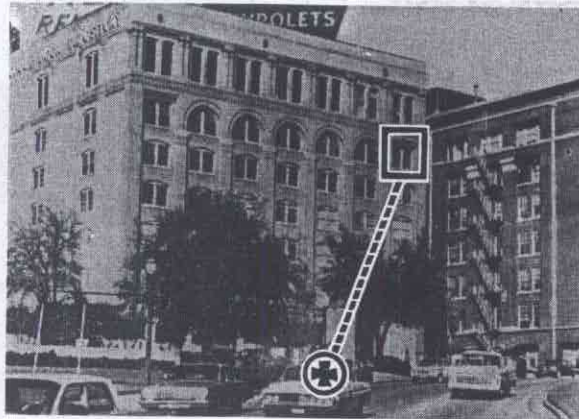


WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

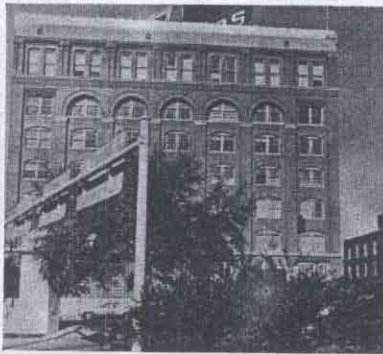
The Depository's Fate

"Old Red," the massive brick building at 411 Elm Street on the western edge of downtown Dallas, is locked and barred these days and festooned with "No Trespassing" signs. The notorious sixth floor is completely empty, save for a stack or two of bricks that scavengers have pried out of the ledge beneath the window from which, eight years ago next Monday, Lee Harvey Oswald fired the shots that killed President John F. Kennedy. But even now, as many as 4,000 people come each day to gaze in awe at the Texas School Book Depository. And once again the 68-year-old building is embroiled in controversy.

In the surreal aftermath of the assassination, officials in the shocked and saddened city were understandably reluctant to deal with various suggestions for the depository's future. Some citizens insisted that the building should be turned into a Kennedy memorial or museum, but others felt just as strongly that it should be torn down altogether. Thus, for years the only official commemoration of the tragedy was a pair of engraved marble slabs in Dealey Plaza, directly across the street from the depository. Eventually, a JFK memorial cenotaph, designed by architect Philip Johnson, was erected some 200 yards away from



Depository in 1962 and path of Oswald's shots at JFK



'Old Red' today: Unofficial shrine



Mayhew at the sixth-floor window

the depository. Shortly before that, however, the building's owner, a Texas oilman named D. Harold Byrd, put the depository up for sale.

Bitter Battle: Just after the assassination, Byrd reportedly had been offered more than \$1 million for the building. But last year, in a dramatic indication of the extent to which local interest in the depository had waned, the building was purchased for the remarkably low price of \$650,000—and by an outsider at that. The new owner, 43-year-old Aubrey Mayhew, is a flamboyant recording-company executive and Kennedy buff from Nashville, Tenn. Mayhew said he had no idea what he would do with the depository, and suddenly worried Dallasites began to manifest an interest in the building. Today, a bitter battle is festering over the depository's fate.

Mayhew has recently hired a Dallas architectural firm to remodel the depository, and he is openly seeking financial support to move his formidable collection of Kennedy memorabilia from Nashville to Dallas. "What I want," he says, "is a tasteful, meaningful museum and library." What feisty Texas State Sen. Mike McKool wants in the depository, however, is a state-owned and -operated museum. Fully aware of the enormous income potential represented by the continuing fascination the building holds for tourists, McKool is waging a determined campaign. "The depository should not

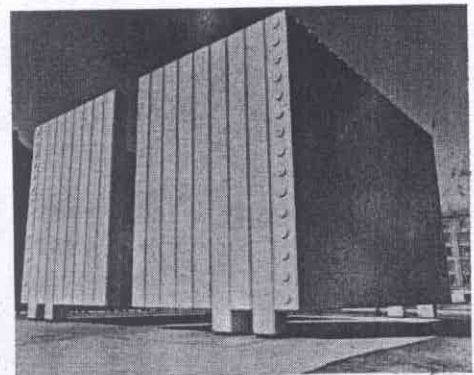
belong to anybody but the people of Texas," he asserts. "They could have one of the great museums of the world." Although he is less emphatic about what the museum would contain, McKool does suggest that, among other things, "the U.S. Government has many items, such as the death weapons, that it would probably be willing to give."

Complicating the situation even more, a nine-man commission appointed by the State of Texas to explore various possibilities for a Kennedy memorial now seems far more interested in the depository's site than in the building itself. "The building isn't in very good condition," contends Raymond D. Nasher, the prominent Dallas cultural leader who is chairman of the commission. "If you could create something on the site that would help the people of this area, it would be much more meaningful than just keeping that red brick building."

Determined Resistance: For his part, Mayhew is determined to resist any attempt to wrest the building from his grasp. In fact, since a lengthy legal and legislative struggle would precede any state take-over, many observers are convinced that Mayhew will forge ahead with his own plans and some day present Dallas with a *fait accompli*.

In the meantime, thousands of visitors continue to descend upon the depository every day. Some of them wander over to the gaudy concession stand across the

street to buy a memento or two—a JFK ashtray, perhaps, or a cigarette lighter. Others intently pace around the depository, taking innumerable snapshots and plaintively asking bystanders if there is any way to get inside. Even if they could enter the building, however, many of the



Official Kennedy memorial

tourists would be bitterly disappointed. For since 1963, the trees between the depository and the spot where President Kennedy was killed have grown so bushy that, today, Oswald could not even see that part of the motorcade route from the sixth-floor window where he waited fatefully with his mail-order rifle.