

619 CONGRESS AVENUE

Demolition Permit Application

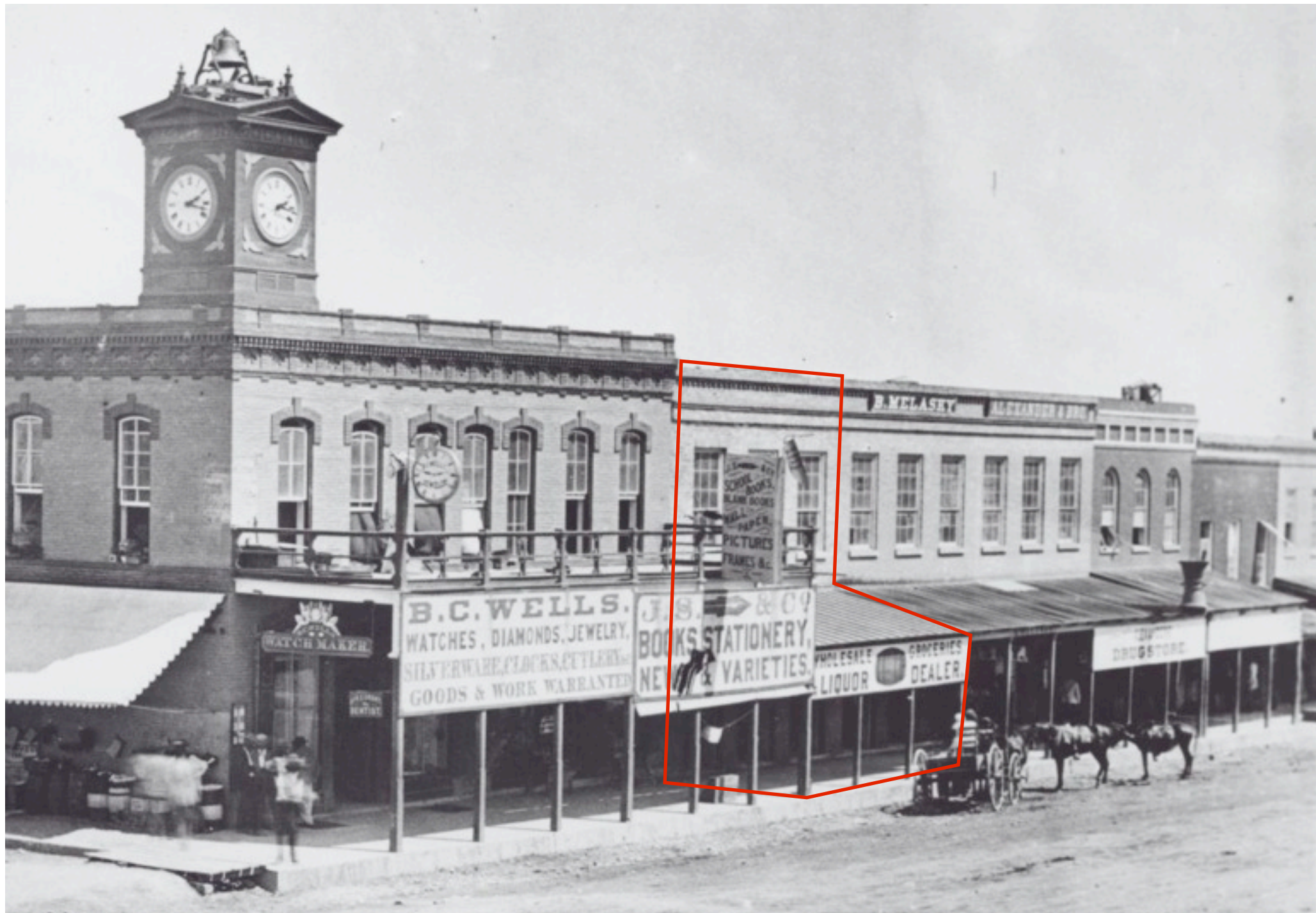
Congress Avenue National Register Historic District
presentation to the Historic Landmark Commission

February 24, 2014

Prepared by Tere O'Connell, Volz O'Connell Hutson Architects



619 CONGRESS IN 1877



CLUES TO RECONSTRUCTION



619 Congress

- Storefront details are compatible, but not accurate
- Windows are not original or matching
- Brick is laid in Portland cement mortar
- Window header and sills don't match 615 Congress and historic photos



617 Congress

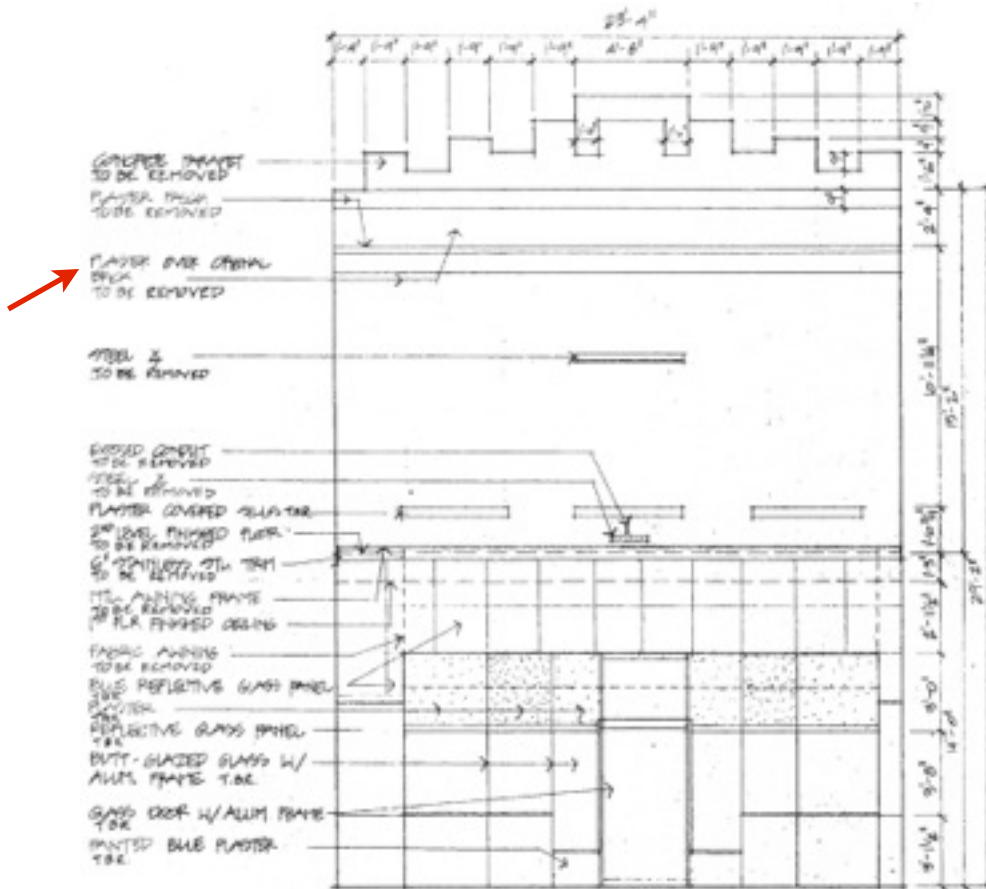
- Building was remodeled in 1953, and again later
- Historic brick cornice, windows, and storefront are gone
- Slipcover is about an inch deeper than 615 Congress, but flush with 619



