

Texas Historical Commission Staff (FR), 10/5/84

Official Texas Historical Building Marker without post for
attachment to brick
Comal County (Order #8008)
Location: 240 S. Seguin, New Braunfels

THE FAUST HOTEL*

FIRST KNOWN AS THE TRAVELERS
HOTEL, THIS INN WAS COMPLETED
IN 1929 WITH 63 GUEST ROOMS
AND REFLECTED THE THRIVING ECON-
OMY OF THE NEW BRAUNFELS
AREA AT THE TIME. RENAMED "THE
FAUST" IN 1936 FOR THE PROMINENT
FAMILY ON WHOSE HOMESITE IT
WAS BUILT, THE STRUCTURE HAS
REMAINED IN CONTINUOUS USE AS A
HOTEL. ITS SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL
DESIGN IS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE ORNATE
TERRA COTTA DECORATIVE WORK.**
RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK - 1984***

*1/2 inch lettering
**3/8 inch lettering
***1/4 inch lettering

Incise in base: SUBMITTED BY JOHN H. ROBERTS, JR.

APPROVED

Frances Rickard

THE FAUST HOTEL

by Montre M. Enyart

Building a first-class hotel in New Braunfels in 1929 was justified in many ways. The economic base of the city was primarily agricultural in 1925 when a severe drought struck the Hill Country. By 1927, the worst seemed to be over.¹ The Chamber of Commerce had in the past been instrumental in attracting a number of convention groups to the city, and rallied even stronger to attract tourists after the drought. The railroads brought drummers by the scores into New Braunfels. They needed overnight accommodations as well as "sample rooms" to display their wares. The city's existing lodgings were modest at best, and had few conveniences.

The summer of 1927, during a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, Paul Jahn reported for the promotion committee that they were considering a number of propositions for a modern hotel. He recommended that a special committee be appointed to research the possibilities, as it was a matter requiring detailed investigation, which the promotion committee was not able to undertake in addition to its other work. Emil Heinen, Paul Jahn, H. A. Triesch, U. S. Pfeuffer, Ad Henne, I. A. Ogden, R. J. Gode, and Secretary Jones were appointed by the chair.² This committee spawned the New Braunfels Hotel Company, Inc.

In the months that followed, further brief statements were made in the press regarding progress made on the project. An estimated \$75,000.00 was to be raised by selling preferred stock to the citizens.³

On April 27, 1928, a concrete offer was made by the Joseph Faust Estate to donate the Joseph Faust home, located at 240 S. Seguin Street, lots 57 and 71, New City Block 1004, New Braunfels,⁴ as a site for the new hotel, with an additional subscription for stock in the amount of \$5,000.00 by Walter Faust. Plans were drawn up for several different priced hotels, the favored one requiring \$60,000.00 from the citizens.⁵

Officers and directors of the New Braunfels Hotel Company were elected in May, 1928. The directors elected by the stockholders were Emil Fischer, Adolph Henne, U. S. Pfeuffer, R. J. Gode, Walter Faust, Emil Heinen, I. A. Ogden, B. W. Nuhn, and J. R. Fuchs. The officers elected by the board were Emil Fischer, President; Walter Faust, Vice-president; B. W. Nuhn, Secretary-treasurer; and J. R. Fuchs was engaged as legal counsel.⁶

The value of the Faust estate was assessed at \$30,000.00 for the land and \$6,000.00 for the home.⁷ Stock was issued in the following manner: \$10,000.00 to Walter Faust; \$10,000.00 to Hanno Faust; \$10,000.00 to Melita Faust Goeth; and \$6,000.00 to Walter Faust.⁸

At the June 21, 1928 meeting of the Hotel Company, Mr. Nuhn was instructed to send letters to the stock

subscribers calling for one-half the balance due by each subscriber, payable by July 15, 1928. The other half of the balance was due by August 15, 1928.⁹

The following week, after a secret ballot vote, Harvey Smith of San Antonio was selected by the board as the architect for the project.¹⁰ Mr. Smith was notified of the board's decision and appeared at the next meeting with preliminary sketches and a contract. Emil Fischer, President of the Hotel Company, and Harvey Smith signed the contract on July 6, 1928.¹¹

By the first week of the next month, the Hotel Company had \$67,347.50 cash in the treasury derived from subscriptions to stock in the company. Of that, \$60,000.00 was ordered placed on call in New York.¹² The First National Bank in New Braunfels was then authorized to handle the call loan for the Company.

