The Goldstein's Building/ Rutherford County Offices
One Public Square, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, 37130

Building History and Assessment

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History • Education • Architecture

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Historical Background:

The Goldstein Building is a key part of Murfreesboro's post Civil War history. It represents not only the growth of retail on the town square but also the impact of immigrants on the town and community from the late 19th to mid-20th centuries.

Who was William Goldstein?

The applicant, from which it appears to the satisfaction of The Court, that the said William Goldstein has resided in The United States for more than Seven years and within the State of Tennessee more than six years, and during that time, he has behaved as a man of good moral character, attached to the principals of the Constitution of The United States, and was well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same. It is therefore, ordered, adjudged and decreed by The Court that William Goldstein be fully admitted to become a citizen of The United States and entitled to all the rights and privileges of such citizenship.¹

William Goldstein, like many immigrants in the late nineteenth century arrived in New York City. According to his naturalization decree, William was born on, "September 13th, 1859 in...Russia..." and arrived in New York on, "...July 4, 1880".² These two dates are quite likely approximations. According to census records from 1900, 1910, and 1920, William was born around 1859 or 1860.³ Census records also vary on the year of immigration as 1880 or 1878.⁴ Immigration records are also not clear, however, one passenger list from the ship Egyptian Monarch in 1881 lists a, "Wm Goldstein", age 30, originating from Russia, having traveled in steerage.⁵ It is possible that this is the William Goldstein who ultimately

¹ "Naturalization Decree," June 28, 1894, Goldstein Collection, Goldstein Family Papers - Goldstein, William 1894-1931, Box 2, Folder 7, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.
² Ibid., 1.
⁴ Ibid., 1900 census lists 1880 as the year of immigration, 1910 census lists 1878, and the 1920 census lists the year of immigration as 1878.
moved to Murfreesboro, "...around the 1st of June 1886." The first Goldstein's store was located on Depot Hill, ultimately moving to the Square in 1900.

Goldstein Building, c. 1900, Rutherford County Archives

When thinking about the contemporary One Public Square, it is important to remember that the single building actually consists of several pieces of land- or lots- on the south side of the Square. One Public Square is bordered by South Main Street to the north, South Church Street to the east, Vine street to the south, and commercial buildings to the west. In 1887, approximately the year that William Goldstein moved to Murfreesboro, much of the land that is now One Public Square was a small barber, carpenter, and photography shop. An 1897 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps show us that much development had taken place around the square, and the land under examination had been divided into three plots containing a tin shop, barber, and variety shop. Additionally, a stone yard was present,

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6 "Naturalization Decree". 1.
which likely shaped the foundation stones of many of the buildings on the square. The original City Hall and fire station were also located on the southeast corner.9

Until stated later in this document, references to One Public Square will be done so based upon the specific lot number as it corresponds with a different business and family. Lot 1 is the most eastern of the three main lots, it is immediately to the west of Church Street. Lot 3 is the central lot of the group and Lot 5 is the most westerly of the three. While no commercial lot number is given, the southern 'lot' was occupied by and will be referred to as City Hall until stated otherwise later in this document.

The 1900 census shows, William Goldstein, wife Dora, daughter Leah, and sons Harry and David. All of the members of the Goldstein family are listed as being able to read, write and speak English. William and son, Harry, occupations listed as merchants of dry goods, while Leah and David were in school. The family was renting a house on Lytle Street.10 As for the store, it was remembered many years later that, "It was the personal charm and business sense of W. Goldstein and his wife, Dora, that originally made Goldstein's "the store" in Murfreesboro. Although W. Goldstein died in 1930, he is still remembered by some as a community leader who never sold anything he wouldn't himself have."11

William purchased Lot 1 in 1900 and opened the dry goods store mentioned in the 1900 census and shown in the 1902 Sanborn map.12 In addition to the maps, photographs of the building taken around 1910 clearly show lots 1, 3, and 5 as brick structures with flat roofs sloping slightly to the south.13 Sometime between the 1897 and 1902, all three lots-and the buildings upon them-expanded south, removing the stone yard. It is likely that these expansions took place around the same time.

