

# HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

July 06, 2018

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2018-304  
**ADDRESS:** 1603 S HACKBERRY ST  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 6815 BLK LOT 13, 14 & 15  
**ZONING:** C-3R  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 2  
**APPLICANT:** Erika Hizel  
**OWNER:** We No Tell Lounge, LLC  
**TYPE OF WORK:** Finding of Historic Significance

## REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Finding of Historic Significance for the property located at 1603 S Hackberry Street.

## APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

*Unified Development Code Sec. 35-606. - Designation Process for Historic Landmarks.*

(a) **Authority.** Requests for landmark designation may only be made by or with the concurrence of the property owner. In instances where a property owner does not consent to the landmark designation, the historic preservation officer shall request a resolution from city council to proceed with the designation process prior to any zoning commission hearing. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a request for landmark designation may be made and approved by the city council. To the extent that this subsection conflicts with any other provisions of this chapter, this paragraph shall control except for buildings, objects, sites, structures, or clusters heretofore designated as local landmarks or districts, National Register landmarks or districts, state historic landmarks or sites, or state archaeological landmarks or sites. Additionally, requests for designation shall be made on a form obtained from the city historic preservation officer through the office of historic preservation. Completed request forms shall be returned to the office of historic preservation for processing. All buildings, objects, sites, structures, or clusters heretofore designated by the city council as historic landmarks under any pre-existing ordinance of the City of San Antonio shall be accorded the protection of properties designated historic landmarks under this chapter and shall continue to bear the words "historic, exceptional" (HE) or "historic, significant" (HS) in their zoning designation.

### (b) Designation of Historic Landmarks.

(1) **Initiation.** Any person, the historic and design review commission, zoning commission, the historic preservation officer, or the city council may initiate a historic landmark designation by filing an application with the historic preservation officer. Requests for designation shall be made on a form obtained from the city historic preservation officer. Completed request forms shall be returned to the office of historic preservation for processing. Owner consent for historic landmark designation shall be required unless a city council resolution to proceed with the designation has been approved. Additionally, owners may submit with the application a written description and photographs or other visual material of any buildings or structures that they wish to be considered for designation as non-contributing to the historic landmark.

(3) **Decision.** The historic preservation officer shall refer a completed application for historic landmark designation to the historic and design review commission. Property owners of proposed historic landmarks shall be notified of the historic and design review commission hearing by the historic preservation officer by mail prior to a historic and design review commission hearing for historic landmark designation. Notice to property owners shall state the place, date, time and purpose of the historic and design review commission hearing. The historic preservation officer shall also send notice of the meeting to any registered neighborhood associations located within the proposed district boundary. The historic and design review commission shall make and forward its recommendation to the zoning commission within forty-five (45) days from the date of submittal of the designation request by the historic preservation officer. Upon submittal of the historic and design review commission's recommendation, the proposed historic district or landmark designation shall be submitted to the zoning commission for its review recommendations along with its finding of historic significance. The zoning commission and the city council shall process the application as prescribed in [section 35-421](#) of this chapter and this section. The zoning commission shall schedule a hearing on the historic and design review commission recommendation to be held within sixty (60) days of receipt of such

recommendation and shall forward its recommendation to city council which shall schedule a hearing to be held within sixty (60) days of council's receipt of such recommendation. Upon passage of any ordinance designating a historic landmark, or removing or upgrading the designation of historic, the city clerk shall send notice of the fact by mail to the owner or owners of affected property.

*Unified Development Code Sec. 35-607. – Designation Criteria for Historic Districts and Landmarks.*

(a) **Process for Considering Designation of Historic Districts and Landmarks.** Historic districts and landmarks shall be evaluated for designation using the criteria listed in subsection (b) and the criteria applied to evaluate properties for inclusion in the National Register. In order to be eligible for historic landmark designation, properties shall meet at least three (3) of the criteria listed. Historic districts shall consist of at least two (2) or more structures within a legally defined boundary that meet at least three (3) of the criteria. Additionally, all designated landmarks and districts shall demonstrate clear delineation of the legal boundaries of such designated resources.

(b) Criteria For Evaluation.

(5) Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;

(7) Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;

(11) It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United States;

## **FINDINGS:**

a. The request for landmark designation was initiated by the property owner.

b. **HISTORIC CONTEXT –**

Joe X. Newcomb purchased this property in 1928 from Thomas Edison Barnes, and contracted with Barnes (who also operated a lumber company) to construct the ice house. Newcomb was an experienced ice manufacturer from Ennis, Texas. Several members of the Newcomb family were involved with the business – Bessie and Gerald were in sales, and Waldo was the secretary-treasurer for the company, and they all lived on West Drexel, in the block just west of the factory. The Crystal Ice Company remained in operation at this location through 1943, after which it changed hands several times while still producing ice. After a brief vacancy in the late 1950s, the structure became a bar/lounge through the 1960s and 1970s.

