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A Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas

By W. Dwayne Jones

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Prepared For

Texas Department of Transportation

Environmental Affairs Division
Historical Studies Report No. 2003-3

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October 2003

A Field Guide to
Gas Stations in Texas

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A Field Guide to Gas Stations in Texas

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Looking at Gas Stations 11

1910-1920: Drive-Up Gas Stations 23

1920-1930: Full Service/Corporate Identification Gas Stations 33

1930-1940: Machine Made/Streamlined – The Depression Era 47

1940-1950: World War II – Post War Emergence 65

1950-c.1970: Modern Design/International Influences 83

Independent Companies and Gas Stations 99

Reference

Registration Requirements 107

Glossary 117

Bibliography 121

Illustration Credits 129

Introduction

A station is referred to by various popular names including *filling* station (approximately 1910–1920), *gasoline* or *gas* station (1920–1940), or *service* station (meaning a place where a variety of automobile services are provided, 1920 to post World War II). The evolution of the term reflects the gradual expansion of a commercial enterprise, from the curbside distribution of fuel in a crude and rudimentary process along every town's main street, to a sophisticated corporate distribution program that offered a branded product along an interstate highway system. The development of the gas station also evolved from a simple and common building form to a complex building form during the 20th century, attracting the attention of major industrial designers and architects. Despite the commonality of the property type, specific forms and styles arose during progressive time periods, in different areas of the country, and evolved through the corporate design influence of a number of oil and gas companies.

Gas Stations in Texas

The architecture and design of stations as described and defined in this guide share some common characteristics that are helpful in understanding the historic and architectural context of this building type in Texas.

Texas gas stations follow the development of the automobile and its cultural uses and technological advancements.

The first automobile in Texas arrived by railroad in Terrell, about 1899. Colonel E.H.R. Green of Dallas took delivery of this modern machine and drove off on what roads were available at the time. The open-air vehicle reportedly frightened horses, cattle, and humans alike as it chugged across the dusty roads of North Texas in its initial thirty-mile, five-hour adventure to Dallas. By 1910, Texas reported some 14,286 vehicles operating in 180 counties; however, it was the Model T, introduced in 1908 by Henry Ford of Michigan, that brought the automobile to everyman. Texas farmers could afford the Model T, learn to repair it, and make it function regularly to deliver farm products to market.

In 1913, Ford Motor Company opened its Southwest Assembly Plant in Dallas, where it continued a manufacturing presence through most of the 20th century. Other automobile makes and models also appeared in Texas. The Nash, Studebaker, Dodge, Hupmobile, and Cadillac were a few of the more common automobile makes or models. A special automobile, labeled "The Texan" and manufactured in Fort Worth, reflected the state's pride of name. Affinity clubs formed in the state to promote the recreational use of automobiles, as well as the sport of driving and repair of autos.

The Dallas Automobile Club, Automobile Club of Houston, and the Bexar County Highway League were among the state's largest clubs. As the automobile became an everyday feature in the state, locations for purchasing gasoline grew in number and acquired new appearances. Local distributors, often at a garage or automobile dealership, eventually gave way to corporate or independent stations; and many of these entities generated their own building form, signage, and identifying features specific to a time and place.

Figure 1: This example of Henry Ford's Model T was photographed in 1911, parked on the Brazos River Bridge in Waco.

Texas gas stations also are associated with streets, roads, and highways that invariably influence their location, site planning, signage and materials.

The earliest automobile traveled the rough dirt and sandy roads of Texas, which were often filled with stumps and seldom passable in inclement weather. Road maintenance rarely met the ongoing need of the routes, especially as the number of automobiles increased. First established in the northeast by the League of American Wheelmen, the Good Roads movement swept across the country. By the early 1900s, the movement sought to generate and organize public investment in improving roads. Houston hosted the first Good Roads convention in 1895. While many streets still were paved with wood blocks, in general roads remained unimproved and routes were largely undefined.

In 1903, Texas auto owners formed the Texas Good Roads Association to press for state government involvement in road development. In 1910, the annual Glidden Tour began in Cincinnati and dipped down to Dallas before concluding in Chicago. The tour distance of 2,850 miles put North Texas on the map of autoists, in spite of the poor quality of roads. In the same year, San Antonion David E. Colp helped reorganize the Texas Good Roads Association (TGRA) with road contractors and automobile dealers. Colp continued to lead the state's efforts for better roads and organized highway routes for the next twenty years, well after the Texas Legislature established and funded the Texas Highway Department in 1917.

Figure 2: The Good Roads movement swept across the country in the early 1900s and generated the *Good Roads Magazine* (1908).

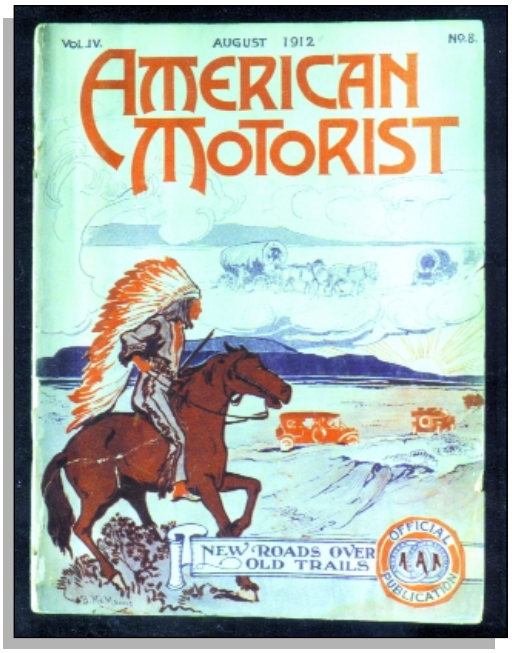


Figure 3: American Motorist (1912) was another publication advocating public investment in road and highway improvement.

In 1912, Colonel Frank P. Holland, publisher of Farm and Ranch and Holland's magazine, promoted the rural use of the automobile by offering a $1,000 prize for a farmers' automobile tour connecting the San Antonio, Galveston and Dallas triangle. Gradually, the state's dirt roads were improved with tar and gravel. They were graded and tamped regularly, or paved with concrete as the number of automobiles on the road rose. In the 1920s and 1930s, named highways criss-crossed the state. The Dallas-Fort Worth turnpike, the Old Spanish Trail, Bankhead Highway, Glacier-to-Gulf Highway, King of Trails, and Meridian Highway demanded the most attention and gradually became incorporated into the state highway system. Special trail guides and private associations first advertised the routes by marking them with distinctive colors and road markers and distributing the earliest road maps.

After World War II, primitive roads became more sophisticated highways, tollways, expressways, and parkways, all skillfully designed by trained engineers and implemented largely by the Texas Highway Department, now Texas Department of Transportation. With each new development the building forms, site planning, materials, signage, and marketing of gasoline and its products adapted to the latest means of transportation.

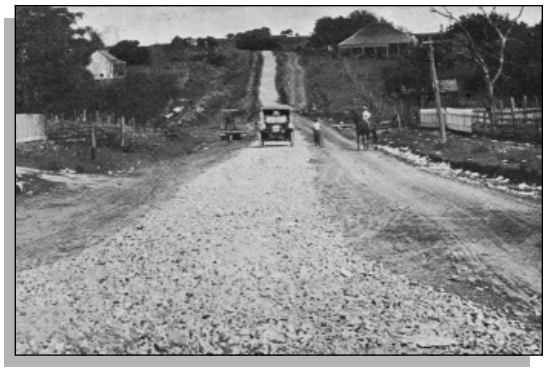


Figure 4: During the 1910s, Texas dirt roads were improved with gravel or rock, as shown in this photo from Grimes County.

Figure 5: Pictured above is the Old Spanish Trail near Kerrville, c. 1925.

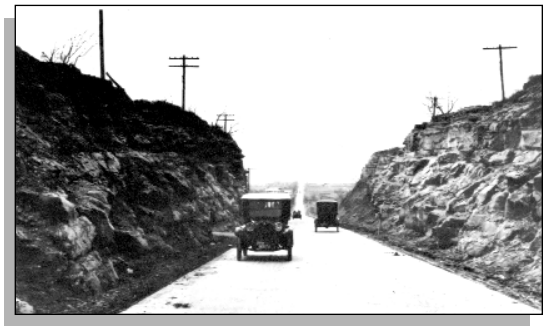


Figure 6: The Dallas-Fort Worth turnpike, shown above, was the most heavily traveled road in Texas during the 1920s.

Texas gas stations reflect the state's varied geography as well as its diverse architectural and cultural legacies.

Texas incorporates some of the country's most varied landscapes and boasts of multiple cultural legacies. From the beaches and lowlands of the Gulf Coast, to dense forests and blackland prairies, from rolling hills and mountains, to the vast flat prairies of the panhandle, Texas is a rich and romantic state. Its geography often influenced building forms, styles, locations and site characteristics of gas stations. This varied geography, overlain with diverse cultural and architectural influences, also resulted in an assortment of distinctive building forms, colors, and signage. For example, Spanish Colonial Revival and Mission styles found an influence in South Texas, drawn from the San Antonio missions of the 18th century. The 1936 Texas Centennial celebration in Dallas embraced the machine age designs called Art Moderne (Streamlined Moderne) and Art Deco, resulting in the largest collection of these styles in the United States. This exhibition influenced both corporate and independent station design of the middle 20th century.

Yet despite these regional geographic and architectural influences, Texas gas stations bore a resemblance to national marketing trends and corporate identity in many locations. Labeled as place-product-packaging by the nation's foremost historians of gas stations, John Jakle and Keith Sculle, stations adopted standardized forms of advertising that sold gasoline and its associated products wherever the customer appeared with his automobile. Distinctive colors, shapes, and logos brought a level of comfort and expectation to the motorist which increased throughout the 20th century.

Figure 7: This 1930s Mobil station in San Antonio reflects the Spanish Colonial Revival influence found throughout South Texas.

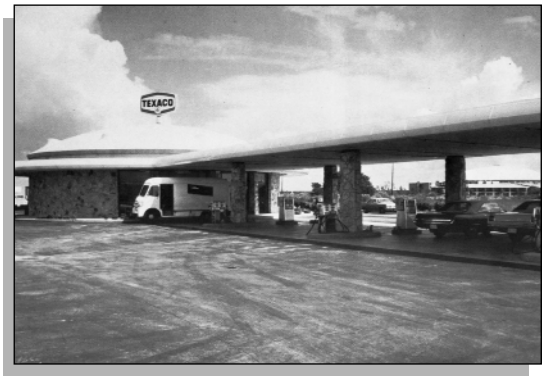


Figure 8: Houston's Astrodome was the inspiration for the above Texaco station located on Kirby Drive in south Houston.

Texas gas stations express state pride, because it is uniquely rich in natural resources that gave rise to much of the nation's oil and gas industry.

Some of the largest corporate giants in the gasoline and oil industry began in Texas. The Gulf Refining Company adopted the name "Gulf" from its refinery operations along the Gulf Coast of Texas. The Texas Company, or Texaco as it became later known, introduced a single star as part of its logo, an emblem which is borrowed from the Texas flag and is symbolic of the Lone Star State. Magnolia Petroleum Company, founded in Corsicana, Texas, organized and partially owned by Galvestonian John H. Sealy, found its namesake in Sealy's aunt, Magnolia Willis Sealy. Even Magnolia's ubiquitous Pegasus Horse can be traced back to Texas influences.

Humble Oil Company, later known as Exxon, took its name from the oil fields around Humble, Texas, near Houston. Finally, intense summer heat and the necessity to protect the personal investment in an automobile called for the addition of canopies and garages to many stations. A number of corporate designed gas stations added canopies when building streamlined forms in the Southwest. These became distinctive forms largely reflective of Texas.

Figure 9: The Gulf Oil Company built this station adjacent to its new corporate headquarters in Houston during the late 1960s.

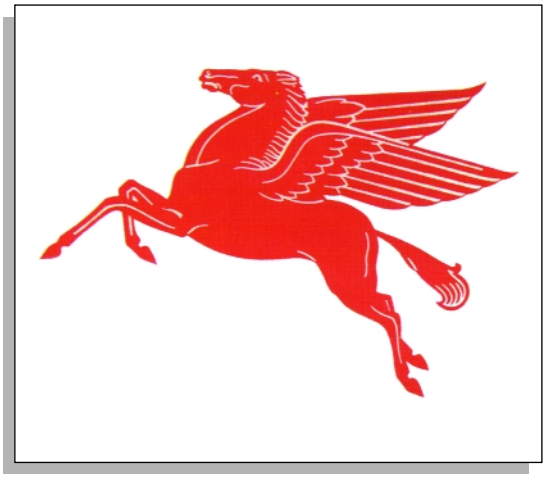


Figure 10: The Magnolia Oil Company's Pegasus is one of the best recognized and most beloved of Texas oil company icons.

Organization of the Field Guide

This field guide is organized as an easy reference book to gas stations in Texas. The initial sections address the general development of stations as a specialized roadside industry catering to the automobile owner. Though arranged in broad chronological periods with temporal boundaries, the first section attempts to make it easier for the user to classify a gas station by architectural or historical characteristics. This is intended to create a context that may assist in developing statements of significance as typically called for in all levels of historical designations.

Following the introduction, each major oil and gas company operating in Texas is described with temporal boundaries. Brief histories, architectural styles and influences, building forms with line sketches, and identifying features are outlined for each station. The building forms and accompanying line sketches are largely drawn from the work of John Jakle and Keith Sculle in their comprehensive work, *The Gas Station in America*, though the building forms are modified to match those most often found in Texas. Jakle and Sculle drew most of their conclusions from the *National Petroleum News*, a publication of note and wide distribution in the industry throughout most of the 20th century. This publication, by its very nature, tended toward generalization and not regional characteristics. Jakle and Sculle also drew from their own region of Illinois for additional forms. Given the influence of geography on station design, additional characteristics are found in Texas gas stations that are noted in this section. The line sketches are further enhanced and modified with general or typical site plans. These elements broaden the descriptive information available for fieldwork.

A separate chapter covering independent companies is included in order to highlight the important presence of those companies and businesspersons preferring to operate outside the confinements of the major oil and gas companies. This section reflects the diversity of the state and the creativity demonstrated by many independent operators in Texas.

The final chapter discusses registration requirements, including issues of integrity and areas of significance that follow the standards issued by the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places. While some flexibility is present for consideration of local or state designation, the National Register has long been considered the basis for many designations and is typically recognized as the standard for determining historic preservation interests.

Lastly, a reference section concludes the field guide, containing a bibliography, glossary of selected terms and illustration credits. The bibliography is drawn from major publications on gas stations as well as historical documents. The glossary incorporates terms often used to describe gas stations, their design, signage and/or marketing. And the illustration credits reference the publications and private collections that provided the images found in the field guide. Following the illustration credits, additional pages are provided for taking notes while in the field.

Looking at Gas Stations

How to Use the Field Guide

The field guide provides assistance for investigators of Texas roadside architecture, specifically gas stations. Sometimes referred to as commercial archeology, the study of commercial architecture is a process using historical documents combined with the examination of layers of physical alterations to reveal original roadside buildings.

Gas stations, like many building types of commercial and roadside industries, often underwent alterations or changes over time. In some extant examples, buildings may no longer reflect original corporate or independent design intentions, signage may be long removed, or site plan characteristics may be significantly altered. The investigator must examine layers of change or extrapolate from the existing site or fabric to determine original influences and potentially determine significance. The investigator may literally take this publication on a roadside trip, stop in front of a station, and flip through the guide in order to find appropriate influences evident at the site. It is a "guide" for the "field" investigator.

This publication provides general guidance, both visual and historical, needed to aid the investigator. It is limited by the complexity of gas stations, invariably individual or local interpretations of a building form or design, and the inherent difficulty in dating the very fluid cultural, business, or marketing changes expressed over time. Thus, this field guide should be used with care and allow for the inevitable opportunity for special cases.

Architectural Styles and Influences

Bungalow/Craftsman

- Wood Frame.
- Residential appearance.
- Side or front gable roof.
- Hipped roof.
- Boxed or tapered columns.
- Exposed rafter ends.
- Brick with wood trim. Stucco with wood trim.

Figure 11: This 1920s Texas Company gas station is an example of the Bungalow/Craftsman style.

Spanish Eclectic/Mission

- Tile roof and/or pent roof elements.
- Stucco siding.
- Hipped roof or complex roof form.
- Square columns.
- Raised parapet, often curvilinear or gabled.

Figure 12: The above station, located in Beaumont, features stucco siding and a hipped roof typical to the Spanish Eclectic/Mission style.

Architectural Styles and Influences

Figure 13: This example of the Colonial Revival style is a 1920s Texas Company station that was located in Austin.

Colonial Revival

- Decorative roof ornament, often balustrade with square balusters/diamond patterns.
- Wood frame siding, occasionally red brick.
- Residential appearance.
- Hipped roof.
- Flat roof.

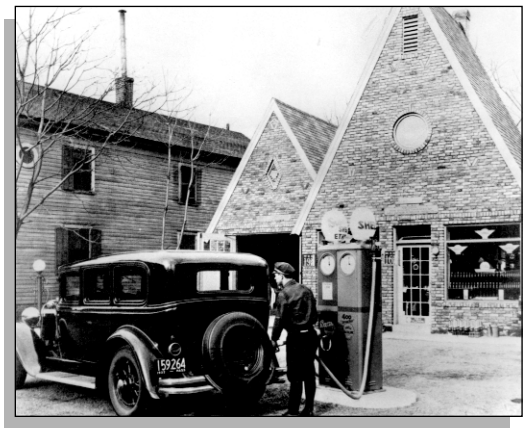


Figure 14: The Tudor Revival style is shown in this 1930s Shell gas station, which was owned by the author's grandfather.

Tudor Revival

- Steeply pitched roof.
- Chimney, usually on the principal facade.
- Residential appearance.
- Arched doorway and sometimes arched windows.
- Brick veneer.

Architectural Styles and Influences

Art Deco

- Decorative ornamentation, sometimes polychromatic.
- Ridged surfaces or fluting.
- Raised band and column elements.
- Angular surfaces using geometric patterns.
- Stucco siding.
- Porcelain enamel paneled siding.

Figure 15: Porcelain enamel paneled siding is a typical feature of Art Deco stations, as seen in this 1920s Gulf example.

Streamlined (Moderne)

- Stucco siding.
- Raised parapet, often curvilinear.
- Coping along parapet.
- Clean, crisp edges sometimes resembling a pilaster.
- Rounded corners.
- Flat roof.
- Bands along roofline edges.

Figure 16: This gas station, located in Beaumont, demonstrates the Streamlined (Moderne) style, featuring a flat roof and raised parapet.

Architectural Styles and Influences

Figure 17: The above 1950s Conoco station represents the Modern influence, featuring large glass windows and no ornamentation.

Modern

- General term for non-traditional architectural influences.
- Clean, smooth surfaces.
- Porcelain, steel siding.
- Devoid of ornamentation.
- Large glass windows.
- Minimal exposed structure.

Figure 18: This Shell gas station features the low-pitched roof and stone veneer typical of the Ranch design.

Ranch

- Large, low-pitched roof (usually gable in form).
- Stone or brick veneer.
- Large plate glass windows, often angled .
- Residential in appearance.
- Large pylon rising above roofline.

Architectural Styles and Influences

International

- Exposed structural elements.
- Steel sometimes interspersed with brick.
- Large expanses of glass.
- Devoid of ornamentation.
- Tinted glass.
- Smooth, clean architectural lines.

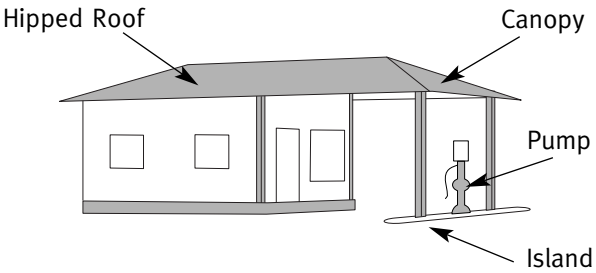
Figure 19 : In 1966, Eliot Noyes developed this design for Mobil gas stations, employing the International influence

Mimetic or Programmatic

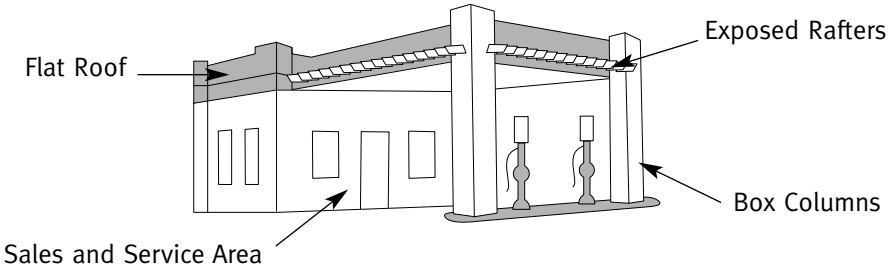
- Freeform appearance.
- Creative design that may mimic other building types.
- Diverse materials, sometimes using a combination of materials.
- Strong visual elements that draw attention.
- Complex roof and architectural elements.

Figure 20: This 1950s station, located in Shamrock, is an example of the Programmatic influence common to independently owned gas stations.