615 Congress

- Historically appropriate first floor configuration
- Original brick remains intact
- Non-original second floor windows and awning

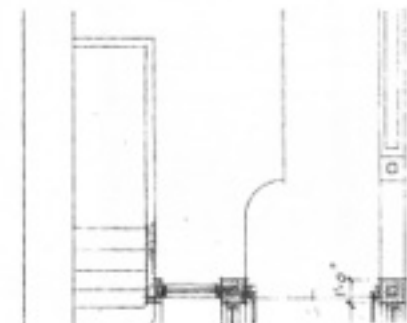
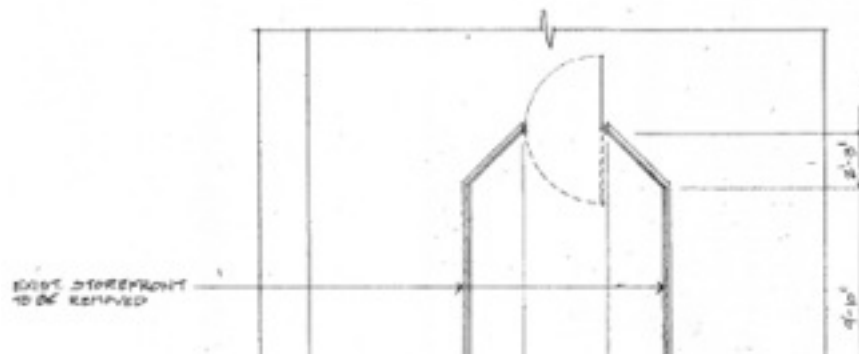
FACADE RENOVATION, 1986



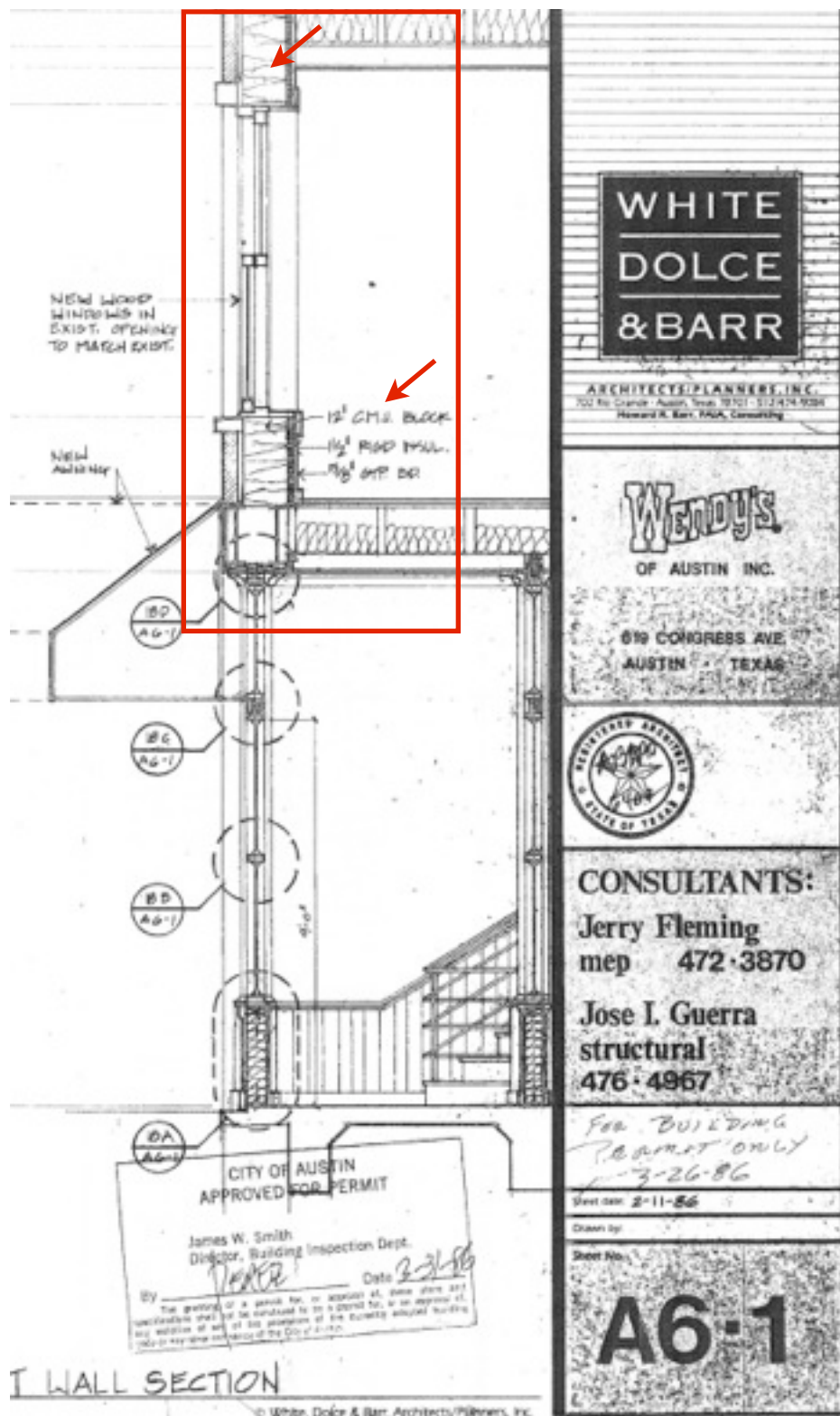
8 EXISTING FACADE
1/4" = 1'-0" T.B.E. = TO BE REMOVED



9 AWNING PROFILE 1/4" = 1'-0"
10 PROPOSED FACADE 1/4" = 1'-0"



RECONSTRUCTION CONFIRMED 2/12/14



EARLY PROPERTY OWNER

“Dutch John” Wahrenberger (1812-1864) was born in Switzerland, and trained as a baker. He immigrated to the United States in 1836, arriving in New Orleans. He moved to Austin in 1839, married in 1848, and had five children including renowned architect James Wahrenberger (1855-1929).

Family history states that he was granted this land in approximately 1849 as a reward for his role in the **Archives War** of December 30, 1842.*

He constructed a **bakery and cafe on the property**, and was the only business on Congress Avenue to make a profit in excess of \$500 in that depressed year.**

He also owned several other properties in the city. His home at 208 W. 14th Street is both a RTHL and NR property, but it is not an Austin Landmark.

* *Indian Wars and Pioneers of Texas* by John Henry Brown, 1880 [University of North Texas Library online]

** *Texas Almanac of 1850*

A bronze statue of a woman in a long dress, pushing a large wooden wheelbarrow. She is holding a small object in her right hand. The statue is set against a light-colored stone wall with a plaque that reads "600 Congress Avenue".

