tavern," *Tyler Courier-Times*, July 25, 1937, 6, newspapers.com.

⁶⁶ Historic resource survey of dance halls in the Hurricane Harvey disaster area (in progress in 2023), Texas Dance Hall Preservation, Inc.

⁶⁷ Sheldon Cheney and Martha Candler Cheney, *Art and the Machine: An Account of Industrial Design in 20th-Century America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936), 14–18, 164.

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Texas Dance Hall Preservation) which features a dance floor surrounded by two levels of wraparound, slightly elevated seating to provide better sight lines to the stage.

It is likely that the 1938 renovation that led to the construction of the seating platforms was influenced stylistically by the types of music being presented in the Mayfair Club at that time. While other Texas dance halls were featuring polka and Western swing music, the Mayfair's schedule (as indicated above) was full of big-band orchestras.⁶⁸

Associated Building Professionals

A. C. Gentry, Sr., designer

Augustus Callahan Gentry, Sr., (1873–1964) graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in architectural engineering in 1918. Gentry initially worked as an assistant to an engineer for the Cotton Belt Railroad, prior to attending college. He worked for the state highway department in Tyler from 1919–1958. Gentry was credited as being the first engineer to take a highway traffic count in Texas and designed concrete ships for the U.S. Government during World War I. Gentry retired in 1958.⁶⁹ He designed the Mayfair Building in collaboration with a “Mr. Thomas of Dallas.” It is likely that “Mr. Thomas” was architect Arthur Elliott (A.E.) Thomas, FAIA (1893–1973), who had graduated from the University of Texas School of Architecture in 1916 and, like Gentry, was a member of the fraternity Theta Xi; their time at the university and in the fraternity overlapped by two years.⁷⁰ After working in various offices from 1917–1924, in 1925 Thomas went into practice under his own name, briefly partnering with Cornell Curtis under the firm name Curtis & Thomas in 1927–1928 before returning to solo practice from 1928–1939. In the 1930 Dallas City Directory, he is the only architect with the surname Thomas; the only other building professional with the same name was a general contractor. Although most of A. E. Thomas' work was in Dallas and Marlin, Texas, a later firm, Thomas Jameson and Merrill, completed projects in Tyler including the 1953 Smith County Courthouse and several buildings for the Texas Highway Department between 1956–1960, while Gentry was employed there.⁷¹

Sam R. Hill (contractor)

Sam Robbins Hill, Sr. (1876–1958) founded the Sam Hill Lumber Company in Tyler in 1918. During the 1930s, the 60,000-square-foot store stocked home goods and professional building supplies. In 1940, the company began building and financing “low-priced attractive homes” for lower-income families; it also operated its own lumber plant, one of the largest in the area at that time. Sam Robbins Hill, Jr. (1919–1991) continued on as a builder after his father's death. The company remained family-owned until 2006, when it was acquired by Comanche-based Higginbotham Brothers, a hardware, sporting goods, and home improvement chain.⁷²

⁶⁸ Jean A. Boyd and Alfredo Colman, “Looking Through a Musical Lens: Music, Identity, and Culture in Texas,” *College Music Symposium* 52 (2012), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26564876>.

⁶⁹ “Services Wednesday for A. C. Gentry Sr.,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, May 13, 1964, 8.

⁷⁰ Adapted from Falls County Courthouse (Marlin, Falls County, Texas) National Register nomination by Arthur Weinman and Gregory Smith, 2000 and Dallas Times Herald Pasadena Perfect Home (Dallas, Dallas County, Texas) National Register nomination by Steven Clark Bergman, PhD, and Gregory Smith, 2006. Also, AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, *American Architect Directory* 1956, p. 555; 1962, p. 699; 1970, p. 911. Also, Theta Xi, Fraternities, *The 1918 Cactus Yearbook*, University of Texas at Austin, 213.

⁷¹ 1956 *American Architects Directory*, R.R. Bowker LLC, 1955, 555.

⁷² Find a Grave, memorial page for Samuel Robbins Hill Sr. (27 Oct 1876–9 Feb 1958), memorial ID 35853306, citing Rose Hill Cemetery, Tyler, Smith County, Texas, USA, www.findagrave.com. Also Find a Grave, memorial page for Samuel Robbins “Sam” Hill Jr. (25 Jun 1919–9 Feb 1991), memorial ID 116644281, citing Rose Hill Cemetery, Tyler, Smith County, Texas, USA, www.findagrave.com; “Sam R. Hill Supplies All Builder Needs,” *Tyler-Courier Times*, April 25, 1937, 9, newspapers.com. Also “Tylerite of the Week,” *Tyler-Courier Times*, February 25, 4, newspapers.com; “Sam R. Hill Jr. Services Monday” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, February 11, 1991, 4, newspapers.com.