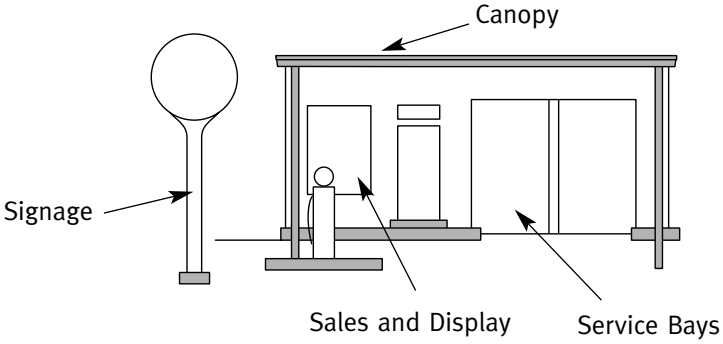
Analysis of Gas Station Components



Gas Station 1910-1930 – House with Canopy

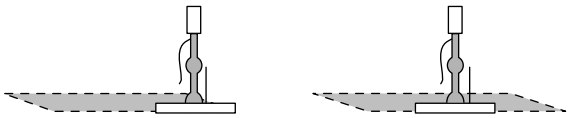


Gas Station 1920-1940 – Box with Canopy

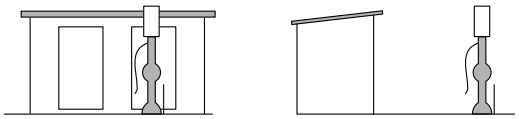


Gas Station 1930-c.1970 – Oblong Box with Canopy

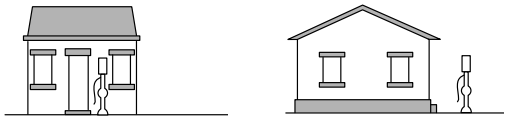
Gas Station Building Forms



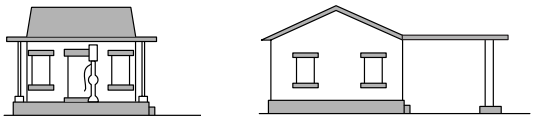
Drive-up or Curbside



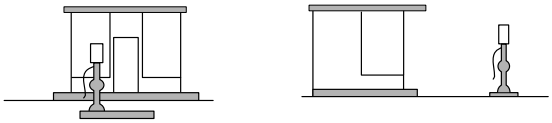
Shed



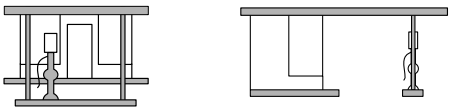
House



House with Canopy

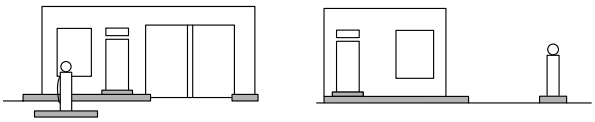


Box

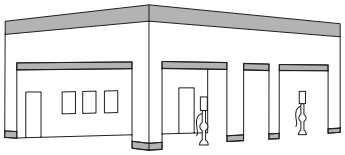


Box with Canopy

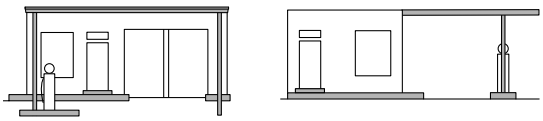
Gas Station Building Forms



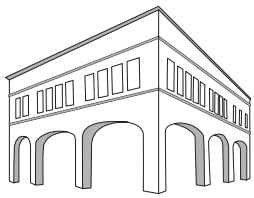
Oblong Box



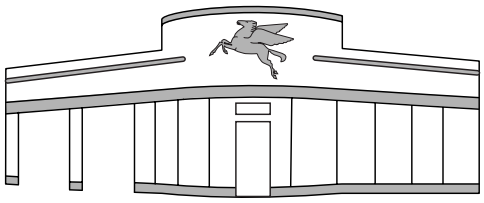
1-Part Commercial Block



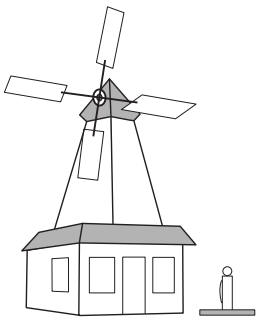
Oblong Box with Canopy



2-Part Commercial Block



Oblong Box with Drum



Programmatic or Mimetic

Drive-Up Gas Stations

Early automobile owners in Texas typically obtained fuel through local wholesale distributors associated with automobile-related businesses. These businesses distributed gasoline, a by-product of kerosene, often purchased at livery and dry goods stores in crude containers that allowed the product to be funneled into automobile tanks. Wholesalers, sometimes with horse drawn tank wagons, carried gasoline to needy customers wherever they might be located. Stationary gasoline stations or pumps were not necessary or even preferred by automobile owners in the early period. The initial offering of fuel for the emerging automobile owner began in an organized and permanent station form about 1910 and may be classified as the "drive-up" period.

In 1907, Standard Oil of California introduced the first gasoline drive-up station at its Seattle kerosene refinery. Crude hoses carried the product to queued automobiles awaiting service. This concept developed into curbside service with underground tanks and above ground pumps set along an urban street curb or rural road. About 1913, Gulf Refining Company introduced the first full-service filling station in Pittsburgh in a brick, pagoda-like station and offered free air, water, restrooms, and a lighted sign. The station cast a large cantilevered canopy over multiple above-ground pumps, allowing access from a number of different directions at one time. Contrary to the curbside pumps without canopies, the early Gulf station allowed for a fill-up even in inclement weather. Prior to 1915, however, few automobiles were covered, so little automobile travel occurred in poor weather conditions and thus canopies were not necessary. Curbside or drive-up filling stations were found in urban and rural areas alike. After 1919, urban fire safety codes and ordinances forced some curbside gas stations to close. This began a dichotomy between designs in urban and rural areas, as the latter continued for several more decades.

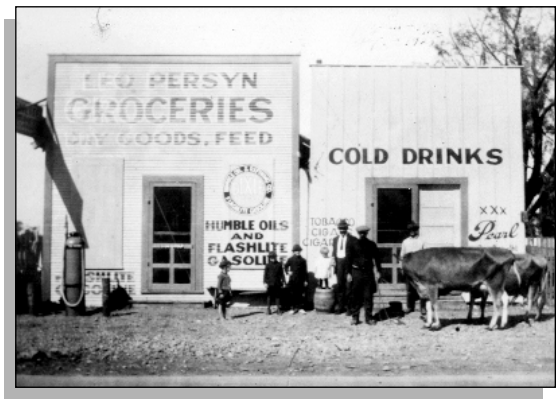


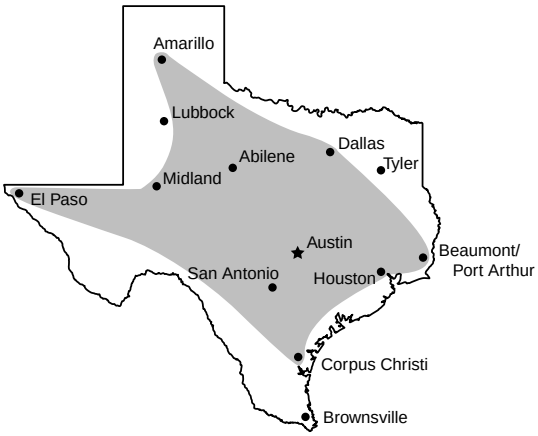
Figure 21: This Humble station is an example of the early drive-up filling stations and was located in San Antonio.

In Texas, gasoline and automotive care products appeared as early as 1910 in the larger cities. San Antonio, for example, offered approximately ten oil and refining companies with gasoline products and stations. Among these were The Texas Company, Waters-Pierce Oil Company, Gulf Refining Company, and several local distributors, such as the Dixie Oil Company and Alamo Oil and Refining Company. Early photographs of the drive-up gas stations show the automobile owner driving up by a large pump, often adjacent to another business. Automobile dealerships and small gasoline companies offered some additional services as a means of securing customers. Such services were typically lubrication, minor repairs to the automobile body, replacement of springs or hoses, tire replacement or repair, and air and water. Most of these stations relied on customer self-service in crude but functional facilities with tall gasoline pumps that matched the noisy, clumsy automobiles of the period. By the end of the decade, more than 200 gasoline companies existed nationwide, giving rise to the development of new stations that projected a corporate image. Among the earliest corporate designed stations in Texas was the Texas Company, which introduced a Spanish Eclectic (Type “A”) style gas station in 1918. Humble, Magnolia and Gulf soon followed, introducing their own designs.

Figure 22: This 1918 off-street gasoline station, operated by Gulf and located in Beaumont, originally featured multiple gas pumps.

The Gulf Oil Company (or Gulf Refining Company) began in 1901 with the discovery of oil in Spindletop, near Beaumont. Financed primarily by Andrew Mellon, Gulf's oil fields were well established in West Texas with relatively few fields in the continental United States. Gulf is credited with the first gas station in a small retail establishment in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1913. This station was built for the purpose of selling and distributing gasoline to automobiles in an off-street location.

In Texas, many of the earliest Gulf stations were associated with other auto-related businesses and operated from the curbside.

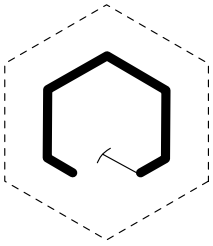


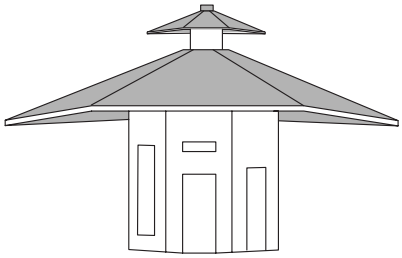
Distribution of Gulf in the 1910s.

Identifying Features:

- Metal overhanging canopy with stucco box and brick.
- Multi-light windows and brackets.
- Distinctive roof adornment.
- Spanish Eclectic influence.

Form: Hexagonal Box





Humble Oil and Refining Company operated mostly in the Southwest (Mexico, and Arizona) as well as in Ohio. Its initial distribution was through independent stations. Humble opened its first station in Houston, Texas, about 1919 for a cost of $50,000. Alfred Finn, one of Houston's most prolific early architects, designed an elaborate Beaux Arts influenced building constructed at the intersection of Main and Jefferson. Operated as a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, the Humble Company was named for the lucrative Humble Oil Field near Beaumont, Texas. The earliest stations appeared as a simple house with canopy. Later versions of the house form (in the 1920s) featured a flat roof, raised parapets and an extended flat canopy or hipped roof with hipped canopy. Despite some tendency to a corporate design, variations to the form were common.

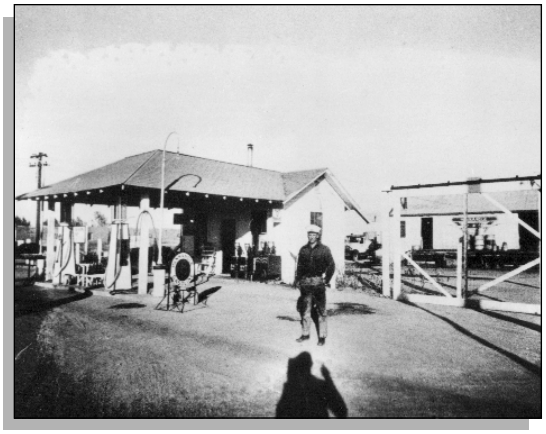
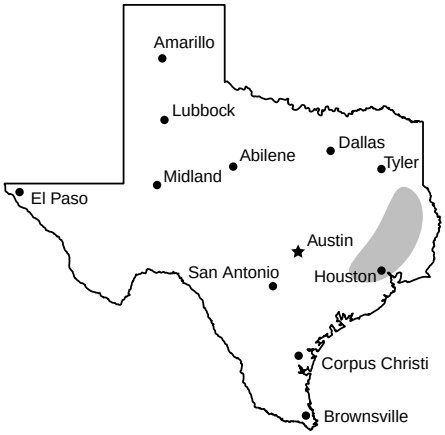


Figure 23: This example of the Craftsman style was common to early Humble gas stations.

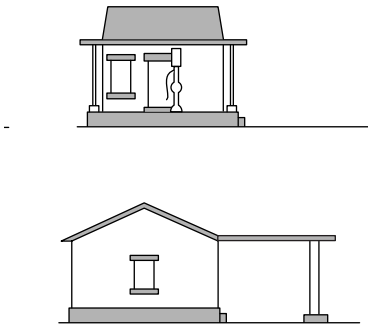
Identifying Features:

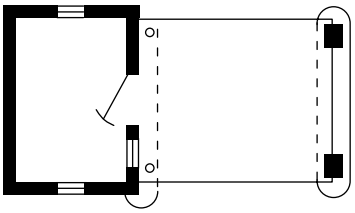
- Side gabled roof or hipped roof.
- Extended canopy.
- Exaggerated exposed rafter ends, often only on canopy, or boxed eaves.
- Typically brick with door and single window to office.
- Prairie School or Craftsman influence.



Distribution of Humble in the 1920s.

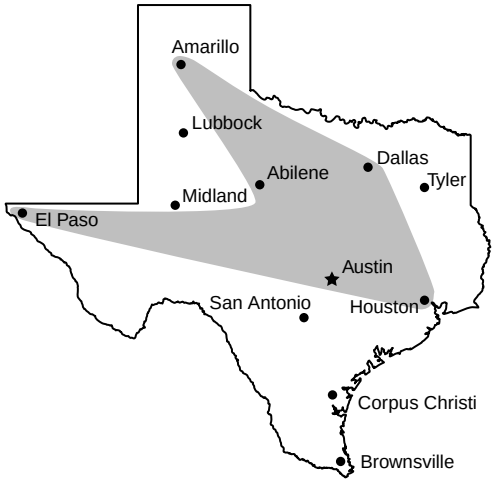
Form: House with Canopy





Magnolia organized in 1898 in Corsicana, Texas, under the direction of John H. Sealy of Galveston. The company was named for Sealy's aunt, Magnolia Willis Sealy, also of Galveston. By 1911, Magnolia was headquartered in Dallas, Texas, and began the production, refining, and marketing of its products. Its major gasoline products were sold as "Magnolia Gasoline" and "Magnolene Motor Oils." The corporate logo featured a red circle with a blue center, showing "Magnolia" arched across the top and "Gasoline" around the bottom. Small magnolia flowers in white filled the center circle.

In 1918, Standard Oil Company of New York (Socony) acquired Magnolia and initiated an expansion campaign, but retained the Magnolia brand name. Magnolia developed its first gas station forms about 1918; one was primarily used in outlying locations and a second, introduced after 1920, was located in urban or central business district markets. Both forms produced handsome buildings for commercial areas or residential neighborhoods. During this same period, Magnolia also marketed and sold through independent station owners in every imaginable building form and location.



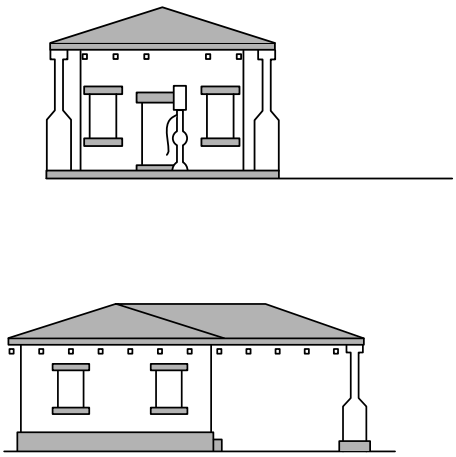
Distribution of Magnolia in the 1910s.

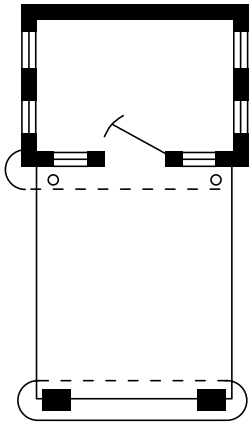
Figure 24: Many early Magnolia stations featured boxed columns constructed of brick, a hipped roof and exposed rafter ends.

Form: House with Canopy

Identifying Features:

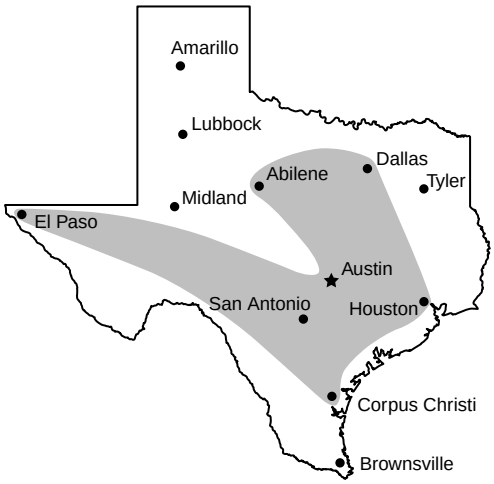
- A hipped roof with a covering canopy and box, exposed rafter ends.
- Boxed columns taper up to a small capital (a distinctive design element for Magnolia).
- Construction is usually brick, though sometimes wood or regional stone is used.
- Decorative features include brick quoins, contrasting colors of door and window lintels and sills.
- Small display windows, one or two single doors.
- Architectural style was typically Craftsman, very residential in feel and expression.
- By 1918, Magnolia had introduced a standard form with tapered columns.





The Texas Company, originally named the Texas Fuel Company, grew out of the discovery of the Spindletop Field near Beaumont, Texas, in 1901-02. The Texas Company officially located in Corsicana, Texas, but moved within a year to Beaumont. The company's first logo, adopted in 1903, featured a simple five-pointed red star. In 1908, The Texas Company moved its headquarters to the Stewart Building in Houston, Texas. During these early years, The Texas Company operated curbside stations at independent locations. In San Antonio, the company offered gas at the corner of Zavala and North Comal in the central business district. In 1911, the first filling station opened on a corner in Brooklyn, New York, selling Texaco Auto Gasoline as a motor fuel, and in 1917, the company opened its first Texas-based station in Houston. Labeled a "service station," this location offered a full array of company products, including Texaco Motor Oil and "volatile gas," through curb service in a storefront facility. In 1918, the Texas Company introduced a Type A form that featured a drive-through bay under a continuous gable roof.

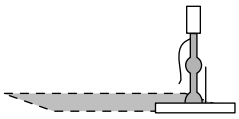
The company marketed gasoline and motor oils across Texas and began to establish its presence across the country, with the exception of the five westernmost states. The Texas Company established some 229 wholesale terminals. These terminals were supplied from one refinery at Port Arthur, Texas. The Company's retail marketing strategy focused on placing the company as second or third in most markets rather than being the lead. The red star of 1903 featured the words "Made in Texas" on a white background. In 1909, The Texas Company introduced its first trademarked logo, a green "T" against a red star. By 1913, the company introduced a 42-inch porcelain enameled double-faced sign for display on all company-owned filling stations.

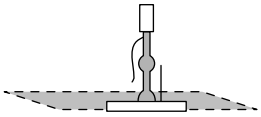


Distribution of the Texas Company in the 1910s.

Figure 25: This example of an early Texaco curbside or drive-up gas station was featured in the 1918 edition of *Locke's Good Road Maps*.

Form: Curbside
1903-1917

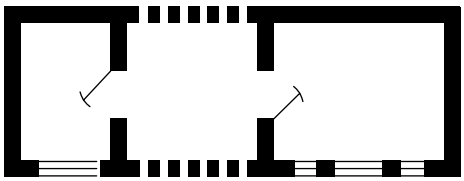




Identifying Features:

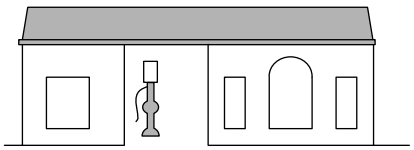
- Curbside pumps were placed along street in urban areas.
- Similar locations in rural sites.
- Located to allow close placement of automobiles to the pump, often from the street.
- No architectural style, associated with commercial storefront facade.

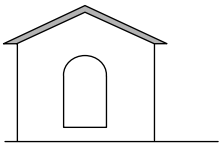
Form: House
1918-1920



Identifying Features:

- Type A, side-gabled roof.
- Typically tile and red brick siding.
- Multiple flat-arched windows.
- Larger arched storefront windows.
- A drive-through bay may be the single most significant feature.
- Prairie School or Craftsman influence.
- Spanish Eclectic





1920-1930

Full Service /Corporate Identification Gas Stations

Hundreds of stations began to appear across the country during this decade. Efforts to distinguish between competing stations introduced distinctive buildings, generally with canopies projecting toward the highway or street and covering gasoline pumps. Amenities also began to appear, including vending machines and water fountains. Service attendants wiped windshields, checked oil and water, and provided curb service. Larger specialized service bays, attached to the basic building form, began to appear by the end of the decade. Sometimes referred to as "lubritoriums," these eventually became full service repair and maintenance centers for automobile owners. Building owners in urban areas began to incorporate service stations into corner commercial blocks, sometimes adapted to the site and other times designed for the site. Corner commercial block buildings allowed a drive-through area that covered gas pumps, creating a space for marketing and the sale of automotive products, and affording protection during inclement weather. In Texas, hundreds of these facilities still exist in urban areas, including many small town main streets.

After 1920, oil companies introduced neighborhood service stations in and around wealthy residential areas of urban communities. These neighborhood stations required large corner lots accessible from two primary arterial streets. Neighborhood stations often took on materials and forms similar to a residence, with special deference to nearby neighborhoods. Tall projecting gables, chimneys, large multi-paned windows, and cloth or metal awnings appeared on these stations. The introduction of these businesses into residential areas sometimes required the removal of existing houses and predated zoning ordinances in most cities. However, by 1930 many cities had passed zoning ordinances and these commercial businesses, regardless of appearance, became inappropriate to residential neighborhoods. This introduced many street corners to commercial uses that still remain, due to "grandfathered" zoning classifications.

This period also saw the introduction of gasoline pumps designed with attention given to their appearance. Major gasoline pump companies designed above-ground pumps that were lighted at night and advertised the company. By 1925, many gas stations added grease pits and car washing floors with concrete. The term "grease monkey" appeared in reference to the mechanics that worked the stations. As a result of the increase in services, building forms included more than one service bay, sometimes flanking the office, and a specific product sales area. During the 1920s, many gas station designers introduced lights and light standards as a means of attracting motorists, and also to provide a safe environment for nighttime fueling and access from busy streets or roads.

A significant rise in the number of sole proprietorships and woman-owned businesses appeared during this period. In San Antonio, a small chain of stations developed to offer gas and rooftop entertainment. La Gloria No. 1, built in 1928 at Brazos and Laredo, provided a rather unusual mix on the city's West Side among the emerging Mexican-American neighborhoods. This small business prospered under the direction of its female owner until recently demolished. Other local distributors and refining companies operated in San Antonio. Grayburg Oil Company is the best known among these companies, with more than seventeen stations by 1926 and thirty by 1929.