The Barnes Terrace Addition No. 2 was subdivided between 1927 and 1928 by Thomas Edison Barnes. Today this area is included in the Denver Heights Neighborhood Association, but prior to the construction of Interstate 10 it was more closely connected with Highland Park. The blocks subdivided by Barnes were bound between Aberdeen Street and South Hackberry. Just east of Aberdeen Street, the Thomas Nelson Page School was built in 1925 to serve this rapidly growing neighborhood. Commercial development along South Hackberry by 1929 included two grocery stores, two filling stations, a department store, cleaners, and plumbing store between just the 1600 and 1800 blocks, underscoring the importance of this retail cluster for Highland Park residents.

c. **CULTURAL CONTEXT –**

After the Civil War, Texas, San Antonio in particular, became a manufacturing leader in the production of ice. By 1867, five ice factories existed in the United States; three of them were in San Antonio. Local German brewers had begun producing lager beers which needed colder fermentation temperatures. San Antonio's hot temperatures and the city's German population's thirst for lager created the perfect environment for ice as a commodity. By 1928 when the Crystal Ice Factory opened, home refrigeration was more common, but the need for large scale refrigeration, including for transportation and restaurant use, was strong enough to keep ice manufacturers in business until the 1950s when up to 90 percent of Texas families had home refrigeration.

d. **SITE CONTEXT –**

The two-part commercial block factory and ice house sits on a corner triple lot facing South Hackberry. The structure stands two stories tall on a L-shaped footprint along the South Hackberry commercial corridor. It is adjacent to a two story filling station. Across High Street is a two story fourplex. On the opposite side of South Hackberry are one story mid-century commercial structures. The structure's setback, 10 to 15 feet, is consistent with the setback of the canopy of the filling station while the fourplex sits on the front property line.

e. **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION –**

The factory and ice house is a two-part commercial; the structure's historic materials are largely intact. The factory and ice house structure has a flat roof with parapet and decorative cornice. The structure has plaster

siding and it is unclear what structural framing materials are beneath the plaster. There are 3 bays on the two story portion, one of which has been opened up with no fenestration. All original first floor windows and doors have either been removed or plastered over. The second story has two steel windows in each bay, each with 3-by-3 dividing lights. The one-story wing also has a flat roof with parapet and matching cornice. On this wing there are awning anchors although the awning has been removed. The factory has a rear wing, creating a L-plan shape. There are steel second story windows on the north elevation matching those on the front façade. The design, form and materials are all original. The alterations include boarding up windows on the first floor and opening up one of the three bays.

f. **EVALUATION –**

As referenced in the applicable citations, 1603 S Hackberry meets UDC criterion [35-607(b)5], [35-607 (b)7], [35-607 (b)11], for a finding of historic significance in the process of seeking designation as a local historic landmark. In order to be eligible for landmark designation, a property must meet at least three of the criteria; 1603 S Hackberry meets three.

**5. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;** as an intact example of a 1920s ice house, a well-insulated structure with few windows to minimize heat gain with a small retail outlet attached.

**7. Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;** as a highly visible two-story commercial structure located on a prominent corner on South Hackberry with shallow setback of approximately 10 feet.

**11. It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United States;** as an excellent example of the ice manufacturing industry which flourished in San Antonio. This was likely one of the last ice houses constructed, as electric refrigerators became more ubiquitous in local households.

- g. This request was initiated by the owner. If the HDRC approves the Finding of Historic Significance, then the recommendation for designation is submitted to the zoning commission. The zoning commission will schedule a hearing and then forward its recommendation to the City Council. City Council has the ultimate authority to approve the historic designation zoning overlay.
- h. Per UDC Sec. 35-453, once the commission concurs eligibility of the property and makes a recommendation of approval for designation, interim design review requirements will be in place and the property owners must receive a written approval (a Certificate of Appropriateness) for any exterior work. These interim requirements will remain in place until the City Council makes their final decision on the proposed zoning change or not longer than six months.
- i. The City offers a tax incentive for the substantial rehabilitation of historic properties because historic landmarks possess cultural and historical value and contribute to the overall quality and character of the City and its neighborhoods. If historic designation is approved, rehabilitation and restoration work may be eligible for this incentive. State and Federal tax incentives are also available for properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and provide substantial relief for rehabilitation projects.