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Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Map 1. Smith County, Texas

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smith_County,_Texas (accessed October 29, 2023)



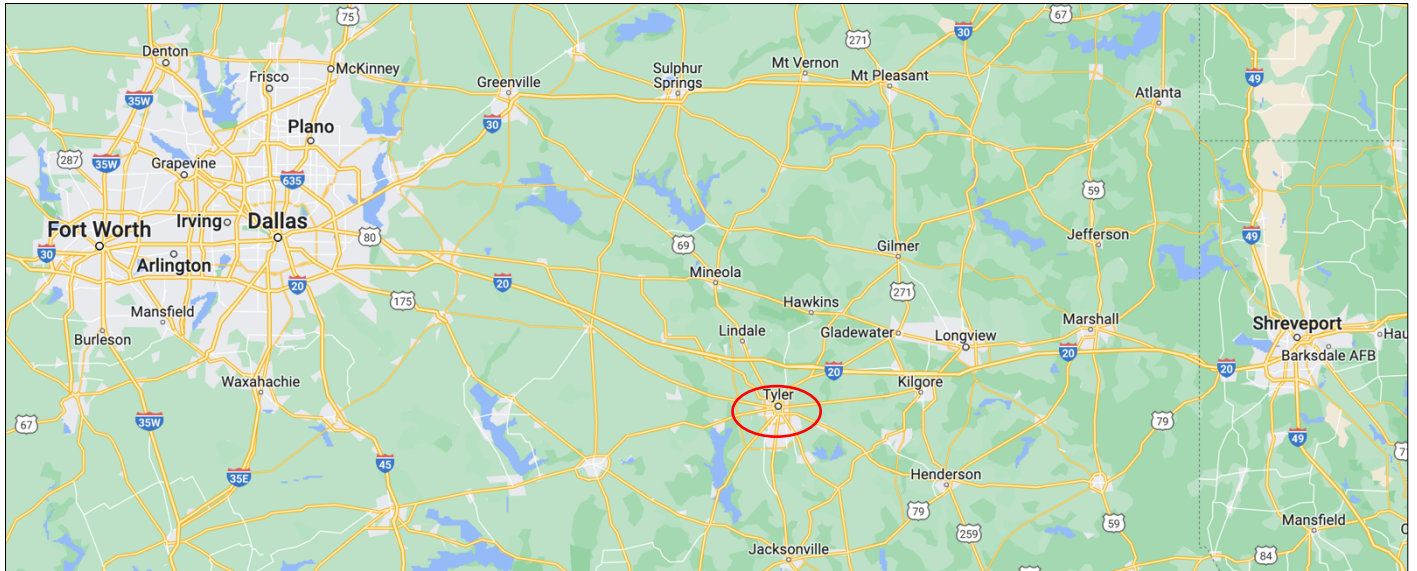
Map 2. Mayfair Building Boundary

Source: Google Earth (accessed October 29, 2023)

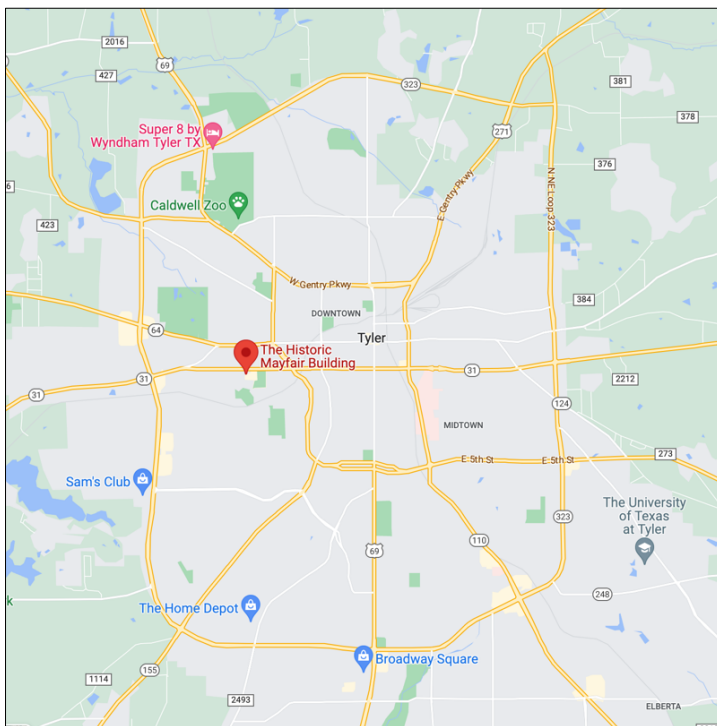


Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Map 3. Tyler, Texas, respective to Dallas, TX and Shreveport, LA (Google Maps, June 2023, annotated by the authors)