Figure 26: Corner locations, similar to the above Texaco gas station in Austin, were introduced in the 1920s.

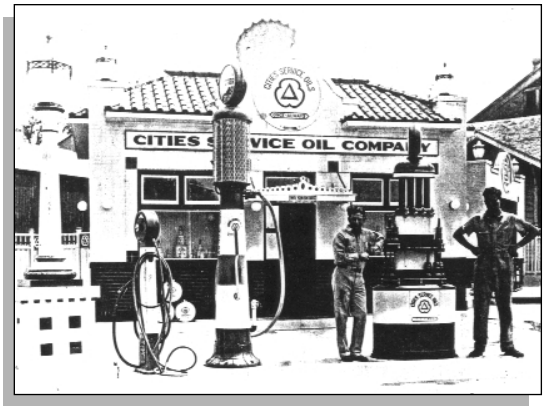


Figure 27: This 1920s Cities Service gas station was located at the corner of Lavaca and Sixteenth Street in Austin.

Distribution of Cities Service in the 1920s.

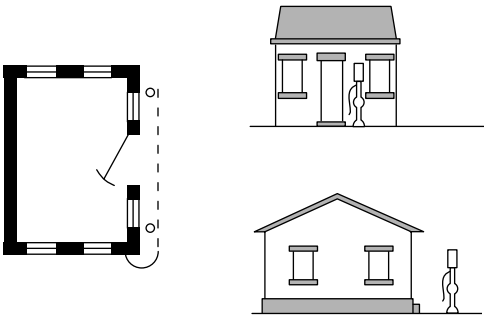
Cities Service was founded in 1910 as a public utility. The company operated natural gas, lighting, ice and other utility type services in major municipal locations during the early part of the century. In 1914, the company was headquartered in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and at this time entered the petroleum market.

The company built gas stations across the East and Midwest, and included Texas in its market as far south as San Antonio. The earliest company logo featured a black outlined white rectangle with a black band across the center. A later logo consisted of a clover leaf in black and white on a circular form.

Cities Service expanded in Texas during the late 1920s, offering petroleum products in most major cities. These stations usually offered only gasoline, but in some cases offered limited service as well. No standardized corporate station is known. However, extant examples of Cities Service stations suggest they were often creative and imaginative forms. Inspired by local architecture, the stations would feature a Spanish Eclectic or Mission influence with a tile roof and raised brick pilasters.

Corporate logos of the period featured a clover leaf in black and white on a circular form stating, "Cities Service." In the 1920s, the company advertised in major magazines, such as *The Saturday Evening Post*, reaching some 113 cities across 20 states. Cities Service also used billboards and small signs nailed to trees and fence posts along highway rights-of-way. Cities Service strove to spread its trademark nationally and to expand sales for the company.

Form: House



Identifying Features:

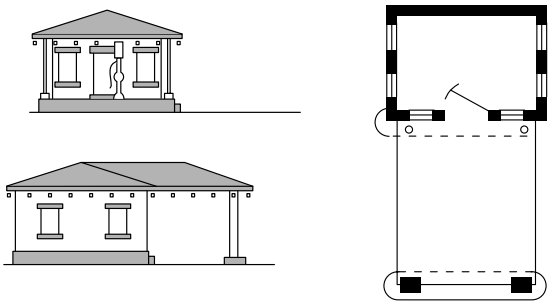
- Few remain, but corporate signage may be the best source of identification.
- Architectural styles varied, reflecting local architectural influences; early examples are Mission or Spanish Eclectic.

Early Gulf Refining Company stations rarely followed any set design or standardized form. The early hexagonal shaped station may have been interpreted in similar shapes through the 1920s in some locations. Signage may be the most distinctive element of this period of Gulf stations. A round sign containing the words "That Good Gulf Gasoline" often sat on a single light standard along the street. The station itself appeared as a box without canopy, often featuring landscape features that helped it blend into the neighborhood. In other examples, Gulf dealers operated from the former location of another company occupying a house with canopy form.

Identifying Features:

- Signage would be the best indicator of the company.
- Bungalow/Craftsman and Colonial Revival.

Form: House with Canopy



Form: Box

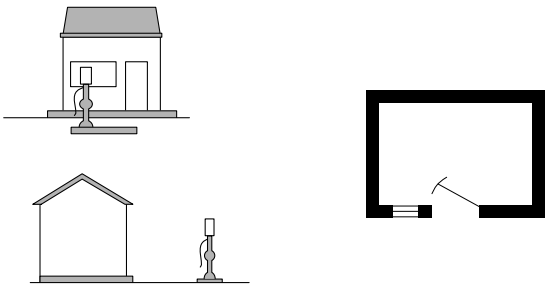
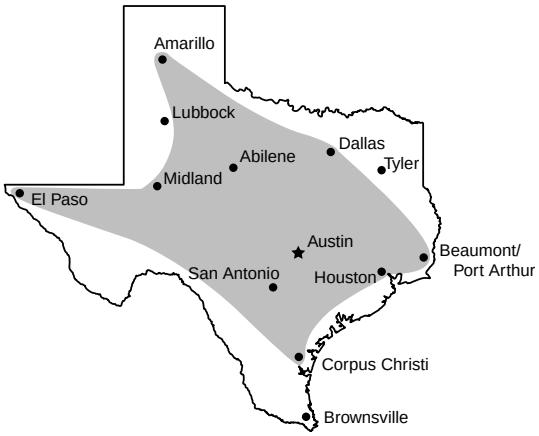


Figure 28: This example of a 1920s Gulf station shows the prominent signage common to these early locations.

Figure 29: The above Gulf Refining Company station, located in Grapevine, is an example of the house with canopy form.



Distribution of Gulf in the 1920s.

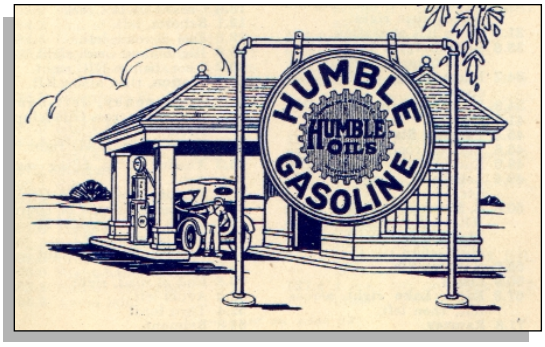
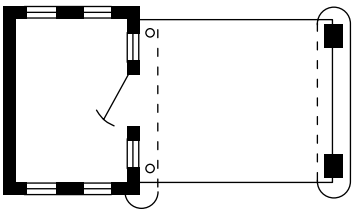


Figure 30: This line drawing is from the 1925 "Highways of Texas" map book published by Humble Oil of Houston.

Distribution of Humble in the 1920s.

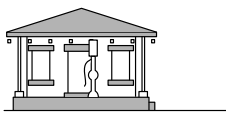
Form: House with Canopy

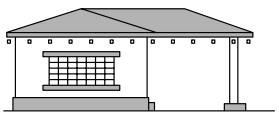


Despite its initial entry into the retail market in 1919, Humble, based in Houston, Texas, owned only three to four stations in the state at the beginning of the 1920s. However, by the mid 1920s, Humble spread across much of southeast, central and south Texas. As the company developed, the popular house with canopy form used in its earliest service stations found many variations. Almost always of brick veneer construction with a hipped or flat roof, the corporate owned stations typically sported exaggerated rafter ends on both the house and canopy. A single island of gasoline pumps dominated the end of the canopy on a raised island. In many communities, Humble distributed its products through independent dealers who displayed the Humble signage but did not follow a standard corporate station design. Humble's first corporate logo incorporated a gear-tooth circle on a white background with "Humble" arched across the top, "Gasoline" arched around the bottom; "Humble Oils" fell straight across the center. Humble offered a full complement of products for motorists by the mid 1920s, including Humble Gasoline, Humble Motor Oils and Humble Greases. The company produced gasoline in three refineries: Burkburnett, Hearne, and Baytown. These locations allowed distribution across the state with the exception of far west Texas.

Identifying Features:

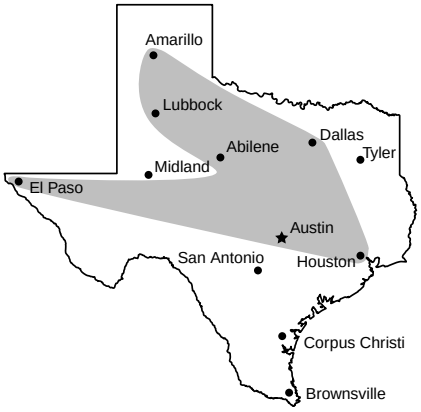
- Brick veneer construction with brick columns supporting the canopy.
- Exaggerated rafter ends on house and canopy.
- Large multi-light windows typically dominate the office with a single door.
- Hipped or flat roof with raised parapet.
- Some stations were stucco, with exposed rafters, raised and arched parapets and stucco columns.
- Typically Bungalow or Craftsman influenced, sometimes Mission style.





During the 1920s, Magnolia continued to retain and produce its house with canopy form across the state, but soon introduced its most distinctive urban form in one and two-story versions. Magnolia preferred corner locations, allowing drive-through bays on two streets. The company often hired local architects to oversee the construction of these standardized corporate designs, using terra cotta tiles. Magnolia advertised its full name on many of these stations, "Magnolia Petroleum Company" followed by "Gasoline Auto Supply Station." The company name was typically embossed in the terra cotta, as was the street name when located on a corner lot. Magnolia controlled some eighteen percent of the Texas market with refineries in Beaumont and Corsicana and stations in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona. Socony began to build its market nationwide after the company's acquisition and fully extended coast to coast by 1930.

Figure 31: The above example of Magnolia's 2-part Commercial Block was found in San Antonio.

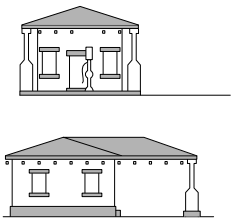


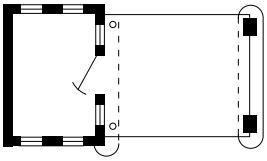
Distribution of Magnolia in the 1920s.

Form: House with Canopy

Identifying Features:

- Hipped roof or flat roof.
- Continuous roofline.
- Distinctive tapered columns.
- Brick construction, with terra cotta tile trim.
- Classical Revival or Spanish Eclectic.

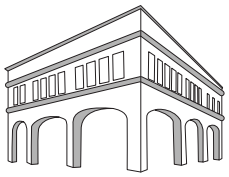


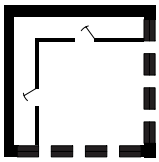


Form: 1-Part or 2-Part Commercial Block

Identifying Features:

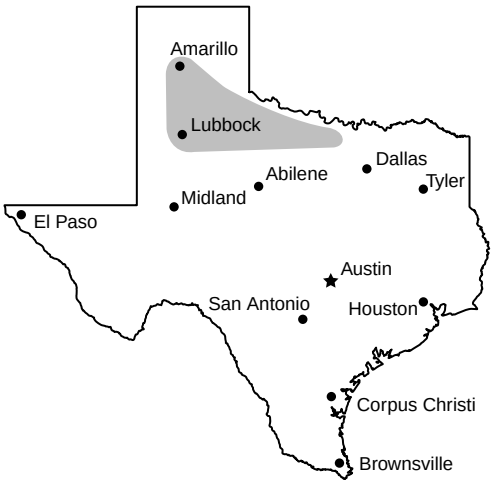
- Brick veneer construction with drive-through bays incorporated within the building.
- Flat roof, arched openings, decorative cornices, and terra cotta tiles.
- Two story versions usually included office space on upper floor.
- Spanish Eclectic.





The Phillips Oil Company was founded in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, by Frank Phillips and his brother. However, the company did not begin refining and marketing gasoline in Texas until 1927. In the same year, Phillips opened its first station in Wichita, Kansas, building a largely regional trade area extending from New Mexico north to Minnesota and east to Indiana. Phillips held large natural gas holdings in a field that began in Kansas and ended in the Texas Panhandle. The company marketed its natural gasoline (developed from natural gas) at local service stations, but rarely to independent dealers.

Phillips 66 service stations operated in the Texas Panhandle and extended down to the Lubbock area and extreme North Texas around Wichita Falls. The original stations were typically located in residential areas. The station designs attempted to blend into the neighborhoods by using Tudor Revival, a popular residential style. Some stations went a step further, to appear like an old English Cottage, bucolic and romantic.



Distribution of Phillips 66 during the 1920s.

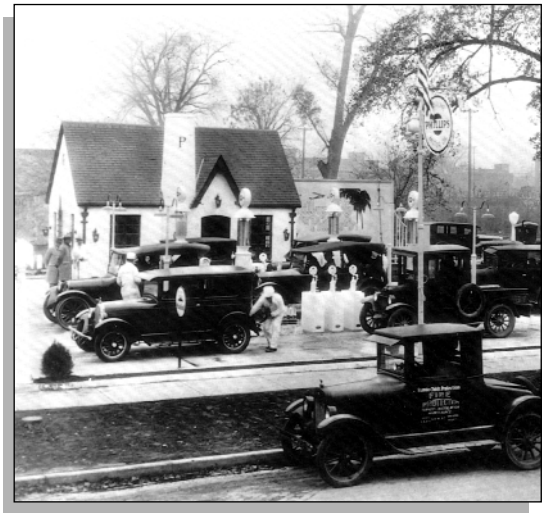


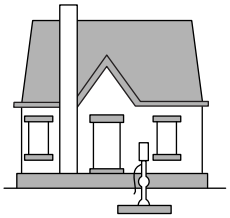
Figure 32: A high pitched roof and front chimney flanked by a wooden door distinguished this 1927 Phillips 66 station.

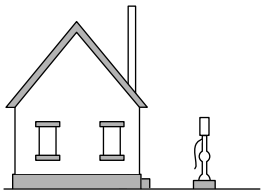
Identifying Features:

- High pitched roof, originally with colored tiles or shingles.
- A front chimney flanked by a single wooden door.
- Multi-light metal window sashes.
- Steeply pitched front gable.
- Typically brick siding, often in a dark earth tone.
- Gasoline pumps separated from the main building, usually on a raised island.
- Typically located in a residential area.
- Tudor Revival (or English Cottage).

Figure 33: This colorful Phillips station dates from the 1920s and is located in McLean.

Form: House





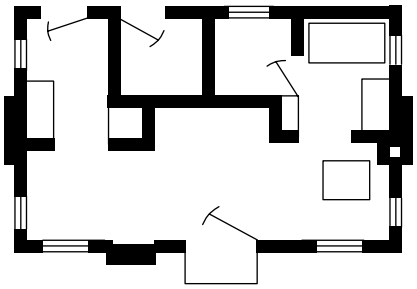
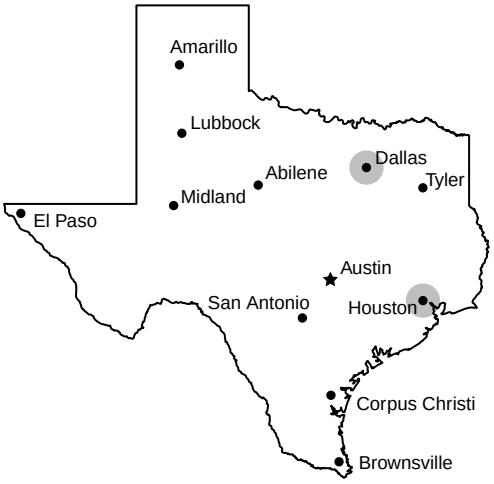


Figure 34: Above is an example of the prefabricated form common to Shell gas stations during the 1920s.

Shell (or Royal Dutch-Shell) was established in 1907 and began its first marketing in the United States in 1912 under the name American Gasoline Company of Seattle. By 1925, Shell owned more than 3,000 stations distributed throughout California, Oregon, and Washington. The company first entered the Texas market in 1929, setting upon a nationwide marketing campaign.

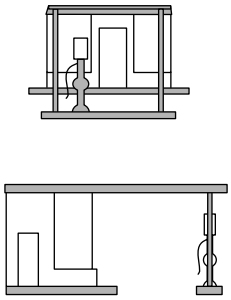
Identifying Features:

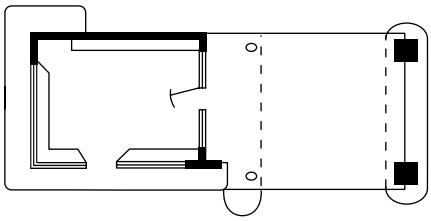
- Prefabricated box with large steel shash divided windows.
- Metal canopy extended out or dropped and suspended and was supported by a single column, or two columns.
- Small building, lighted by incandescent lights.
- Ornamentation of Art Deco bas relief.
- Transparency created by large windows and doors.
- Art Deco.



Distribution of Shell during the 1920s.

Form: Box with Canopy



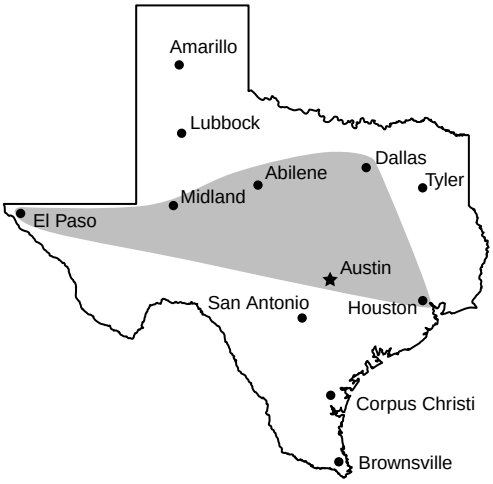


The Texas Company developed regional designs depending on the indigenous architecture of an area. In the Northeast, the company introduced a saltbox design derived from traditional domestic building forms of the area. In 1923, The Texas Company developed the Denver-Type service station as its first national design in order to blend into residential neighborhoods. The Denver-Type station became the first company design to incorporate bays for lubrication and repair. In the West and Southwest (including Texas), the company built Mission style stations that resembled stucco or adobe buildings in appearance.

Figure 35: This station is an example of the Mission style common to Texaco gas stations in the 1920s.

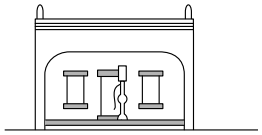
Figure 36: The above Texaco station, another example of the 1920s Mission style, was adjacent to the Lakey Tourist Court at 504 Locust Street in Denton.

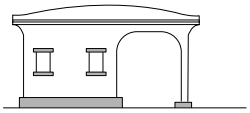
In Texas, the Texas Company also built a house with canopy form influenced by the Colonial Revival style. While typical of the form in the 1920s, the style expressed a residential and traditional architecture. The company offered Texaco New and Better Gasoline in 1926, and incorporated a chain of 4,000 stations in eight states (Texas, New York, Florida, North Carolina, Illinois, Virginia, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). In 1928, The Texas Company purchased the California Petroleum Corporation and Galena-Signal Oil Company, thereby expanding the company to all 48 states.

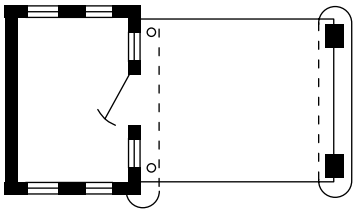


Distribution of the Texas Company during the 1920s.

Form: House with Canopy



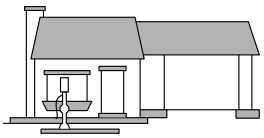


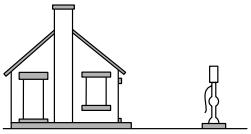


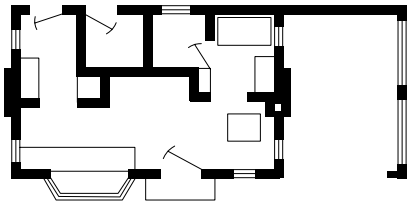
Identifying Features:

- Featured a raised parapet.
- Part of the roof below the parapet was tile.
- Entry way arched with a canopy.
- Exterior stucco.
- Single door with flanking storefront windows.
- Mission influence.

Form: House with Bay



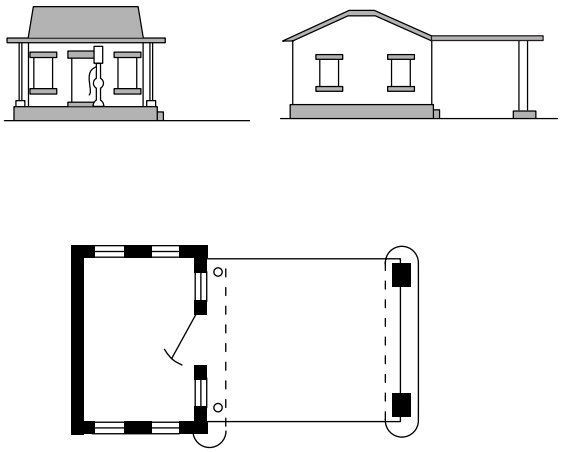




Identifying Features:

- Denver-Type service station.
- Side-gabled tile roof with front gable.
- Stucco walls, simulated chimneys and bright colors accenting the building.
- The type may be named for its first locale of introduction, Denver, Colorado.
- Bungalow or Craftsman influence, sometimes Tudor Revival.

Form: House with Canopy



Identifying Features:

- Side-gabled roof on box; clipped gable roof creating a gable end location for the red star emblem.
- Projecting canopy resting on box columns, with knee brackets used to decorate the canopy roof line.
- Large glass show window, usually a single door to showroom.
- Multi-light windows on side elevations.
- Typically no service bays.
- Colonial Revival.

Figure 37: This example of the Texaco gas station demonstrates the house with canopy form and was located in Austin in the 1920s.