Mr. Alfred Herry offered \$500.00 for the house situated on the building site that September.¹³ His proposition was accepted by the Hotel Company, with the understanding that the house would be moved to its new location no later than November 15, 1928.

On October 22, 1928, Harvey Smith was present at the Hotel Company meeting and submitted the plans and specifications for the hotel building. Mr. Smith's plans were accepted by the board, with the following exceptions: an additional small dining room be added on the southeast side of the building; that the men's room in the lobby be

provided with a vestibule; and that a water softening system be installed in the building.¹⁴ All of these changes were to be included in the contract.

The decision was made by the board to sell the full amount of stock (\$150,000.00).¹⁵ Walter Faust, President of the First National Bank, offered to loan the Hotel Company the funds needed to complete the building, without interest for one year from the date loaned. The property was to stand as security for the debt, or the Hotel Company could sign a note for this amount.

The opening of laborers' bids on the proposed hotel was held on November 8, 1928.¹⁶ Harvey Smith opened and read the various bids for the building, plumbing, heating, electrical, and elevator equipment. After tabulation, the three lowest bids were held by the board and Secretary Nuhn was instructed to hold all other cashier and certified checks. The three lowest bidders on each of the above mentioned materials were instructed to meet with the board the following night.

At that meeting, contracts were awarded as per the bids opened at the previous meeting. The contract for electrical work was given to Graham & Collins Electrical Company, Inc. of San Antonio for their bid of \$7,062.00.¹⁷ The elevator contract was given to American Elevator & Machine Company of Louisville, Kentucky for their bid of \$5,391.00.¹⁸ Plumbing and heating contracts went to Braden-Hudson-Wangler Company, Inc. of San Antonio for their bid

of \$18,807.00.¹⁹ The building contract was awarded to Walter Sippel of New Braunfels for his bid of \$89,083.00.²⁰

Work on the hotel building was to be completed by May 15, 1929,²¹ with provisions to have the work superintended by a competent superintendent at any time that the architect saw just cause to place said on the job. Harvey Smith was to be paid three and one-half percent of the total cost of the project (\$120,343.00), or \$4,212.05.²² Mr. Smith was given a check for that amount at the meeting on November 9, 1928.

In February, 1929, the Hotel Company accepted the proposition made by Messrs. Nagel and Wuest of San Antonio as to leasing the hotel building for a period of 15 years, on a sliding scale, i.e. \$5,000.00 cash in advance for the first year, \$6,000.00 for the second, \$7,500.00 for the third, fourth, and fifth years, \$9,000.00 for the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth years, and \$10,000.00 per year for the five years thereafter.²³ The rent after the first year was to be paid monthly.

On April 11, 1929, a meeting of the Hotel Company was called for the purpose of having lighting fixtures submitted by Bailey Reynolds Chandelier Works of Kansas City.²⁴ The price for all fixtures, not including fans, amounted to \$3,074.00.²⁵ An agreement was made between the parties to purchase the merchandise.

The hotel plans called for 51 guest rooms; however, the board decided an additional 12 rooms were necessary.²⁶

To cover the cost of the additional rooms, Mr. Sippel increased his building bid by \$14,650.00;²⁷ Braden-Hudson-Wangler's increased by \$3,637.00,²⁸ with the provision made that all lavatories and tubs have pop-up valves, or drains, which matter would be decided by the architect; Graham & Collins' increased by \$399.99,²⁹ and they offered to handle the entire job of light fixtures and fans, including both the original building and the additions, as per bid in their letter to Mr. Smith on April 18, 1929, which showed a total electrical bid of \$6,218.38.³⁰ This proposition was accepted with the condition that they check all fixtures carefully and assume the Bailey Reynolds Chandelier Works order, and the distinct understanding that they have approval from Mr. Smith.