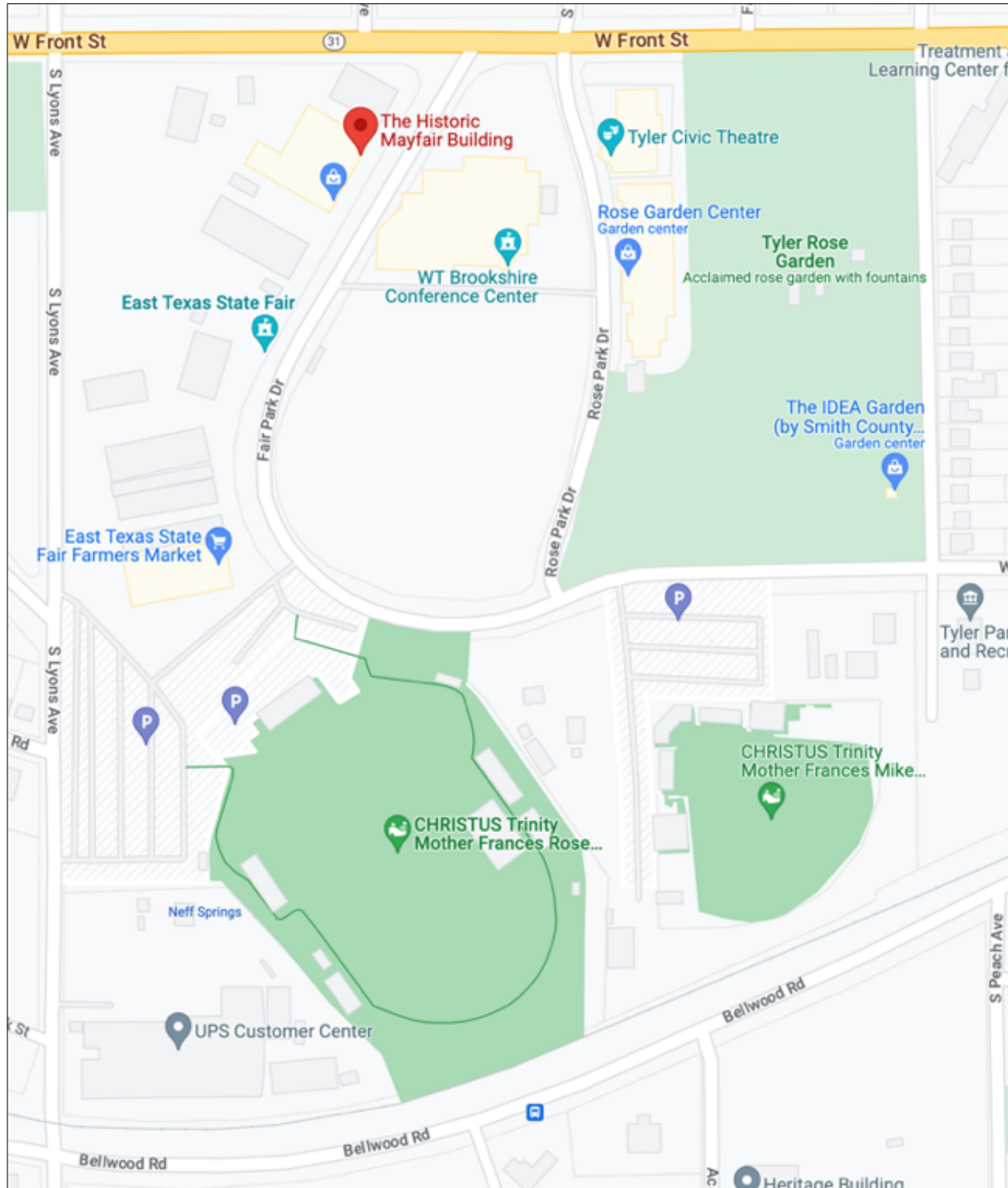


Map 4. Location of the Mayfair Building within the City of Tyler (Google Maps, June 2023)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Map 5. Mayfair Building within the Texas Fairgrounds (Rose Garden, Conference Center, Sports complex).
Source: Google Maps, June 2023



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Map 6. Google Map Birdseye View (accessed October 29, 2023; updated satellite photos not yet available)



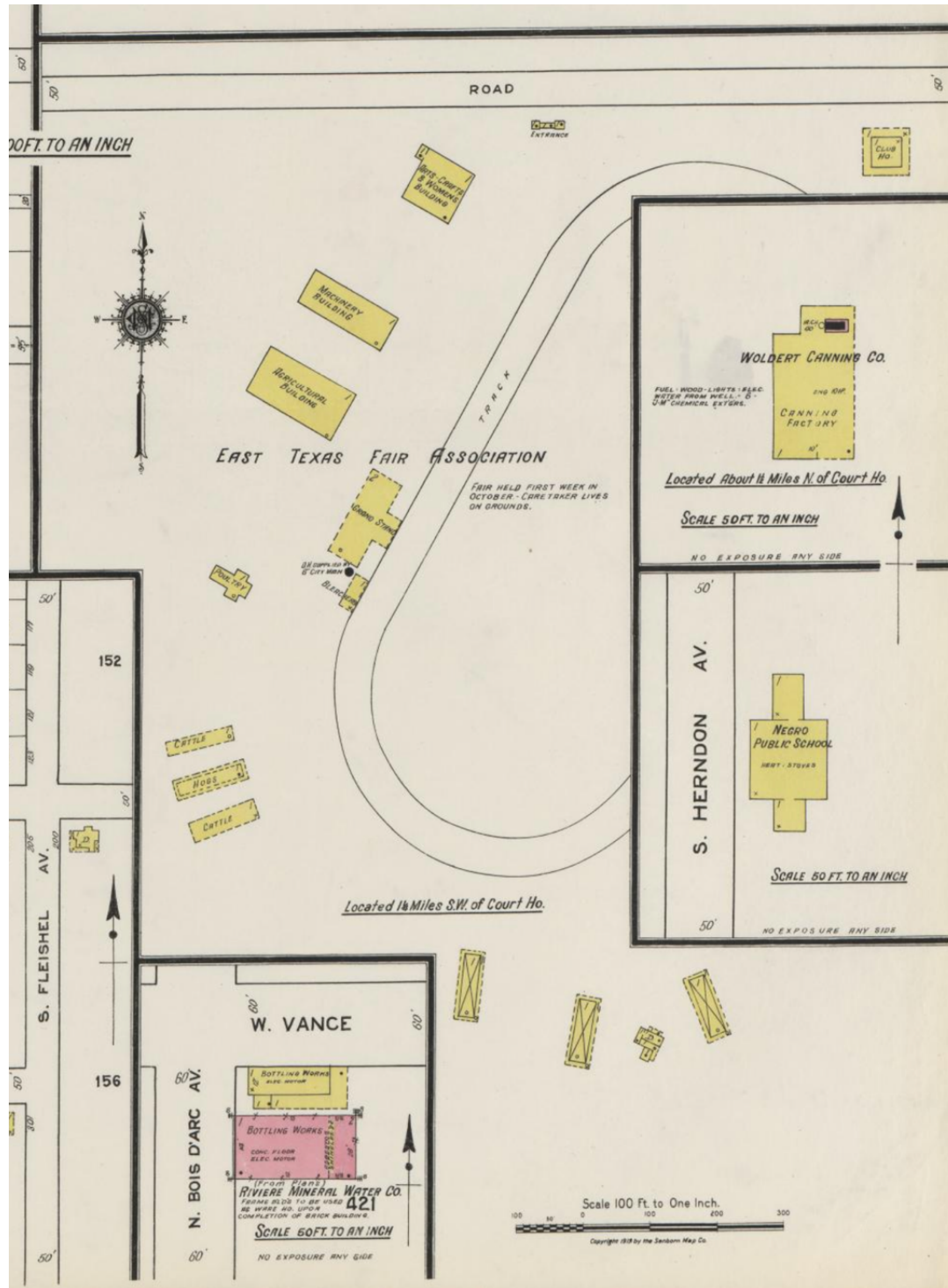
Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Map 7. East Texas Fairground buildings on left, with the Mayfair Building indicated by a red arrow
Google Maps, 2023, annotated by authors.