1930-1940

Machine Made /Streamlined – The Depression Era

As much of the country recognized the role of machines and drive-in convenience in everyday life, new and sophisticated gas stations appeared across the country. A genre of industrial designers emerged to influence the design of the automobile and contributed to the now pervasive gas station. Walter Dorwin Teague's design work for The Texas Company (Texaco) in 1934 offered a clean, curved gas station with forest green and red details. His design was to become the enviable standard for other companies. Norman Bel Geddes designed for the Socony-Vacuum Oil Corporation of New York, and K.E.M. Weber's art students designed prototype stations in California. Many gas stations adopted porcelain enamel panels, added neon to lights and signs, and expanded services to include tire repair and replacement, oil changes, and automotive repair. Magnolia (later known as Mobil) pioneered the trend of designing gas stations into neighborhood shopping centers and adopting regional architectural styles. In Texas this resulted in modifying the Spanish Colonial style or Spanish Eclectic into automotive facilities.

Figure 38: The Streamlined (Moderne) style is illustrated in the above gas station located in Beaumont.

Independent station owners often projected their own individuality in materials, design, and/or location. Owners built or modified their buildings to be in the shape of eye-catching roadside structures, such as wigwams and airplanes, or added petrified wood and historical elements to existing buildings. The independent gas station owners sometimes gained a market edge in a highly competitive business environment with their novelty buildings, referred to as mimetic or programmatic architecture.

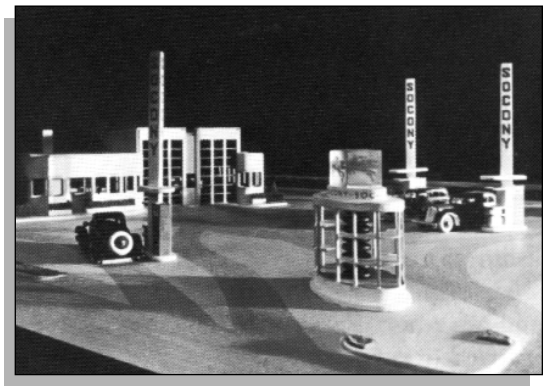


Figure 39: Above is a model of the station design developed by Norman Bel Geddes for Socony-Vacuum in 1934. Only one example was actually built.

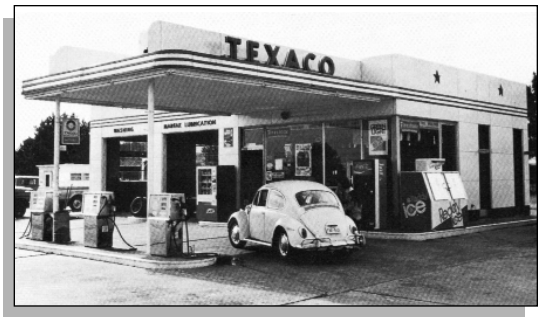
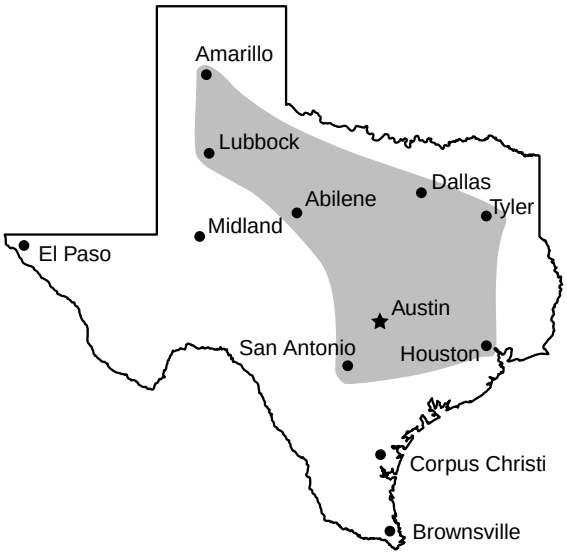


Figure 40: This Texaco station, located in Sulphur Springs, is an example of Walter Dorwin Teague's classic design.

Figure 41: Cities Service gas stations were typically a 1-Part Commercial Block, as seen in this example located at 400 West Seventh in Amarillo.

In 1930, Cities Service operated as an amalgam of companies connected by ownership. The company continued it municipal offerings, but by this point, owned extensive crude oil reserves in Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana. It also operated refineries in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Cities Service sometimes occupied existing facilities, the most common being downtown buildings with corner access.



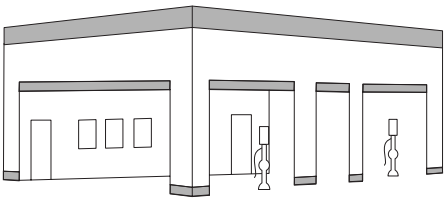
Distribution of Cities Service during the 1930s.

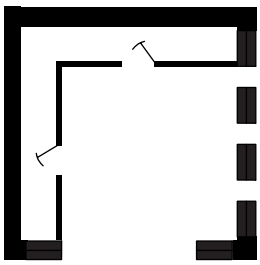
Form: 1-Part or 2-Part Commercial Block

Identifying Features:

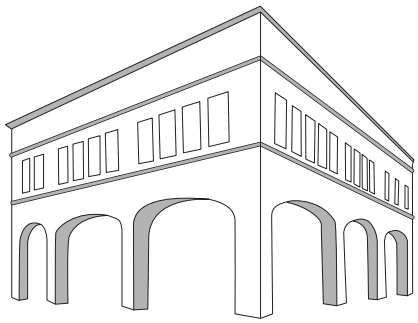
- Signage featured a clover-leaf shape.
- Downtown corner buildings.
- Automobile access from two streets.
- Architectural style varied; most common form was 1-Part or 2-Part Commercial Block.

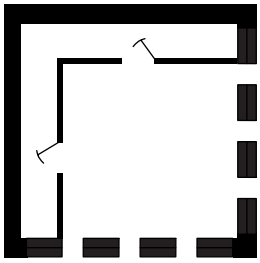
1-Part Commercial Block





2-Part Commercial Block





Continental Oil Company grew out of Standard Oil Company's Rocky Mountain reserves. Continental built the first filling station in the West in 1909 and invested in a fleet of delivery trucks to distribute its gasoline across the Rocky Mountain area. By the 1930s, the company grew and expanded from a few stations around Denver and southern Nebraska to more than 1,000 across the Southwest. Continental became an amalgam of a number of companies including Dutch interests, The Mutual Oil Company, Texhoma Oil Company, and the Marland Oil Company of Ponca City, Oklahoma. The earliest service stations featured hipped tile roofs in a house with canopy (or canopies) form. Stucco siding and raised lighted pylons on the roof added to its Spanish Eclectic appearance. One of the company's earliest gasoline pumps featured a glass dome to allow customers to view the pumped gasoline. By the lates 1930s, Conoco introduced a gas station clad in porcelain enamel, tile and large glass windows, reflecting the design trend of Streamlined (Moderne) architecture.

Figure 42: This 1938 Conoco station was located in Corpus Christi and reflects the Mission Style.

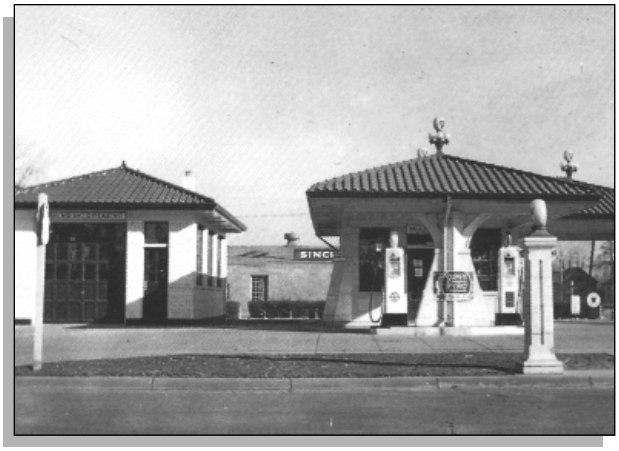
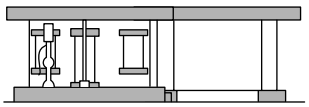


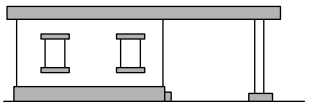
Figure 43: The above 1930s Conoco gas station is an example of the Spanish Eclectic style.

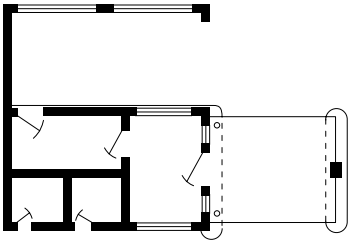
Distribution of Conoco/Continental during the 1930s.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy

(Sometimes more than one canopy extended from the box.)







Identifying Features:

- Stucco siding, tile roof, sometimes in a white or cream siding and green tile combination.
- A single architectural column often supported the canopy or cantilevered from a main block in Streamlined (Moderne) examples.
- Several multi-light windows and one or two single doors opened to the office.
- A few examples remain with two canopies at corner site; rounded office; multilights; and Streamlined (Moderne} influence. These often had two small metal poles supporting a canopy.
- Spanish Eclectic (in some versions Mission) or Streamlined (Moderne).

Figure 44: The style of Conoco stations in the late 1930s was often Streamlined (Moderne).

Figure 45: This example of Conoco's Streamlined (Moderne) gas stations features two canopies and is located on a corner site.

Figure 46: During the 1930s, Gulf gas stations were typically an oblong box with a flat roof, demonstrating an Art Deco influence.

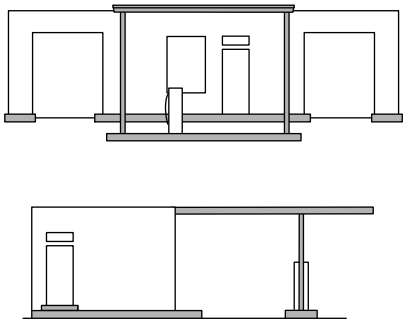
In the 1930s, Gulf successfully extended its market throughout the Southeast, Midwest, and Northeast states. The company stations during this period were typically the oblong box form. These gas stations adopted a handsome Art Deco style with exaggerated pilasters and a smooth stucco exterior. Gulf became one of the largest companies operating in Texas during this era, located in most of the state's large cities.

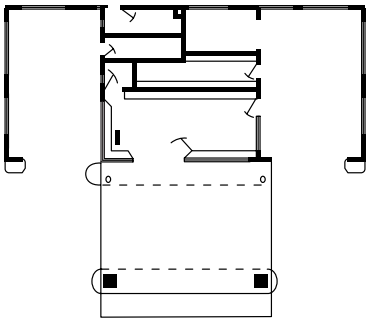
Distribution of Gulf during the 1930s.

Identifying Features:

- Flat roof.
- Exaggerated pilasters, clean Art Deco lines.
- Tile bases on columns and display area.
- Multiple service bays.
- Attached canopies.
- Art Deco.

Form: Oblong Box With Canopy





Humble aggressively entered marketing and station expansion in Texas in the 1930s. By 1938, the company introduced a corporate logo and signage in the form of an orange oval with white letters trimmed in blue. Humble service stations followed the growing national interest in modern designs, rounded and streamlined.

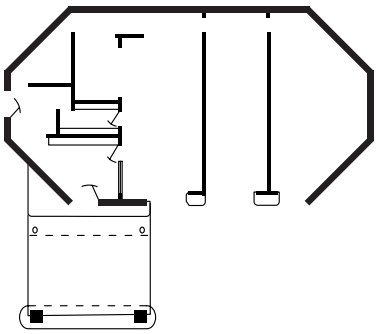
Figure 47: This former Humble station, located in Dallas, features a hipped metal roof, typical to Humble gas stations in the 1930s.

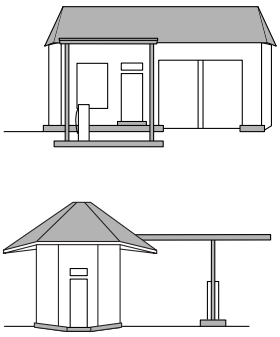
Identifying Features:

- Large display windows, usually brick with tile.
- Hipped roof, usually metal.
- Rounded display windows.
- Incorporated one or two service bays.
- Streamlined (Moderne).

Distribution of Humble during the 1930s.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy





Magnolia was eventually absorbed by the Socony-Vacuum Company (Vacuum Oil Company of New York merged with Socony in 1931). Socony-Vacuum, who already marketed gasoline under the name of Mobilgas, adopted Socony's shield and Pegasus as its logo. The shield often hung on a detached pole along a street or highway and a red Pegasus sometimes appeared affixed to the building. Socony-Vacuum became the first major oil company to seek a modern appearance in its service stations. In 1934, the company hired Norman Bel Geddes to develop a prototype service station. Socony and its distributors were reluctant to adopt the new design, finding it too modern and drastic. Later in 1934, the company hired the firm of Frederick G. Frost. Frost's son, Frederick, along with Donald Dodge, designed a series of transitional service stations.

Built of stucco or clad in porcelain enamel steel, Frost's models were either built anew or wrapped around an existing building. The new design was modern and streamlined, appearing as a white box with a stepped-roof parapet. In Texas, Magnolia Oil also introduced a regional variation that emphasized the popular Spanish Eclectic influences in residential design. These stations typically were integrated into shopping complexes or set at the intersection of major streets or highways. The design of these stations may have been the result of such major commercial developments as Highland Park Shopping Village in Dallas. In addition to the physical changes that abounded in the 1930s, by 1934 all Socony-Vacuum locations, regardless of region, sold gasoline as Mobilgas. The new logo incorporated "Mobilgas" into the basic design.

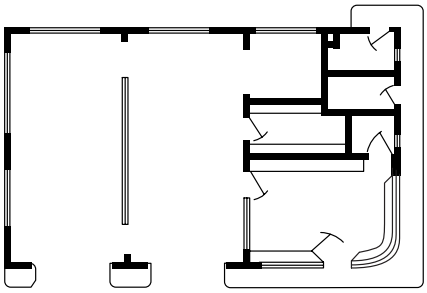
Distribution of Magnolia during the 1930s.

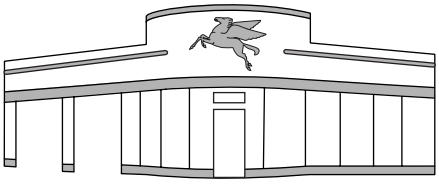
Figure 48: Frederick Frost developed this elegant porcelain enamel steel design for Socony-Vacuum in the late 1930s.

Form: Oblong Box with Drum

Identifying Features:

- Porcelain enamel exterior with or without a canopy.
- Typically flat roof.
- Matching large glass display windows on either side of a single door.
- Streamlined (Moderne).

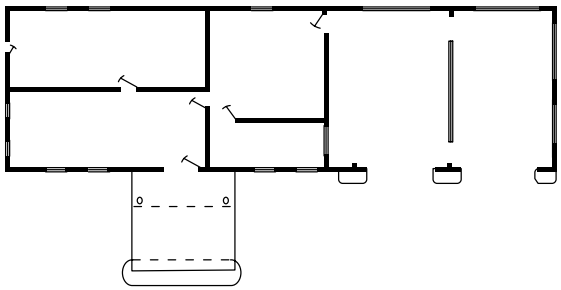


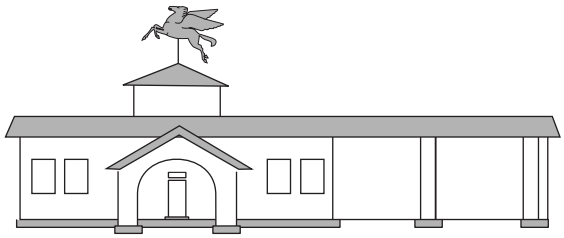


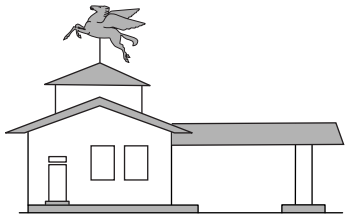
Form: Oblong Box with Canopy

Identifying Features:

- Distinctive building with a tile roof, featuring Spanish Eclectic details and decorative columns supporting the canopy.
- A raised hexagonal tower supported a pylon with a red Pegasus horse.
- Usually incorporated service bays and one or two canopies.
- Spanish Eclectic.





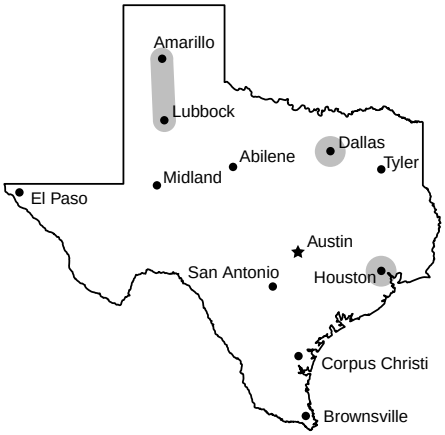


By 1930, the Phillips Petroleum Company operated more than 6,000 service stations in twelve states. The company remained a mid-continent marketer for much of this period, dealing with the varied climates of the region. In 1930, Phillips introduced a gasoline that matched seasonal conditions. The new product boosted sales, as did a new marketing campaign featuring a shield with the red logo "Phillips" on a black band and a black "66" slanted on a lower red field. In its neon version, the shield incorporated a green border. Phillips marketed at gas stations with porcelain curb signs, building signs and neon shields on raised poles. Gas stations in this period often incorporated service bays as well as a main office.

Figure 49: A faux chimney and steeply pitched roof were features of Phillips stations in the 1930s. This example, located in Houston, is now an auto repair shop

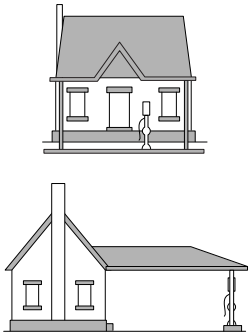
Identifying Features:

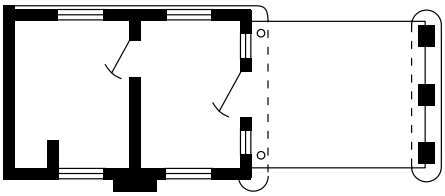
- Steeply pitched front gable over the doorway.
- Side gabled roof steeply pitched with a faux fireplace and chimney, originally painted earth tones.
- Multi-light windows in metal frames.
- Heavy emphasis on domestic or residential expression.
- Gasoline pumps usually separated from the main building on an independent raised island.
- Typically located in a residential area.
- Tudor Revival.



Distribution of Phillips 66 during the 1930s.

Form: House with Canopy





Shell's initial penetration into the Texas market ceased or slowed in the 1930s with the Depression. It significantly withdrew from the gulf coast region leaving its primary interest in Texas north and west of San Antonio. The style of Shell stations during this period was Streamlined (Moderne) or Art Moderne, influenced by the company's headquarters building in San Francisco.

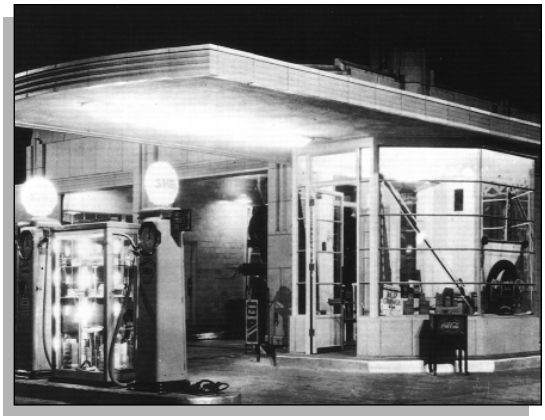
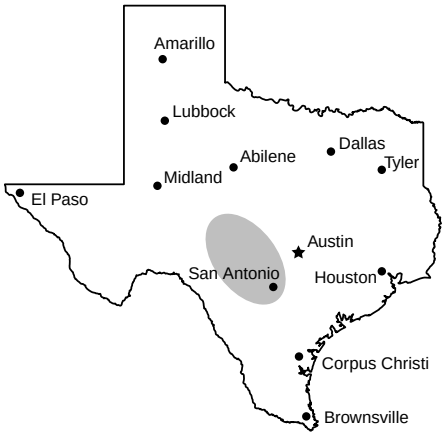


Figure 50: This 1934 Shell station mimicked the architectural style of the company's headquarters building in San Francisco.

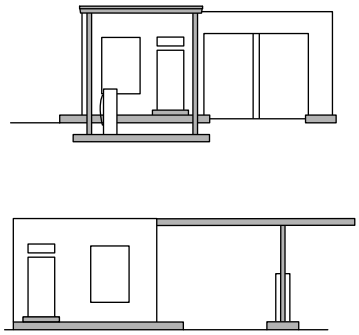
Identifying Features:

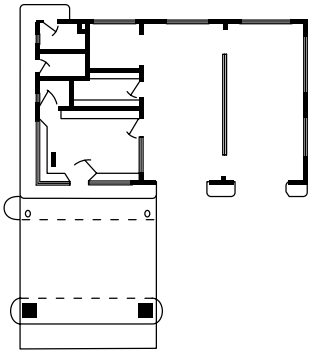
- Subdued cream-colored box.
- Subtle red and yellow striping.
- Porcelain enamel panels.
- Large yellow shell shaped signage with capital letters of Shell.
- Streamlined (Moderne) or Art Moderne.



Distribution of Shell during the 1930s.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy





Sinclair Consolidated Oil Company began its development under the ownership of Harry Sinclair as an amalgam of several predecessor firms. It marketed gasoline in a handful of southwestern states, including Texas, by the 1930s. In 1930, Sinclair purchased Pierce Petroleum Company, already operating extensively in Texas, and added refineries to its operations.

Pierce Petroleum Corporation, renamed from the Waters-Pierce Oil Company, operated gas stations in major urban areas during the 1920s. The Pierce Corporation was based in St. Louis, Missouri. By the end of the decade, the company owned six stations in San Antonio and also operated stations in the Amarillo area.

In 1932, Sinclair Consolidated merged with Prairie Oil and Gas Company and Prairie Pipe Line Company to form Consolidated Oil Corporation. The new company continued to market under the Sinclair brand.

Sinclair service stations developed a very standardized form and architectural style in the 1930s. Stations featured a distinctive pent roof, typically covered in green tile, and raised parapet on the canopy that rested on square stucco columns. This style appeared across the country despite its Southwestern architectural influence.

