

The Historic Review

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Design Review & Historic Preservation in Savannah

Got Milk? New Uses for Savannah's Old Dairy Buildings

During the first 25 years of the 20th century, when development in the Thomas Square-Streetcar Historic District was at its peak, dairy farming was also on the rise. Depleted cotton lands were put to use as pasture land for dairy cattle, providing a new source of livelihood for the small farmer. All sorts of related businesses sprang up, including ice houses, creameries, bottling plants and intown distribution centers. Many of these were located downtown in the Historic and Thomas Square Districts. Ultimately, conglomerates bought up and consolidated the activities of a myriad of family dairies in the latter half of the 20th-century. Three of these abandoned dairy buildings have been successfully rehabilitated for new uses: the Starland Dairy Building on Bull Street, Harm's Dairy at Whitaker and Jones Street, and Keller's Dairy at Bull and 32nd Street.

The Starland Dairy started as a dairy in Pooler in 1922. It relocated to the Thomas Square neighborhood in the 1930s. Today, the buildings of the Starland Dairy have been adaptive and rehabilitation as an arts complex, with studios, galleries, and retail stores.

John W. Harms owned Oakhurst Farm (now Oakhurst and Paradise Park Subdivisions off White Bluff Road). In 1936, he built a creamery at Jones and Whitaker to see milk under the "Golden Guernsey" trade mark. Harm's Dairy operated until the 1950s. The building has been rehabilitated as retail space.

Keller's Dairy was located on Bull and 32nd Street. Hubert Keller ran a bottling distribution center at this location for the milk produced by his cattle on Hopeton Plantation off Highway 17. A rehabilitation of this building was recently completed.



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June 2003

Fill'em Up!

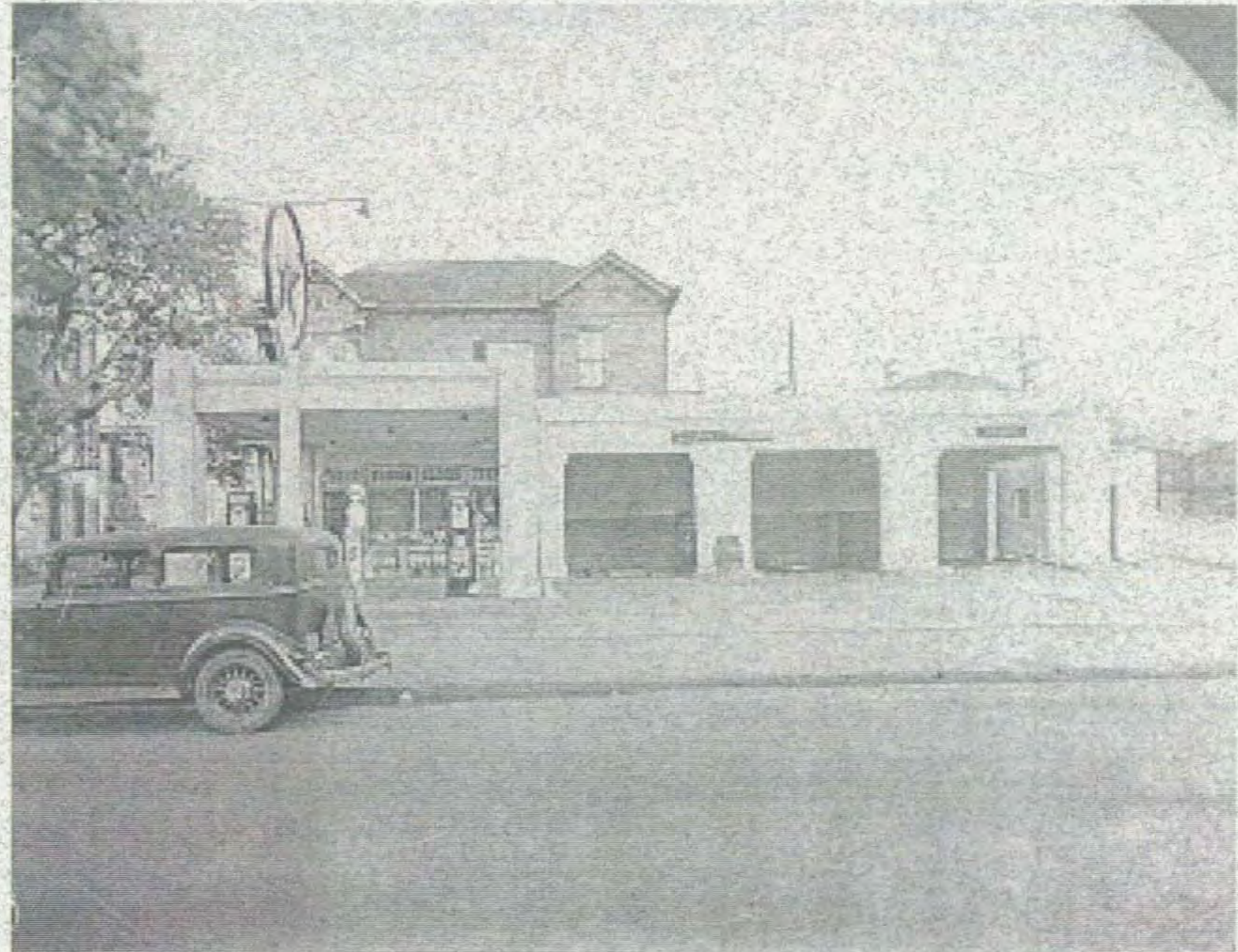
Savannah's Early Gas Stations

by Jennifer Davis

Gas stations are such a basic part of contemporary living that it is difficult to imagine anyone, say in 75 years, contemplating the wonder of Enmark. An interesting thing about older buildings is that even the ordinary places like gas stations were built with a certain quality and style. Some may not see the beauty in commercial architecture purely because they are not looking for it, but vernacular buildings have a charm all their own, with a more low key appeal. Once they are looked at in a new light, the appreciation will follow. These buildings deserve to remain in place as long as they are useful and sturdy structures. It would be disappointing to waste such wonderful treasures when they can easily be converted to new creative uses.