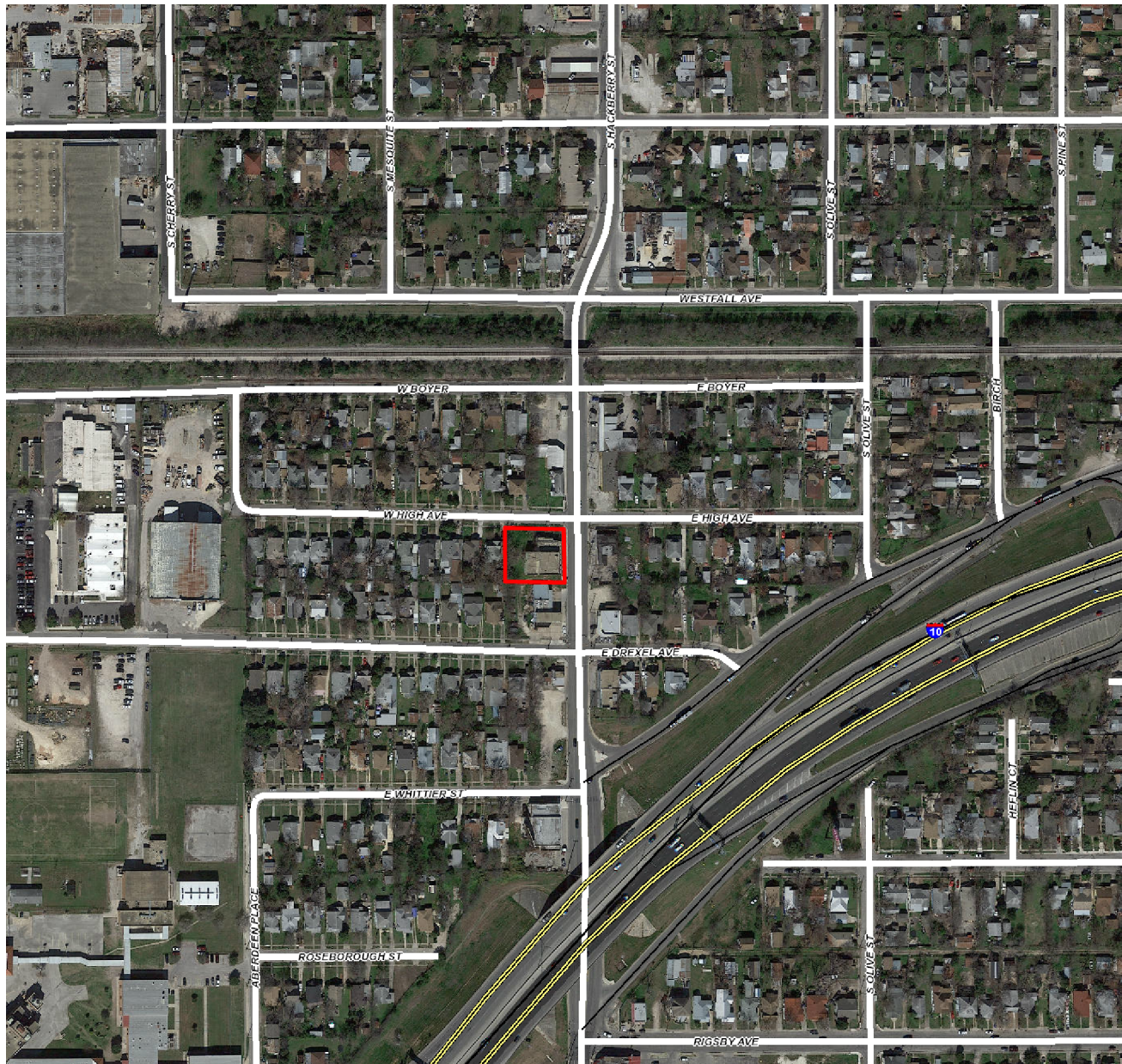
## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of a Finding of Historic Significance and that the Historic & Design Review Commission recommend approval for the landmark designation of 1603 S Hackberry Street to the Zoning Commission and to the City Council based on findings a through e.

## **CASE MANAGER:**

Lauren Sage





## Flex Viewer

Powered by ArcGIS Server

Printed: Jun 18, 2018

The City of San Antonio does not guarantee the accuracy, adequacy, completeness or usefulness of any information. The City does not warrant the completeness, timeliness, or positional, thematic, and attribute accuracy of the GIS data. The GIS data, cartographic products, and associated applications are not legal representations of the depicted data. Information shown on these maps is derived from public records that are constantly undergoing revision. Under no circumstances should GIS-derived products be used for final design purposes. The City provides this information on an "as is" basis without warranty of any kind, express or implied, including but not limited to warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose, and assumes no responsibility for anyone's use of the information.

























Submitted by Applicant | June 15, 2015

REAR, RIGHT



Submitted by Applicant / June 15, 2015

REAR





REAR, LEFT



Submitted by Applicant | June 15, 2015

LEFT





Submitted by Applicant | June 15, 2015

RIGHT





FRONT







02/26/2015 13:18





CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

## Statement of Significance

**Date: June 21, 2018**

**Tier: 2**

**Property Address: 1603 S Hackberry**

**Known Name: Crystal Ice Factory**

### *1. Application Details*

Applicant: Erika Hizel

Type: Landmark Designation

Date Received: June 15, 2018

### *2. Findings*

The property at 1603 S Hackberry is a two story brick ice house built c. 1929. It is currently owned by We No Tell Lounge, LLC.

The Barnes Terrace Addition No. 2 was subdivided between 1927 and 1928 by Thomas Edison Barnes.<sup>i</sup> Today this area is included in the Denver Heights Neighborhood Association, but prior to the construction of Interstate 10 it was more closely connected with Highland Park. The blocks subdivided by Barnes were bound between Aberdeen Street and South Hackberry. Just east of Aberdeen Street, the Thomas Nelson Page School was built in 1925 to serve this rapidly growing neighborhood.<sup>ii</sup> Commercial development along South Hackberry by 1929 included two grocery stores, two filling stations, a department store, cleaners, and plumbing store between just the 1600 and 1800 blocks, underscoring the importance of this retail cluster for Highland Park residents.<sup>iii</sup>

Joe X. Newcomb purchased this property in 1928 from Thomas Edison Barnes, and contracted with Barnes (who also operated a lumber company) to construct the icehouse.<sup>iv</sup> Newcomb was an experienced ice manufacturer from Ennis, Texas.<sup>v</sup> Several members of the Newcomb family were involved with the business – Bessie and Gerald were in sales, and Waldo was the secretary-treasure for the company, and they all lived on West Drexel, in the block just west of the factory.<sup>vi</sup> The Crystal Ice Company remained in operation at this location through 1943, after which it changed hands several times while still producing ice. After a brief vacancy in the late 1950s, the structure became a bar/lounge through the 1960s and 1970s.