10 1900 U.S. Census. William and Dora married in 1888 according to the 1900 census.
13 "Aerial Image of Square [Photograph]," ca 1900, Rutherford County Archives.
corresponding with the opening of the W. Goldstein dry goods, J. B. Freeman variety store, and the clothing store in lot 5.

James Byron Freeman, born around 1876, was the owner of a 'racket' store, which occupied lot 3. Racket stores are more commonly known as variety stores, selling, "...shoes, boots, grocery staples, clothes, novelties, and various sundry items," and is labeled as such on the 1902 Sanborn map. It was during this period that Freeman entered into business with William E. Knox. Together the two operated J. B. Freeman shoe and clothing store.

Lot 5 was the location of Todd & McCollough a shoe and hat store. Herman A. Todd was born around 1883. Thos/Thomas McCollough was born around 1877. We are fortunate today to have a few images of the storefront, one in particular pictures W. Goldstein's, J. B. Freeman's, and Todd and McCollough circa 1900. Todd & McCollough began to transition long before the 1950s however.

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19 “Aerial Image of Square [Photograph].”
Between 1910 and the outbreak of the First World War in Europe in 1914, the store expanded from clothing to include furniture. The U.S. Census from 1910 lists both Todd and McCollough as shoe store merchants, which is consistent with the 1900 image and the 1907 Sanborn map, and though the 1920 census continues to list both merchants as shoe merchants, the 1914 Sanborn map begins calling lot 5 a furniture shop—probably due to furniture being more valuable from an insurance standpoint.  

South of the three primary lots was the original City Hall and firehouse of Murfreesboro. First shown in the 1897 Sanborn map, this two-story brick and stone Italianate style building featured a square cupola, one over one rectangular windows and large swinging barn doors for the horse drawn- and later steam powered- engines to be housed in a garage.  

Unlike today, in the early 20th century, most of the fire fighters were not regularly on duty. Instead, an alarm sounded which could be heard across town to summon the men. The Murfreesboro City Hall and firehouse operated out of this building until the 1930s when the new firehouse was built on East Vine and South Spring.  

After the City offices and the firefighters moved out in the mid 1920s, Ed Morris and William Glover Sneed opened an automotive dealership. "They held the dealership of the Willy's-Knight and Whippet automobiles for Rutherford County. The Whippet car was the forerunner of the Willy's Jeep of

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21 “Murfreesboro, August 1897, Sheet 5.” For images of the City Hall/ fire house see: “Aerial Image of Square [Photograph].”; and Mabel Pittard, A History of Rutherford County in Pictures (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Co, 1990), 33.


World War II fame.” 24 According to census records, Sneed was the dealer and Morris was the bookkeeper. 25 After the car dealership failed, John Valley White rented the lower floor of the building and turned it into a restaurant. 26 The White had moved out of a tent restaurant on the ‘Mink Slide’ into the building and became the segregated restaurant where whites could enter through the front, and African-Americans were required to use the back or the Vine street entrance. 27 T. J. Wrather purchased the restaurant and maintained the ‘nickel hamburger tradition’ started by White, ultimately moving the business out of the old City Hall allowing for the building’s purchase by David Goldstein in the early 1940s. 28

Sometime around the end of the first decade of the 20th century, the Goldstein’s expanded their business to include both lots 1 and 3. Photographs in the aftermath of the 1913 tornado shows Goldstein’s occupying both lots 1 and 3. 29 Additionally, the 1914 Sanborn map lists lot 1 as dry goods, and lot 3 as clothing with two new doorways connecting the retail spaces. 30 This period leave some questions surrounding Freeman and Knox in lot 3, and Todd and McCollough in lot 5. It is likely that between 1910 and 1914, Todd and McCollough moved their furniture business where it continued to become even more successful. With Todd and McCollough’s move, J. B. Freeman and Knox would be free to move from lot 3 to lot 5 and allow for the Goldstein’s to expand to lot 3. Supporting evidence for this theory is as follows. First, the circa 1900 areal shows Goldstein’s, J. B. Freeman’s, and Todd &

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24 Charles Byron Arnette, *From Mink Slide to Main Street*, 53.
27 Charles Byron Arnette, *From Mink Slide to Main Street*, 53-54.
28 Ibid., 54.
30 “Murfreesboro, September 1914, Sheet 7.”
McCollough. Second, by 1913 and 1914 the post-tornado photo capturing Goldstein’s in lots 1 and 3, and the Sandborn map demonstrate that Goldstein’s was clearly the owner of the two lots. Third, a photograph from circa 1950 shows the Freeman Furniture Co next to Goldstein’s, both with remodeled façades. It would be easy to become confused with the Freeman Furniture photograph with an H. A. Todd Furniture photograph taken from the same time, however upon closer inspection the windows, particularly the window key stones, of the shop to the left of the H. A. Todd photograph do not match those of Freeman nor McCollough and Todd façades from the circa 1900 photograph.

Goldstein Building before mid-20th century alterations, Gore Center, MTSU

William Goldstein died on the 24th of November, 1930, leaving his sons David and Bernard in charge of the store. David began working at the store around 1911, and Bernard in 1925 after two

31 “Aerial Image of Square [Photograph].”
32 Jakes, Murfreesboro, 53; and “Murfreesboro, September 1914, Sheet 7.”
33 “Freeman Furniture Company [Photograph],” ca 1950, Rutherford County Archives.
34 Ibid.; “H. A. Todd Furniture [Photograph],” November 11, 1950, Rutherford County Archives.; and “Aerial Image of Square [Photograph].”
years at Vanderbilt.\textsuperscript{36} Around this period, the dry goods business was abandoned by the Goldstein store in favor of a clothing store for men and women. Women's fashions were sold in lot 1, and men's in lot 3. Flo, David's wife was an important member of the business as she, "...augmented the search and procurement of the goods that would soon make the Goldstein's a household name in Middle Tennessee."\textsuperscript{37} Goldstein's is often remembered for the personal service and care for customers within the local community. One recollection in the Tennessean stated, "...during the depression years, Mrs. Westbrooks had to tell Mr. David that she couldn't pay her bill because the banks had closed. "I'll never forget he said, 'I can't pay my bills either, Allie Clark. We're all in the same boat. Don't worry.'"\textsuperscript{38}

As mentioned earlier, around 1940, the Goldstein's purchased the old City Hall building and extensive renovations began on the property. Much of the original features of the building were changed shortly after the Second World War. When David died on June 21, 1942, Bernard-William's last remaining son- took over the department store and made significant changes.\textsuperscript{39} The front facade of lots 1 and 3 was replaced with a modern concrete, new glass bay windows displayed the season's fashions, the brickwork along South Church street was painted white to match the front, and the building was expanded all the way to Vine street.\textsuperscript{40} In addition to the exterior changes, the interior of the old portion of the building received changes including flooring, electrical, roofing repairs, furniture and fixtures, heating and air conditioning.\textsuperscript{41} Between the new addition, repairs and remodeling to the old building, architectural fees, the Goldstein department store underwent a $121,249 change.\textsuperscript{42} After a fourteen month renovation which added new department, air conditioning and now boasted 15,000 square feet