In October, 1929, the New Braunfels Hotel Company took a fire insurance policy on the building in the amount of \$35,000.00, and a tornado insurance policy in the amount of \$80,000.00.³¹

On Saturday, October 12, 1929, the new Travelers Hotel opened its doors for the first time.³² Nearly 2,000 New Braunfels-area citizens paid their respects to the owners and lessees throughout the day.³³ Proclaimed a "model of beauty" and touted "the South's finest small hotel,"³⁴ the Travelers was at nightfall ablaze with special lights and decorations. The lobby abounded with fresh flower arrangements sent by admiring friends and well wishers.

Mayor H. A. Triesch presided over the opening banquet,

attended by more than 300 citizens of New Braunfels and Southwest Texas.³⁵ The group gathered in the elegant ballroom and heard speeches by Emil Fischer, President of the New Braunfels Hotel Company, H. Dittlinger, Marcus Davis of San Antonio, H. G. Henne, and others.³⁶

W. T. Davidson, Chef de Cuisine, created an eight course feast that delighted the guests. The New Braunfels Band provided the evening's entertainment.

Although Governor Dan Moody was expected to attend the festivities,³⁷ he was apparently detained, and failed to make an appearance. The governor's acceptance to attend the banquet was in the form of a personal letter to Mrs. Walter Faust, a former classmate, dated October 8, 1929.³⁸ Although disappointed, the townfolk soon turned their energies toward making the grand opening celebration a night to remember, and many of the guests even remained for breakfast.

The following description of the hotel at its opening is taken from the October 18, 1929 edition of the New Braunfels Herald: "...considered the finest Hotel Building of its size in the state, not only in construction, but in design, comfort, convenience, and the number of new features introduced.

"The Hotel has 63 guest rooms; each one with a complete private bathroom. Some of these have tub, and some the latest type steel shower compartments. It is four stories high, built of solid, reinforced concrete for the framework,

with face brick and hollow tile walls and tar and gravel roof. The color scheme of the face brick has been worked out in one of the most unusual designs anywhere in this section. It is a graduation of shades, starting at the ground with a dark brown tone, blending gradually from one shade to another, lighter and lighter, until it reaches a very light ivory at the top of the parapet wall. All of the windows are of the very latest type steel sash casements with a patented metal screen, which was just put on the market while this building was in course of construction.

"The design of this building is along modernistic lines with a feeling for the Spanish introduced. All of the ornamental stonework on the front facade has been especially designed and modeled for this building.

"The building contains one of the latest type elevators, which runs from the basement to the fourth floor inclusive. The ornamental doors, though of metal, have been specially designed to harmonize with the Spanish panel doors of the lobby.

"The first floor contains a large lobby with a clerk's desk, manager's office, telephone booths, space for writing tables, etc. On the west end of the lobby are the barber shop and beauty parlor, the latter adjoining the ladies restroom. The lobby is floored with a beautiful Spanish tile in a design and colors especially selected for this building. All of the walls are plastered and

decorated to imitate the real Travertine stone from Italy. Columns and pilasters have unusually decorative caps, and the soffits of all the main beams on the ceiling are decorated in stencil work, while the ceiling itself is stippled out in a delicate tint. All of the woodwork throughout the lower floor, as well as all of the flush doors on the upper floors, are done in a beautiful walnut finish. Unusually beautiful graining has been selected in all of the doors and panel work. Back of the lobby is the large main dining room. This room, while much simpler in detail, has all of the startling effects of the more elaborate room. Its very simplicity adds to its grandeur. The columns and pilasters of this room sweep up in beautiful coved effects, dying out on the main ceiling. The color graduates from the very dark color near the floor to a delicate tint on the ceiling. The floor itself, as well as the floor of the smaller dining room, is done in an especially treated block flooring, which has been cemented to the concrete floor below, making a solid and yet resilient floor, which can be used, both as a dining room and for dancing. The smaller dining room is a slightly different design.

"Between the large and small dining room is the very efficient and well equipped kitchen with all of its modern apparatus and equipment to handle large crowds in the various dining places.