Sinclair introduced a large Brontosaurus as its marketing campaign in the 1930s, sometimes incorporating the silhouette of the dinosaur in green or white portrayed on its signage. The corporate logo of this period featured a round sign with a background of green and "Sinclair" arched across the top, "Gasoline" along the bottom, and the letters "H-C" across the center on a red background.

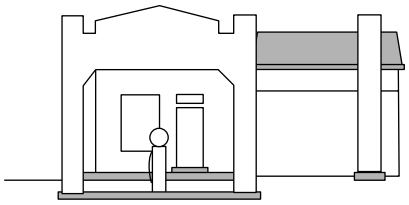
Figure 51: This 1930s Sinclair gas station features stucco walls and decorative tile elements on the canopy and reflects the Mission style.

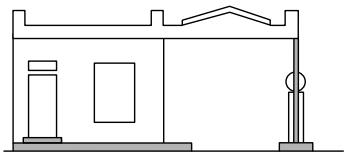
Distribution of Sinclair during the 1930s.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy

Identifying Features:

- A flat roofed oblong box with pent roof parapets covered in tile (originally green tile).
- A truncated canopy.
- Stucco walls and decorative tile or other elements on the canopy.
- Gable parapets on the canopy, featuring rectangular signage on each elevation.
- Multiple bays, and occasionally bays on both sides of the oblong box.
- Single or multiple service bays on either or one side.
- Variations of size depended on site location factors; highway sites were typically larger and more complex than those found in town.
- Mission or Spanish Eclectic.





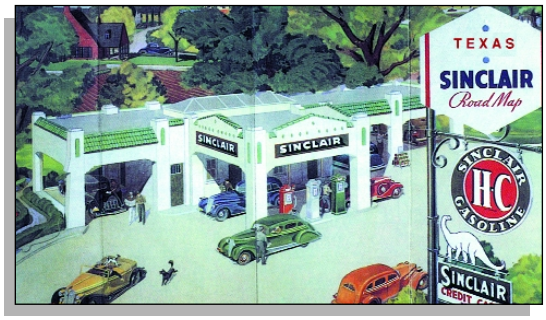
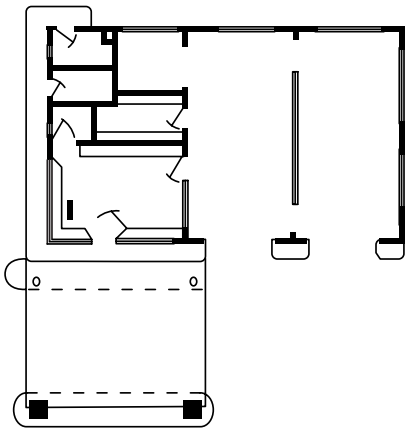


Figure 52: Sinclair produced a series of colorful road maps in the 1930s, unique in that they unfolded horizontally into five panels, as seen in the above example.



Texaco, also known as the Texas Company, relocated its headquarters to the Chrysler Building in Manhattan in 1930, and introduced Texaco Golden Motor Oil that same year. In 1932, the company unveiled a new product, Texaco Fire Chief Gasoline, offering a higher octane level. This new product was sold through some 40,000 outlets nationwide. Establishing a national presence, the company began to sponsor radio shows by Ed Wynn. In the mid 1930s, The Texas Company initiated a new marketing research component to update its logo and signage with a corporate identified service station.

Distribution of the Texaco Company during the 1930s.

Under contract, Walter Dorwin Teague, one of the nation's leading industrial designers, provided the company with five variations of a Streamlined (Moderne) station design executed in porcelain enamel panels. Each variation was modified to a different lot configuration with different uses of the canopy. Teague also designed a "banjo" shaped sign that identified the company to the motorist.

Figure 53: This Type C gas station was designed for the Texas Company by Walter Dorwin Teague in the late 1930s.

Figure 54: Another example of Teague's 1930s design, this Texaco station features his distinctive "banjo" signage.

Form: Oblong Box With or Without Canopy

Designed in five variations, A-E.

Type A: Oblong box with island canopy and two service bays.
Purchase price: $15,000.

Type B: Triangular box with canopy and two to three service bays. (Designed for corner lots.)
Purchase price: Unknown.

Type C: Oblong box with single canopy projecting from the main block and two service bays (most common).
Purchase price: $10,000-$13,000.

Type D: Oblong box with canopy flush with the main block and with one or two service bays (common form).
Purchase price: Unknown.

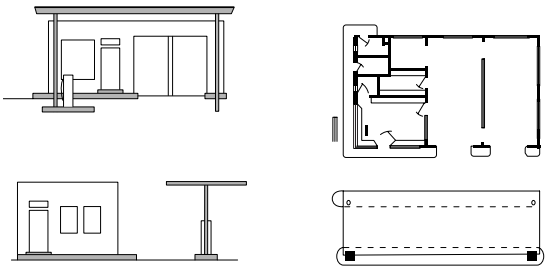
Type E: Oblong box. Smallest version with only one room.
Purchase price: $5,000.

Identifying Features:

- White porcelain enamel steel panels (rarely stucco or wood).
- Rounded corners on the box and canopy.
- Raised bands of trim, sometimes in green.
- Ghost impressions of a five-pointed star.
- Parallel rounded forms projected across the canopy and served as a back-lighted space for signage.
- Three green bands were featured around the building above the display area and service bay doors.
- Single red stars were placed on the upper part of each facade.
- Large metal windows opened to the display and service area.
- Small metal columns supported the canopy.
- Separate pump islands may have been included, sometimes placed perpendicular to the oblong box and canopy, with "Texaco" stretched across the top of the island canopy.
- Large glazed overhead service doors.
- A large round sign on single square column, "banjo" shaped, contained the five-pointed red star emblem with a green “T” and “Texaco” written and lighted.
- Streamlined Moderne (industrial, machine-made).

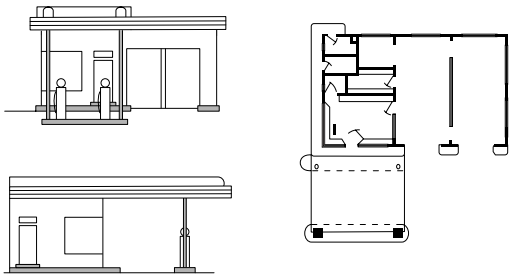
Oblong Box with Detached Canopy

Type A



Oblong Box with Canopy

Type C



1940-1950

World War II – Post War Emergence

In the early 1940s, the country turned its attention to the needs of World War II. Gas rationing, as well as limitations on materials, preempted developments in roadside businesses. Gas stations and gasoline companies moved toward strengthening customer loyalty by introducing special products or services for the automobile.

In building design or form, many gasoline companies emphasized standardization across the country with repetitive corporate logos, colors, and services. Aluminum and glass storefronts became common building materials for gas stations. Gasoline pumps became shorter, squarer, and stood on one and often two service islands. Porcelain enamel exteriors predominated in this period and allowed for bright colors to be incorporated in the building design. Gas stations were well lit to allow 24-hour sales and service. The introduction of the International Style began to influence station form and architecture. This style often made use of prefabricated steel construction, appearing for the first time in gas station buildings, replacing traditional wood framed stations and brick veneers.

Corporate gasoline companies retained full-time "marketing engineers" who acted as architect designers, thus ensuring consistency and repetition across the country. The nation did not fully return to operations until the late 1940s, during which time wartime constraints on materials and supplies ended. As the nation changed from a minimal consumption period to a traveling consumption period, corporate oil operations increased production and reduced costs for gasoline. This further spurred the proliferation of gas stations and expanded the concepts of marketing and advertising.

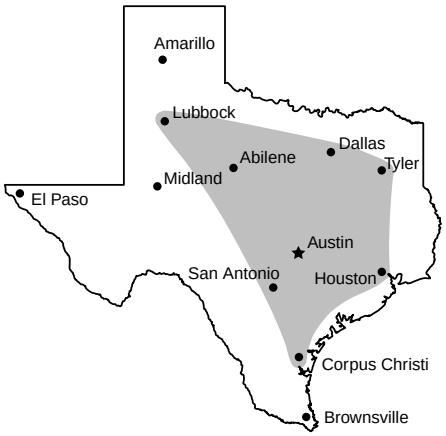
In 1947, George Urich of Los Angeles, California, an independent operator, introduced the first self-service station. Within one year, he operated twenty-five more stations in the city. Life magazine hailed the new station as a "Gas-A-Teria." While largely attractive in high volume areas, the self-service stations threatened many companies across the country and faced a rocky start in many communities. Nevertheless, self-service stations became popular for independent owners who gradually moved away from the "service" side of gas stations. This trend continued to develop and gain momentum during the 1950s and 1960s.

Figure 55: World War II brought gas rationing to the nation, initiated on December 1, 1942.

Figure 56: During the 1940s, corporate gasoline companies offered their customers extra products and special services to offset the advent of the independent self-service stations.

Figure 57: During the late 1940s, the form of Cities Service gas stations was typically the oblong box.

During the post World War II years, Cities Service operated in the Midwest, Southwest and Northeast. Cities Service stations appeared in many forms without consistency for corporate identity. The oblong box remained the popular form, but variations existed with overhanging pent roofs, streamlined facades of porcelain enamel panels, and stucco walls with undulating parapets. The company's most notable element was its logo of a shamrock in green, white and black, and later in green and white. The center of the logo contained the words "Cities Service."

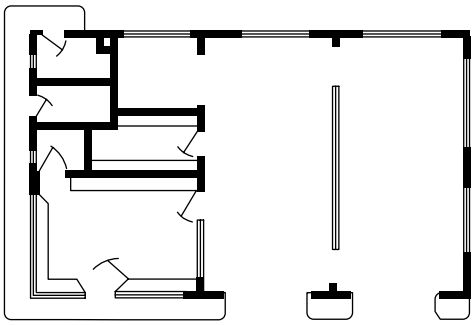


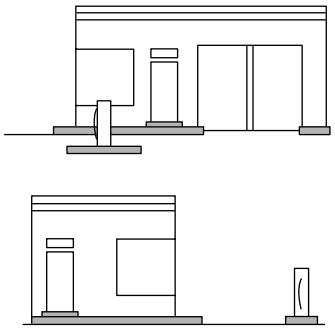
Distribution of Cities Service during the 1940s.

Identifying Features:

- Oblong box, often without canopy.
- Sometimes rounded corners.
- Three or more stripes.
- Modern, with Streamlined (Moderne) influences.

Form: Oblong Box





By 1940, Continental Oil Company operated Texas stations from El Paso to Marshall and south around San Antonio and Houston. The company's absorption of Marland Oil Company brought additional service outlets along the East Coast. These sites were disposed of in 1949 with their sale to Cities Service. In Texas, the company operated refineries in Wichita Falls and in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Continental continued its own modern or modified Streamlined (Moderne) service station design in the 1940s. One or two cantilevered canopies extended from a clean, crisp oblong box built of concrete blocks and painted a bright white. Several pumps highlighted the end of each flat canopy. "Conoco" outlined in neon and red letters rested along the canopy's outer edge. The new station expressed a modern look for the now widely distributed product line.

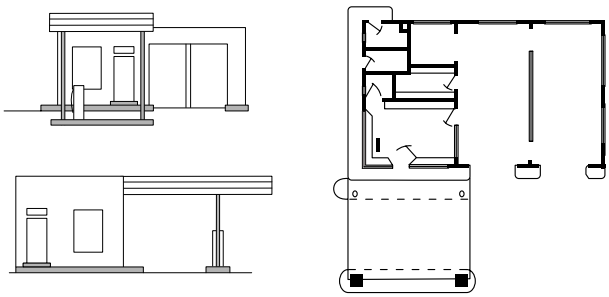
Figure 58: Conoco stations of the 1940s featured a distinctive canopy outlined by metal bands.

Figure 59: The above photograph was a 1940s advertisement for Phil Blanco's Conoco station, located at 6650 South Main in Houston.

Identifying Features:

- Crisply detailed, with large windows and one or two doors.
- A single or double service bay may be attached.
- One or two canopies may be cantilevered from the oblong box.
- A band of metal typically outlined the canopies while inset canopy lights forced lighting down.
- Signage consisted of an inverted red triangle with green outline crossed by a large rectangle containing "Conoco" in capital letters.
- Modern, with Streamlined (Moderne) influences.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy



Distribution of Conoco during the 1940s.

Figure 60: During the 1940s, Gulf gas stations were typically an oblong box.

Headquartered in the Gulf Building in Houston, Texas, the Gulf Oil Company operated service stations in more than 30 states under the Gulf brand. The company also operated in a dozen other states and Canada under the names Union Oil 76 and British American or BA. In the post World War II years, Gulf continued to expand its market territory. Eventually it included the Rocky Mountain states and California.

In the late 1940s, the company introduced a new service station design that was clean, crisp and modern. In some areas, Gulf used stations with a brick veneer, generally Colonial Revival, to blend with surrounding neighborhoods.

Porcelain enamel panels covered the oblong box that featured a flat roof. The box contained a customary two-bay service area and a sales space. Some examples included canopies while others did not. The distinctive white box was highlighted with a blue band and orange letters for the Gulf logo. A round Gulf logo sign often hung at the street level in an illuminated spot.

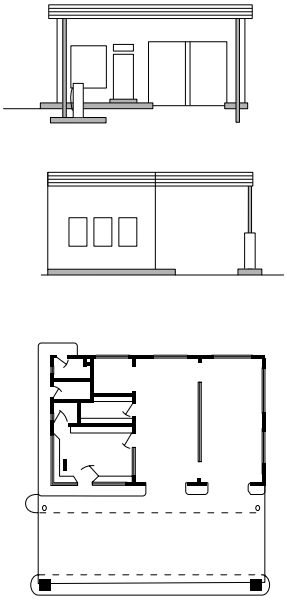
Distribution of Gulf during the 1940s.

Figure 61: A hipped roof and brick veneer were typical features of Gulf stations during the 1940s.

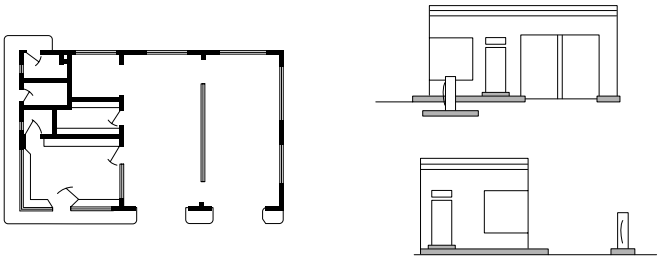
Identifying Features:

- A flat roof, with three distinctive blue bands encircling the building.
- Large display windows and multi-light glazed overhead service doors.
- Some stations featured a corner door entrance to the display area.
- Typically white porcelain enamel boxes.
- Corporate affiliation was identified by a separate and detached circular orange sign with dark blue letters.
- Modern, Streamlined (Moderne).

Form: Oblong box With Canopy



Form: Oblong Box



Identifying Features:

- Brick veneer construction.
- Hipped roof.
- Large display window.
- Multiple service bays.
- Colonial Revival.

Form: House

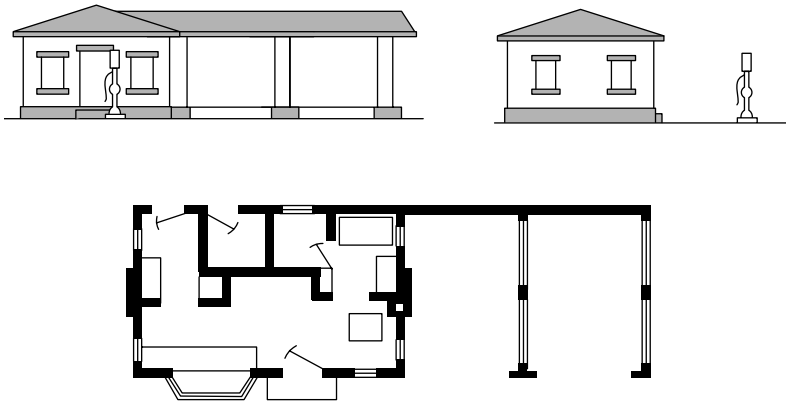


Figure 62: This Humble station is an example of the Streamlined (Moderne) style common in the 1940s.

In the post World War II era, Humble service stations marketed under the logo of a red porcelain enamel oval with a blue and white outline and "Humble" in white across the center. Whether in neon or illuminated by floodlights, the signage bore the strong lettering of the company. Humble service stations followed the common oblong box form, sometimes with a canopy, but often not.

Stations were covered in porcelain enamel or stucco, highlighted by a band of red and blue. Large display windows often dominated a corner and service bays featured glazed overhead doors. An unusual marketing element highlighted most Humble stations with "Happy Motoring" written in script on the side of the building and sometimes above the service bays. In some examples, the script appeared on the end of the building.

Distribution of Humble during the 1940s.

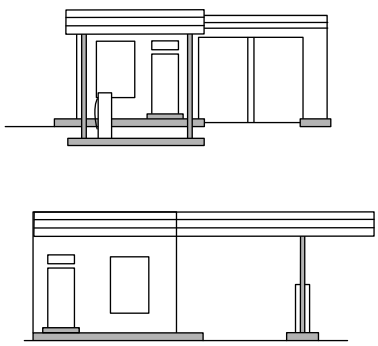
Figure 63: The above Humble station ad is from a 1940s Tyler phone book, and illustrates the oblong box form with double bays.

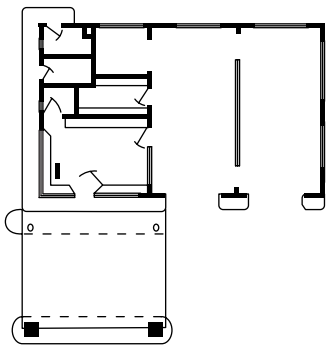
Identifying Features:

- Large glazed display area at the corner of the oblong box form.
- Few, if any, projections will be present from the box.
- Recessed, often glazed, overhead service doors.
- Service bays may be single, double, or as many as four.
- "Happy Motoring" script letters may be visible in a ghost form.
- Signage often sat atop the canopy or on raised poles above the oblong box, as well as on an illuminated pole along the street or highway.
- Modern.

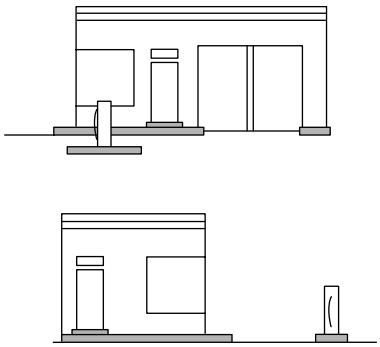
Form: Oblong box With or Without Canopy

With Canopy





Without Canopy



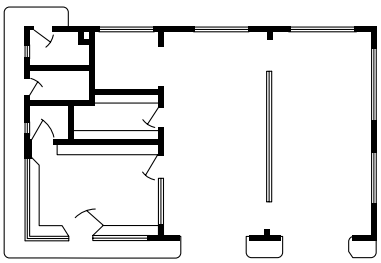


Figure 64: Frederick Frost developed the drum prototype for Socony-Vacuum before World War II, and Mobil continued its use in the 1940s.

In 1940, Socony-Vacuum appeared more comfortable with the modern designs in commercial buildings. During this era, the company expanded use of Frederick Frost's "drum design", based on the shape of an oil can, which used a half-cylinder shape for a sales and display room. During the war, this design proliferated across the country and set the tone for the company's stations in the postwar years.

The company also introduced a gas station without a canopy that dropped the "drum design." This oblong box often incorporated bays and featured Mobil's "flying horse" along the flat roof line.

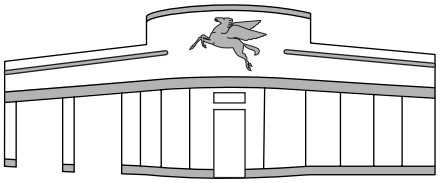
Distribution of Mobil during the 1940s.

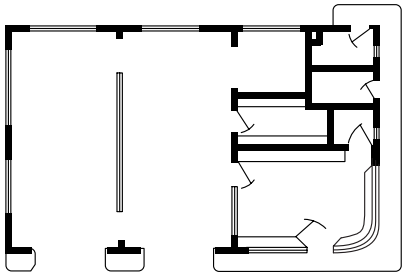
Figure 65: During the 1940s, many Mobil stations adopted the oblong box form, as seen above.

Form: Oblong Box with Drum

Identifying Features:

- A large cylinder-like structure dominated the corner of the oblong box form and rose roughly 5-6 feet above the box.
- A large set of windows, rounded to follow the cylinder, should be present, often with a single glass door.
- Round windows typically flanked the display windows.
- One or two service bays may also be present.
- Porcelain-enamel steel or stucco may be used for the box.
- Modern.



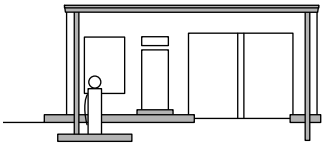


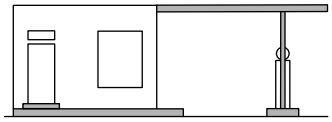
Form: Oblong Box With or Without Canopy

Identifying Features:

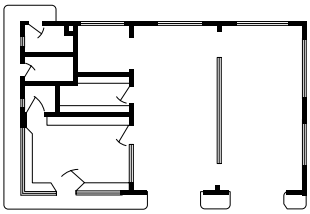
- Flat roofed oblong box with detached island for pumps.
- Featured a Pegasus rising above the roof line.
- One to three service bays.
- Large fixed glass in service and office area.
- Modern.