\textsuperscript{36} "Goldstein's Store Was Established Here in '85," 1.
\textsuperscript{37} Charles Byron Arnette, From Mink Slide to Main Street, 51.
\textsuperscript{38} Diggons, "Some Will Visit Goldstein's for the Memories," 2.
\textsuperscript{39} "Tennessee, Death and Burial Index, 1847-1955" (FamilySearch, June 21, 1942), Ancestry.com.
\textsuperscript{40} "Freeman Furniture Company [Photograph]."; and "Fashion Show at Goldstein's Department Store [Photograph]," ca 1940, Rutherford County Archives.
\textsuperscript{41} "Goldstein Renovation Ledger," ca 1947, Goldstein Department Store, Murfreesboro, Legal & Financial, 1947-1959, Box 3, Folder 3, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
of retail space, the department store reopened on May 8, 1947.\footnote{“Goldstein's New Store Set To Open,” \textit{Daily News Journal}, May 7, 1947, 1.} Goldstein's was now, in Arnette's words, "As Marshall-Field, R. H. Macy, and Sachs- Fifth Avenue were at the national panicle in this merchandise category, Goldstein's held a similar ranking in Middle Tennessee."\footnote{Charles Byron Arnette, \textit{From Mink Slide to Main Street}, 51.} The store continued to grow, and by the 1950s and 1960s, Bernard and wife, Evelyn donated thousands to religious, medical, and community organizations in Middle Tennessee and New York.\footnote{For a more detailed account of the philanthropic donations made by Bernard and Evelyn Goldstein see: “Goldstein: Family Papers, Goldstein, Bernard & Evelyn, Charities: Hospitals 1958-1964” (1958-1964, n.d.), Goldstein Collection, Box 1, Folder 3, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee; “Goldstein Family Papers, Goldstein, Bernard & Evelyn, Charities: Vanderbilt, 1959-}
important to note that by the 1960s, the Goldstein's owned several other businesses including, Carolyn's of Shelbyville, Aultman's Jewelry of Murfreesboro, Joy's Jewelry in Clarksville, and Goldstein's of Tullahoma.\textsuperscript{46} Towards the end of Bernard's life, the Goldstein department store was leased to Alden's, the catalogue based store from Chicago. When Alden's failed in the early 1980s it took Goldstein's with it. In February, 1984 the building sold at auction to Dr. Charles Smith, Bill Webb, and Charles Byron Arnette, who intern sold the building in 1987 to Jone Swanson and ultimately Rutherford County.\textsuperscript{47}

Meanwhile, next door in lot 5, Freeman Furniture was undergoing its own changes. Like the facade of Goldstein's, Freeman Furniture Co. also modernized the storefront. Large bay glass windows were installed, and the three separate windows of the original construction were combined into three six over six hung windows, which touched allowing for more light onto the retail floor, and the brick was painted white.\textsuperscript{48} Freeman Furniture changed ownership several times, becoming Rollins and Levan Furniture Co, and then Dixie Furniture Co. The Dixie Furniture Co became very successful and ultimately moved to South Church Street. The actual owner of the property, Tom Brown passed away in the 1930s leaving the building to his daughter Louise Brown Byck who eventually sold to Ferrell Holloway-owner of Holloway Fashions- in 1986. Like the Goldstein building, Rutherford County ultimately purchased the building in 1989.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} "Goldstein Collection, Department Store: Tullahoma, 1960-1965," 1965 1960, Goldstein Collection, Box 3, Folder 5, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee; and "Goldstein Collection, Department Store: Aultman's, Inc., 1919-1946," 1946 1919, Goldstein Collection, Box 4, Folder 1, Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

\textsuperscript{47} Charles Byron Arnette, \textit{From Mink Slide to Main Street}, 53.

\textsuperscript{48} "Freeman Furniture Company [Photograph]."

\textsuperscript{49} Charles Byron Arnette, \textit{From Mink Slide to Main Street}, 43–44.
Before the Rutherford County offices could move into their new home, renovations needed to take place. The interior of the buildings have changed with the creation of office spaces, carpeted floors, new restrooms, electrical and internet upgrades, new lighting fixtures, and removal of walls in order to facilitate office operations. In addition to the changes to the interior, the façades of lots 1, 3, and 5 were changed as well, in 1994. In an attempt to invoke nostalgia, reinvigorate business and tourism, and follow national trends like Project Main Street, the façades of the new County office building received extensive changes following historical documentation including photographs in order to restore them to their original look prior to the 1940s. To the credit of the intentions of the County, the architect did capture many of the elements of the original façades. Painting the white brick on the sides and back of the building red to reflect the original color scheme, returning to each lot a set of three double hung windows, and recreating the brick arches with white key stones above each set.