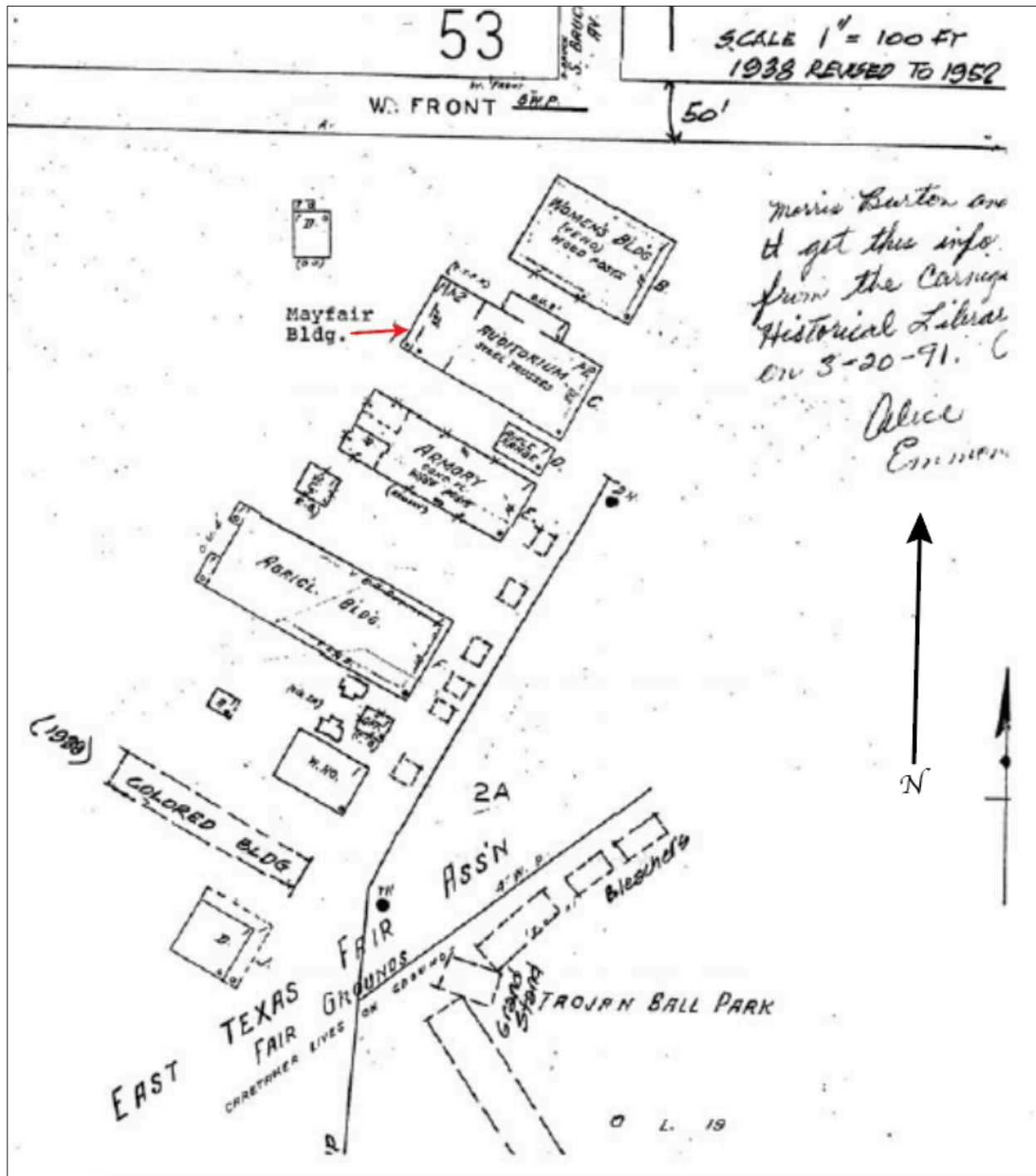
Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Map 8. East Texas Fairgrounds campus, prior to the construction of the Mayfair Building;
1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Tyler, Texas, Sheet 14 (excerpt)
(Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

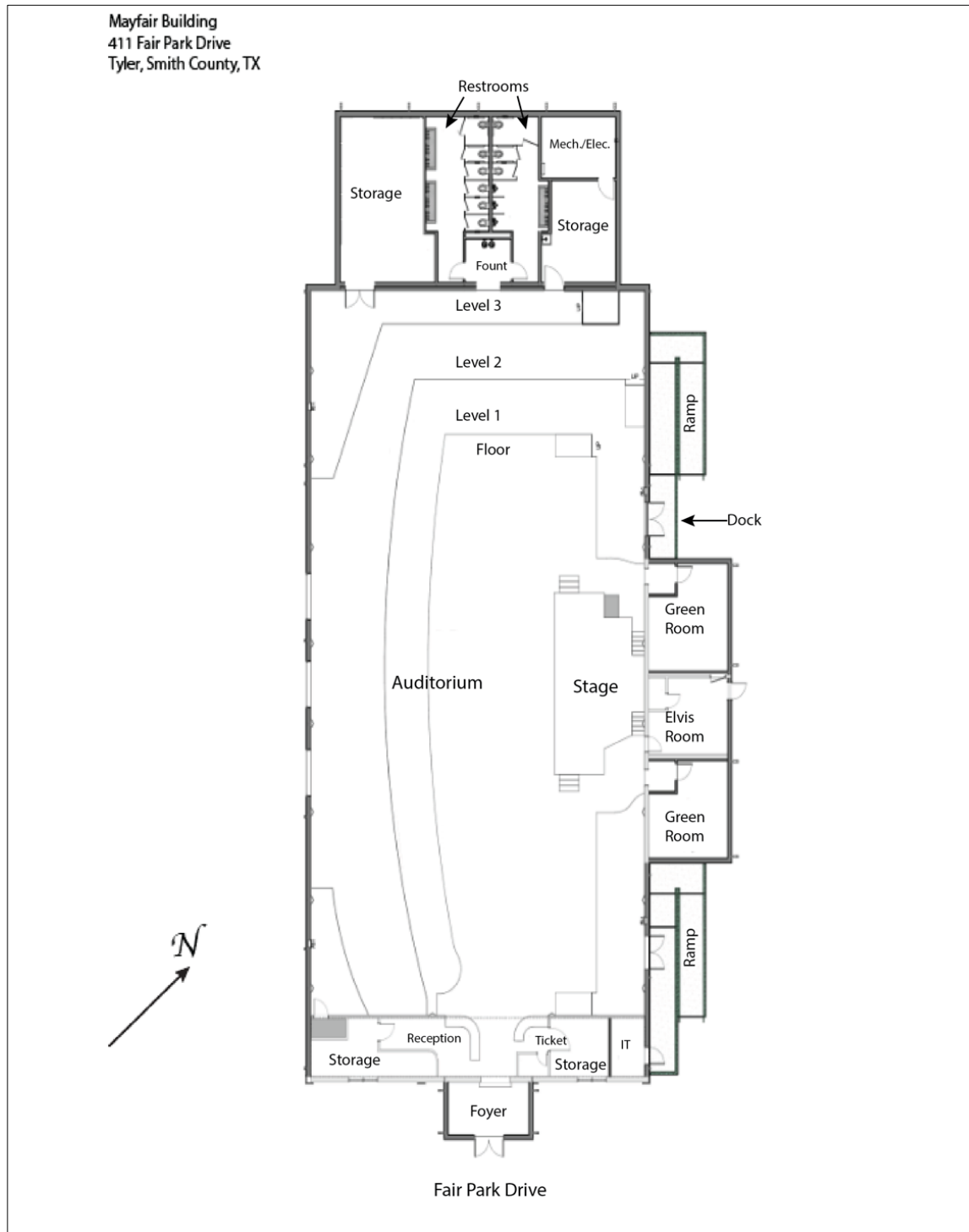
Map 9. East Texas Fairgrounds campus, with Mayfair Building indicated by a red arrow; excerpt of 1938 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map, updated 1952 (2015 *Mayfair Preservation Master Plan*, courtesy of the East Texas Fair Association, annotated by authors)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figures