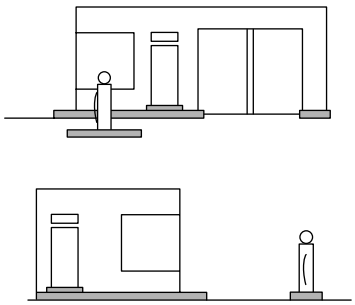
With Canopy





Without Canopy





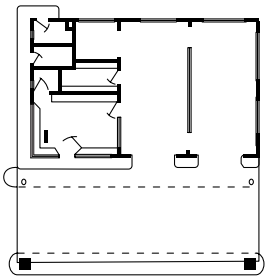


Figure 66: Phillips 66 stations featured a steeply pitched roof and two service bays during the 1940s, as seen in this example located in Breckinridge.

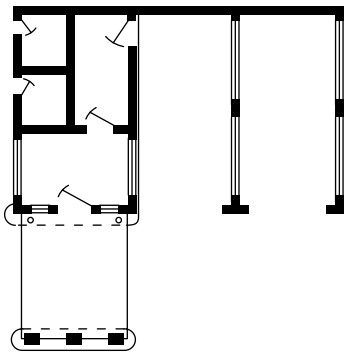
The Phillips Company prided itself on its research and development of petroleum products, adding an Alkylation process for making high-octane gasoline in 1940. This process improved Phillips' gasoline product and set the company apart from many competitors. In 1947, the Phillips Petroleum Company purchased Wasatch Oil Company, extending its market to Utah, Montana, and Washington. The purchase allowed the company to expand across the South, Midwest and to the East Coast. Phillips introduced additional service station designs to adapt to highway locations. The new designs continued the company's interest in residential styles, but allowed for larger buildings and more service areas. The first Phillips 66 station opened in San Antonio during the 1940s.

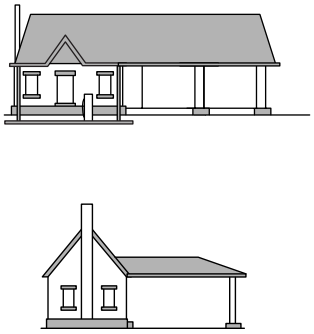
Distribution of Phillips 66 during the 1940s.

Identifying Features:

- A steeply pitched roof with colored tiles or shingles, sometimes with an intersecting gable roof.
- Large multi-light windows; often two to three service bays.
- Gasoline pumps were typically on a separate island or islands.
- Signage generally contained "Phillips" on the upper portion of the earlier shield, and italics "66" in white on a red background with a green trim.
- Tudor Revival.

Form: House





After World War II, Shell returned to its expansionist market. It upgraded its gasoline stations by introducing a new prototype. The station adopted the common oblong box form, but recessed the office and display area and incorporated large overhead glazed service doors. By recessing the display and office, the form featured a cantilevered ledge to hold the blocked letters of "Shell." The Shell company sign, shaped like a large sea shell, and colored yellow with red letters, typically hung on a pole along the street or highway. In 1947, Shell introduced the first internally lighted sign, also mounted on a pole along the highway.

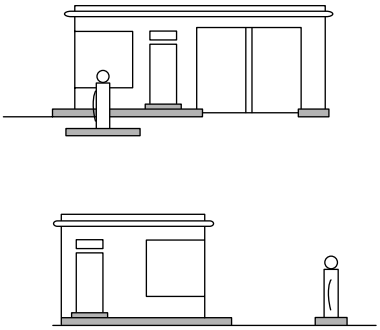
Figure 67: Shell stations in the 1940s were typically the oblong box form and the service areas featured large, overhead glazed doors

Identifying Features:

- Stucco walls.
- Large recessed display and office area.
- Large overhead doors, most often glazed for visibility to service areas.
- Modern.

Distribution of Shell during the 1940s.

Form: Oblong Box



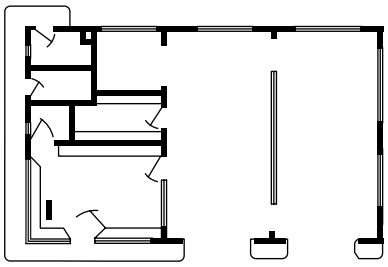


Figure 68: A large, green brontosaurus often marked Sinclair stations in the 1940s.

In 1943, Sinclair Consolidated Oil Company changed its name to Sinclair Oil Corporation, a named used earlier in some parts of the country. The company continued its use of the stucco Mission influenced station design through the mid-1940s, especially east of the Rocky Mountains. After World War II, however, the company introduced a more modern design of an oblong box with and without canopies. As the interstate highway system developed, Sinclair built hundreds of new outlets using the oblong box form. The highway sites usually incorporated a free-standing sign with a green and white round porcelain enamel sign containing "H-C" in black or white. In some cases, the large brontosaurus, first introduced in the 1930s, was combined with the "Sinclair" signage on the building or as an outline atop of the free-standing sign.

Distribution of Sinclair during the 1940s.

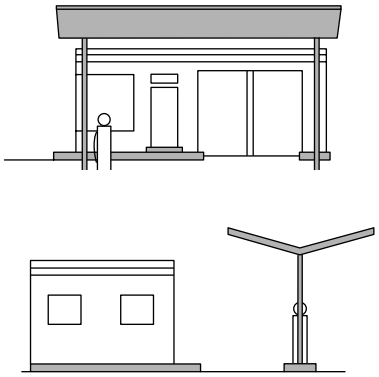
Figure 69: In the 1940s, Sinclair offered a variety of toys for children, including the above clever promotion.

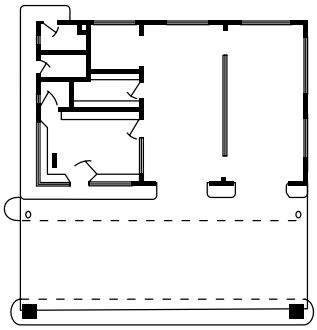
Form: Oblong Box With or Without Canopy

Identifying Features:

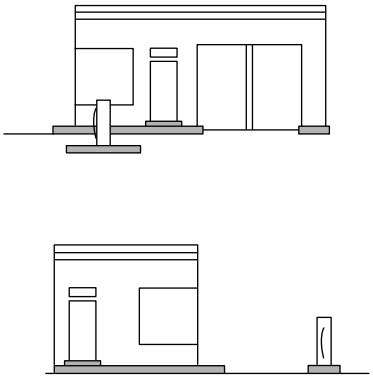
- Two or three service bays with multi-light windows in the upper part of overhead doors.
- Large plate glass windows for the service and show room.
- Banded color stripes around upper part of oblong box.
- Detached island with or without light standards.
- Flat roof sometimes with raised parapet.
- Modern architectural features.

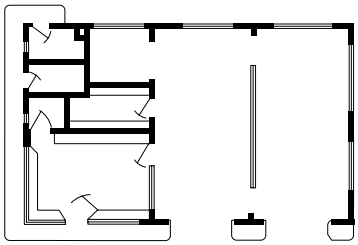
With Canopy





Without Canopy





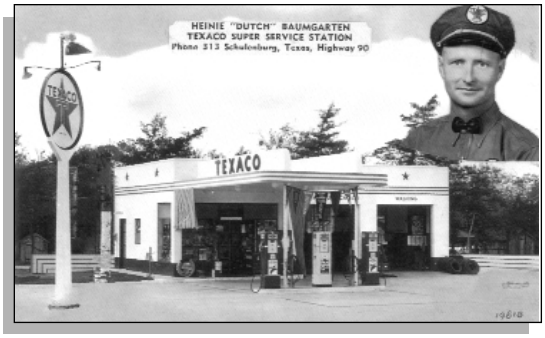


Figure 70: The Type A Texaco station is illustrated in this ad for Heinie "Dutch" Baumgarten's Texaco Super Service Station, which was located on Highway 90 in Schulenburg.

Distribution of Texaco during the 1940s.

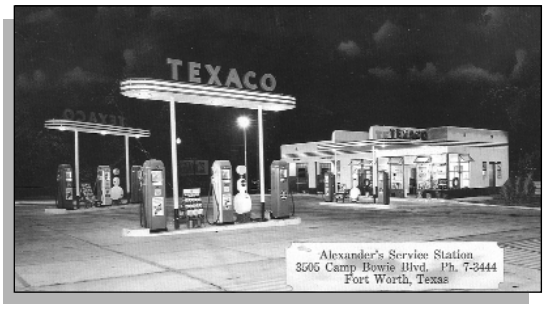


Figure 71: The above ad depicts a 1940s Type B Texaco station, and promotes Alexander's Service Station, located at 3505 Camp Bowie Boulevard in Fort Worth.

During the 1940s, the Texas Company began its first sponsorship of the Metropolitan Opera, broadcast from New York City and experienced through radio nationwide. The now fully national company continued to operate out of its late 1930s service stations, but refocused into wartime operations. In 1942, the company joined ten other oil companies to organize the War Emergency Pipelines, referred to as the Big Inch and Little Big Inch, for the Petroleum Administration for War.

A year later, The Texas Company, along with seven other gasoline companies, established the War Emergency Tankers, Inc. This group was responsible for organizing and operating ocean-going tankers for the U.S. War Shipping Administration. Like most major oil companies in the post World War II years, the Texas Company again began to restructure for peace-time marketing and operations.

Figure 72: Many Type C Texaco gas stations in the 1940s featured red stars on the upper facade and the company name stretched along the canopy.

Form: Oblong Box With or Without Canopy

Designed in five variations, A-E.

Type A: Oblong box with island canopy and two service bays.
Purchase price: $15,000.

Type B: Triangular box with canopy and two to three service bays. (Designed for corner lots.)
Purchase price: Unknown.

Type C: Oblong box with single canopy projecting from the main block and two service bays (most common).
Purchase price: $10,000-$13,000.

Type D: Oblong box with canopy flush with the main block and with one or two service bays (common form).
Purchase price: Unknown.

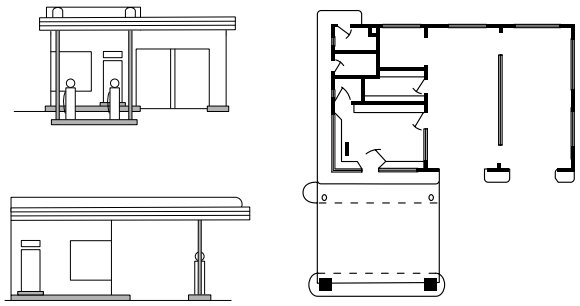
Type E: Oblong box. Smallest version with only one room.
Purchase price: $5,000.

Identifying Features:

- White porcelain enamel steel panels (rarely stucco or wood).
- Rounded corners on the box and canopy.
- Raised bands of trim, sometimes in green.
- Ghost impressions of a five-pointed star.
- Parallel rounded forms projected across the canopy and served as a back-lighted space for signage.
- Three green bands were featured around the building above the display area and service bay doors.
- Single red stars were placed on the upper part of each facade.
- Large metal windows opened to the display and service area.
- Small metal columns supported the canopy.
- Separate pump islands may have been included, sometimes placed perpendicular to the oblong box and canopy, with "Texaco" stretched across the top of the island canopy.
- Large glazed overhead service doors.
- A large round sign on single square column, "banjo" shaped, contained the five-pointed red star emblem with a green “T” and “Texaco” written and lighted.
- Streamlined Moderne (industrial, machine-made).

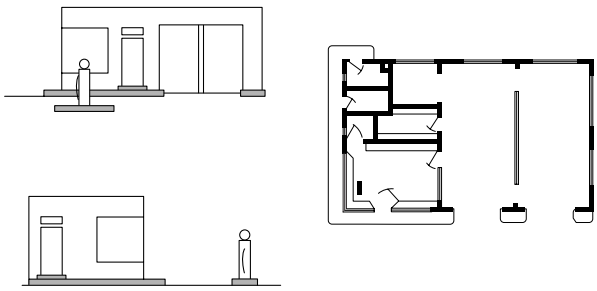
Oblong Box with Canopy

Type C



Oblong Box

Type D



1950-c.1970

Modern Design /International Influences

In the 1950s, gasoline companies and their service stations entered the Modern era. New designs tended toward exposed steel frames, increased use of glass, and flat roofs and canopies. The International Style of Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius' Bauhaus School further influenced the gas station building forms. As cinder and concrete block construction began to replace prefabricated steel, the station styles began to change. Shell introduced its first "ranch style" in 1960 at Millbrae, California, but it soon found its way into Texas. Shell also introduced a projecting canopy, while Mobil simplified its structures into clean crisp shapes. The International Style, still preferred in corporate America, found its place along the roadside in increasing numbers among independents, as well as major corporate stations.

By 1960, acrylic and vinyl with translucent Plexiglas became the norm for construction. Later in the 1960s, porcelain and plastic met more and more resistance from local planning and zoning commissions in urban areas. Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the major architects of the 20th century, designed a station during this period. Wright created his version of a "modern" service station built in Cloquet, Minnesota. However, it did not become a standard design.

Business practices also changed during this era. Customers found several options when entering a gas station, from three grades of gasoline to extensive automobile products. Gas companies offered free marketing gimmicks, including more elaborate road maps and guidebooks, drinking glasses, trading stamps, car washes and even trinkets. As Americans traveled more in the post World War II years, a greater emphasis followed for clean restrooms and family facilities. By the 1960s, the gas station in Texas reached a formal, sophisticated design that reflected the highly competitive marketplace and modern preferences of the traveling public.

Figure 74: Clean restrooms were a selling point for gas companies in the 1960s and were promoted in various ways, such as posting an "award" on the gas station building.

Figure 73: Frank Lloyd Wright based this Cloquet, Minnesota station design on a cantilever motif. It featured a 32 foot canopy and L-shaped pumps.

Figure 75: During the 1960s, gas stations employed a variety of marketing ploys, as seen in this photo of a Phillips 66 promotion.

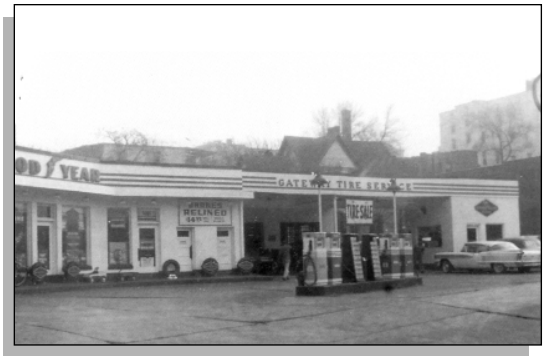


Figure 76: This 1959 Cities Service station is a variation of the oblong box form.

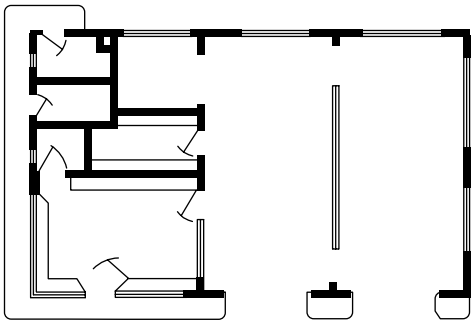
Cities Service built a number of interesting and elaborate stations during the 1950s. In 1965, the company changed its name to Citgo. Despite its growth and presence across the country, the company never reached the level of identification achieved by most other companies during this era. The company focused more on public identification by logo, rather than a particular building form and style.

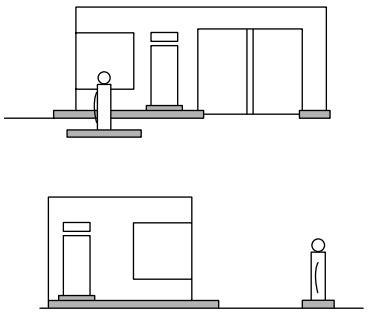
Distribution of Cities Service during the 1950s.

Identifying Features:

- Oblong box, (varied extensions).
- Large display windows.
- Multiple service bays in some forms.
- Separate island for pumps.
- Modern.

Form: Oblong Box





During the 1950s, Conoco bought Western Oil Company of Minneapolis, F.P. Kendall and Company (Kayo) of Chattanooga, and Douglas Oil Company of Los Angeles, thereby expanding its trade area exponentially. The company never developed dramatic or unusual architectural forms for its stations. Conoco tended to follow the larger trends of the period and thus continued to use the oblong box in a modern or international style during this period.

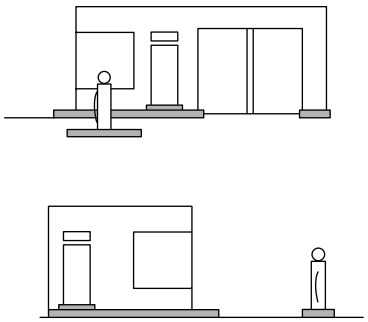
Figure 77: Conoco gas stations in the 1950s were often designed with no canopy.

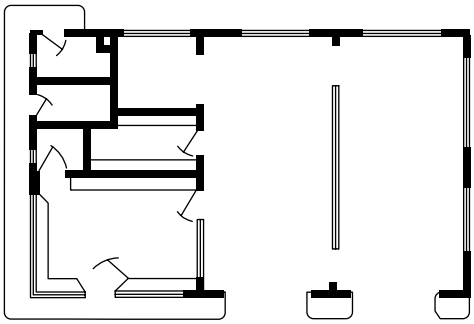
Identifying Features:

- Simple form with large display glass windows.
- Often without a canopy; signage included inverted triangle in red.
- A tall round metal pipe angled upward holding the inverted triangle.
- Modern or International Style.

Distribution of Conoco during the 1950s.

Form: Oblong Box





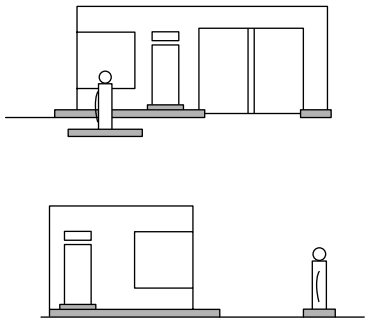
Distribution of Fina during the 1950s.

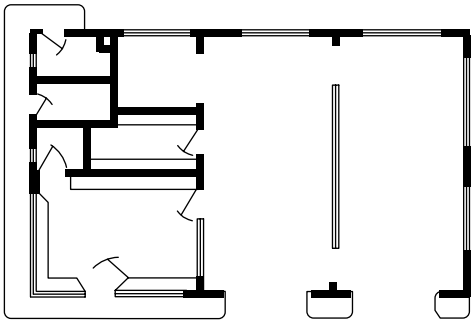
American Petrofina, Belgian owned and based in Dallas, Texas, initiated its first stations in Texas after 1954. In its first acquisition, Fina bought Panhandle Oil Corporation of Wichita Falls, Texas in 1956. The company quickly expanded to operating more than 830 chain stations across Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana and Arkansas. Fina is best recognized by its shield logo in red outlined in blue and white.

Identifying Features:

- Simple oblong box.
- Large display window with single door.
- One or two service bays.
- Modern.

Form: Oblong Box





Gulf expanded coast to coast by the early 1960s, with a proliferation of gas stations using the oblong box form. The newest form, however, incorporated a flat roofed canopy resting on two metal poles. The canopy extended from the oblong box over the display and sales area. Large corner windows highlighted the sales space, and the stations typically featured two service bays. A second detached island of gasoline pumps often completed the site.

Identifying Features:

- Flat roof oblong box with projecting canopy resting on two slender poles.
- "Gulf" in large upper and lower case letters highlighted the space above the display area.
- The form was modern, but restrained.
- Modern or International Style.

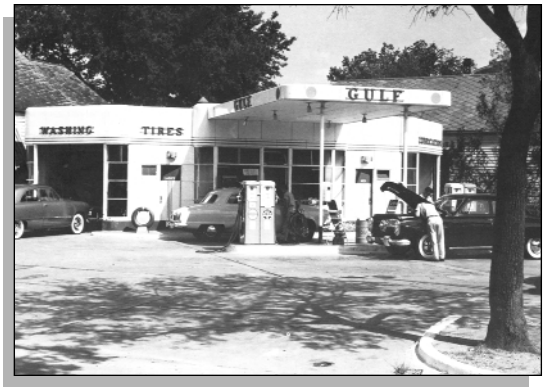
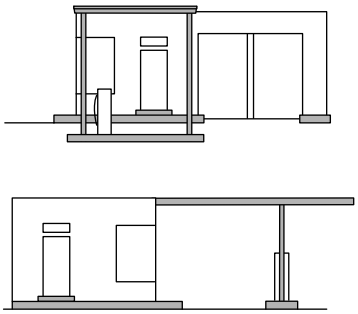


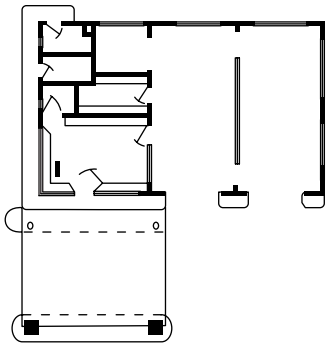
Figure 78: This 1950s Gulf service station features a projecting canopy and large windows over the sales area.

Figure 79: 1960s Gulf stations featured large corner windows and two bays.

Distribution of Gulf during the 1950s.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy





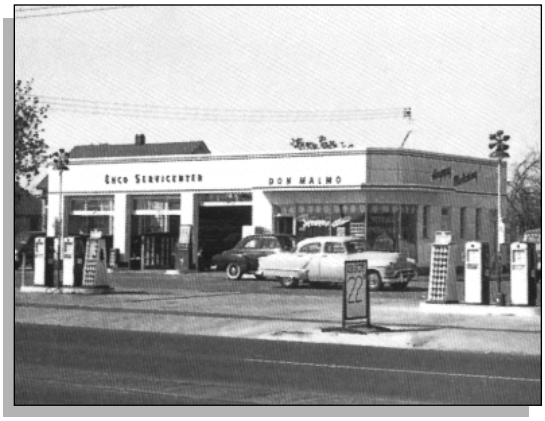


Figure 80: Standard Oil of New Jersey replaced Humble with Enco throughout Texas and Oklahoma in 1961.

The Humble brand, though owned by Standard Oil of New Jersey (Exxon), continued to market in Texas under the name Humble until 1959. Two years later, the company replaced Humble with Enco in both Texas and Oklahoma. Humble continued to promote an oblong box station with service bays during this period.