"Situated outdoors on the east side of the building,

bounded by the lobby, the main dining room and the private dining room, is the open air patio, with its beautiful polished and waxed slab floor for dancing. All three of these main rooms open onto this patio with French doors, so that the circulation throughout the entire first floor is delightful.

"The basement contains the men's restroom, a large boiler room for the steam heating plant with oil burning equipment, which heats the entire building, a trunk room, a linen supply room, and a hotel supply room, for soaps, papers, supplies, etc.

"Each of the typical guest room floors; namely the second, third, and fourth, contain besides the guest rooms with their private bath--a linen room for the daily supply, the maids' closet with the slop sink in it, a linen chute to drop all of the soiled linen from the rooms down into the basement, distribution panel boards, French telephones in every room and an individual clothes closet in each room, etc. Electric fixtures throughout the building are of the very finest type procurable for hotel usage. These were especially designed for each room of this building, and manufactured by a Kansas City firm. All of the walls of both the guest rooms and corridors of the three upper floors are papered in various patterns to suit the varied tastes of the guests.

"Out in front of the hotel there are two marques's, one over each of the two front entrances with a beautiful

terrace, in the center of which is a wall fountain done in Spanish tile. The grounds are to be landscaped, so that the setting as a whole will harmonize with the building and blend softly into the surrounding grounds.

"The building, with all of its beautiful furniture and equipment and the grounds, represents an outlay of a quarter of a million dollars, and has been conceded by experts, who have seen it, to be the finest hotel building of its size anywhere in this section of the country."³⁹

It is truly unfortunate that this fine, first-class hotel was built during a time of economic instability. By October, 1930, Messrs. Nagel and Wuest were in arrears for the October lease payment and informed the board that they "had not been able to make any money either at their New Braunfels hotel or at the San Antonio hotel and were not in position to pay anything at that time,"⁴⁰ and requested a year's rental without payment.

The New Braunfels Hotel Company financial statement showed a profit of \$4,717.62⁴¹ at the end of December, 1930. In mid-January, the treasurer reported to the board that Messrs. Nagel and Wuest owed the company \$2,219.54, while accounts due from the company totaled \$3,553.49.⁴² Notice was served on Nagel and Wuest on January 30, 1931 to pay all rents in arrears by February 14, or return the hotel to the company.⁴³

At the company meeting on April 14, 1931, it was reported that Nagel and Wuest had released the building

on February 14, with all bills pending.⁴⁴ George S. Graves (former manager for Nagel and Wuest) had been hired by the company to act as manager. Walter Faust, who was by this time president of the company, proposed that he finance the purchase of the furniture, kitchen equipment, and all other articles in the name of the bankrupt partnership of Nagel and Wuest, "provided the Hotel Company make a loan sufficient to cover these items and personal loans of Nagel and Wuest from him."⁴⁵ The new loan would include the \$35,000.00 current loan, and the entire new loan was to be secured with a Deed of Trust on the hotel property. The proposal was approved by the board.⁴⁶

In June, 1931, a gentleman from Shreveport, Louisiana proposed to lease the hotel, but was refused. The board was "not interested in a lease, but only in a direct sale of the entire property."⁴⁷

At the end of 1931, the financial statement showed a deficit of \$1,254.49,⁴⁸ while the hotel operating statement showed a profit of \$4,853.63.⁴⁹ The financial statement for 1932 showed a deficit of \$8,539.80.⁵⁰

In mid-October, 1933, a memorial was held for Walter Faust. Hanno Faust was elected president of the company and was authorized to have full power to operate the hotel, through his own management or by lease, provided the terms would guarantee payment of all taxes and provide for payment to the hotel of all profits realized out of operations.⁵¹

In April, 1936, the board met with Milton W. Dietz, executor of the Walter Faust Estate, who was representing the interest of the estate. Hanno Faust was given the authority to lease the hotel to Ralph Grimsley of Tulsa, Oklahoma.⁵² The next month, the Travelers was renamed Hotel Faust, in honor of that prominent family.⁵³

During those early years, the Faust Hotel was the center of activity in New Braunfels. There clubs met, committees had luncheons, banquets were held for convention groups, and many dances were held in the Banquet Hall.