Austin at the time of the Archives War - 1842

- Image taken from The Texas Archive War of 1842, by Dorman H. Winfrey

Courtesy of Effie Dean Giles

Construction History

- Per the family history, the three-lot building could have (originally) been built as early as 1849-50.*
- Abner Cook and his partner Lamar Moore were manufacturing brick in Austin by 1851.**
- According to histories of Abner Cook, he “built many stores in 1853” of brick from his kiln at the mouth of Shoal Creek.***
- It is certain that the building was constructed no later than 1877, the date of the first known photograph of the property.
- The exterior of 619 Congress has been altered many times throughout history (circa 1877, 1885, 1889, 1900, 1953, 1986). The facade is reconstructed with salvaged brick used as a veneer, and it does not have its original or accurately reconstructed storefront or windows.

* *“Dutch John Wahrenberger 1812-1864, by Jimmy Lindeman, n.d.*

** *Texas State Gazette, August 2, 1851*

*** *Abner Cook Obituary, Statesman, February 24, 1884*

1877 Sanborn Map

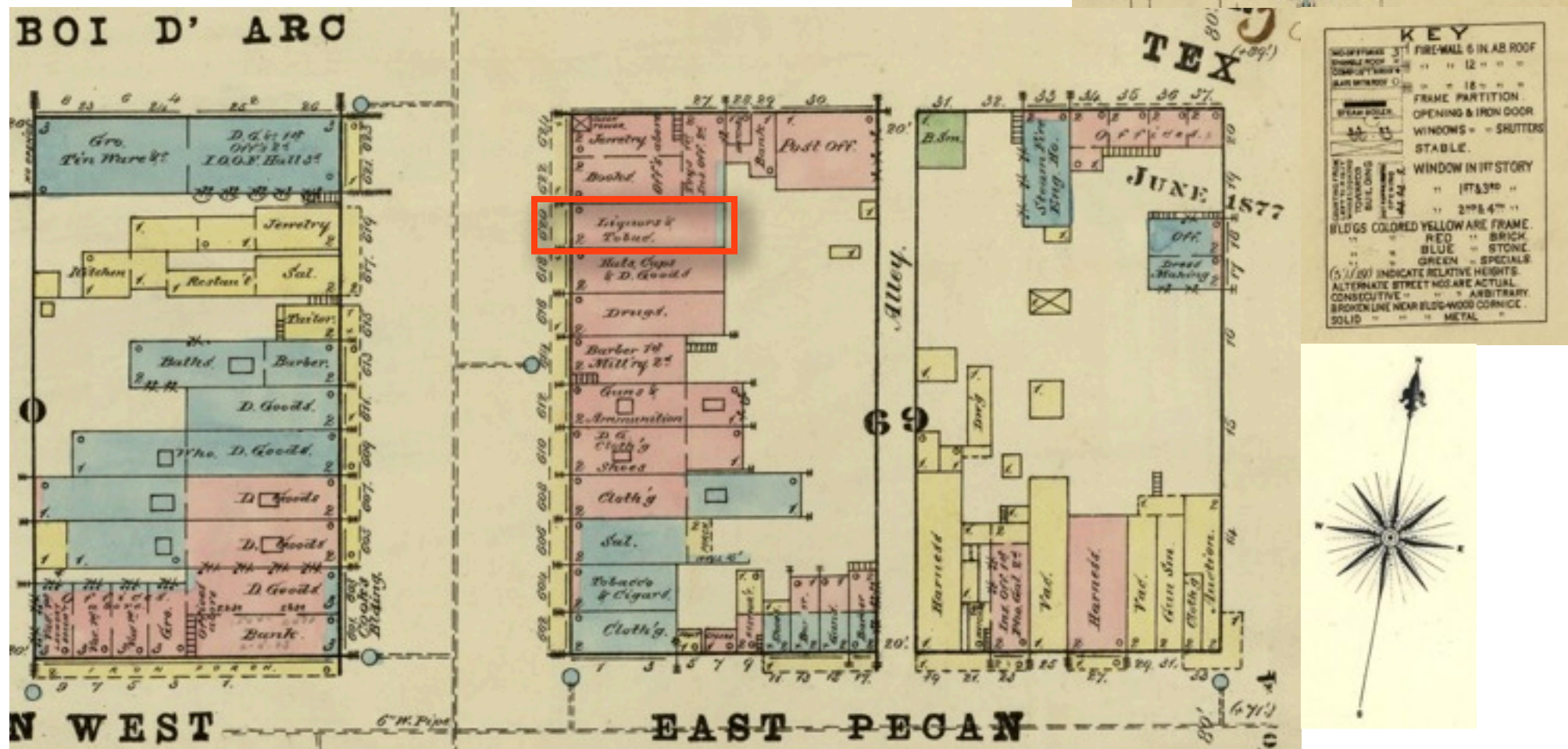
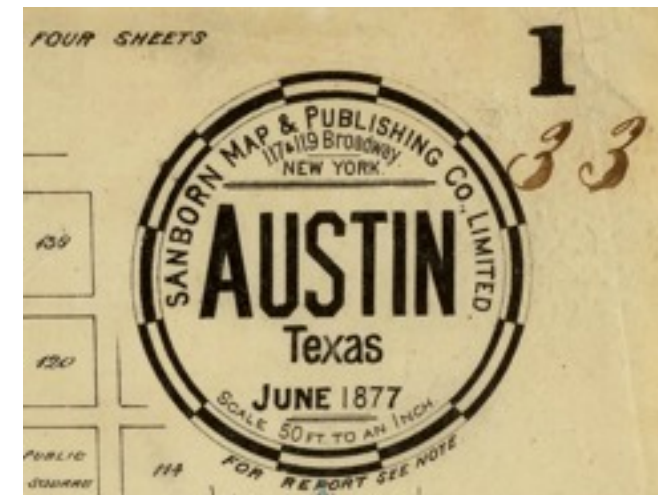
- Two-story brick construction, with wood awning on Congress Ave.
- The rear elevation has already been replaced with stone
- Note street address in 1877 was 620 Congress Avenue - Street numbers flipped between 1882 and 1883 (reference: City Directories)

1877-1878 City Directory:

620 Congress: Seligman & Houghton Wholesale Wine, Liquors and Cigars

618 Congress: B. Melasky & Son Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots and Shoes

616 Congress: Stuart & Hawkes, Optician and Pharmacy





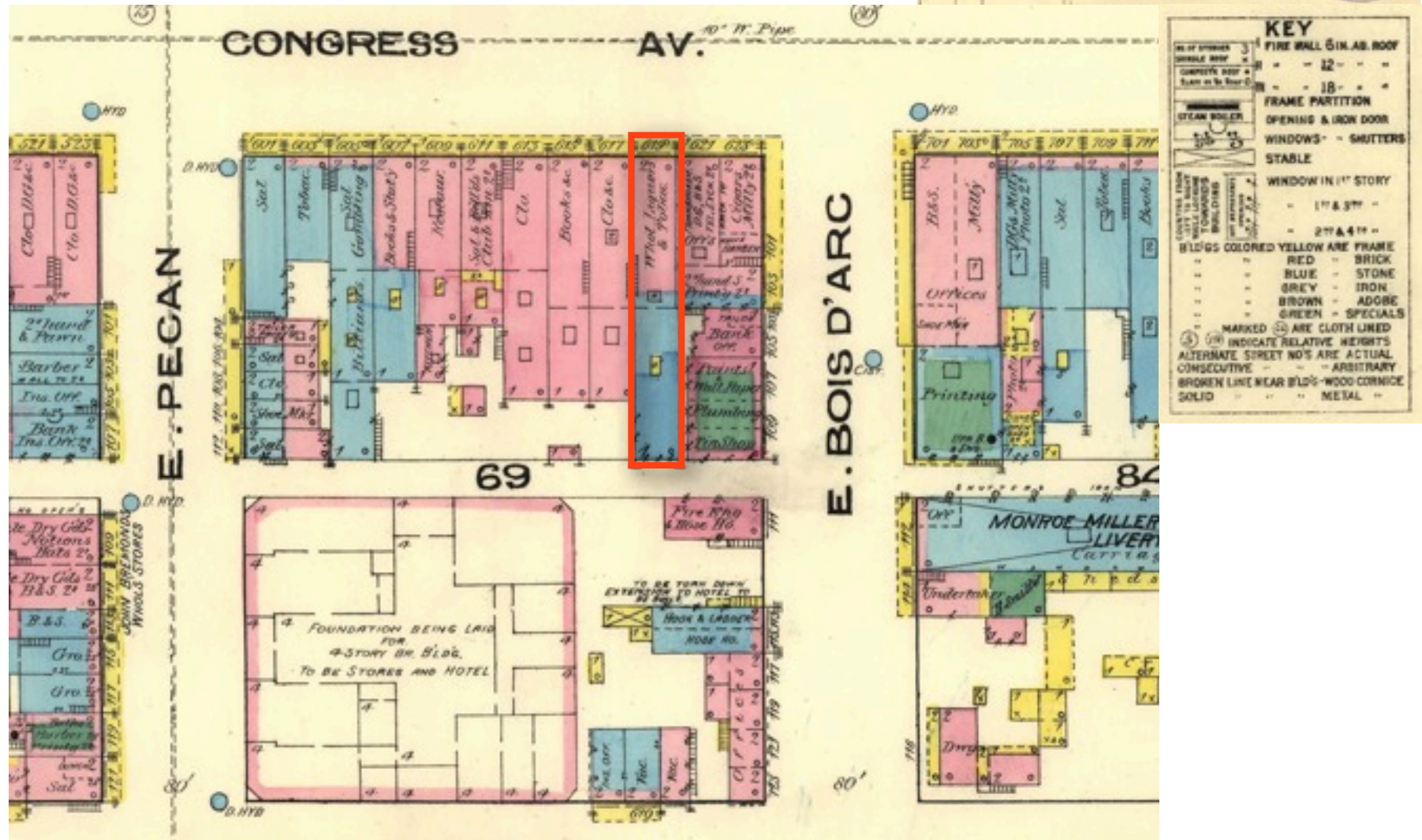
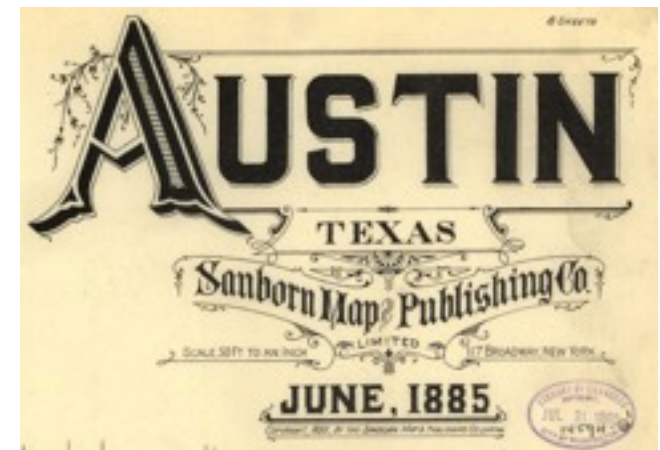
1877-78 Photograph

- Oldest known photograph of the building
- Building has a continuous storefront that spans across three lots, each 23' wide
- 2-story brick construction with wood awning
- Storefront is not visible under awning
- 9/6 multi-lite windows at second floor
- Signage centered on parapet says B. Melasky
- 619 Congress is occupied by Seligman & Houghton Wholesale Wine, Liquor and Cigars.

Bernard Melasky (1825-1911) immigrated from Poland around 1853, and was a Confederate soldier in Hood's Brigade. He married Golda Baberstein and had 4 daughters and 3 sons, including Bennett, Harris, and Issac "Zick" Melasky. They moved to Austin in 1865, and owned and ran a clothing and dry goods store at 617 Congress (center section) for more than 20 years (at least 1872-1892). The Melasky family were early leaders in the Jewish community of Austin. His obituary noted that he was one of the oldest residents of Austin at the time of his death, and told of his care of the sick and needy.

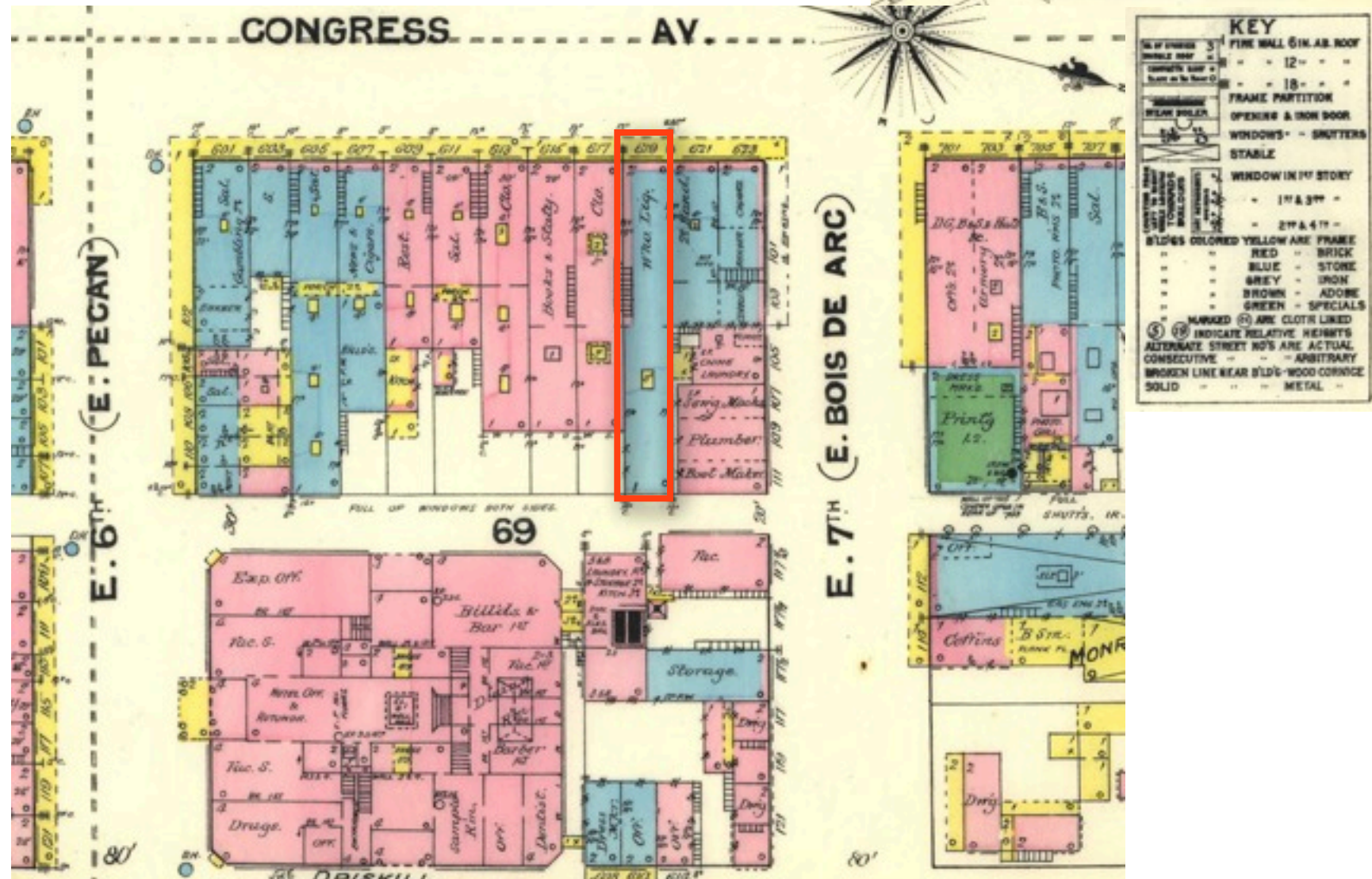
1885 Sanborn Map

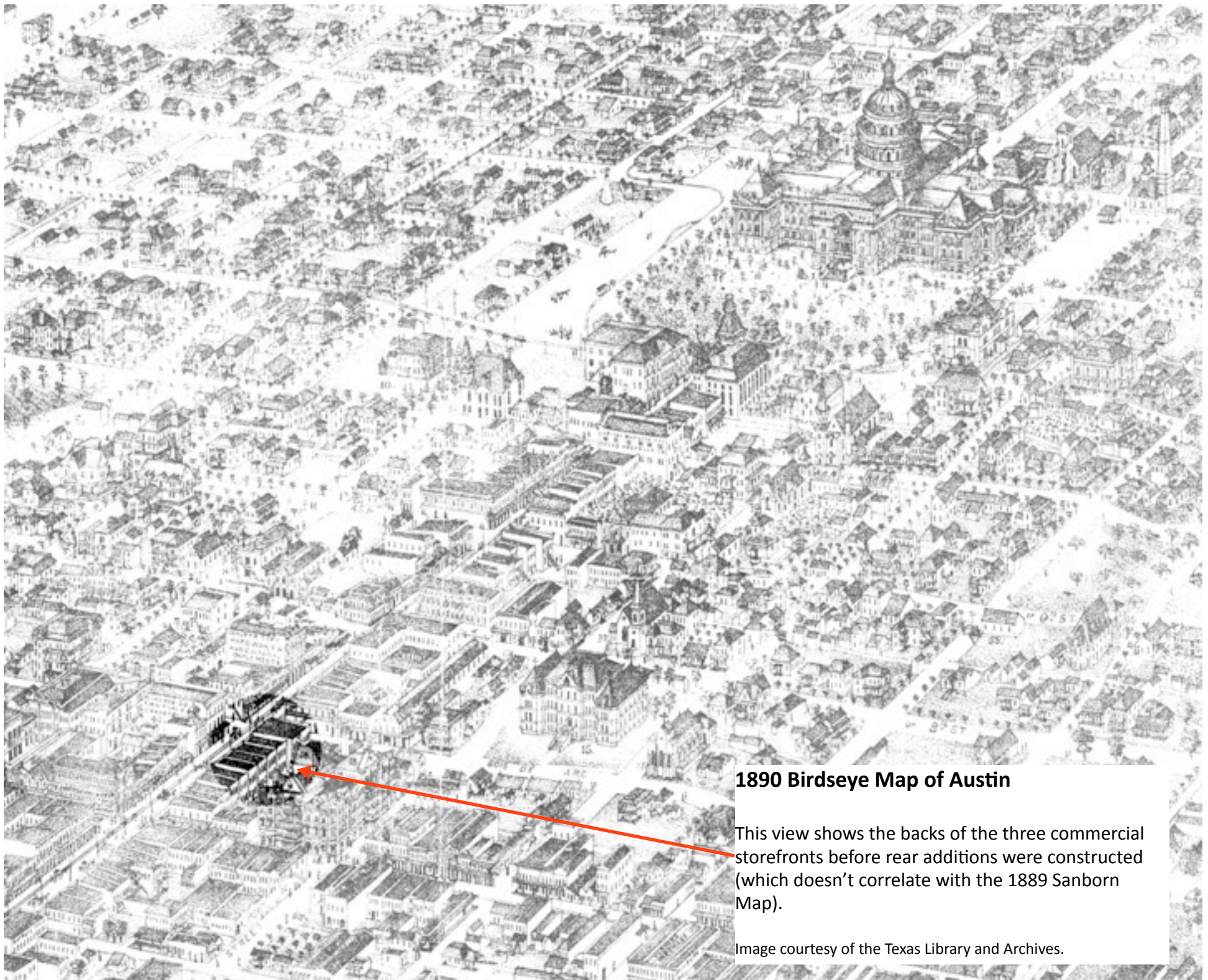
- Front half 2-story brick construction with wood awning
- New construction at back half of one story stone construction to rear property line, with wood framed skylight at roof
- 1885-1886 City Directory:
 619 Congress: Houghton & Robertson Wholesale Wine, Liquors and Cigars
 617 Congress: Melasky & Son Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots and Shoes
 615 Congress: A. K. Hawkes, Optician



1889 Sanborn Map

- Front and south wall, brick construction with wood awning, remainder of building is stone construction, which indicates timeframe when northern wall was changed to stone rubble construction
- Window openings from the third floor of 621/623 Congress open to roof of 619
- 1889-1890 City Directory:
 619 Congress: Houghton & Robertson Wholesale Wine, Liquors and Cigars
 617 Congress: Melasky & Son Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots and Shoes
 615 Congress: Albert K. Hawkes, Optician





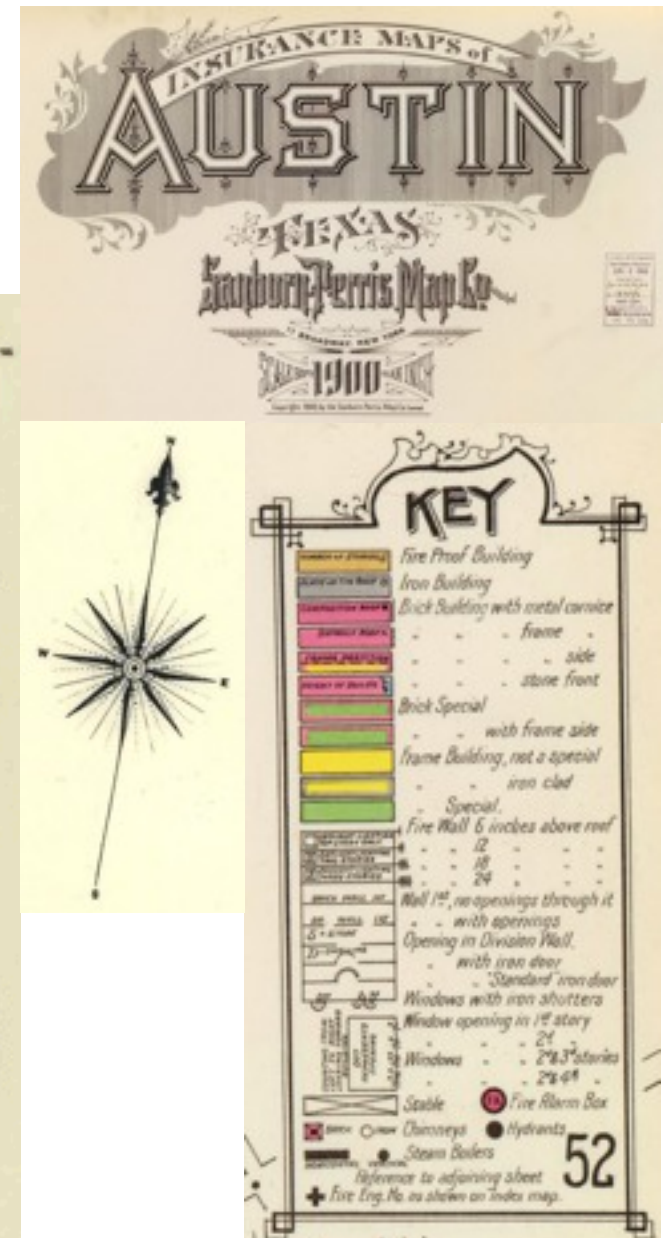
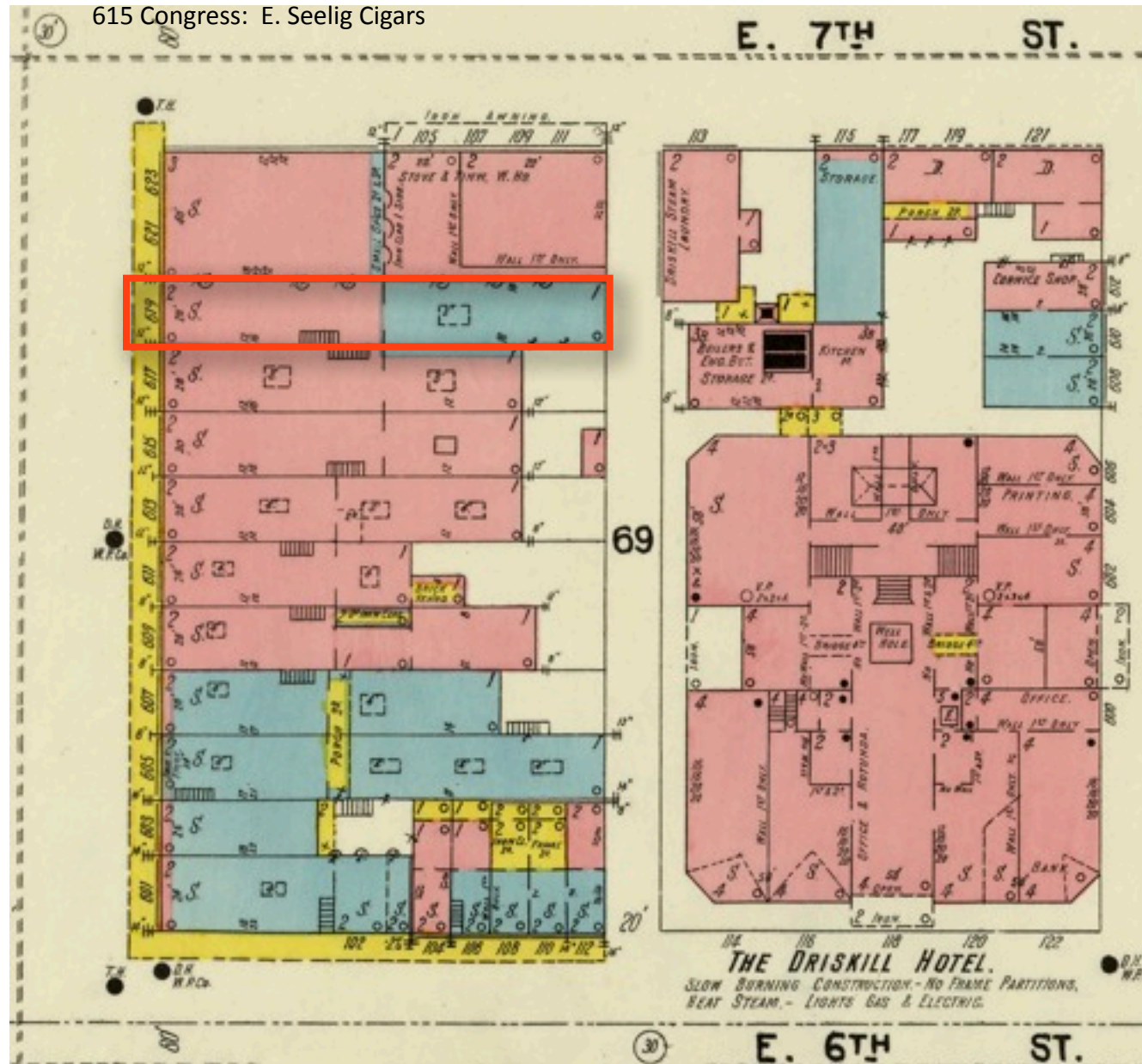
1890 Birdseye Map of Austin

This view shows the backs of the three commercial storefronts before rear additions were constructed (which doesn't correlate with the 1889 Sanborn Map).

Image courtesy of the Texas Library and Archives.

