

University of Texas Medical School Building
914-916 Strand
Galveston
Galveston County
Texas

HABS No. TX-292

HABS
TEX
84-GALV,
36-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS NO. Tx-292

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL BUILDING

Location: 914-916 Strand Avenue, Galveston, Galveston County, Texas.

Present Owner: State of Texas.

Present Use: The building is currently used for offices and a student book store. A printing shop and other activities are located in the basement and laboratory animals are housed on the third floor.

Significance: This is the first building of the Medical School of the University of Texas. Its architect was one of the leading professionals in the later part of the nineteenth century in Texas. The building itself is an excellent example of the Romanesque style.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1889-1891. The building was officially opened October 5, 1891 when the first annual session of the School of Medicine convened. A \$30,000 appropriation in 1891 for equipment was made bringing the total cost of the building to a reported \$125,000.
2. Architect: Nicholas J. Clayton. Clayton had worked in the firm of Jones and Baldwin, Architects, Memphis Tennessee, just before and after the Civil War and received his architectural training there. The firm had sent him to Galveston to supervise the construction of the First Presbyterian Church (recorded by HABS as TX-2106). Clayton remained in Galveston and became one of the state's outstanding nineteenth century architects. Some of his most notable works include the First Presbyterian Church, St. Mary's Infirmary, The Galveston Pavilion, Harmony Hall, University of Texas Medical School and several buildings in the Strand District.
3. Builder: August Baumbach (Houston), Contractor

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Medical Department of the University of Texas was created by the state legislature on March 30, 1881. At that time the selection for

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL BUILDING
HABS NO. Tx-292 (Page 2)

a site away from the main campus in Austin was encouraged and by a statewide public vote Galveston was chosen. This action was not followed by any appropriation, however, and no definite plans were initiated. Several years later, however, in 1887, John Sealy, a prominent Galveston businessman and philanthropist, offered to provide funds for the erection of a modern hospital. His proposal was accepted and the John Sealy Hospital was erected in 1888 and 1889. This building was designed by Nicholas Clayton.

The Medical Department building was then begun as it was to work in connection with the hospital. The first appropriation was made by the Texas Legislature in 1888. This was for \$50,000 to be used for the construction of buildings on the Galveston campus. In 1889 the property was purchased with a \$25,000 appropriation of that year. Also in that year, the architect, Nicholas Clayton had asked and was granted permission by the Board of Regents for \$150.00 to finance a trip to visit various medical college buildings in other states and so acquire "the most modern...ideas as to the construction and equipment of medical colleges." Following his trip, Clayton submitted a report on his findings. He had visited Johns Hopkins, the University of Pennsylvania, the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Plans were drawn up following Clayton's return and on September 9, 1890 the building was reported nearing completion with the architect's statement that it would be ready for occupancy in thirty days from that date. The school was intended to be completed and opened by October, 1890 for the first session; however, lack of appropriations prevented that action.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Regents of the University of Texas, September 17, 1889.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Catalog of the Medical Department of the University of Texas, 1891-92.
p. 138.

Galveston Daily News, September 9, 1890, p.5

Galveston Daily News, October 2, 1891, p. 8

Lane, J.J. History of the University of Texas, 1891

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.
Director
Galveston Architecture Inventory
March 15, 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The structure consists of a main building with circular wings. A central projection and portico are dominant features of the three story brick building. It is in the Romanesque style and elaborated by typical Revival details. The walls are treated as a grand arcade with windows and brick panels as infilling.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The structure measures 70' x 200'; the height of central pavilion is 102'.
2. Foundations: Large stone piers on isolated footings.
3. Wall construction: Cedar Bayou pressed brick (local manufacture).
4. Structural system: Walls are arcuated and interior support is skeletal.
5. Porches: A central entrance portico reached by a broad flight of steps projects from the central pavilion.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance is reached by a broad flight of steps leading up to the covered porch. The doors are modern replacements.
 - b. Windows: Windows vary, but are all double-hung sash. Those in arched openings have round heads.
7. Roof: The present roof covering is Spanish tile. The central projection originally terminated in a two stage polygonal roof and the central pavilion in an intersected high-pitched hip roof. However, the 1900 storm destroyed the roof so the present ridge roof is a replacement of that period.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The basement was originally used for a boiler room, janitor room, cauldron room and tank room.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL BUILDING
HABS NO. Tx-292 (Page 4)

The first floor is divided by two corridors, one longitudinal, the other transverse to the building, being at right angles to each other and at their crossing is located the grand staircase that connected all floors. The circular wing on the west side contained the large chemistry lecture room and other spaces for clinical laboratories. The other parts of the floor were used for offices for the dean, secretary and faculty. Presently these spaces are used for offices and a student bookstore.

On the second floor large amphitheatres were provided taking in most of the circular wings. The one in the west wing was devoted to physiology and materia medica and the one in the west flank to anatomy. This story also contained the private rooms for professors and various experiment rooms.

A large dissecting room was provided on the third floor as well as lavatories and wardrobes for professors and students. The upper portion of the second floor amphitheatres could be entered from this floor.

2. Stairway: A wide central stair is located in the center of the building. The stair is open with solid side panels up to the rail level.
3. Floor: The original floors were wood.
4. Wall and Ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plastered.
5. Doors: The doors are characteristic of the period, of wood, and with a four panel design. Some have glass transoms above.
6. Trim: Characteristic wood trim of the period.
7. Hardware: Typical Victorian hardware, butt hinges, etc.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Heating was originally by steam radiators. Presently gas.
 - b. Lighting: The present lighting is by electric fixtures of recent date.

D. Site:

1. Orientation and general setting: The building is situated in the center of Block 669 and occupies most of the area. It faces south onto Strand Street and is located in the center of the present Medical School campus.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS MEDICAL SCHOOL BUILDING
HABS NO. Tx-292 (Page 5)

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Galveston Survey was jointly sponsored by the National Park Service, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation and the Galveston Historical Foundation Inc., and developed under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The historical data was written by John C. Garner, Jr., acting as the Director of the Galveston Architecture Inventory. The written data was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1980 by Kent R. Newell of the HABS staff. The photographs were taken by Allen Stross in the summer of 1967.