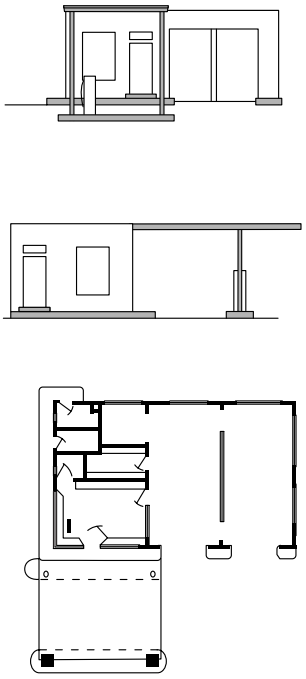
Identifying Features:

- Simple oblong box.
- Large display windows in sales area, with a single door.
- Typically two service bays.
- Modern.

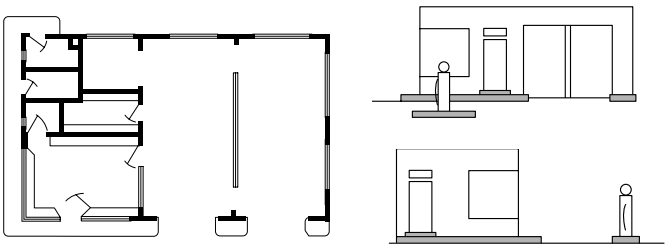
Distribution of Humble during the 1950s.

Form: Oblong Box With and Without Canopy

With Canopy



Without Canopy



By 1960, Socony-Vacuum (Magnolia in Texas) changed its name officially to Mobil Oil and marketed in 41 states (excluding Kentucky, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida). Mobil marketed three grades of gasoline under the names of "Mobiloil" and "Mobil Service." The red Pegasus still found a prominent location above the doorway to a service or retail area. A white oblong box (sometimes with a canopy but more often without) became the company's most popular station. The Mobilgas shield generally would hang on a pole along the road or highway, illuminated by floodlights. A red painted band below the parapet decorated the otherwise plain box. In 1966, Mobil hired Eliot Noyes and Associates to develop a new design for the company's service stations. The result was a flat roofed oblong box with vertical piers of brick and bright colors of blue, gray and white. A large illuminated disk with the red Pegasus on a white background was attached to the box. Round gasoline pumps were located on detached islands under large round canopies. Mobil set a new trend away from the residential influences on the oblong box to a very sleek, modern look.

Identifying Features:

- Brick oblong box; large display windows with single door; one or two service bays; rear restrooms.
- This form rarely had canopies attached (post 1966).
- Brick pilasters were interspersed on the flat roofed box form.
- Large circular canopies covered round truncated pumps. "Mobil" signage rested on a pole, often separate from the main building.
- Modern, International (post 1966).

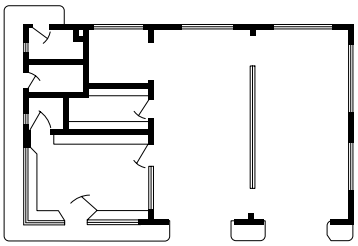


Figure 81: Circular canopies and a large round disk bearing the Pegasus image were important elements of Eliot Noyes' design for Mobil in the 1960s.

Figure 82: The oblong box took on a Modern style, as illustrated by this 1960s Mobil gas station.

Distribution of Mobil during the 1950s.

Form: Oblong Box

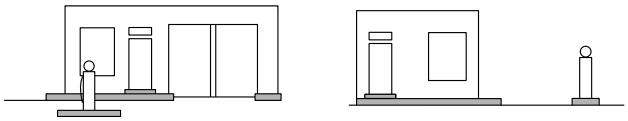


Figure 83: This 1960s Phillips 66 station, located in Houston, features projecting triangular canopies and large plate glass display windows.

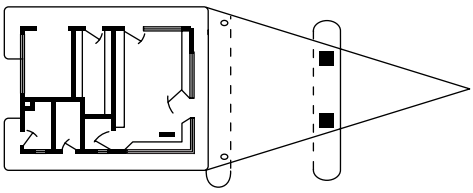
In 1953, Phillips opened its first service station in Florida. This spurred an East Coast marketing plan, covering states from Virginia to Maine. The following year, the company offered its first all-season motor oil and brought out its new service station form that would be its standard through the era. By the early 1960s, the Phillips Company opened some 3,000 stations each year. Phillips 66 stations numbered more than 500 in the 1960s and extended across Texas. Many of these stations are now in state highway or interstate locations.

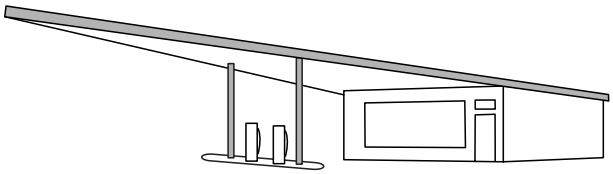
Distribution of Phillips 66 during the 1950s.

Identifying Features:

- Box with large bays of squared glass doors, large plate glass display windows.
- Most noted feature was an upwardly projecting triangular canopy (sometimes two canopies) to a point connecting with a metal signpost holding a large Phillips 66 shield (the "66" in italics).
- Pumps were modern, featuring a rectangular pump face on simple square columns.
- International.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy



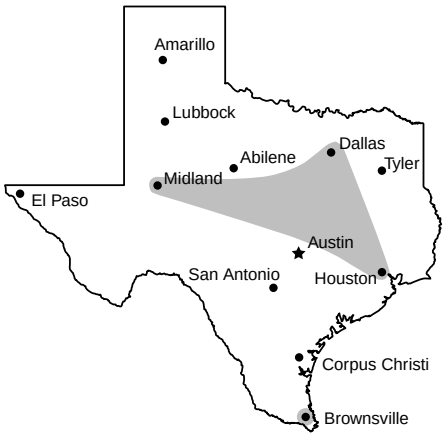


Shell adopted a new station design in 1957, the landscaped ranch style. Shell was the first company in the country to initiate this style. The ranch style station was typically built of synthetic stone or brick. It included an office and sales area and typically detached pumps. Some sites incorporated existing landscape features, such as large trees. Retaining the oblong box, the ranch style featured a sloped roof and borrowed heavily from the now abundant ranch style houses in America's suburbs. The oblong box appeared residential and conforming in its neighborhood or commercial settings.

Figure 84: Above is an example of the ranch style gas stations built by Shell during the late 1950s.

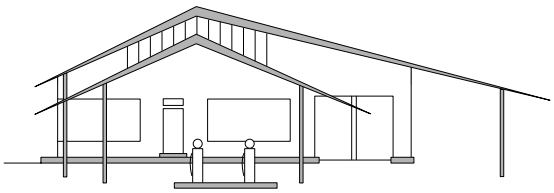
Identifying Features:

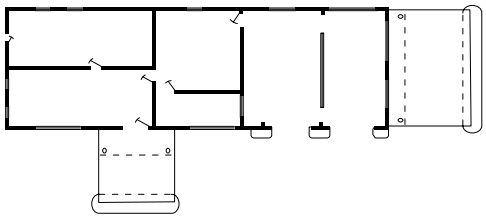
- Introduced night lighting (an example exists at Guadalupe and 34th in Austin).
- Long, low form.
- Large front gable roof.
- Brick or stone.
- Large glass windows.
- Wood trim and highlights.
- Attached canopy.
- Usually two service bays.
- Ranch.



Distribution of Shell during the 1950s.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy





By the mid 1950s, Sinclair Oil Corporation operated hundreds of gas stations across the country and introduced a new station model influenced by the International style. These stations remained as oblong boxes with a raised roof over the service bays with a lower flat roof over the showroom and office.

The later stations typically held very large, almost floor to ceiling, plate glass windows that slanted into the showroom area. below the main signage. "Sinclair" stretched across the service bay portion of the building just below bands that encircled the building. This form created a stark contrast to the more modest oblong box that preceded.

At the same time, Sinclair introduced a new marketing image with a large trapezoidal porcelain enamel sign in white with black dropshading and "Sinclair" in red letters. The company placed these on top of single free-standing standards or hanging from a fixed sign. A green brontosaurus sometimes extended below the main signage.

Sinclair Corporation expanded so widely that it was unable to keep up with its own station demands. In 1969, Sinclair merged with Atlantic-Richfield and subsequently sold its East Coast stations to British Petroleum. In 1973, Atlantic-Richfield relinquished its Sinclair holdings by court order and thus began to operate as an independent oil refiner with more than 2500 stations in twenty states.

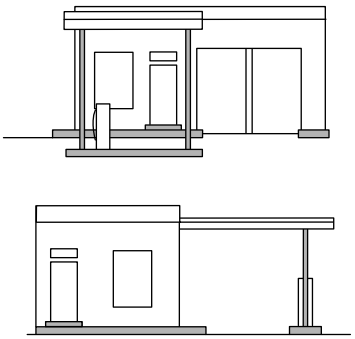
Distribution of Sinclair during the 1950s.

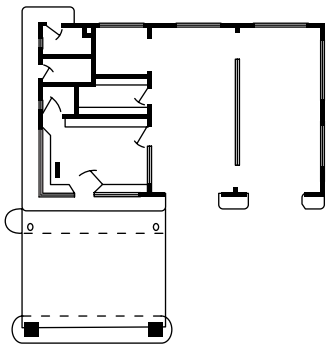
Figure 85: During the 1950s, Sinclair adopted new trapezoidal porcelian signage that included its original green brontosaurus.

Form: Oblong Box

Identifying Features:

- Oblong Box with flat roof with overhang.
- Two or three service bays with raised roof.
- Office or showroom typically featured lower flat roof projecting out.
- Large plate glass windows slanting into the showroom.
- Detached island for gas pumps.
- Trapezoidal shaped signage.
- International style influence.





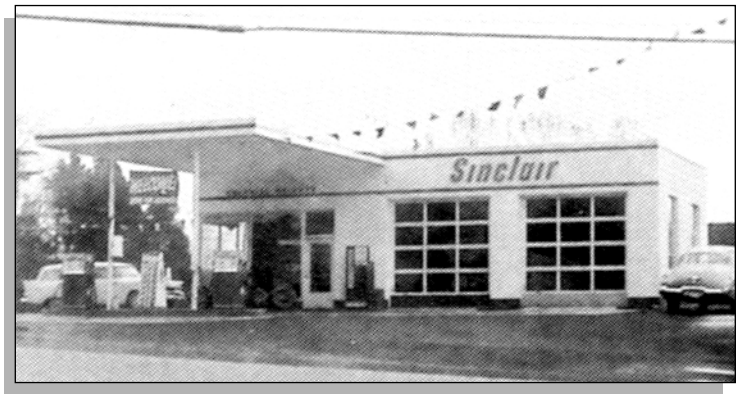


Figure 86: The above Sinclair gas station is an example of the oblong box, featuring two services bays and a lower flat roof projecting from the showroom and office area.

Figure 87: This modified Ranch design with a unique raised pylon was adopted for Texaco gas stations in the 1950s.

In 1959, the Texas Company officially changed its corporate name to Texaco, Inc., now identifying itself with the company's commonly recognized name. The company focused most of its expansion in the international area, including South American countries and Saudi Arabia. A new high-octane gasoline, Sky Chief Supreme, was marketed in 1956 and became the company's most successful product.

After three decades of construction and use of the Teague designs, Texaco introduced a modified Ranch with a large raised pylon in the 1950s and the Matawan design in 1964. This design would blend into both residential and commercial areas. The company produced a hexagonal sign with "Texaco" written across the center. Texaco retained the Matawan design until 1996, when it introduced its System 2000 marketing program with a Star 21 form including food markets, car washes, and service centers.

Distribution of Texaco during the 1950s.

Figure 88: In 1964, Texaco gas stations adopted the Matawan design, with field stone siding and green roof.

Form: Oblong Box with Canopy or Oblong Box with Detached Canopy

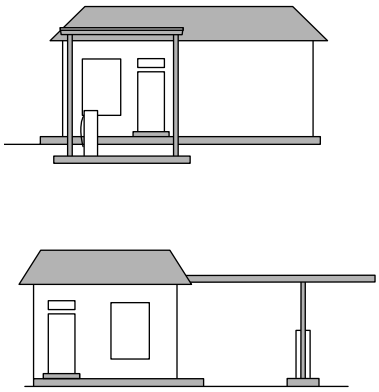
Identifying Features:

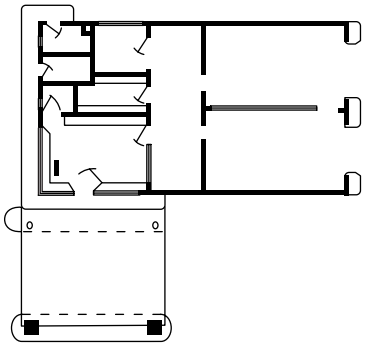
- Matawan design, incorporating field stone veneer siding.
- Distinctively shaped green roof.
- Large display windows and side-entrance lubrication bays.
- Canopy is typically flat and detached from the oblong box and service bays.

* In some examples a small "winged" canopy may exist.

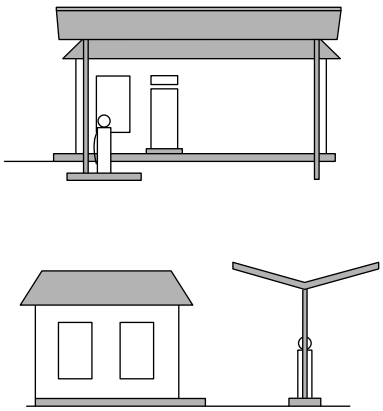
- Ranch.

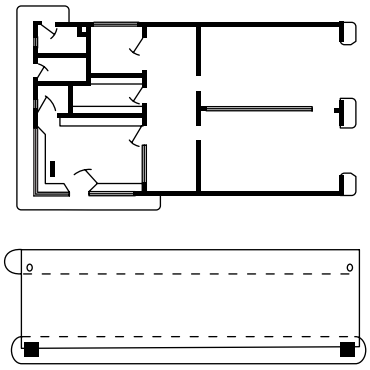
With Canopy





With Detached Canopy





Independent Companies and Gas Stations

Independent companies, owners and gas stations existed from the beginnings of commercial gasoline operations. From 1900 through the 1970s, independents operated profitably outside the structure of major refining and petroleum companies. Independent companies and owners marketed without regard to prescribed company signage and building forms.

Independents from the early decades of the 20th century often located with garages or automobile dealerships in commercial storefronts, in both urban and rural locations. Underground tanks and curbside pumps provided access to gasoline, especially in urban settings. By the 1920s and 1930s, independents began to move away from garages and dealerships. They began to operate with related and growing automobile industries such as tourist courts, tourist campgrounds, motels, and even food establishments. In some cases, an independent would occupy the building of an abandoned major petroleum company station. Other independents developed their own distinctive building designs or signage by mimicking legendary architectural or historical landmarks or choosing clever and whimsical forms. Generally referred to as mimetic or programmatic architecture, independents adopted these unusual forms in order to highlight their distinctiveness, or to competitively market near the larger and better-known corporate gas stations. These local jobbers or small regional distributing companies typically offered only gasoline, oil and limited merchandise. Owners emphasized convenience and accommodation to their customers.

While free from corporate guidelines and restrictions, independents in the latter part of the 20th century often adopted small box or small box with canopy building forms. Prefabricated buildings with small offices, expanses of glass, restrooms, and storage met many needs. In some examples, "bulk stations" featured above-ground tanks. Large billboards along the approach drives reflected the independent nature of these gas stations. Independents rarely accepted credit cards, developed promotional materials, or offered specials to their customers. The typical owner stressed discounted gasoline prices as the primary marketing technique.

Figure 89: Camp Hannon No. 2, located in Texarkana, illustrates the integration of tourist camps and independent gas stations during the 1920s and 1930s.

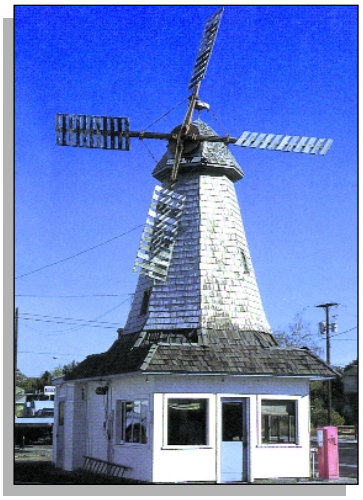


Figure 90: The above windmill shaped gas station is an example of the mimetic architecture often found in independent stations

In the 1960s and especially in the 1970s, self-serve stations and convenience stores often provided gasoline under an independent's name. These gas stations often adopted a canopy and booth or convenience store with a detached canopy over the pumps. They also featured detached restrooms and vending machines. The most common canopy forms were: the flat roofed or "standard" canopy, roughly thirty feet in length; or the butterfly canopy that swept upward and outward. Signage and lighting followed few guidelines and sometimes dominated the building, canopy and site. Independents rarely offered extended service to customers, but continued to focus on convenience and discounted prices. Customers sought economy and value with little regard for loyalty to a company or building form.

Figure 91: Above is an example of the large signage typical of many independent stations

Identifying Features:

- Commercial block, small box with or without canopy, mimetic or programmatic.
- Large signage; diverse and extensive lighting.
- Irregular, tending toward gaudy and flashy.
- Butterfly canopy or standard (flat roofed) canopy.
- Distinctive, often mimetic form.
- Architectural style or influence varied, noted by independent nature of owners.

Figure 92: L.E. Agon's marketing knowledge was obvious in his clever use of an airplane on the flat roofed canopy on his independent station in Texarkana.

Figure 93: This "tree" station, located in San Antonio, is an example of the mimetic form of many independent service stations in the 1930s.

The Independent Gasoline Companies

Alamo Oil & Refining Company: c. 1905–c. 1920

Early independent refining company with several gas station locations in San Antonio.

Columbia Oil & Gasoline Company: c. 1905–c. 1920

Independent and early gasoline company offering gasoline in San Antonio.

Davidson Oil Company: c. 1905–c. 1920

Early independent oil company with a small gasoline service based in San Antonio.

Dixie Oil & Refining Company: c. 1905–c. 1920

San Antonio based refining company that produced and sold gasoline from its headquarters located at 400 East Commerce. Dixie's brand of gasoline was called "Dixico." The company also offered a special lubricating oil called "Dixico Royal."

San Antonio Oil Works: c. 1905–c. 1920

Early independent gasoline producing company with limited service in San Antonio. Very little is known of its history.

Texas Pacific Coal and Oil Company: c.1915-1945

An early independent company based in Fort Worth. Gas stations were distinctive domed house forms with elaborate decorative details. The company marketed Texas Pacific Gasoline and motor oil until incorporated with Humble Oil and Refining Company in 1945.

Deyo Oil Company: c. 1920–c. 1940.

Deyo, based in Galveston, marketed a brand of gasoline named "Galtex, the Better Gasoline." Identified by a circular red porcelain sign outlined in red and white with the white lettering "Galtex." Signage featured red lettering "Deyo Oil Company, Inc." arched around the top of the sign and "Producers Refiners Marketers" around the bottom in white.

Grayburg Oil Company: 1920–1939

A large and prominent oil company based in San Antonio for approximately two decades. Little is known of the company's history, though a larger company likely purchased it sometime in the late 1930s. Signage was presented as a flange triangle and distinguished by a gray porcelain sign outlined in red, or a red triangle in a gray center with red lettering. The white lettering of "Grayburg Oil Company" arched around the top and "San Antonio, Texas" stretched across the bottom.

Figure 94: The above Texas Pacific gas station, once located in Dallas, was crowned with a golden dome.

Universal Oil Company: c. 1920–c. 1940

A small independent oil company and service station operating primarily in south San Antonio. The final operating service station remained on Roosevelt Avenue into the early 1940s.

Wofford Oil Co. of Georgia/Alabama: c.1925-1935

Wofford, established c.1925, first marketed a benzol blend of gasoline, Woco-Pepo, in Georgia and Alabama. In 1925, Pure Oil of Pennsylvania merged with Wofford and began to market Woco-Pep through south Texas until World War II.

Figure 95: This 1925 Woco-Pepo station was located in New Braunsfels.

Aztec Oil Company: 1930–1949

Moderate sized gasoline gas station company operating in San Antonio.

Diamond Oil Sales: c. 1930–c. 1960

Small independent company offering gasoline in several locations in San Antonio.

Golden West Oil Company: 1930–1950

A little known San Antonio based company, Golden West identified itself with a round porcelain sign outlined in white and black featuring a yellow sun in the center. Yellow and white rays rise from the sun showing a reflection of the sun on blue mountains and a water scene below. A black outlined banner reads "Golden West" with white lettering, outlined in dark blue reading "Oil/Company" on the sun.

Good Luck Oil Company: c. 1930–c. 1960.

Dallas based oil company selling in an independent chain of distinctive service stations throughout north Texas called Good Luck Service, marketing “Gloco” brand of gasoline. Signage included a green scalloped border around a white porcelain oval sign. Large green horseshoes highlighted the center with yellow diamonds to either side. A red "Good" was arched to the left of the horseshoe, and a"Luck" to the right. "Service" in black stretched across the bottom of the signage.

Modeled after the "tower building" at the Texas Centennial in 1936, the Good Luck service stations used a prominent tower or pylon in a Moderne style as the signature architectural piece. The company also marketed through less distinctive stations in a common small box form.

Figure 96: The above Good Luck gas station, modeled after the “tower building” at the 1936 Texas Centennial, is located in Dallas.

The Good Luck Company mostly marketed in North and East Texas.

Ideal Service Stations: 1930–c. 1945

Independent service station company operating in San Antonio.

Midway Service Stations: 1930–1960

Independent refining and marketing gas station located in San Antonio.

Ritters Service Stations: c. 1950–c. 1970

A small independent refining company based in Austin. While little is known of the company history, the company's signage featured a white porcelain sign with a green oval extending from "G" in script and "Gasoline" in green across the bottom of the sign. "Ritters" in red at the center of the oval denoted the company.

Union Texas Petroleum: c. 1950–c. 1970

Based in Houston, Union was part of Allied Chemical and marketed a brand of gas known as "Texgas" across the south central United States. Union marketed under a white diamond-shaped porcelain sign with a red scripted "Texgas" and black "Gasolines" across the center.

