

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

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date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number All

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6. Name: Main Building, Southwest Texas Normal School
(Common name - Main Building, or Old Main, Southwest Texas State University)

Location: Old Main Street, Southwest Texas State University campus

Classification: Category - building; Ownership - public; Status - occupied;
Accessible - yes, unrestricted; Present use - educational.

Owner of Property: Southwest Texas State University
Mr. Robert Hardesty, President
J.C. Kellam Building, SWTSU
San Marcos, Texas 78666

Description: Condition - good; Altered; Original site.

The Victorian Gothic Main Building of Southwest Texas State University is the most impressive structure in San Marcos. It is of buff brick and two and a half stories high. The remarkable profile is created by the four pyramidally roofed towers that rise from each of the four corners of the rectangular structure, the main mass of which is topped by a hipped roof. The central gabled pavilion of the south facade and the wall dormers of the corner towers add to the roofscape.

The south front is the primary facade, and is divided into five bays containing three windows each. The two end pavilions feature windows with two-over-two lights in segmentally arched frames on the first floor, with round-arch openings on the second floor. This pattern of fenestration is repeated on the recessed second and fourth bays of this facade. The central pavilion features round-arch window openings on the first floor, and pointed-arch openings on the second. All of the window openings of the building are formed by limestone arches. The walls are articulated with a corbel table under the cornice of the gable end, multiple brick stringcourses (six for each floor), stone stringcourses that double as window sills, brick dentil and zigzag courses, and indented panels. Each of the wall dormers of the attic floor contains a double window set within a broad, pointed-arch frame. A limestone roundel is set above the apex of this arch. The roofs of each of the four corner pavilions rise up from the wall dormers in flat planes towards a cornice which marks the base of the upper pyramidal section of the roof, the sides of which are concave. Tall finials rise from the peaks of these uppermost roof elements.

The other facades feature similar decoration, but are less complex in their design. The east and west walls are flat, but show a slight projection of the bays. The north front has no central pavilion, but brick piers define the central bay, and the end pavilions project slightly. This wall is covered with a heavy growth of ivy. A fire escape is attached to the east facade.

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Few exterior changes are evident. Some windows have been bricked in or their light arrangement changed. An old postcard shows the second floor Gothic windows, now nine-over-nine, to have contained long vertical lights. Tiny eyebrow dormers that appear in old photos are gone. A roof crest, similar to iron fencing, once ornamented the hip, but differs from a sawtooth design seen in a drawing, perhaps by Northcraft, but never in photos. There have been finials on the hip's ends. The roof color has changed at times, also. During World War II it was painted a light color.

More alteration shows inside. The long wooden ceiling of the first-floor hall has been covered by dropped acoustical tile, and the vaulted ceiling of the second-floor auditorium has been largely obscured. Wooden details, including sawn cutouts under each stair tread and beaded wainscoting, have been painted light brown. The stairs remain important features; the eastern one sends a single flight to a landing where it branches in two, and the western flights are hidden behind side walls from where they converge at a landing where there is a single flight to the second floor. University officials and Texas Antiquities Committee staff are working together on a major restoration plan.

Significance: Period - 1900- ; Areas of significance- architecture, education.
Specific dates - 1902-03; Edward Northcraft. Architect; Francis Fisher and R.C. Lambie, contractors.

Among the many fine buildings of the state, the old Main Building erected for the Southwest Texas Normal School stands out. The design is Victorian Gothic, with steep gables, arched windows, dormers, and roof finials. The setting is particularly lovely. "Old Main" occupies Chautauqua Hill, and its distinctive outline is visible for miles.