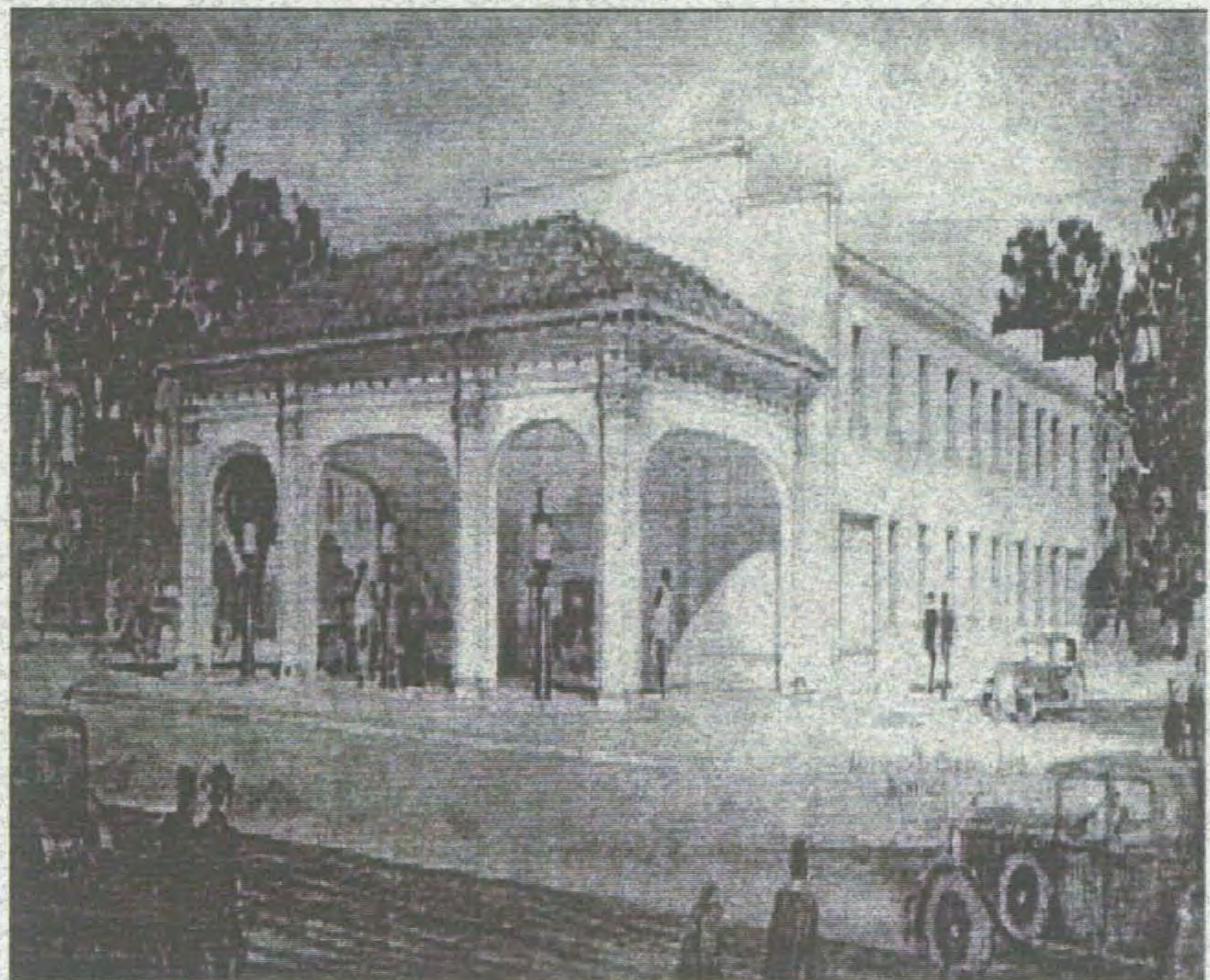
To some, the old station at Drayton Street and East Charlton Street is an eyesore. The windows and doors are boarded-up, the exterior walls are streaked and stained from years of neglect, and the roof has collapsed. While this building seems to be a lost cause, it does not have to be. The exterior remains intact as evidenced when compared with a 1929 ad for "Savannah's Master Service Station", which proudly boasts that it "fronts on two paved streets" and was "open all night", two conveniences we now take for granted. The property could be a contribution once again to the neighborhood if rehabilitated and converted appropriately according to Historic Review Board and zoning regulations.

On Drayton Street there is a small enclave of auto-related architecture. The building that is now the 7-11 Shop (on the southwest corner of Perry and Drayton) used to have a much grander facade with a tiled roof and canopy. Smith's Texaco has been a traditional gas station since it was built in 1936 and has been virtually unaltered inside and out.



Currently a Texaco station, this building has maintained its historic appearance and continues to serve as its original function. Located on Drayton Street.

Parker's Market occupies what used to be the old Boyd Tire Company. Parker's represents a great example of adaptive re-use since the exterior remains the same yet the business serves modern needs as a gas station and upscale convenience store.



Located on Drayton Street and rehabilitated as Parker's Market, this historic rendering from the Georgia Historical Society shows the building's exterior has been retained.

The old Standard Oil building that stands at the corner of East President and Drayton Street was more than just an ordinary service station. In 1924 Standard Oil built this as their regional headquarters. