

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number A11

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9. Fire Station and City Hall

Location: 224 North Guadalupe Street

Classification: Category - building; Ownership - private; Status - unoccupied  
Accessible - yes, restricted; Present use - other, (vacant).

Owner of property: Mr. and Mrs. Celestino Mendez  
1213 West San Antonio Street  
San Marcos, Texas 78666

Description: Condition - good; Altered; Original site.

Prolific Austin architect Roy L. Thomas designed the Fire Station and City Hall building in a vaguely Renaissance Revival manner. The structure is a simple two-story rectangle with buff brick walls, a low-pitched, hipped roof of red barrel tile, and a pedimented entrance.

Decoration is concentrated on the front (west) facade. Three entrances (the central, multidoored one is hidden behind the "For Lease" sign) are inset to form an overhang supported by brick piers and, inside the piers, two unfluted Doric columns. On the wall surface dark brown brick, tiles, and concrete forms in geometric shapes contrast with the light brick. Stone or concrete cartouches at the corners add a softening touch. Dentils and openwork brackets, some of them paired, are found under the overhanging eaves.

Except for the west facade, which has windows with one-over-one lights, the windows have two-over-two lights. A historic photo shows that the 1/1s are original, and that their transoms, now filled in, were once clear. There are 11 windows lined regularly on the west second floor. On other walls they are arranged irregularly. A stranded second-floor door on the east wall shows that a stair has been removed there. All windows are on stone or concrete sills.

The four-panel door at the northwest is like the eight doors of 10 lights each hidden behind the sign. At the southwest corner is a simple single door that leads to the long, narrow, city-hall section and a front stair. Interesting features in the city-hall area are the green and white octagonal tile floor and the vault doors that appear to be painted metal. One displays a lion's head, composite pilasters, and a dentiled entablature. The other has an acanthus-leaf frieze. Besides this room, its vaults, and the fire engine room, there is another room to the rear. The second floor is one large room, now open to the roof, devoid of detail. There is a brick chimney near the southeast corner. The only other major change to the building was the removal of the bell and its metal tower from the roof. It was feared that their weight would cause them to crash through.

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At the building's northwest corner, not much higher than the sidewalk, is a small gravestone inscribed "In Memory of Jack. Killed 12-27-1922. Mascot S.M.F.D."

Significance: Period - 1800-1899, 1900- ; Areas of significance - architecture, government. Specific dates - 1915. Roy L. Thomas, architect.

The San Marcos Fire Department has been held in high esteem since its beginnings in 1881, and its home from 1915 to 1969 is a fitting monument for the organization. Reflecting the early 20th-century trend in public buildings which drew inspiration from Renaissance sources, the Fire Station and City Hall building is the most important non-residential structure from the post-Victorian period, and served many community functions.

Prior to the organization of a volunteer fire department in April 1881, a bucket brigade fought the many fires that plagued the town's frame structures. Two volunteer divisions were started in 1884--the Hook and Ladder and Alert Hose companies--and a third in 1886, the Rescue Hose Company. By 1889 the total membership of the two older companies was 26 active and 26 honorary. The department remained purely voluntary until the 1950s, and for a time was the largest voluntary fire department in the state.

Horse- or mule-drawn carts served as water wagons until 1914, when the first motorized truck arrived. Dubbed "Old Faithful," the La France truck was still in use in 1975. Also, in 1914, the old station burned. The following year the new station was built in an attractive combination of motifs. Under the wide eaves and low roof typical of the Prairie Style, classical columns and cartouches decorate the front facade. Red barrel tiles are typical of Spanish-derived buildings of the period.

Stories about the town's fires and their fighters abound. Among the list of well-remembered episodes is the 1920 blacksmith-shop fire that was so hot that the telephone poles on the other side of West San Antonio Street ignited. Every firehouse seems to have a Dalmatian mascot, but this one had a fox terrier, Jack, whose tiny grave is marked by an inscribed stone near the northwest corner. The bell that once topped the building warned of fires and other calamities and also proclaimed good news, such as the end of World War I. On January 6, 1924, two boys climbed to the bell to summon police after robbers held up the State Bank and Trust across the street and cut the cord.

The building housed firemen (on and off duty), a town hall with stage and dressing room, and the Chamber of Commerce on the second floor. On the first floor, besides the fire trucks in the north part, was the city hall in the southern section.

After closing as a firehouse in 1969, the building became a local museum for a few years. It is presently for lease.

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Bibliography:

Edward C. Serur, Public Relations Division, San Marcos Fire Department, undated monograph on fire department history. On file at the San Marcos Public Library.  
Interview with Catherine Johnson, May 27, 1982.  
Interview with Jack Wood, June 10, 1982.  
San Marcos Record, October 8, 1959, February 1, 1973, January 1975, May 16, 1976, March 26, 1978, and April 19, 1981.

Geographical data: Acreage - less than one acre.  
UTM reference - D 14/602250 / 3306200

Verbal Boundary Description - Original Town Site, Block 20, southern 87.33 ft. of lot 1.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Fire Station and City Hall (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

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**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

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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**13. Other**

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet*



BRANCH  
SAN MARCO, CALIF.

Historic Resources of San Marcos  
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas  
#9. Fire Station and City Hall

Photo courtesy of San Marcos Public Library,  
taken c. 1915. Copy photo by Sally S. Victor  
negative property of HASM, on file at SMPL.

Southwest oblique, camera facing northeast.

Photo 42 of 150.





Historic Resources of San Marcos  
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas  
#9. Fire Station and City Hall

Photo courtesy of Tula Townsend Wyatt, taken  
1960. Copy photo by Sally S. Victor,  
negative property of HASM, on file at SMPL.

Southwest oblique, camera facing northeast.  
Photo 43 of 150.



JOHN A.  
ANDERSON  
LIFE-CAR  
INSURANCE  
AUTO-LIFE  
FIRE-HEALTH

FOR LEASE

WILL RENTED TO BEST TENANT  
BY L. L. WILSON, INCORPORATED  
200 NORTH 10th STREET  
CHICAGO 504 632-72-8333

Historic Resources of San Marcos  
San Marcos, Hays County, Texas  
#9. Fire Station and City Hall

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

Northwest oblique, camera facing southeast.  
Photo 44 of 150.

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

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000853