In 1899, the Texas Legislature established the university-to-be as a "normal" school, a teachers' college. It would be located on a hilly, 11-acre tract given by the city, that since 1885 had hosted educational and inspirational meetings. The property became available with the Chautauqua's collapse. Edward Northcraft, a local professional of considerable talent, was chosen as architect for the school's first building. The cornerstone was laid April 28, 1902. It opened in 1903 with a faculty of 17 and an enrollment of 303, but grew rapidly in size and prestige. Nineteen fifteen saw its status elevated to junior college. In 1918, Southwest Texas became a full, four-year college; in 1936, it opened a graduate school. Finally, in 1969, the name was changed to Southwest Texas State University. Among its many graduates was Lyndon B. Johnson, in 1930. Present enrollment is over 15,000.

Today, Old Main houses the ROTC and Journalism Departments. An extensive restoration program is being planned.

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Bibliography:

Historical Markers in Hays County 1907-1976, p. 45.

Texas Democrat, April 28, 1902.

Annie Hall, The History of Hays County, Texas, plate VII.

"Background on Old Main," press release from University News Service, 1972.

The Pedagogue, yearbook published by Southwest Texas Normal School and Southwest Texas State College. 1905 and 1916 editions.

Geographical data: Acreage - less than one acre.

UTM reference - 14 /602480 / 3306800

Verbal Boundary Description - The immediate environs of Main Building are described on three sides by a low stone-and-concrete wall that serves as a boundary. Its distance from the structure varies. On the north, or rear facade, it is about 10 ft. from the building, and about 14 ft. from the east facade. From the building's southeast corner, the wall curves out to form a yard in front of the south facade. At the building's midpoint the wall is about 48 ft. from the facade. It continues at this distance to the southwest corner. The west boundary is defined by a low concrete platform 20 ft. wide at the building's midpoint, and 10 ft. wide at its southwest and northwest corners.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Main Building, Southwest Texas Normal School
(San Marcos MRA)
Hays County
TEXAS

Working No. 7-14-83
Fed. Reg. Date: 2.7.84
Date Due: 8/11/83 - 8/28/83
Action: ACCEPT 8/26/83
 RETURN
 REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

Entered in the
National Register

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria _____
Reviewer _____
Discipline _____
Date _____
_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name _____

2. Location _____

3. Classification

| | | | |
|----------|--------------------|------------|-------------|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
| | Public Acquisition | Accessible | |

4. Owner of Property _____

5. Location of Legal Description _____

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____
Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____
Quadrangle name _____
UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