1900 Sanborn Map

- Front half 2-story brick construction with wood awning, back half one story stone construction
- Window openings from the third floor of 621/623 Congress open to roof of 619
- 1900-1901 City Directory:
 619 Congress: John A. Jackson, Collateral Broker
 617 Congress: no listing found
 615 Congress: E. Seelig Cigars

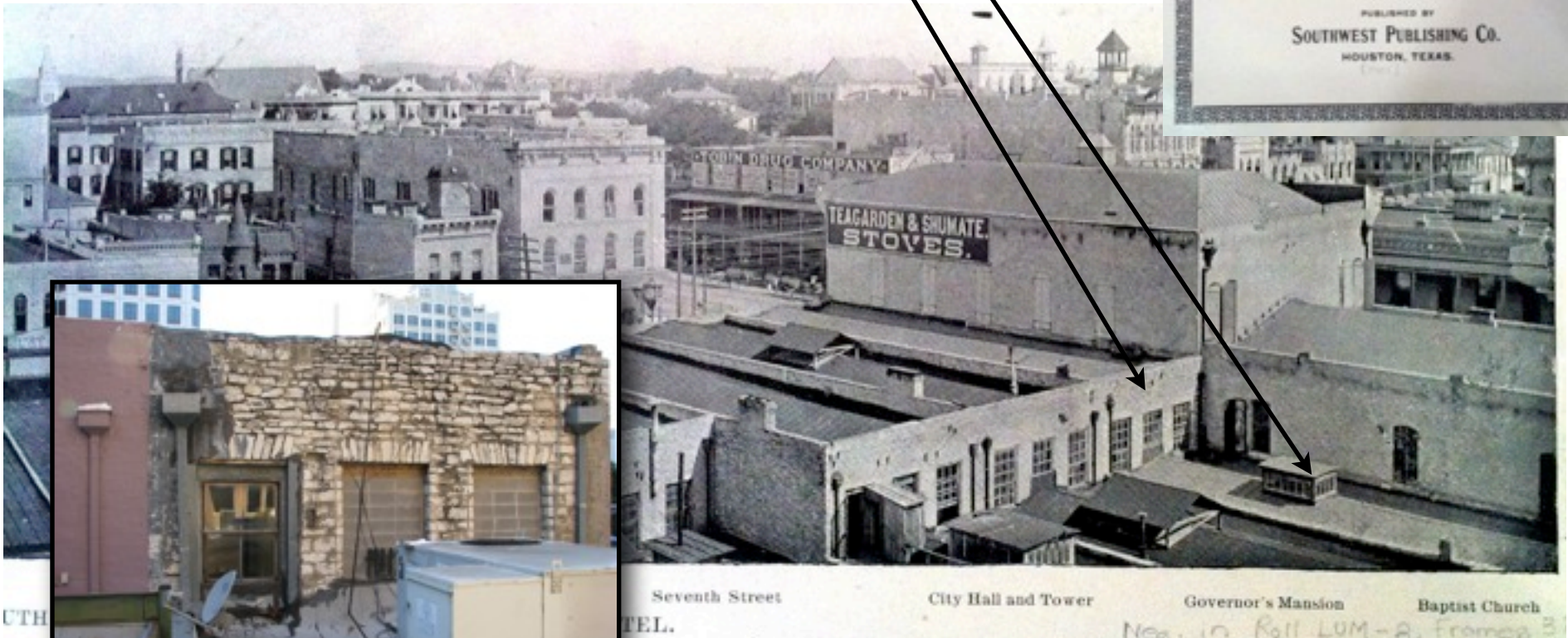
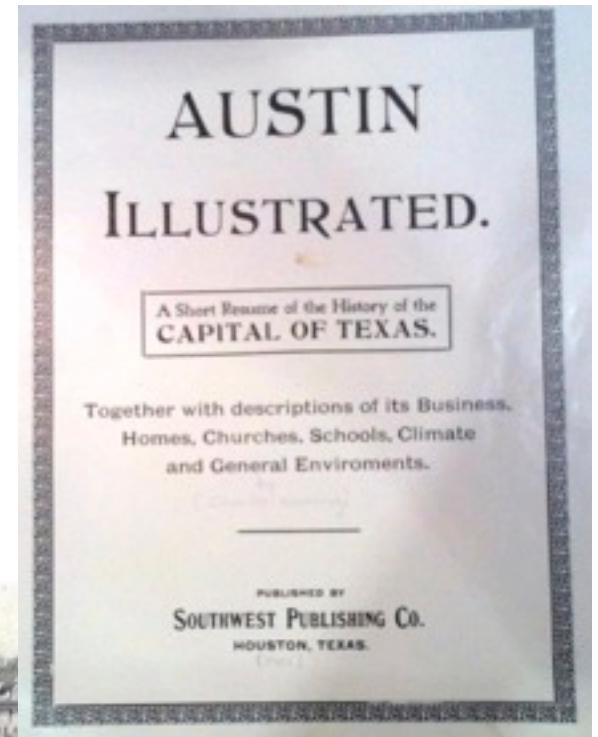


1901 Photograph

This view, looking northwest from the balcony of the Driskill Hotel, shows the back of the original three-lot building, with the original 9/6 windows (now gone).

The skylight that can be seen in the 1885, 1889 and 1900 Sanborn Maps

The second floor rear elevation of 619 Congress



The second floor rear elevation of 619 Congress today



1905 Photograph of 621/623 Congress

Newspaper ad for Harrell & Klein Clothing, 619 Congress (to the right, not clearly visible in this night scene), was not listed in the 1905 City Directory

Image from the Austin History Center files, C01047

619 Congress



1946 Image of the east side of Congress, between 6th and 7th

Image created by Neal Douglass as part of a larger photo series. 619 Congress has been modified with the stepped parapet and the windows have been removed. It is shown as **Zales Jewelers**, which moved here in 1937.

Image from the Austin History Center files, 329301



1950s Photograph of 621/623 Congress

The building deteriorated and eventually was destroyed by fire in the 1950s.

619 Congress has changed to Mission Jewelers.

The original storefront at 617 Congress was replaced with a modern facade by architect Winfred Gustafson in 1956.

615 Congress remains largely intact in this image, but the windows have been replaced.

Demolition of 621/623 Congress

After 621/623 Congress was destroyed by fire, this image shows the condition of the rubble stone party wall after removal of the building.

This photo post-dates 1974, following the construction of the gold glass-clad bank building in the distance.

Image from the Austin History Center files, PICH 03264

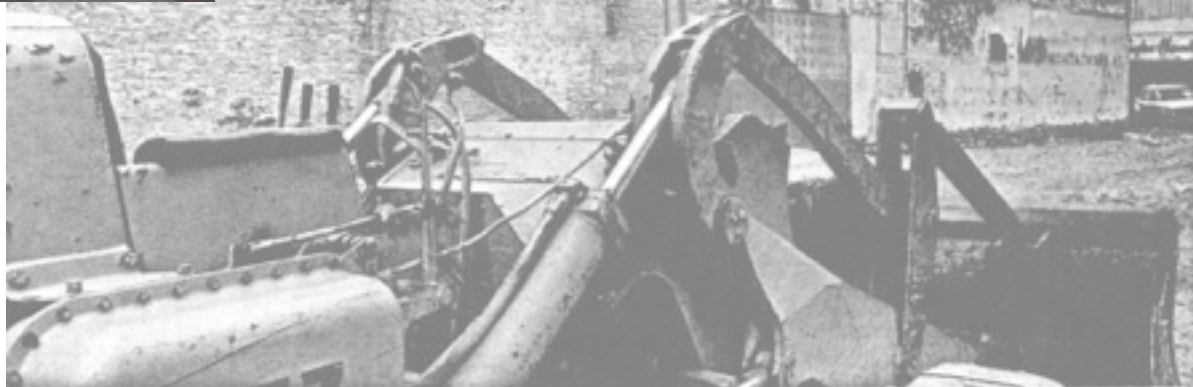


The rubble stone wall of 619 Congress was coated with Portland cement shot-crete as an inexpensive way to stabilize it after the fire.



