

Texas Historical Commission staff (BB), 2/18/2014  
27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post  
Austin County (Job #13AU05) Subject (Atlas) UTM: 14 000000E 0000000N  
Location: Sealy, 111-113 Main Street

### **HACKBARTH BUILDING**

GERMAN NATIVES F. W. (FRITZ) AND CAROLYN (KRAMPITZ) HACKBARTH ARRIVED IN GALVESTON IN 1846 WITH THEIR TWO SONS. THEY SETTLED IN AUSTIN COUNTY, WHERE FRITZ FARMED AND RANCHED, AND THE COUPLE HAD FOUR MORE CHILDREN, INCLUDING F. W. HACKBARTH, JR. (BORN 1849). HE WAS A CARPENTER, WHO IN 1885 OPENED THE HACKBARTH LUMBER COMPANY, ONE OF SEALY'S EARLIEST ENTERPRISES. HE WAS JOINED IN THE BUSINESS BY HIS SONS PAUL, ROBERT AND JOHN. THE LUMBERYARD SUPPLIED MATERIALS FOR THE EARLY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF SEALY, EXPANDING TO INCLUDE A BRICK PLANT AND THEN CONCRETE MASONRY PRODUCTION. THIS MATERIAL WAS USED IN COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS COMPLETED FOR F. W. HACKBARTH AND JOHN HACKBARTH IN 1907, OTHER BUSINESSES INCLUDING AN ICE HOUSE, AND THE PAUL AND MAHALA HACKBARTH HOUSE IN 1911.

F. W. HACKBARTH, JR. OWNED A BLOCK OF FRAME BUILDINGS ON MAIN STREET, WHICH HE RAZED IN 1907 TO ERECT A NEW CONCRETE BLOCK STRUCTURE. THE BUILDING FEATURES LOAD-BEARING MASONRY BLOCKS PRODUCED AT THEIR FACTORY, A CANOPY WITH IRON COLUMN SUPPORTS, AN ANGLED CORNER, AND A CAST IRON FAÇADE STOREFRONT ORDERED FROM GEORGE L. MESKER AND COMPANY OF EVANSVILLE, INDIANA. CITIZENS STATE BANK FORMED IN 1907 AND OCCUPIED PART OF HACKBARTH'S NEW BUILDING, WITH CAPITAL OF \$25,000, ASSETS OF \$46,000, R. A. ENGELKING AS PRESIDENT, AND JOHN HACKBARTH ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. THE BANK OUTGREW ITS LOCATION BY 1917. THE BUILDING HAD MANY COMMERCIAL USES, NOTABLY FRED FRIMEL'S JEWELRY AND HACKBARTH GENERAL STORE AND GROCERY. DURING WORLD WAR II, THIS WAS THE SITE OF A RED CROSS OFFICE AND WAR BOND SALES. THE *SEALY NEWS* WAS PRINTED HERE FROM 1942 UNTIL THE LATE 1990s. THE BUILDING EXHIBITS SIGNIFICANT CRAFTSMANSHIP AND RECOUNTS NOTEWORTHY HISTORY AND COMMERCE OF THE COMMUNITY.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 2013

MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

## **Subject Marker Narrative for the Hackbarth Building, Sealy, TX**

### **Context**

The first Anglo-American settlement in Texas was founded in the early 1820's on the west bank of the Brazos River; the town was named San Felipe de Austin. It soon became the capital of Stephen F. Austin's colony. In the 1870's, the San Felipe Township rejected the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railway's offers to route the new Galveston Brenham spur through San Felipe.<sup>1</sup>

This decision to refuse the railroad's access to the settlement was the precursor to the town of Sealy's inception, as a new route for the proposed railway expansion was necessary. In 1875, the railways acquired an 11,635-acre tract of land from the San Felipe de Austin Town Corporation from the original 22,000-acre Mexican land grant of 1824 for San Felipe, and began surveying a town site along the proposed line of its new Galveston-Brenham spur. Soon, railroad yards and a roundhouse were constructed, and the railroad became a major employer.<sup>2</sup>

German and Czech immigrants brought farming and ranching to the area, and the settlement became a shipping center for the produce and livestock raised there. By 1879, the town of Sealy, named after George Sealy, a director of Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railways, was established.<sup>3</sup>

Sealy is located in Austin County, one of the state's oldest counties, named for Stephen Fuller Austin, who founded San Felipe, and is also known as the Father of Texas.