In 1946, Arlon Krueger purchased the hotel and the Kruegers kept it until 1977. Mr. Krueger was a very shrewd and successful businessman, yet he could not make the Faust a profitable enterprise. The hotel proved to be a great disappointment to him.⁵⁴

In January, 1977, Steven A. Jackson and William Houser, Jr., of Jackson-Houser & Associates, purchased the Faust out of interest in old hotels and antiques. The physical appearance of the building was dismal. The exterior was blackened, the dining room parquet was damaged by water, several windows were broken and squirrels had inhabited the building. There was no equipment to speak of in the grimy kitchen, and no air conditioning at all.

They set to work immediately to restore the once-beautiful building. The exterior was water blasted, the dining room floor was repaired, air conditioning-heating

window units were installed throughout the building, and the furniture was refinished. Parts of the dining room were sectioned off to provide a service area, as well as a small bar. A small part of the lobby was sectioned off and made into a gift shop, while the beauty shop was turned into a service area and the barber shop an office. The carriage house and another small building in the back were torn down and the parking area was paved. A circle drive was placed in the front, as was an electric sign. A wet bar was added to the suite, and fire doors and escapes were placed on the upper floors. The Faust re-opened in August, 1977.⁵⁵

The hotel changed hands yet again in the fall of 1979. Roy Gates and Richard Fuqua of Palm Valley Equipment, Inc. purchased the Faust, which was in a fair state of repair, and made a few more changes. The open air patio was enclosed and made into a bar in 1980. In 1981, the dining room was redecorated and the small bar was made into a private dining room called the Heritage Room, which has pictures and artifacts of the hotel's past years. Decorating and painting continued during 1982. A laundry was installed in the basement, and the gift shop became an Antique Information Center.⁵⁶

In June, 1982, Palm Valley Equipment, along with its holdings, was obtained by John H. Roberts, Jr. of San Antonio. Although the hotel was by no means decrepit, it was a little shabby. Renovations began once again,

in an effort to return the Faust to its original first-class condition.

Draperies and bedspreads were purchased for all 62 guest rooms, at a cost of \$69,486.96. The interior of the hotel was freshly painted for \$30,395.00. Carpeting for the bar, guest rooms, and upstairs hallways was installed for \$39,467.17. The grounds were landscaped for \$2,687.29, and the parking lot was repaved for \$15,342.00. The most major renovation for 1982-83, at a cost of \$161,770.15, was the kitchen addition. The back wall was torn down to allow for an expansion that doubled the size of the original kitchen, and new kitchen equipment replaced the old. The elevator was turned from a utility-type blue conveyor to an elegant smoke-glass lift for \$1,375.00. Other miscellaneous repairs, including the dining room floor, cost \$7,219.40 for that time span.⁵⁷

In just the past few months of 1984, Mr. Roberts has expended more than \$40,000.00 for further renovations and repairs. The suite was refurbished with eighteenth century hand-carved Italian furniture, and all king size rooms fitted with iron and brass headboards, at a cost of \$13,902.00. The bar was redecorated in hardwood and brass for \$14,271.90. The original outdoor lamp posts are currently being restored at an estimated cost of \$2,000.00. In all, more than \$450,000.00 has been spent in the past two years for restorations of the Faust Hotel by its current owner.⁵⁸ Gary R. Cattell, who has been managing the property since

February, 1983, has ensured that all remodeling efforts did nothing to damage the Faust's authenticity, nor detract from its unique beauty. The Faust is truly one of the best examples of a restored hotel in Texas.

The Travelers Hotel was built to temporarily house a growing number of visitors to New Braunfels in comfort and elegance. More than 50 troubled years later, the Faust Hotel still provides comfortable and elegant lodging to the many area tourists.

This history was prepared by:


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Herald
New Braunfels, Texas

FEB 14 1995



Historic marker

Staff members of the Faust Hotel are trying the Texas historic marker on for size. The marker will be placed on the hotel in ceremonies Friday at 4 p.m. A city historic marker will also be

placed on the building during the dedication ceremony. From left are Angela Fox, director of food services; Judy Goerke, assistant general manager; and Gary Cottell, manager.

FRANCES BRIDGES HERALD ZEITUNG