### *3. Architectural Description*

The two-part commercial block factory sits on a corner triple lot facing South Hackberry. The structure stands two-stories tall along the South Hackberry commercial corridor, and relatively larger massing than its neighboring structures. It's adjacent to a one-and-a-half story historic filing station and to two-story four-plex. Across the street are one-story mid-century



## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

commercial structures. The factory's setback, 10 to 15 feet, is consistent with its filing station neighbor while the four-plex sits on the front property line. The factory has a parking area in front and to the side of the building.

The factory is a two-part commercial block with a parapet and a decorative cornice. It has plaster siding with its first floor entrances and bays enclosed and boarded up. There are 3 bays on the two-story portion, and another bay on the one-story north wing. One of the bays has been opened up with no fenestration, altering the original window fenestration. The second story has two steel windows in each bay, each with 3-by-3 dividing lights. The one-story wing also has parapet and a matching cornice. On this wing there are awning anchors with the awning missing. The factory has a rear addition, creating a L-plan shape. Originally it was a linear plan.

### *4. Landmark Criteria*

The structure meets landmark criteria 5, 7, and 11, which are outlined in the Unified Development Code (UDC Section 35-607).

5. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials; as an intact example of a 1920s ice house, a well-insulated structure with few windows to minimize heat gain with a small retail outlet attached.

7. Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature; as a highly visible two-story commercial structure located on a prominent corner on South Hackberry with shallow setback of approximately 10 feet.

11. It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United States; as an excellent example of the ice manufacturing industry which flourished in San Antonio. This was likely one of the last icehouses constructed, as electric refrigerators became more ubiquitous in local households.

### *5. Outcome of Review*

Based on this assessment, 1603 S Hackberry meets three of the sixteen criteria listed in UDC Section 35-607(b). In order to be eligible for landmark designation, a property must meet at least three of these criteria; thus 1603 S Hackberry is eligible for designation as a local landmark. Additional research may uncover more information about the significance of this property. As noted above, some modifications have been made to the structure over time,





## CITY OF SAN ANTONIO OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

including some changes to the first floor entrances and removal of the canopy. These alterations are largely reversible.



---

<sup>i</sup> Bexar County Property Records 1928 Deed V. 1025 p. 432 and Deed V. 1023 p. 494.

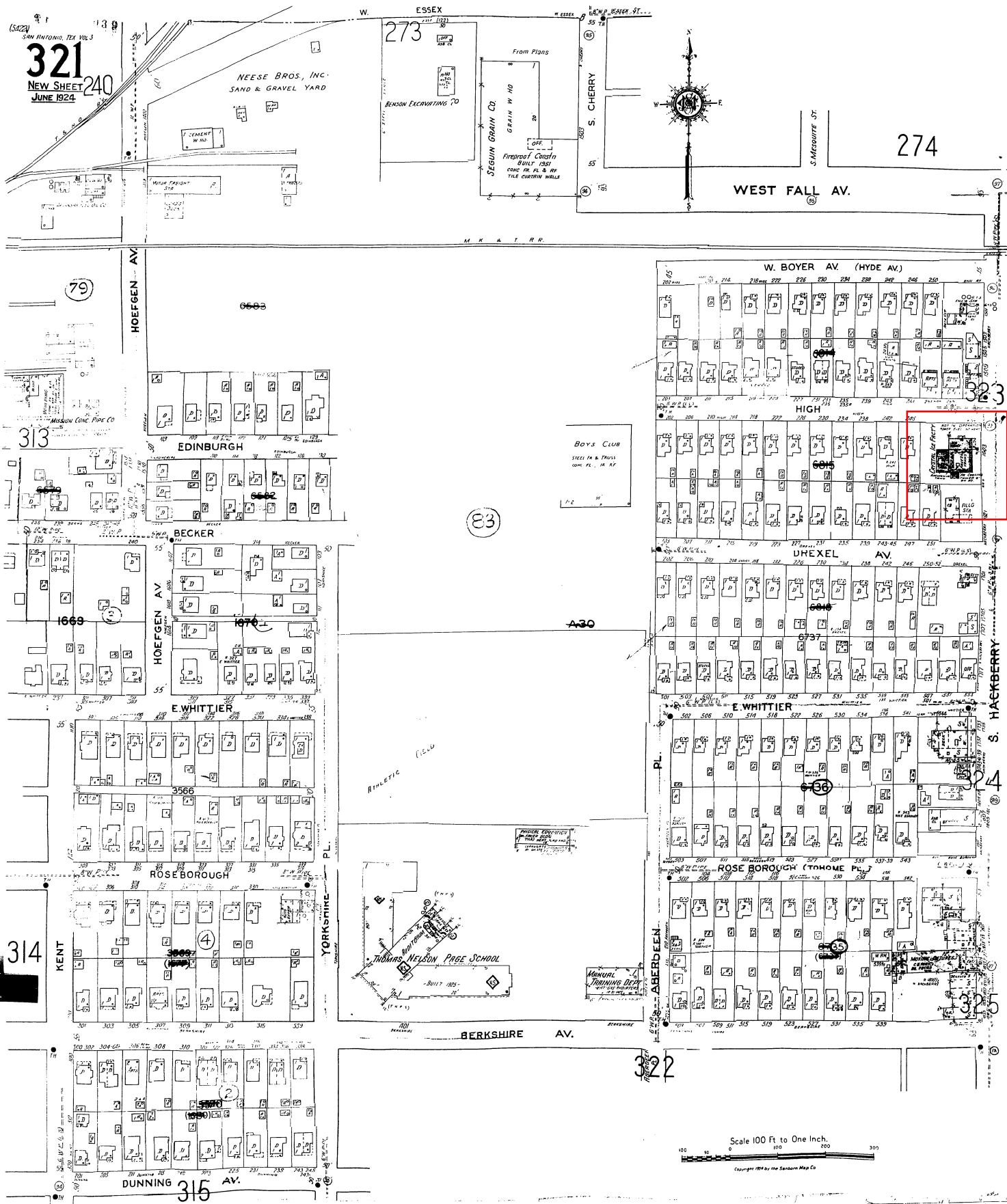
<sup>ii</sup> Sessions, T. Irwin. 2015. *San Antonio's Historic Architecture*. Arcadia Publishing: Charleston, SC.