Figure 1. Mayfair Building site plan (Fitzpatrick Architects, April 2022, annotated by authors)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 2. Mayfair Building as it appeared ca. 1930s, southeast and southwest elevations, camera facing north (2015 *Mayfair Preservation Master Plan*, courtesy of the East Texas Fair Association)



Figure 3. 1938 aerial photo of the Mayfair Building, between the Armory and the Women's Building, looking north (2015 *Mayfair Preservation Master Plan*, courtesy of the East Texas Fair Association)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 4. 1953 east elevation, looking southeast (2015 *Mayfair Preservation Master Plan*, courtesy of the East Texas Fair Association)



Figure 5. Mayfair Building exterior sign, as it appeared in the 1980s–1990s (2015 *Mayfair Preservation Master Plan*, courtesy of the East Texas Fair Association)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 6. Advertisement, sketch of East Texas Fair Auditorium performers the DeLiberto Brothers and Company and Willis, 1926 (*The Tyler Journal*, September 24, 1926, The Portal to Texas History)



Figure 7. Country-western dance, 1948: Partygoers pose with plow, haybale, and guitar in the Mayfair Club vestibule; ticket window visible at left, camera facing north (Smith County Historical Society)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 8. Country-western dance, 1948: Attendees pose behind faux corral fence in front of main entrance doors inside Mayfair Club; camera facing southeast (Smith County Historical Society)



Figure 9. Country-western dance, 1948: Attendees sit at a table inside the Mayfair Club, camera facing southwest (Smith County Historical Society)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 10. Country-western dance, 1948: Mayfair Club dance floor as seen from the stage, with seating and South wall visible; camera facing west (Smith County Historical Society)



Figure 11. Performers at a children's party on stage at the Mayfair Club, ca. 1948 (Smith County Historical Society)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 12. Performers on stage at the Mayfair Club, ca. 1948, (Smith County Historical Society)



Figure 13. 1948 Rose Queen at the Mayfair Club (Smith County Historical Society)

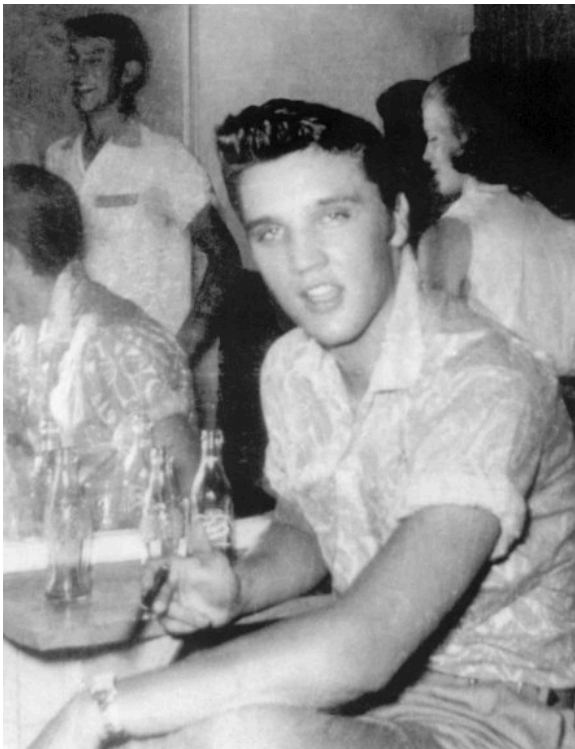


Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 14. Elvis on stage at the Mayfair Club, January 25, 1955 (Steve Bonner, scottymoore.net)