The Goldstein Building after the county government restoration, c. 1995
The Goldstein Building in 2017

Today One Public Square is again in a period of transition but its story cannot be lost. The story of the Goldstein's is certainly the dominant story of One Public Square. Immigrant and Jewish history is rarely portrayed in Murfreesboro. "It survived wars, cyclones and depressions and passed through a generation of sons, David and then Bernard, before 1965 when it went the way of many small businesses- a few pages in the voluminous ledger books of a huge conglomerate."\textsuperscript{50} Their former store location stands as a reminder of their success and important philanthropic contributions to the region. The site has been home to restaurants, a car dealership, public offices and even a firehouse. Neighboring businesses grew from catch all 'racket' stores to some of the most successful furniture companies in the area.

The building, like Murfreesboro itself, has physically grown and changed over the years in order to suit the needs of the people who utilized it. Today, the side and rear elevations of the exterior retain its historic look while the façade reflects the impact of the Main Street program movement of the early 1990s with its new brick, new paint, and new windows. Inside, the building has been turned from a retail to an office space, but here again the bones are strong, and throughout the interior you can find architectural distinguishing features from its retail past.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
The imprint of the Goldsteins and the Goldstein Building has been lasting. Richard Shackett recalled, his early success was in part due to Goldstein's, allowing him to afford camera equipment, "I was only about 17 years old when I did some work for them... I knew when I did a job for them that it meant good, hard cash. But not only that, it provided me with some technical challenges when I shot fashion shows on slow film with only available light."\textsuperscript{51} As such, One Public Square today is today, as it always has been, important to the community because it is part of the historical district of the Square.

"There is some indefinable quality about a town square that extends a hand and a sense of belonging. The vast evidence of this is the disappointment and residual grief townships always seem to suffer when a town square dies or is diluted by the destruction of those leaving for the sprawling outer spokes of the geographic wheel."\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{Condition Assessment}

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 2.
Exterior:

The building’s roof and side and rear elevations are in general good condition. The 1994 new façade, however, has pulled away from the building. Future owners will want to repair or replace the façade.

Brick work: One Public Square has had significant changes over the years. Every expansion of the building towards Vine street is visible. Windows of the past have been bricked over. On the side and rear of the building (South Church street, Vine street) the historic brickwork has been painted over. First in white, then in a ‘brick’ red. Paint cannot be removed from brick as the process damages the brick, compromising its ability to repel moisture and ultimately shortens the lifespan of the brick and therefore the structural integrity of the building. There are some minor cracks in the brickwork which generally trace to a former window. Vertical cracks like this generally are a result of the building settling. As the building last expanded in the 1940s, it is unlikely that these cracks will continue to expand due to the structure settling, however, moisture and vibrations from traffic will cause issues over time if they are not addressed.

Front façade: The façade on South Public Square facing north towards the courthouse is contemporary with little historical value. The modern brick, is in excellent condition, the modern windows are in good condition, and regular maintenance will ensure they continue to function properly. Of the three front doors to the various offices of One Public Square, none are properly handicap accessible.

Roof: The roof of the building is covered in a canvas like tarp which protects the original lots 1, 3, and 5. This roofing solution is adequate given the climate of Murfreesboro but should be monitored particularly in the spring or after storms. The newest addition to the building on the corner of South Church Street and Vine also appears to be in good condition, though there is one spot where water appears to collect and should be monitored.

Interior:
The major issue faced by the interior is, frankly, its conversion from retail to office space some twenty years ago. The original building was designed for retail and warehouse use. The number of offices and large paper storage units, especially on the second floor, has stressed the building over time.