### **Overview**

Many residents and businesses soon moved from San Felipe to Sealy to be closer to the new commercial center. In 1880, a post office was established in the community. F.W. (Fritz) Hackbarth, Sr., a German school teacher, married Carolyn Krampitz in East Prussia. The young couple landed in Galveston in 1846 with their two sons, Gus and Albert. They settled in Kuykendall where Hackbarth engaged in farming and ranching. Four more children were born to this union: F.W. Hackbarth, Jr. (b. July 7, 1849); John Hackbarth (b January 9, 1852); Emilie Hackbarth (b February 28, 1854) who married Adolph Haedge; and Ida Hackbarth (b December 29, 1857) who married F.M. Lockwood.<sup>4</sup>

F.W. (Fritz) Hackbarth, Jr. owned a complete block on Main Street and erected the first commercial building in the town in the mid 1800's. Sealy continued growing rapidly, and in 1907, his original

frame buildings on Main Street were torn down to create a new concrete block structure. The new one story building would be located at 111 Main Street and dimensions would be 60 by 70 feet. The blocks for the building were created at the Sealy factory that belonged to F.W., Jr. and his brother, John. Although the concept of building homes and businesses using concrete blocks was a novel idea at the time, F.W. used this process on numerous projects in the town, including his home. The Hackbarth Building was one of the stone commercial sites erected in 1907, and the second with a storefront ordered from George L. Mesker and Company from Evansville, Indiana. <sup>5</sup>

F.W. Hackbarth, Jr. was a carpenter and was the first person to open a store in Sealy. He opened Hackbarth Lumber Company in 1885. He eventually sold this business, and opened another lumber company; three of his sons joined in the management of the lumber yard: Paul, Robert, and John. This lumber yard supplied the materials for the early growth and development of Sealy.<sup>6</sup>

F.W. Hackbarth, Jr. is recognized as a leading contributor to the growth and success of the young town. His new stone building would soon house another very important enterprise in Sealy; every thriving community needs a bank.

Citizen's State Bank was created in 1907, and it took up a corner of Hackbarth's newly constructed building; the bank opened with a capital of \$25,000, and assets of \$46,000. The late R.A. Engelking was the first president of the bank; John Hackbarth was on the bank's first board of directors. The bank was located where the current All Texas Title is housed. The bank outgrew its location by

1917, and moved across the street until the large building it currently occupies on Hwy 36 and Main was completed. <sup>7</sup>



*The early building's unusual angle (above) is accentuated in the renovated building (right.)*

After the bank moved to the corner of Fowlkes Street and Main, a number of activities took place in the Hackbarth building: during World

War II, war bonds were sold there. Surgical dressings for



injured soldiers were also made there. A jewelry store, Fred Frimel's Jewelry, adjoined these varying enterprises; the jewelry store doubled as a Red Cross office during the war, until it moved across the street. <sup>8</sup>

Hackbarth General Store and Hackbarth Grocery occupied a large portion of the building's space, as did Brouillette Furniture Store, operated by Mr. and Mrs. B. C. Smith, L.L. Bender, Leo Haverda, and White Auto Store, which moved in following a destructive fire at Hwy 36 and Main. In December, 1942, the Sealy News began a long occupation of the building. Several people exchanged ownership of the property: Mr. and Mrs. F.D. Hicks became owners in 1944. They sold the business to The Texas News Media in 1946. In less than a year, Mescal Solomon, who had served as manager for the Hicks, took over the ownership of the paper. He, Earl Luedecke, and longtime Sealy News Editor Wilma Petrusik managed the newspaper for many years. <sup>9</sup>

The Sealy News relocated to Highway 36 South in the late 1990's, and the building was unoccupied for several years until David Cryan, a local rancher, businessman, and owner of Ranch Country Homes purchased the property in 2007 and began renovating it. All Texas Title currently occupies part of the structure; Mr. Cryan originally intended to house the corporate offices of his various businesses in the rest of the building, but after looking at designs determined the remaining Main Street Building was too small for all of the companies. However, because of its' historical significance, decided to completely restore the original exterior of the building to the extent possible under existing building standards. Renovation of the exterior included the addition of period cast iron standards for the canopy and replacement of door and window glass to meet current safety standards. It otherwise remains the same storefront originally supplied by George L. Mesker and Company. The ownership of blocks 7, 8, 9 and 10, the property where the Hackbarth building stands, is documented through deeds that date back to the acquisition of the land by George Sealy, the city's founder. Copies of these deeds and a sketched layout of the early city are attached to this narrative.