_____ national _____ state _____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

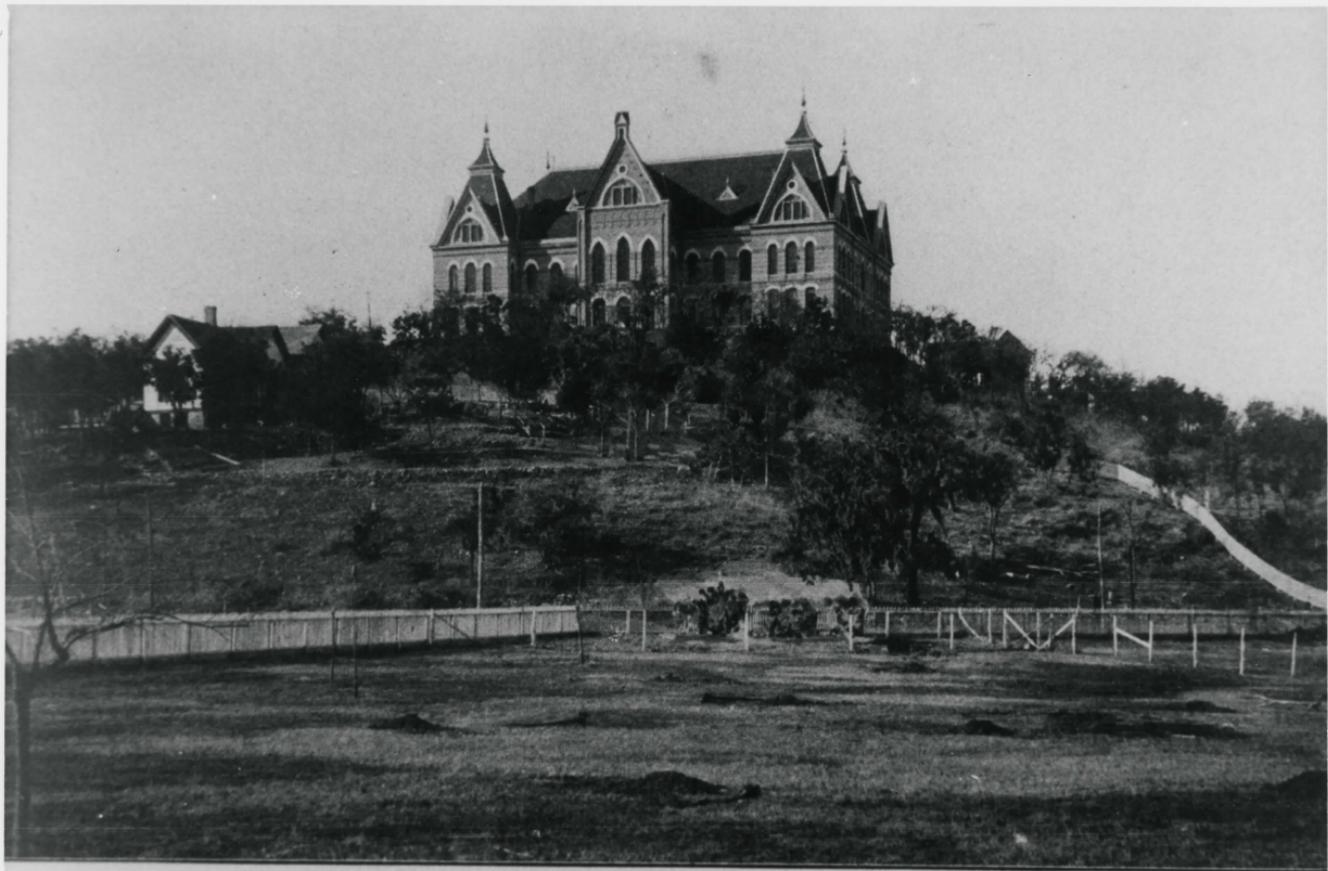
title _____ date _____

13. Other

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____



THE NORMAL.

Historic Resources of San Marcos
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas
#6. Main Building, Southwest Texas Normal
School.

Photo from 1905 Pedagogue, copy photo by
Sally S. Victor, negative property of HASM,
on file at SMPL.

South facade, camera facing north.

Photo 24 of 150.



Historic Resources of San Marcos
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas
#6. Main Building, Southwest Texas Normal
School.

Photo by Texas Historical Commission staff,
1971. Negative on file at Tx. Hist. Com.

Southeast oblique, camera facing northwest.
Photo 25 of 150.



Historic Resources of San Marcos
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas
#6. Main Building, Southwest Texas Normal
School.

Photo by Texas Historical Commission staff,
1971. Negative on file at Tx. Hist. Com.

West facade, camera facing east.
Photo 26 of 150.