Basement: The foundation of One Public Square is in solid condition. No evidence of cracks nor water stains on the walls have been observed. The solid foundation is a good indicator for structural integrity of the building as a whole. However, water stains have been observed on some of the supporting wood for the first floor. While these stains appear to be old and likely existed before the pavement of the sidewalks around the building, it is something to be monitored. Additionally, the basement is large and offers a respectable amount of storage space. One area of concern in the basement is the wiring, especially changes made to wire the building for internet use. An electrician should be consulted to evaluate the safety and sustainability of the current wiring configurations in the basement. The basement is in need of more illuminating exit signs, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, lighting and markings around steps, and improved security of the back basement door.
First floor: The interior of the building has been modernized with offices, restrooms, lighting, drop ceiling tiles, and carpet. These spaces are in generally good condition, new owners will likely renovate to needs. The large open rooms reflect the original sections of the building, and most changes have occurred at the rear of the first floor, in spaces that the Goldsteins created after the removal of City Hall in the mid-20th century.

Second floor: Like the first floor, once open spaces have been divided into office spaces of various sizes. Many more offices exist on the second floor compared to the first. Of concern, a section of the original brick wall between lots 3 and 5 has been demolished for a wide entrance in order to facilitate office work. This alteration adds stress to building support. Additionally, the nature of an office space—and the number of filing cabinets necessary for the business of these government agencies—lends itself to large quantities of paper. This excessive weight has caused the second floor to become “bouncy” in places.

Second floor plan, 2016
Americans with Disabilities Act issues: As mentioned earlier, the building has issues with ADA compliance. The front entrances of the building do not have push button automation, nor ramps to facilitate wheelchair accessibility. The rear exit of the building is also a set of stairs. Several rooms of the building are also not wheelchair accessible. While there is an elevator that accesses all three floors of the building, it is likely that it would not qualify for current standards.

Recommendations:

The county government is aware the building’s challenges and needs and has does an excellent job of maintaining this historic property. The following comments represent our observations on basic steps needed to keep the building in working order until its next use and/or owner is identified. We see a bright preservation future for the historic Goldstein Building.

Routine: Continue to monitor for water in the basement, particular attention should be placed on the supports for the first floor.

Routine: Continue to monitor the roof, and drop ceiling tiles on the second floor in order to locate and address potential leaks in the roof.
Immediate (1 Year): Reduce the load on the second floor as much as possible. If moving paper into storage would negatively impact the efficiency of the office, consider spreading the files around to other office space throughout the second floor in order to reduce concentrated weight on unsupported areas of the floor.

Immediate (1 Year): Address ADA compliance issues, particularly the front entrances. While the age of the building likely exempts it from some ADA compliance regulations, if this building is to continue to serve the public or adapt to private usage, then wheelchair accessibility must become a top priority.

Immediate (1 Year): Consult with an electrician in order to evaluate the current configuration of wiring, particularly in the basement.

Immediate (1 Year): Repoint mortar in the cracks in the brickwork of the exterior structural wall along South Church Street. There are not many significant cracks in the brickwork, and repairing them now will avert serious and structurally compromising issues later at significantly less cost.

Short Term (1-3 Years): Create plan for future building use. Many of the issues identified above will be addressed as the building moves forward into new usage. Given the significance of One Public Square within the context of the historic district of the Square, serious thought should be taken in preparing this important building for its next stage of service to the community.
Bibliography

Primary:


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“Naturalization Decree,” June 28, 1894. Goldstein Collection, Goldstein Family Papers- Goldstein, William 1894-1931, Box 2, Folder 7. Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee.


Secondary:


**Images:**

“Aerial Image of Square [Photograph],” ca 1900. Rutherford County Archives.
“Fashion Show at Goldstein’s Department Store [Photograph],” ca 1940. Rutherford County Archives.
“Freeman Furniture Company [Photograph],” ca 1950. Rutherford County Archives.
“H. A. Todd Furniture [Photograph],” November 11, 1950. Rutherford County Archives.
"Weise [Photograph]," Albert Gore Research Center, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Weise070.jpg.