<sup>iii</sup> San Antonio City Directory, 1929.

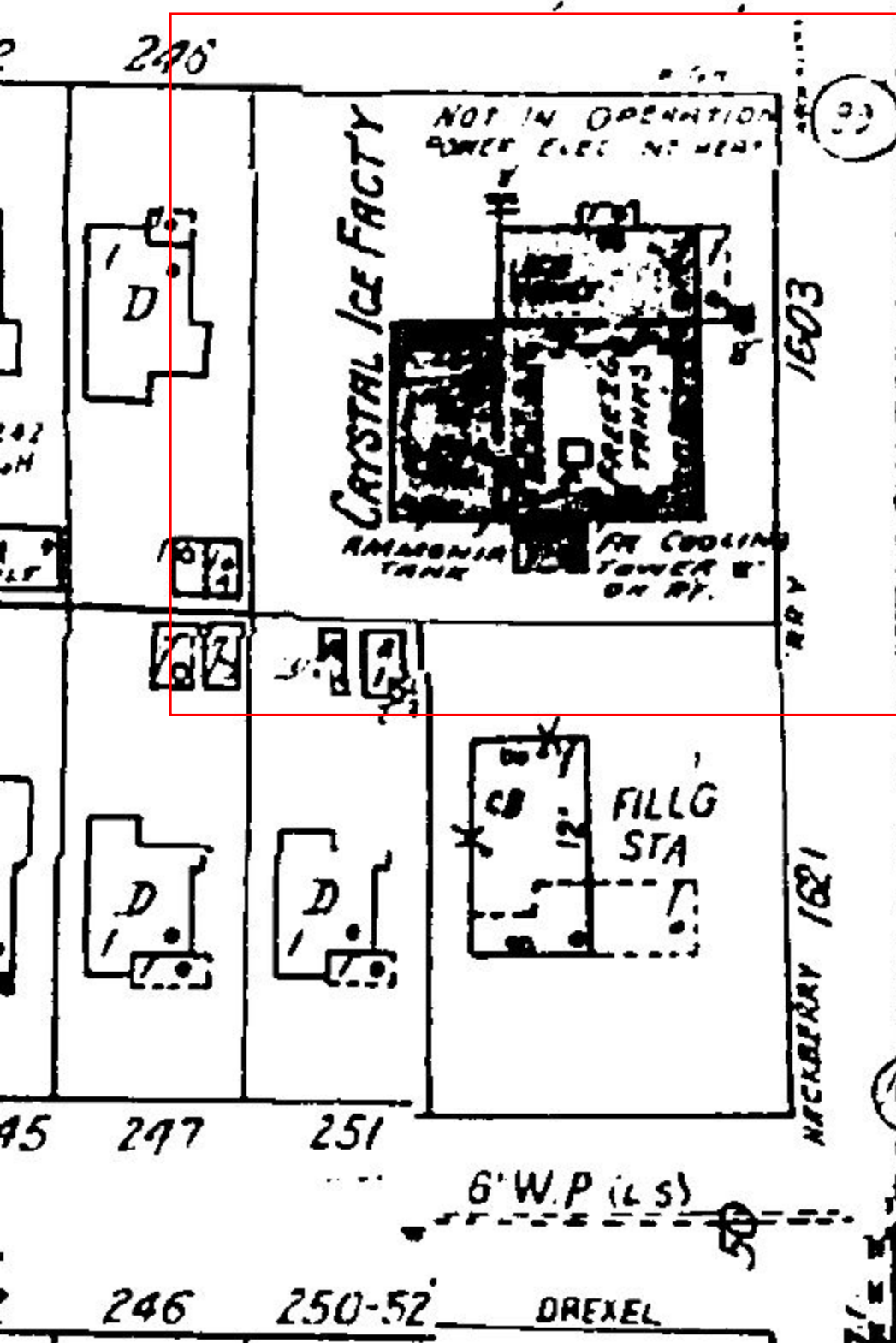
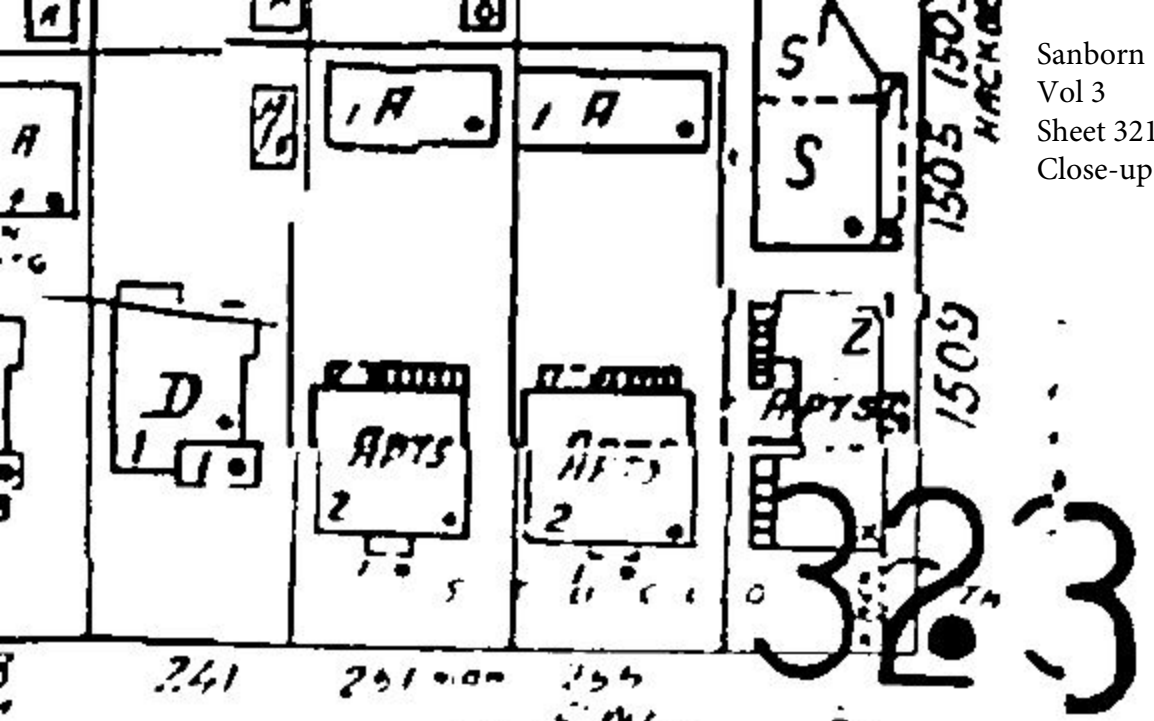
<sup>iv</sup> Bexar County Property Records 1928 Mechanic's Lien V. 122 p. 442.

<sup>v</sup> "Crystal Ice Factory To Have Up-To-Date Production Plant." P. 12A, *San Antonio Light*, 1 Sept. 1928.

<sup>vi</sup> San Antonio City Directory, 1929.







# NEW SOUTH SIDE PLANT

The Crystal Ice Factory, Hackberry and High avenue, is one of newest additions to the Highland Park community center. No expense has been spared in making this one of the finest ice manufacturing plants in the city.



## CRYSTAL ICE FACTORY TO HAVE UP-TO-DATE PRODUCTION PLANT

An important addition to the community center at Highland Park on South Hackberry street is the new "Crystal Ice Factory," corner of Hackberry and High avenue. It is a model of beauty and sanitation, being constructed throughout of concrete, tile and steel and finished in "sparklewhite." The power is furnished by electricity and is especially devised so that it is unusually silent.

The New York Machinery company, the largest exclusive ice machinery company in the world, is employing the best of engineering practice and are furnishing this plant with the latest word in equipment.

The quality of the manufactured product of the Crystal Ice Factory

will be among the best obtainable in the city. It will be pure and "crystal," as the name implies. The blocks will be of uniform shape, weight and size because the Arctic-Pawall stationary can tank is used, this being one of the best freezing tanks the market affords.

"While this plant will not be large, the first unit only fifteen tons per day, yet there will not be a finer or better equipped plant in Texas," says Joe Newcomb, owner and general manager of the Crystal Ice Factory.

Mr. Newcomb is familiar with all phases of the ice industry, having served as secretary-treasurer and director of the Ennis Ice company at Ennis for the past fourteen years. He will give the new plant his personal attention.