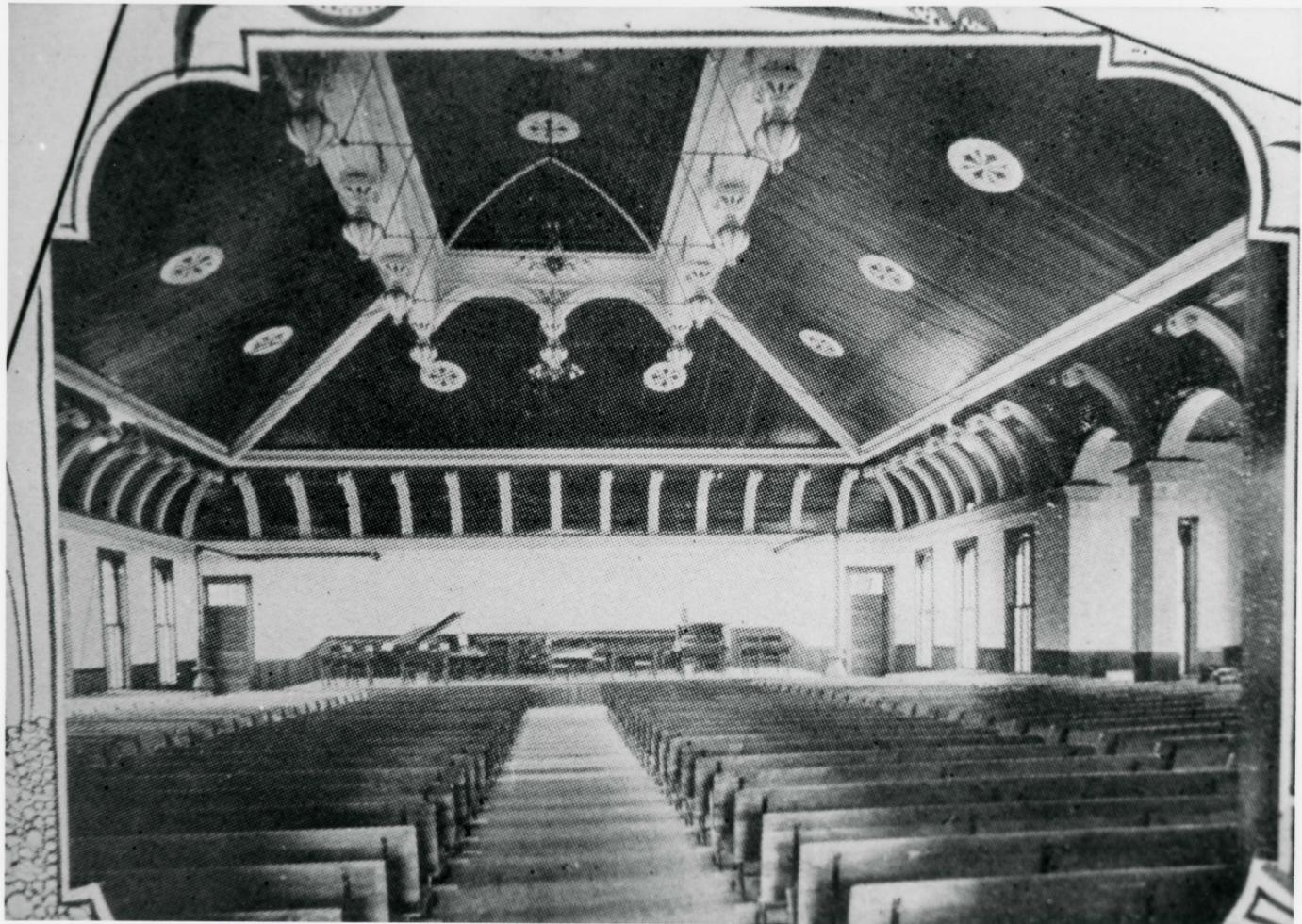


Historic Resources of San Marcos
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas
#6. Main Building, Southwest Texas Normal
School.

Photo by Lissa Anderson, June, 1982.
Negative property of HASM, on file at SMPL.

Detail, southeast oblique, camera facing
northwest.

Photo 27 of 150.