Figure 15. Elvis Presley in the Mayfair dressing room, 1955 (*Elvis: The Louisiana Hayride Years, 1954–1956*)



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 16. Advertisement, Louisiana Hayride: Elvis Presley 's first performance at the Mayfair (Tyler Courier-Times, January 7, 1955)

From KWKH's
Louisiana Hayride
Tom Perryman of KSIJ
Presents
**ELVIS
PRESLEY**
SUN RECORDS: "That's
Alright Moma" — "Blue
Moon of Kentucky"
With
SCOTTY & BILL
Along With
J. E. and MAXINE
BROWN


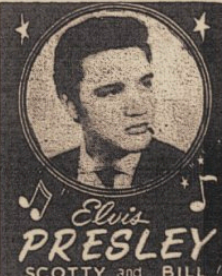


ELVIS PRESLEY
TUESDAY NIGHT — JAN. 25th
MAYFAIR BUILDING FAIR
8:00 P.M. GROUNDS
ADULTS 1.00 — CHILDREN 50c

Monday, Jan. 24—Hawkins, Texas—Humble Camp Recreation Hall
\$1.00 Per Person—8 P.M.
Wednesday, Jan. 26—Gilmer, Texas—REA Bldg. 7:30 P.M.
Students 50c—Adults 1.00
Thursday, Jan. 27—Longview, Texas—Reo Palm Isla Club
1.00 Per Person
Friday, Jan. 28—Gaston HI School—8 P.M.
Students 50c—Adults 1.00

Figure 17. Advertisement, Louisiana Hayride: Elvis Presley second performance at the Mayfair (Tyler Courier-Times, May 20, 1955)

IN PERSON



**Elvis
PRESLEY**
SCOTTY and BILL

"THAT'S ALL RIGHT MAMA"
"BLUE MOON OF KENTUCKY"
"GOOD ROCKING TONITE"
"HEARTBREAKER"

J. E. & MAXINE BROWN
"DRAGGIN MAIN STREET"
"LOOKING BACK TO SEE"



ADDED ATTRACTION
ONIE WHEELER
"LITTLE MAMA" — "RUN 'EM OFF"

MONDAY-MAY 23
ADMISSION—ADULTS \$1.00, CHILDREN 50c
8:00 P.M.
MAYFAIR BUILDING
FAIR GROUNDS
TYLER, TEXAS

Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 18. Advertisement, Louisiana Hayride: Elvis Presley 's third and final performance at the Mayfair (Tyler Courier- Times, August 7, 1955)

TOM PERRYMAN KSIJ GLADEWATER
PRESENTS



ELVIS PRESLEY
Scottie & Bill

J. E. and MAXINE
Brown & Bonnie

MAYFAIR BLDG. -- TYLER
MONDAY, AUG. 8th - 8 P.M.

Admission \$1.00 Adults — Children 50c

HENDERSON RODEO ARENA Loneville Hay.
TUES., AUG. 9th 8:00 P.M.

GLADEWATER BEAR PARK
WED., AUG. 10th 8:00 P.M.

LONGVIEW REO PALM ISLE
THURS. AUG. 11th 8 P.M. Adm. 1.00 Person

KILGORE - DRILLER PARK
FRIDAY, AUG. 12th 8 P.M.

Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 19. Oblique view of concession stand, June 2022.



Figure 20. Coat check counter, with doors to coat check room (left) and ticket booth (right), June 2022.



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Figure 21. Historic dressing room, view of mirror where Elvis Presley was photographed in 1955 (see Figure 15), camera facing south, June 2022.



Fig 15.

Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photographs

Photo 1. Front façade, camera facing northwest (Gregory Smith).



Photo 2. Oblique view of front façade with vestibule, camera facing west (Gregory Smith).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 3. Oblique view of northeast elevation, camera facing west (Gregory Smith).



Photo 4. Oblique view of northeast elevation, camera facing southeast (Gregory Smith).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 5. Northwest (rear) elevation, oblique view, camera facing southeast (Gregory Smith).



Photo 6. Northwest (rear) elevation, camera facing east. (Gregory Smith).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 7. Southwest elevation, oblique view, camera facing east (Gregory Smith).