Autotronics, Inc.: 1968–1990

Founded in Houston in 1968, this company offered its gasoline at convenience stores under the name "Fill-Em Fast." Convenience store operators installed free-standing pumps and underground tanks at the corner of a lot and received a commission for sales. In the 1970s, Autotronics became associated with Sigmor Corporation, part of Shamrock. At this point, operators typically covered pumps with a canopy under the name of "Fill-Em Fast" and marketed from Texas to Virginia. After the 1980s, many of these locations became part of the larger Shamrock owned Sigmor operations.

EZ Serve Stations: c. 1960–1992

Founded in the late 1960s in Houston as part of the self-serve boom in service stations. First operating as a franchise convenience store with unattended fuel pumps, the company later expanded into its own convenience store operations in the late 1980s. EZ Serve purchased the Atlanta based Magic Market in 1992, operating under a number of names. Signage is distinguished by a while porcelain sign with a blue "EZ" and a white "Serve".

Reference

A gas station may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places if it meets at least one of the following criteria and retains a sufficient level of its historic integrity. A property also must be significant at a local, state, or national level with a demonstrated statement to that effect.

A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Commerce: A station may possess significance in the area of commerce if it is associated with the business of trading goods and services in a community. For example, a station simply established to sell gasoline and automobile products might not qualify in this area. However, a station that brought significant business to a community, served as the principal business of a community, became a landmark in the community, or remained in business for a significant time period demonstrating a sustained contribution to the local economy may be eligible. For example, a station built to support agricultural development in an area or provide special services to an agricultural industry may also qualify in this area of significance.

Community and Regional Development: A gas station may be eligible in the area of community and regional development if it reflects a special design or development period of a community. For example, if a station were part of an overall neighborhood development plan or spurred residential development in a planned area, it may be eligible under this area of significance.

Entertainment/Recreation: For example, a gas station built to accommodate tourists to a city, state, or national park or recreation area may be eligible under this area of significance as well.

Social History: A gas station that in some way promotes the welfare of a society or the lifeways of social groups may be eligible. For example, a station that was built to provide services to African Americans during segregation may be eligible in this area of significance (see Independent Companies and Gas Stations, page 99).

Transportation: A gas station may be eligible in the area of transportation if the property reflects the development of a road or highway. For example, if a station developed during the Good Roads Movement in order to support a particular transportation route or service vehicles on a route, it may qualify in this area of significance, if it can be substantially associated with the "boosterism" of the route.

B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Commerce: A gas station may be eligible in this area if the property is closely associated with a leading figure in the business of trading goods, services and commodities. For example, a businessperson significant in commercial development in a community where the gas station represents that contribution may make the building eligible.

Ethnic Heritage: A gas station may be eligible in this area if it reflects the heritage of a particular ethnic or racial group. For example, a station that reflects the entrepreneurship of an individual, associated with and siginificant to a particular ethnic group, may be eligible.

Transportation: A gas station may be eligible in this area if it reflects the process and technology of conveying passengers or materials and is associated with an individual significant in this area. For example, a station owned and operated by a leader in the Good Roads Movement may be eligible if it is the best representative of that individual's interest and leadership in the movement.

C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Architecture: A gas station may be eligible in this area if the property reflects the art of designing and constructing a station. For example, a representative example of Walter Dorwin Teague's design for The Texas Company from the 1930s may be eligible. An independent company's station that employs a programmatic theme like Streamlined (Moderne) pylons or an airplane set atop a station may also be eligible. Stations that incorporate special materials also may be eligible under this area, such as those using petrified wood in their siding. A gas station designed by a noted architect may be considered in this area as well, especially if it was considered a prototype or a single extant example of the architect's work in the building type.

Community Planning and Development: A gas station may be eligible in this area if it was integral to the design of planned space. For example, a gas station designed as part of a neighborhood shopping center may be eligible if it remains intact and reflects the original design intention.

Engineering: A gas station may be eligible in this area if it illustrates the practical application of scientific principles to design, construct and operate a structure to serve human needs. For example, a station that contains exemplary engineering techniques or mechanical equipment may be eligible in this area.

Criteria Considerations: The following considerations may apply to gas stations under review for eligibility.

Consideration B: A gas station removed from its original location but significant for its architectural value or as the sole surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event may be eligible. For example, a gas station relocated to a similar site (i.e. commercial corner to another commercial corner) may be eligible if it is determined significant for its association under the following criteria and circumstances:

(1) Eligibility under Criterion C may be appropriate if the gas station is significant under Architecture and documented as a rare and unusual example of the type, i.e. if the gas station is the last remaining station or a particularly noteworthy design of an architect, building form, or a national design movement. This is the most common circumstance for a gas station meeting this consideration.

(2) Eligibility under Criterion A may be appropriate if the gas station is significant under the areas of Commerce, Transportation, or Community and Regional Planning as a rare building type, i.e. if the gas station is an important resource reflecting the commercial development of an area, its transportation history, or its planning and development history. Documentation that substantiates the role this gas station played is essential to meeting this eligibility requirement.

(3) Eligibility under Criterion B may be appropriate if the gas station is significant under the area of Social History or Ethnic History as a rare building type, i.e. if the gas station is a one-of-a-kind or the last station associated with an important individual noteworthy in the community's social or ethnic history. Additional documentation may be needed to substantiate this eligibility that proves that this is the best property associated with that individual's productive life.

A property that is a rare example should meet the test as a sole survivor and be fully documented at the local, state or national level. A gas station relocated to an amusement park may not be eligible with Consideration B, as it may have no integrity of location, association, setting or feeling. Properties using Consideration B should be approved before relocation if possible.

Consideration E: A gas station reconstructed when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, or when no other building or structure with the same association has survived may be eligible. For example, a gas station recreated or rebuilt following a professional restoration master plan may be eligible if it is an important example of a building form. A restoration of a significant programmatic design may be eligible if significance is established before work begins and the master plan is accurate in its specifications to the original design.

Consideration G: A gas station achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance may be eligible. For example, a gas station claiming Consideration G should be exceptional in design, associated with a master architect or designer, or in some way should demonstrate exceptional characteristics while still retaining its integrity.

Determining Classification

Gas stations may be classified either as a *building* or part of a *district*. If considered as a building, a nomination should list the resources within the property. The common resources on a nominated property include a building or buildings, structures such as driveways and sidewalks, objects such as pumps, signs (affixed or freestanding), air and water or other service accessories, gates, and fences. These resources should be further classified as contributing or noncontributing.

A gas station that is part of a district may be considered as a building in a district if it contributes significantly to the concentration, linkage, or continuity that unites the area historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development. Examples of when a gas station may be part of a district include a central business district, residential area (planned neighborhood development), commercial area (shopping center), industrial complex (refinery), farm or estate, transportation network, or park area (local, state or national park). Properties considered as part of a district also should conform to the period of significance of the overall district.

Inclusion in a Multiple Property Nomination

Gas stations may be included as part of a multiple property nomination if the property relates to the theme set by the historic context and falls within the period of significance and geographic boundaries established by the historic context. For example, a gas station may be eligible under a historic context such as "Community Development of Anytown, Texas, 1880-1955" or "Commercial Development of Anytown, Texas, 1920-1955." A second example demonstrates the relationship of a gas station by theme, "Development and Construction of La Gloria Filling Stations, San Antonio, Texas, oc. 1920-c.1955" or "Gas Stations of The Texas Company in Texas, 1930-1955."

Determining Architectural Classification

The architectural classification of a gas station typically falls within one of the following categories and subcategories:

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

Beaux Arts

Classical Revival

Colonial Revival

Tudor Revival

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival (Spanish Eclectic)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements

Bungalow/Craftsman

Prairie School

Modern Movement

Art Deco

International Style (Miesian)

Moderne (Streamlined Moderne, Art Moderne)

Other

Gas stations also may be classified by building form as identified in the field guide.

Determining Materials

Gas stations may consist of a number of materials. The following are the most common:

Aluminum

Asphalt

Brick

Ceramic Tile

Glass

Metal

Steel

Stone

Stucco

Terra Cotta

Wood

Other

Porcelain enamel (a composite material including metal and glass, but may also be classified as steel).

Evaluating Integrity

Historic integrity is the determination of a property's authenticity as evidenced by extant physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic period. Seven qualities form the integrity of a property. A property generally must possess at least integrity of location, design and materials, as well as one other aspect of integrity before it may quality.

Aspects of Integrity

1. *Location:* A gas station possesses integrity of location if it remains on its original site of construction.

2. *Design:* A gas station possesses integrity of design if it retains significant aspects of its original design to communicate effectively the intent and purpose of the designer.

3. *Setting:* A gas station possesses integrity of setting if it resides in a setting that is similar to its original site or place where it gained significance.

4. *Materials:* A gas station possesses integrity of materials if a substantial percentage of the original materials are intact and reflect the initial intent of the design.

5. *Workmanship:* A gas station possesses integrity of workmanship if evidence remains to reflect the original execution of design by skilled workers on a property.

6. *Feeling:* A gas station possesses integrity of feeling if it embodies and projects a feeling that can be readily viewed or experienced.

7. *Association:* A gas station possesses integrity of association if it is generally understood by the public as being associated with its area and period of significance under a specific criteria for eligibility and level of significance.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are the most important characteristics needed to be present on a gas station when evaluating it for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places?

In order of priority: building form, architectural style or influence, presence of display and service areas, visible service bays (if applicable), canopy (if applicable), distinctive site features, and signage. Eligible gas stations should retain enough original elements to still represent the initial use and intent of the building. For example, an eligible station should clearly reflect the commercial aspects of providing automobile fuel and service even if adapted for a new use.

Should a gas station retain its original signage in order to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places?

While signage was an important feature to a gas station, in most cases it was not the character-defining aspect of the building. Emphasis should be placed in most cases on the original building form or design rather than accessories. However, a gas station retaining original signage probably carries a higher level of integrity than one that does not have signage.

Figure 97: This Texaco station retains its original signage.

If an oblong box and canopy building form no longer retains its canopy, is it eligible for the National Register?

In this building form, the canopy is a character-defining feature. In the most cases, the removal of the canopy would deem it ineligible.

If the original canopy of a station was modified (shortened) because of a road or street widening, is it potentially eligible?

In building forms where the canopy served as an integral part of the design or use, a shortened canopy may not in itself make a property ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This determination, however, may depend on how and when the modification occurred.

Figure 98: The above example of a modified canopy is located in Dallas.

If a house with canopy building form now includes an enclosed canopy, is it eligible for the National Register?

In some building forms, the canopy is an essential character-defining element. If the canopy is enclosed, the station may no longer reflect its original design or use and would therefore be ineligible.

If the service bays are enclosed, is the gas station ineligible because of the loss of integrity?

The type of enclosure or sealing off of the service bays *may* influence the loss of integrity. For example, a porcelain enamel sided gas station where the original overhead doors are fixed in place may be eligible, while one that is enclosed with horizontal wood planks may not be eligible.

Figure 99: The bays of this station have been enclosed.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Must a gas station retain gasoline pumps in order to possess integrity or demonstrate its original function?

The removal of gasoline pumps is common and does not detract from the integrity of the building form. Gasoline pumps changed frequently in the course of the 20th century often being updated as technology improved. Unless the pumps served as the principal character-defining aspect of the building, it is not a feature that must be present for eligibility.

If more than one example of a gas station building form exists in a community, does that make a station ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places?

While rarity may increase consideration of eligibility, it does not necessarily make it ineligible if other examples exist. The National Register recognizes a representative example of a gas station or building form as eligible. To substantiate eligibility a property must be representative, demonstrate significance, and retain integrity.

If a gas station built to follow a corporate design is altered at a later point to adapt to a new corporate design, is the station ineligible for listing?

It is common for gas stations to experience a change in corporate operations; in fact, many gas stations built from the 1920s through the 1950s have undergone at least one change. The evaluation of the property and its eligibility will depend on the length of association and the overall integrity of the property. For example, if a gas station built as a Gulf in the 1930s (oblong box and canopy) was modified to a Texaco (oblong box and canopy similar to Teague's designs) then it may be most significant in the change if being recognized for architecture.

Figures 100 and 101: The gas station on the left is the original c. 1925 structure, that has been renovated over the years. Its current condition is pictured on the right, and while it still retains some of its original structure, it has been so modified as to become ineligible.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Must a gas station possess its distinctive lighting or neon signage in order to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places?

Probably not, however, if a station attained significance because of its neon signage and that is absent, then it may lose its eligibility. In most cases, the building form, integrity, and style will be more important than distinctive lighting or neon signage.

Figure 102: This Good Luck gas station, located in Dallas, no longer features its distinctive signage and is ineligible.

When underground fuel storage tanks are removed for environmental reasons, does the removal of drive approaches, landscaping features, or a canopy make the property ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places?

In most cases the site location features of a gas station and its building form are integral. The removal of storage tanks may alter some aspects of the setting, but in most cases would not deem it ineligible. The property's overall integrity and area of significance would be the overriding considerations for eligibility.

If a designer incorporated a gas station into the plan of a community shopping center that possessed an overall architectural style (e.g., Spanish Eclectic or Modern), would the station be eligible individually or as a contributing element to the center?

By the 1930s many architects incorporated one or more gas stations into the site planning and design of shopping centers. In most cases the gas station is best considered as a contributing element to the overall center design unless a significant portion of the center is demolished or has lost integrity.

If a gas station originally built of brick, stone, porcelain enamel panels, or terra cotta tile has been painted, does the property no longer possess enough integrity to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places?

Figure 103: In this colorful Dallas example, the gas station has been painted and is ineligible

Paint should be treated as another building modification in the assessment of integrity. In this case, the integrity of "materials" may be questioned. While in many cases paint is reversible, in commercial gas stations it may be more difficult to remove paint because many stations were built of porous brick or stone (e.g. petrified wood) and cannot be cleaned effectively. In other cases where terra cotta tiles or porcelain enamel panels exist, these materials often were character-defining aspects of the design and if significantly altered may cause a building to lose integrity and not be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. An example is where the stone of a 1950s Ranch style Shell gas station is painted; the building may not be eligible for listing as the stone was an important part of the architectural vocabulary of the corporate form and style.

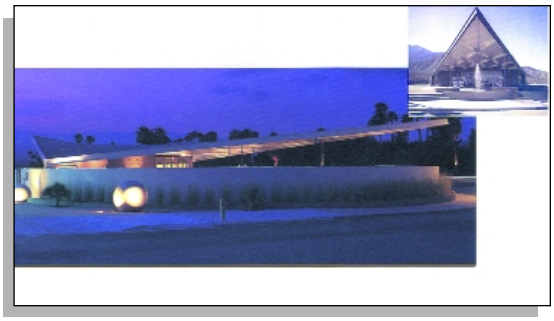
Can a gas station adapted for a new use still be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places?

Many gas stations have been adapted for new uses. Some new uses adapt existing building forms with minimal alteration while others are extreme. A new use in itself does not make a property ineligible, the greater consideration should be for the way in which the new use is incorporated into the existing building.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

If a gas station remains largely intact, but is surrounded by a fence or other barrier, is it ineligible for listing in the National Register?

No, in most cases a detached and separate structure that surrounds a station does not constitute a permanent alteration and typically does not compromise the original building's integrity. This approach may be a positive way to manage new uses to a gas station without severe alteration.



Figures 104 and 105: On the left is an example of Albert Frey's 1960s gas station design. Today, that same station serves as a sculpture gallery, surrounded by a wall as seen on the right. It serves as an outstanding example of adaptive use and is eligible for the National Register.

Are independent gas stations that are simple in form and style ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places?

Independent stations may not be eligible under criteria largely recognizing architecture, but may be eligible under other criteria. For example, a gas station associated with an important local entrepreneur or of particular importance for local commerce, may be eligible either individually or in a historic district.

How do you evaluate independently owned gas stations that are mimetic or programmatic in form and style?

The free form, mimetic or programmatic independent stations are typically important community landmarks. In many cases these stations are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under architecture or commerce, however, if a property is severely altered or compromised, it may be determined ineligible. These properties should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Are gas stations evaluated differently when considered individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and when considered contributing to a historic district?

A station that is isolated or detached from other related buildings or areas should retain a higher degree of integrity. For practical consideration, an individually eligible station should retain form, architectural style or influence, as well as principal spaces used to fuel or service automobiles (display area, service bays, service drives, canopy, etc.). A station considered part of a historic district should retain form, architectural style or influence, but may compromise some principal spaces if the overall appearance still supports the area(s) and period of significance recognized in the historic district. For example, a station dating from 1920 and built to service the growing automobiles in the community, and included in a downtown commercial district recognized in the areas of commerce and architecture between 1900 and 1950, may be considered contributing.

Glossary of Selected Terms

Art Deco

This term refers to an architectural style derived from the French development of a design aesthetic in the early 20th century. It typically refers to buildings with an ornate embellishment often carved or applied to the exterior stone or other building material. Highly decorative and flowing elements are often part of this style, most common in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Autoist

An early term for individuals who owned or drove automobiles. The term often described owners and drivers who used the automobile for tourist or recreational purposes.

Blend-in

Describes the effort by architects to blend service stations into the residential neighborhoods of the mid-20th century.

City Beautiful Movement

A national movement to improve the civic appearance of cities, begun in the early 20th century and continuing until about 1920. The leaders of the movement published and lectured widely on the principles of monumental design and buildings. The movement influenced the design of many commercial and civic buildings, as well as the placement of rather ordinary properties like gas stations.

Commercial Archeology

The investigation of commercial, typically roadside, architecture by a process of using historical documents interwoven with the removal of layers of physical alterations to reveal original roadside objects. The Society for Commercial Archeology, often confused with an archeologist operating as a consulting businessman, has existed since the 1970s to document, educate, and generally increase awareness of roadside architecture in the United States.

Community Service Station

A term developed by *Motor Age* (a trade publication) for service stations with a tire shop, battery station, mechanical shop, greasing rack, automobile laundry, and gas station that provided full service to a customer. The emphasis here is on "service."

Cottage Style

A style or architectural form for a gas station that resembled a cottage, thus giving a domestic flare to the station.

Curb Signs

Signs, usually in the 18-30 inch range, that were often round and placed on a stand and base. These signs were placed by the curb or pump island to attract customers.

Drum Prototype

An architectural prototype developed by Frederick G. Frost for Socony Vacuum that featured a large drum-like office rising at one corner of an oblong-box form. Offered as a transitional design by Frost to the company and used in the late 1930s across the country.

Flange Sign

Signs that hang perpendicular to a wall. They are designed for mounting on one side only.

Independent

A localized jobber and/or small regional distributing company that did not rely on the large refineries for gas. They typically marketed their own brands of gasoline with self-identifying signage and service station design or building form.

International Style

An architectural style that arose on the European continent through the work of Mies Von der Rohe and Marcel Breuer (and others) in the Bauhaus School of design. It is typically very simple in form and uses materials of glass and steel.

Miesian (see International Style)

Mimetic

Refers to a building design or form that places its emphasis on mimicking an object or theme in order to attract attention to a roadside business. Independent gas station operators sometimes uses mimetic designs as a marketing gimmick.

Modern

A term of architectural style that expresses simplicity and honesty of materials and design. Modern design typically eschews traditional forms and ideals for a clean, crisp aesthetic.

National Petroleum News

A publication of the industry catering to gas station owners and operators beginning in the early 20th century to the present. *NPN* became the leading industry publication to promote new design, marketing and sales concepts for the gas station.

Neighborhood Service Station

A service station based in a residential neighborhood that conforms to the massing, setback and general design principles at play around it. This type of station also provides services and goods to accommodate the residents of a neighborhood, including repairs.

Prefabricated

This term refers to the mass production of buildings. Prefabricated gas stations became relatively easy forms to build and develop in the 1920s and later. Prefabrication allowed gas companies to customize station design and begin the association of building form with a company and its products.

Porcelain Enamel

Refers to a sign typically used in advertising, using a combination of ground glass and other materials applied with a metal screen placed over the sign. The screen was removed and the sign fired in a kiln. In some examples, a gas station may incorporate porcelain enamel panels as siding.

Place-Product-Packaging

A descriptive term developed by John Jakle and Keith Sculle, as explained in their scholarly publication *The Gas Station in America.* Jakle and Sculle feel that gas stations have been subject to the marketing and advertising direction of corporations, making identification of a brand of gasoline possible across the country regardless of the location of the motorist. The authors also used this term in the definition of lodging and food establishments.

Programmatic

Similar to mimetic, programmatic refers to the use of design and form in buildings that follow a "program" and may reflect a marketing scheme to promote an independent gas station.

Prototype

A term used to reference a model or ideal form that may be implemented in mass. Norman Bel Geddes' design for Socony-Vacuum in 1934 was to be a prototype for other gas stations built across the country, as was Walter Dorwin Teague's design for The Texas Company.

Pylon

A vertical element placed perpendicular to a service station, usually to draw the attention of automobiles traveling at high speeds. It is often combined with other architectural or signage elements.

Self-Service

A term developed in the late 1940s referring to a gas station that allowed a customer to pump his own gas. Self-service introduced to the industry a number of new marketing techniques and building/site designs, notwithstanding the lower costs to the customer.

Service Bays

Special bays attached to an office in a gas station that is set aside for automobile service. These bays may be found individually or in sets of two or three. The addition of service bays expanded the building form of gas stations, creating an oblong box.

Streamlined (Moderne)

An architectural style describing a "modern" look that was influenced by the machine age of the 1930s. Rounded corners, raised horizontal bands, and curves are typical elements of this style. The overall goal is to express movement and speed.

Super Service Station

A service station designed with more than one service bay and offering a variety of automotive services as well as products. The concept was developed to differentiate the "super" service station from the more standardized station offering principally gasoline and basic services. These stations required larger sites and included more building form.

TBA

Initials referring to tobacco, batteries and accessories sold in service stations from the 1930s to the present. TBA became a preferred use in service stations that influenced the design and size of offices and sales areas in station design.

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