One important architectural aspect of the building at 111 Main is the metal facades that adorn the roof and walls of the building. These details were created by George L. Mesker and Company from Evansville, Indiana, and were typical of many of the banks and businesses constructed in the late 1800's and early 1900's.



*Special efforts to keep the historic ornamentation were continued throughout the restoration. Details of the metal ornamentation can be seen in the picture to the left and below.*

*(Pictures 1, 2, 3)*

*The George L. Mesker ornamental designs are still intact more than a hundred years after F.W. Hackbarth built the Hackbarth building.*



*Picture 4*

*A side view of the Hackbarth Building displays the handmade stones that F.W. Hackbarth and his brother created on site.*





*Picture 5*

*A George L. Mesker nameplate adorns one of the metal decorative facades on the 111 Main building. The artwork was shipped in pieces to the building sites of various banks, businesses, and homes, to be installed by local builders.*

### **Significance**

There are several reasons the Hackbarth Building on Lots 7, 8, 9, and 10 should be documented with a historical marker: The structure was built on land that was purchased by the founder of the town; this deed documentation is attached to this application. F.W. Hackbarth, one of the town's early developers and citizens, actually created the stones for the edifice, and completed the construction. The first bank in Sealy, Citizens State Bank, was housed as one of the first tenants from 1907 until 1917. One of the oldest newspapers in Texas, the Sealy News, occupied the premises for more than 50 years as an expansion to their rear adjoining location. Outstanding metal ornamentation from the George L. Mesker Company still adorns the façade after more than 100 years. George L. Mesker manufactured complete storefront to be shipped by rail throughout the United States. These storefronts included decorative cast iron structural columns, stamped decorative metal panels, cornices, scrolls, and panels, as well as the doors, decorative wood panels, and even the window glass, door hinges, and other necessary hardware. Between 1885 and the 1920's, the company produced thousands of such storefronts for customers in every state, and even Alaska Territory had a total of 17 such storefronts. <sup>10</sup>

### **Documentation**

Attached to this document are the deeds for this property dating back to George Sealy, the founder of the town. Several of Sealy's most significant businesses, including Citizen's State Bank chaired by F. W. Hackbarth, John Hackbarth's General Store, and many other local businesses were housed in this building, which was built by F.W. Hackbarth, who was a key figure, along with his family, in the development of Sealy.

## Additional Information on Marker Placement

The covered walkway in front of 111 Main is narrow, and there is no place to actually place a marker, except on the building. The angled parking would create a problem if the marker was placed on street in front of the building. A perfect spot for the marker would be on one of the Mesker cast iron columns on the front of the building. There would be an inch border on either side of the marker; it would be placed six feet from the ground, which would allow anyone to see it. No architectural detail would be hidden by this placement.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> County Information Resources Agency, "Welcome to Austin County." Welcome to Austin County, Texas. Nov 2008. Austin County . 16 Nov 2008 <[http://www.austincounty.com/ips/cms/County\\_Facts.html](http://www.austincounty.com/ips/cms/County_Facts.html)>.

<sup>2</sup>Kutra, Steven. "Historical Facts." City of Sealy. 11 2008. City of Sealy. 15 Nov 2008 <[http://www.ci.sealy.tx.us/about/historical\\_facts/index.htm](http://www.ci.sealy.tx.us/about/historical_facts/index.htm)>.

<sup>3</sup>Kutra, "Historical Facts" .

<sup>4</sup> Salomon, Mrs. S.J. "The F.W. Hackbarth Family." The History of Sealy, Texas, 1879-1979 June 28, 1979: 17.

<sup>5</sup> Salomon, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Salomon, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>"Citizens State Bank Was Founded in 1907." The History of Sealy, Texas 1879-1979 28 June 1979: 18.

<sup>8</sup>"The Sealy News In Its 92<sup>nd</sup> Year in Publishing" The History of Sealy, Texas 1879-1979 28 June 1979: 34-35.

<sup>9</sup>"The Sealy News In Its 92<sup>nd</sup> Year in Publishing" p. 34-35.

<sup>10</sup> "Evansville Courier Express" (Indiana) Scripps Newspaper Group in an article by Rich Davis entitled Putting steel into the city...Evansville's Mesker buildings Referenced by 'Got Mesker?' [www.illinoishistory.gov/ps/gotmesker.htm](http://www.illinoishistory.gov/ps/gotmesker.htm)

Also included with the submission are deed records for the building from 1907 to 2013.