Photo 8. Southwest elevation, oblique view, camera facing east (Gregory Smith).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 9. Front and southwest elevations, oblique view, camera facing northwest (Gregory Smith).



Photo 10. Interior of vestibule, with original ticket window and interpretive panel, camera facing north (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 11. Original ticket window, camera facing northwest (Steph McDougal).



Photo 12. Ticket booth, looking into vestibule through ticket window, camera facing southeast (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 13. View from main entrance, camera facing northwest (Steph McDougal).



Photo 14. Concession stand after restoration (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 15. Coat check counter after restoration (Steph McDougal).



Photo 16. Electronics closet behind coat check counter (former coat check room), (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 17. Ceiling detail with restored pendant lights (Steph McDougal).



Photo 18. Stage with doorways to green rooms and historic dressing room, camera facing north (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 19. Stage with doorways to green rooms and historic dressing room, camera facing east (Steph McDougal).



Photo 20. Side of stage detail with doorway to historic dressing room (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 21. Doorways to historic dressing room (left) and Green Room #1 (right) (Steph McDougal).



Photo 22. Green Room #1 (next to historic dressing room), camera facing northeast (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 23. Historic dressing room, view from dance floor doorway, camera facing north (Steph McDougal).



Photo 24. Historic dressing room, view of mirror where Elvis Presley was photographed in 1955, see Figure 15, camera facing northeast (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 25. Doorway to Green Room #2, camera facing north (Steph McDougal).



Photo 26. Green Room #2, interior, camera facing northwest (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 27. Seating platforms in south corner of hall next to concession stand, camera facing south (Steph McDougal).



Photo 28. View of southwest wall with roll-up doors, camera facing southeast (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 29. View of hall from west corner, camera facing east (Steph McDougal).



Photo 30. View of hall from west corner, camera facing southeast (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 31. Seating platform north of stage, with accessible ramp and doorway to Green Room #2, camera facing north (Steph McDougal).



Photo 32. Detail view of painted edge of seating platform, camera facing north (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 33. Doorways at rear (northwest) wall, camera facing northwest (Steph McDougal).



Photo 34. Restroom lobby at rear (northwest) wall, camera facing northwest (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 35. Men's restroom doorway, camera facing north (Steph McDougal).

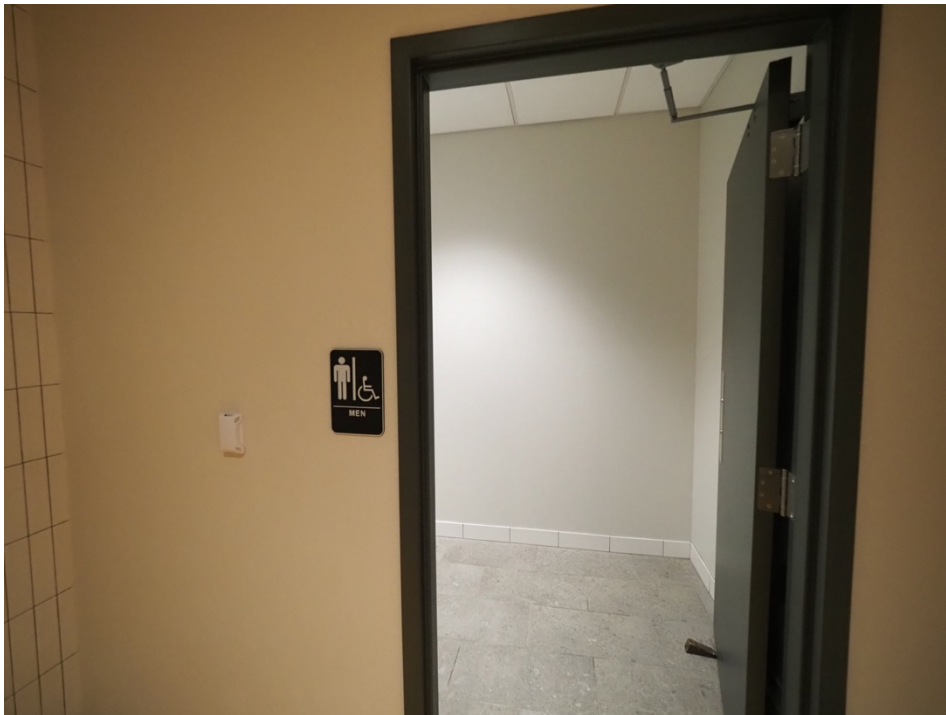


Photo 36. Men's restroom interior, camera facing northwest (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 37. Women's restroom doorway, camera facing west (Steph McDougal).



Photo 38. Women's restroom interior, camera facing northwest (Steph McDougal).



Mayfair Building, Tyler, Smith County, Texas

Photo 39. Storage room doorway, west corner, camera facing west (Steph McDougal).



Photo 40. Storage room interior, camera facing northwest (Steph McDougal).



- end -