

Building That Hid

Dallas

Each day they come, in groups or singly, to stand in Dealey Plaza and stare upward at the seven-story red brick building known as the Texas School Book Depository.

There are other places tragically reminiscent of the assassination here of President John F. Kennedy, other places where the sightseers might go to recall memories of that event ten years ago.

But most of them end up gawking at the onetime depository.

On the sixth floor, at the far right, is a dusty window marked with an X. From that window Lee Harvey Oswald shot President Kennedy as the presidential motorcade traveled at 11 m.p.h. down Elm st. on Nov. 22, 1963.

The big yellow Hertz sign on top of the building with the clock that said 12:30 when the assassination took place is still there. But the name, Texas School Book Depository, over the entrance is gone. On the side of the building is a small sign that reads:

"This building is private property. Any attempt to enter will be considered a criminal act. This building is guarded and under 24-hour protection. Enter at your own risk."

President Kennedy and his motorcade had to pass in front of the depository at 411 Elm st. to reach the Stemmons freeway and get to the Trade Mart and a luncheon speech, about three or four minutes away.

"After the assassination, the Texas School Book people had to put a special

guard down there to keep people from coming in and going up to that window," said D. Harold Byrd, who owns the building.

For some time now he has had it up for sale. The price is \$1.2 million.

"I have it locked up completely. No one gets in the building," said Byrd, 73, an oil millionaire.

"I wish I could sell it. I want it out of my hair. I don't want anything to do with it," he said.

Apparently, no one else does either.

As a Dallas city councilman said not long ago: "This building will never be a memorial to John F. Kennedy; only to Lee Harvey Oswald. It should be torn down and a park or something else positive built there."

It also has been suggested that the building be turned into a historic site. But the Texas historical survey committee refused to nominate the structure for national landmark status.

The Texas School Book Depository, a private firm, had rented the building from Byrd for a number of years and moved out in the late 1960s. Company officials would just as soon have people stop calling it the Texas School Book Depository.

So the building stands empty. People have pried bricks out of it, taken mortar from it, chipped away the cornerstone and they have taken thousands upon thousands of photographs of it.

Someone even stole some of the brick from the bottom part of the window from

which the fateful shots were fired.

"I've let a lot of people go up there, but I'm not going to do it anymore," said Byrd. I've let them take pictures from the window and all; and they take two or three hours every time."

Asked if he would sell the building for less than \$1.2 million, Byrd said: "Well, that's what I'm asking."

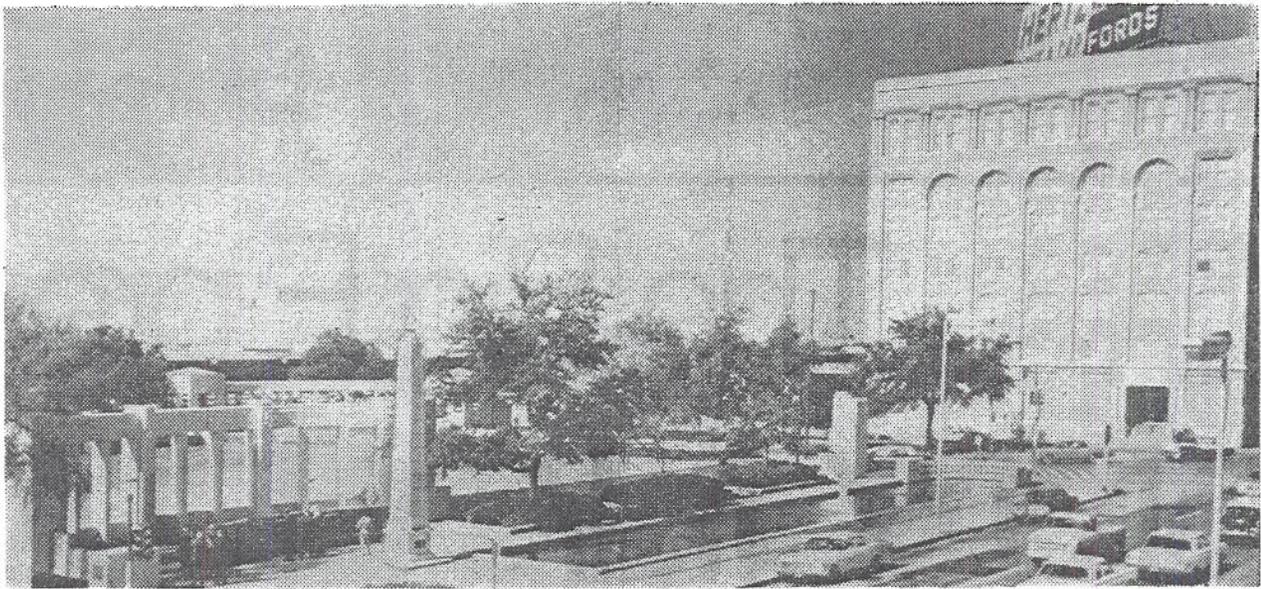
Would he himself turn it into a museum?

"Hell, no. I wouldn't do anything like that. I'm not going to give it to some Catholic church either. They called me once, and tried to get me to give it to them, because he (President Kennedy) was a Catholic and they wanted to put a monument for him."

There are other people and places that evoke memories of the assassination.

Marina Oswald, now remarried, lives near Dallas.

Oswald Now



Today the Texas School Book Depository (right) looks down on Dealey Plaza near the spot where John F. Kennedy was shot.

Oswald's mother lives in nearby Ft. Worth. Mrs. J. D. Tippet, whose policeman husband was slain by Oswald, is remarried and now lives in Dallas.

Federal Judge Sarah T. Hughes, who administered the oath of office to Lyndon B. Johnson, still holds the same judgeship.

Dr. Malcom O. Perry, who attended President Kennedy, is still at Parkland Hospital where the President was brought.

Jack Ruby's Carousel Bar is gone.

The Texas Theater, where Oswald was arrested, is still there.

But it is still the depository that draws sightseers each year from around the world.

It was built in 1909 by the Southern Rock Island Plow Co. Byrd said he purchased it in 1939, added four stories and later air-conditioned it.

Byrd says he wants to see

the "right" thing done by the building.

He is like many people in Dallas who believe their city was unjustly tagged as a "city of hate" after President Kennedy was killed.

Byrd said no one had placed such a label on Los Angeles, where Robert F. Kennedy was killed, or on Laurel, Md., where George C. Wallace was shot.

Byrd put the building up for auction in 1970 with an asking price of \$1 million.

One of the dozens of potential buyers at the sale was a Pennsylvania firm that wanted to tear the building down and sell the bricks for \$5 apiece.

The highest bid — \$650,000 — was made by Aubrey Mayhew of Nashville, a music company executive and a collector of assassination memorabilia.

He paid \$10,000 down with terms of \$6000 dollars a month.

Mayhew promised a museum in good taste. He said it would have 200 artifacts including parts of a PT boat that President Kennedy commanded in World War II.

But when Mayhew's firm announced that tourists would be charged to look down at Dealey Plaza from the fateful sixth-floor window, some of Dallas' citizens began to grow apprehensive.

Many said the city or state should take over the building.

The Dallas Chamber of Commerce urged the state of Texas to buy it. But Dallas was undecided what to do, and the idea died.

Two years after Mayhew purchase the building, he was threatened with foreclosure by the Republic National Bank. In the lobby of the old red brick building he had begun a campaign called "Buy a Piece of History Program," in which he pro-

posed to sell for \$10 apiece titles to symbolic square inches of land on which the structure stood.

had tried to do extensive water damage to the building so that there would be an excuse to tear it down.

Finally, there was a foreclosure sale in August, 1972. The only bidder was Byrd. He bought back the building for \$475,000, about the amount he said Mayhew owed him.

Of the building, Byrd said at the time: "A whole lot of people are interested in it. I will sell it on a first-come, first-serve basis."

But no one arrived.

Los Angeles Times

Empty

posed to sell for \$10 apiece titles to symbolic square inches of land on which the structure stood.

Not long afterward a fire broke out in the building and a young Mayhew employee was charged with starting it. He was let out on bond later, and Mayhew claimed that the Dallas fire department