Detailed information regarding the fac-



**Statement of Significance  
Office of Historic Preservation-City of San Antonio  
1603 S. Hackberry  
San Antonio, TX 78210**

The building located at 1603 S. Hackberry, San Antonio, TX 78210 first appears in the San Antonio City Directory in 1929, operating as a business known as the Crystal Ice Co. Subsequent articles in two local newspapers reference the business as expanding the building to be a larger plant for production<sup>1</sup> and describe the factory's output at 25 tons daily<sup>2</sup>. The making of ice as a commodity was an important innovation in that time period. By the early 1930s, ice was considered an important enough commodity to fall under "Ice Codes" during the Depression. The manufacturers of ice were required to report their prices, regulated by fines<sup>3</sup>.

San Antonio was an early pioneer in the commercialization of ice. According to public sources, French inventor Ferdinand Carré created the method of ice making in France around the 1850s<sup>4</sup>, first exporting it to Mexico. Texas was not far behind not only for its geographical and cultural proximity to Mexico but also because another Frenchman—Andrew Muhl—chose to settle in San Antonio as an experienced manufacturer of ice. By 1867, the U.S. Census listed only six ice factories – three of them were in San Antonio, comprising 50% of the commercial ice industry! As a former ice factory, 1603 S. Hackberry exemplifies an important

---

<sup>1</sup> San Antonio Light, January 27, 1929 p. 59

<sup>2</sup> San Antonio Light, June 20, 1930

<sup>3</sup> San Antonio Light, November 21, 1933 p. 11

<sup>4</sup> San Antonio Express News, January 29, 2017

aspect of the economic heritage of San Antonio and its pioneering spirit. (Criteria # 11).

The building continued to operate as an ice factory through the 1940s after the Crystal Ice Co. The Alamo Ice Plant and Lone Star Ice Company took over the location through various news articles on civil incidents<sup>5</sup>. Lone Star Ice was especially successful at franchising locally with approximately twenty-six locations by 1951<sup>6</sup>. Evidence of the building's use as an ice factory can be found in intact building materials, such as cork remaining in the walls where one can deduce ice was stored<sup>7</sup>. An engineer<sup>8</sup> evaluating the site noted this to the owner. The building's method of construction is valuable for the study of early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial construction, and the integrity of original building materials meet Criteria #5 and #8, respectively. In addition, other licensed contractors<sup>9</sup> have noted historic structural materials such as metal joists tied to metal beams that tie the building's concrete walls together along with metal rivets. This is evidence of an earlier period of construction. Mainly, metal and concrete were cheaper and the wood rafters show signs of being virgin wood -not readily available on today's market. (Criteria #8)

By the late 1940s, consumer refrigerators began infiltrating the consumer market and by 1950, approximately 80% of American households owned their own

---

<sup>5</sup> San Antonio Express News, June 9, 1945

<sup>6</sup> San Antonio Light, June 29, 1951 p.27

<sup>7</sup> See picture as attachment

<sup>8</sup> Loren Drum, P.E.

<sup>9</sup> Mike McNeil, McNeil Roofing; Chuck Smith, SER Consulting;



individual ice -maker, what we call in modern times a refrigerator. The commercial ice industry evolved into marketing ice cubes for bulk use, which we continue to see today at a local HEB, but its business could not recover from this impact to the industry. Most went out of business and the record of ice businesses at the building is not seen past the 1950s.

In subsequent decades, the building became a variety of popular African American owned restaurants, bars, and lounges catering predominately to the African American community in the neighborhood known as Denver Heights. The "We No Tell Lounge"<sup>10</sup> is still fondly remembered by neighbors who live in the area. Mr. Charles E. Williams Sr. , a prominent businessman in Denver Heights, has documented the oral history of African American owned businesses at that location including a restaurant-club known as "The Back Again"—originally named "Leon Parker's Place" -- owned by Mr. Leon Parker. The oral history can be viewed on Vimeo under "Hackberry-Charles E. Williams Sr" (<https://vimeo.com/226575487>). The Denver Heights Neighborhood Association is very supportive of the rehabilitation of this building due to the cultural and economic history of African American owned businesses it represents<sup>11</sup>. (Criteria #11)

In addition to the economic heritage, cultural heritage, and historical materials, the building's location -situated on a corner (Hackberry at High) within a mile of downtown and the Alamo-allowed businesses located there to serve the community with necessities like ice then as a cultural gathering place for the local

---

<sup>10</sup> San Antonio Express News, December 24, 1970

<sup>11</sup> Denver Height NA letter to Councilman Shaw

residents. The building anchors a commercial corridor that serves the downtown-eastside community. (Criteria #7) As the city grew outside of this original footprint and as cars become more ubiquitous, business districts became more independent of residential areas<sup>12</sup>. The decay of the urban core is represented in this building's neglect but represented a great opportunity to preserve this history.

Thank you for your consideration.