621/623 Congress today

Double lot is used as a parking lot.



OCCUPANCY and ALTERATIONS SUMMARY

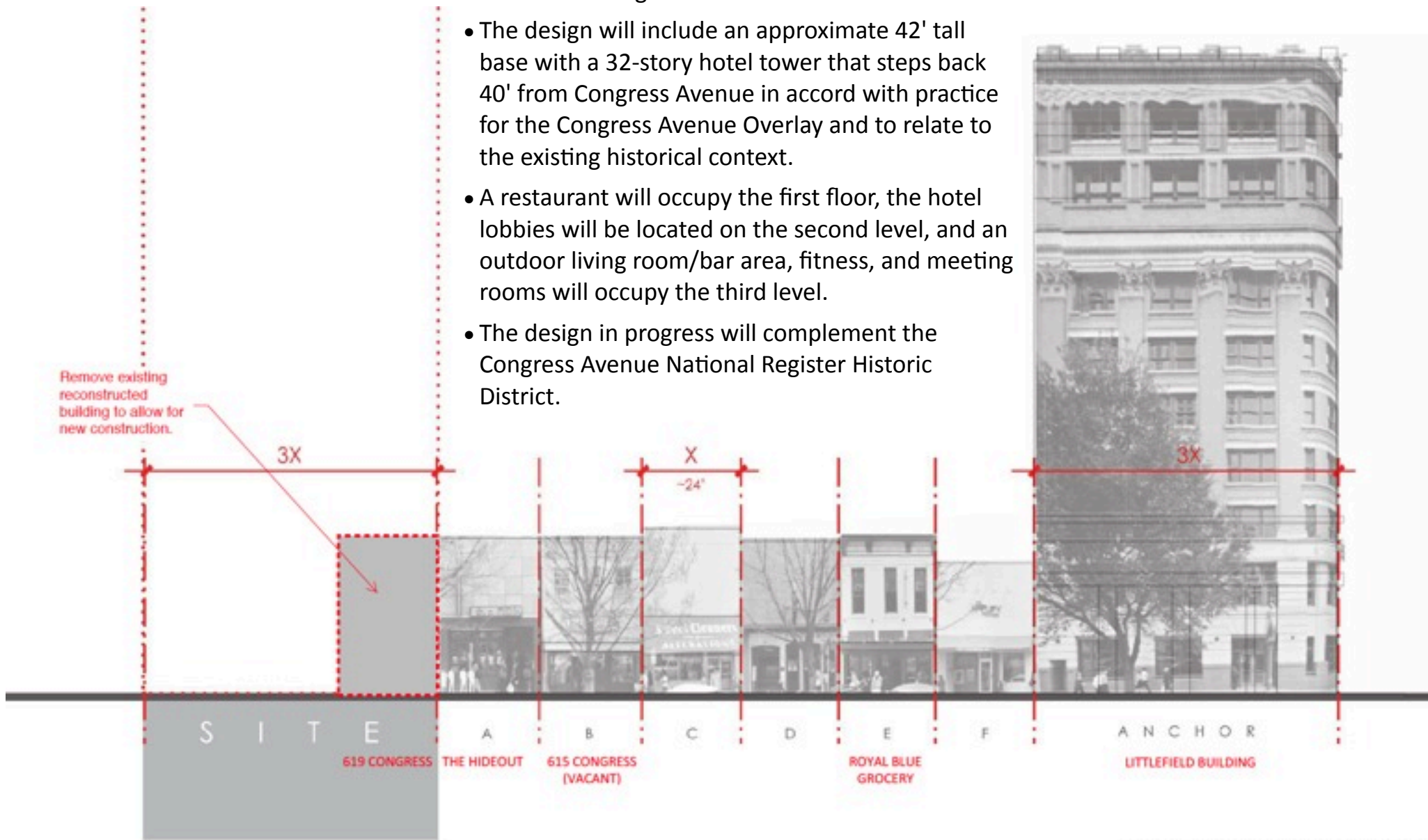


619 Congress Avenue today

- ca. 1848 John Wahrenberger receives the land from the State in thanks for his role in the Archives War of 1842.
- 1850 Wahrenberger is operating a successful bakery and cafe
- 1872 Bernard Melasky & Sons are operating a clothing and dry goods business
- 1877 Seligman & Houston sell wholesale wine, liquor and cigars, and the back of the building is altered
- 1885 Houghton & Robinson sell wholesale wine, liquor and cigars, and a large one story addition is added
- 1898 John A. Jackson is a collateral broker and later sells guns and pistols
- 1909 Robert E. Warren has a 5&10 store
- 1912 Hirschfeld & Anderson have a men's clothing store
- 1937 Zales Jewelry opens there store here with a remodeled facade including a crenelated parapet and no windows at the second floor
- 1953 Mission Jewelry Company moves in to the building
- 1986 Wendy's Old Fashioned Hamburgers remodels the facade again, reconstructing the brick facade and installing new windows and storefront, and the building serves as a restaurant from that point on

THE PROJECT

- The project is a proposed 410-key hotel and retail development to be located at the southeast corner of 7th and Congress Avenue.
- The design will include an approximate 42' tall base with a 32-story hotel tower that steps back 40' from Congress Avenue in accord with practice for the Congress Avenue Overlay and to relate to the existing historical context.
- A restaurant will occupy the first floor, the hotel lobbies will be located on the second level, and an outdoor living room/bar area, fitness, and meeting rooms will occupy the third level.
- The design in progress will complement the Congress Avenue National Register Historic District.



FACADE RHYTHM

EXISTING FACADE ANALYSIS

DESIGN PARAMETERS

1. The reconstructed facade at 619 Congress does not have architectural integrity to merit preservation and incorporation into the new design. In addition to the historical research presented here, all plans (first, second, and roof) and all elevations have been recorded in CAD for the historical record. This building does not have a file at the Austin History Center. All documentation will be forwarded to the AHC to create this file.
2. The new design will meet the requirements of the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, most specifically:
 - 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.**
3. The definition of the first floor street level facade will complement the rhythm of similar adjacent historic properties. It will also include opportunities to create a strong visual and physical connection between the restaurant and the exterior pedestrian zone to create an active façade with outdoor seating.
4. The detailing of the base of both facades should respond to the historic context of the National Register district and surrounding Austin Landmark properties.
5. It is important to have a traditional composition to the podium of the building, with a strong base, fenestrated mid-section that complements the rhythm and proportion of the adjacent buildings, and a cornice or cap that marks the top of the podium. An awning projection from the face of the building would be attractive for pedestrians, and add benefit to the scale and composition of the design.
6. A variety of materials may be selected in this new design, including any traditional and authentic materials, when detailed appropriately.