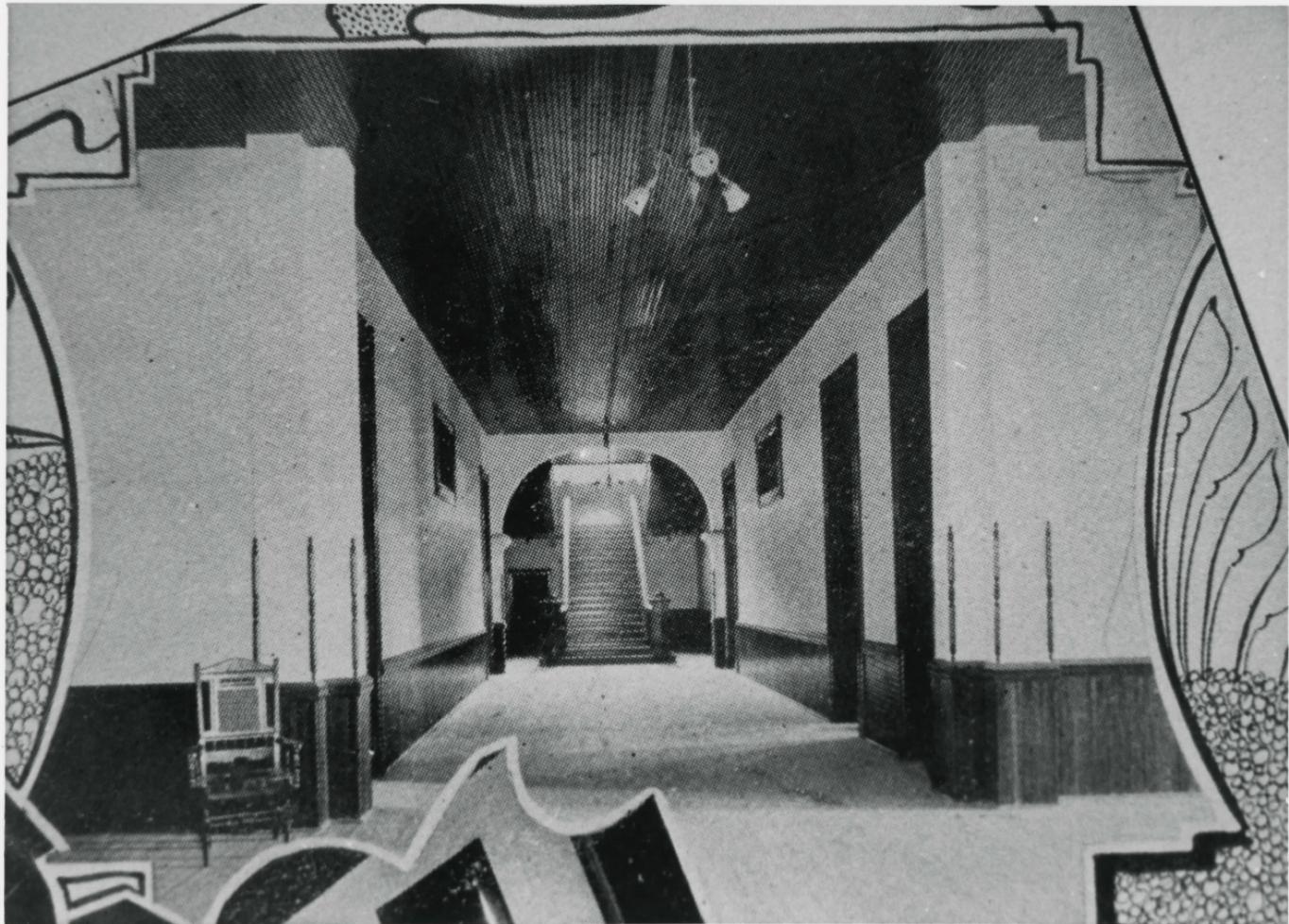


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Photo from 1905 Pedagogue, copy photo by
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Interior of second floor auditorium.

Photo 28 of 150.



Historic Resources of San Marcos
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas
#6. Main Building, Southwest Texas Normal
School.

Photo from 1905 Pedagogue, copy photo by
Sally S. Victor, negative property of HASM,
on file at SMPL.

Interior of first floor hall, camera facing
east. Photo 29 of 150.

Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000853