WE NO TELL LOUNGE, LLC,  
A Texas limited liability company

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Erika Hizel, Managing Member

---

<sup>12</sup> Sanborn map 1950

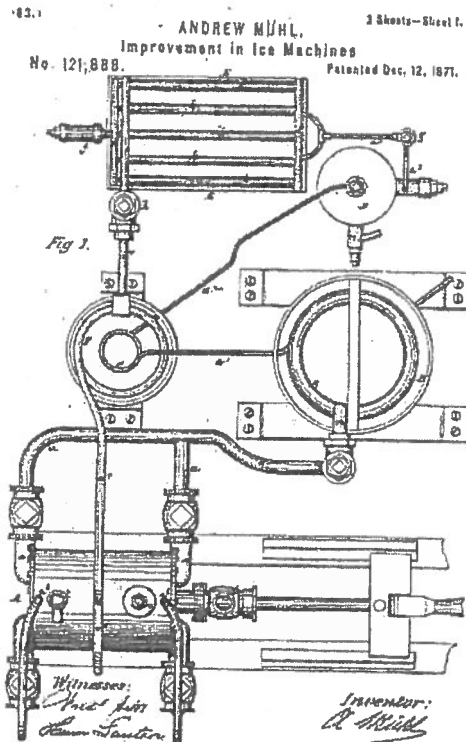
Notice: This work may be protected by copyright (Title 17, U.S. Code)

## Ice - History San Antonio Express-News, 1/29/17

### City was hotbed of cool technology

By Paula Allen, San Antonio Express-News

January 28, 2017 Updated: January 28, 2017 6:53pm – Appeared in print January 29, 2019



THIS MATERIAL IS SUBJECT TO  
U.S. COPYRIGHT LAW. FURTHER  
REPRODUCTION IN VIOLATION  
OF THAT LAW IS PROHIBITED.

Photo: U.S. Patent Office /Google - This drawing accompanied a patent application for Andrew Muhl's ice-making machine.

*In the 1940s, '50s and possibly the '60s, there was an ice factory/ice house on South New Braunfels Avenue about one block north of Porter Street, across from Poe Junior High School. The Bandera Electric Co-Op magazine had an article written by Gene Fowler (an Austin writer who specializes in Texas history) titled "The Iceman Came to San Antonio." Andrew Muhl (1831-1892) was the iceman who came to San Antonio. I would be very interested in the history of the ice factory and wonder if Muhl had anything to do with it. Was Mr. Muhl's device used at the former ice factory?*

– Bernard Adcock

Picture your refrigerator. Now imagine that it's outside your home ... maybe not on the same street or even in your own neighborhood.

Before refrigeration technology was developed during the late 19th century, people didn't have many options to keep food from spoiling. If you were lucky enough to live near a spring or creek, you might have a spring house — a small structure built over the water to store food at cooler-than-outside temperatures that excluded animals and debris. If not, you could put a container of milk in a bucket and send it down the well on a rope.

Larger foodstuffs could pose a challenge. Consider this advertorial about Southdowns, sheep bred for meat, in the San Antonio Express, May 7, 1876: "With a small flock of these sheep, you can at



Typically, blocks of ice were delivered by wagon; customers would put up a sign that indicated the number of pounds they needed. The ice man would wrangle the blocks into the home, where they would be deposited into an ice box (insulated cabinet) with a drip pan below to catch the melting runoff. Some manufacturers of ice started chains of smaller, satellite stores that sold ice and more — the first convenience stores. Ice plants also offered cold storage — space to chill or freeze large items that wouldn't fit in a home ice box.

The building you remember seems to have been a full-service ice plant that included a retail store. A permit to build an "ice house" at 1302 S. New Braunfels Ave. was issued Oct. 7, 1930, to Harry Surtees. According to research by San Antonio Conservation Society library volunteers, this building first appears in the 1931 city directory as the Sunset Ice and Cold Storage Co. The name changes to Lone Star Ice Co. in 1946, and it became Lone Star Ice Station No. 12. It's sometimes identified as a "Lone Star Ice and Food" store, the later name of the company that operated a chain of convenience stores here for more than 75 years.

As home refrigerators became more affordable and popular, the term "ice house" migrated from manufacturing plants to retail outlets that sold ice, beer, soda, snacks and essentials. At the same address as Sunset Ice and Cold Storage, a business called Modern Ice Refrigeration Inc. sold Coolerator refrigerators for home use, according to an ad in the San Antonio Light, May 28, 1931. These electric "air-conditioned" models — no blocks of ice needed — were said to "keep food fresher" and to produce ice cubes, "crystal clear and taste free," in five minutes; "one filling lasts four to seven days." With a freezer on top and larger refrigerator compartment below, the Coolerator sold for "as low as \$44.25 ... as much as \$100 less" than other home refrigerators. Customers were urged to "Ask your ice service man about the Coolerator."

If he endorsed the purchase, he was putting himself out of a job. By 1950, according to census figures, 80 percent of American homes had an electric refrigerator; in cities, the figure was 90 percent. Home refrigerators "melted away traditional ice house business," says a story in the August 2000 issue of Texas Highways. "So ice manufacturers zeroed in on the booming recreational market and began selling cubed and crushed ice for water coolers, parties, picnics and sporting events." The reimagined ice houses became community commonplaces, and the mom-and-pop variety gave way to regional chains.

An ad in the Express, Nov. 7, 1963, lists Lone Star Ice No. 12 at 103 Lanark Drive; the South New Braunfels address does not appear among the chain's local stores. The current building at 1302 S. New Braunfels Ave. has been used as a carwash.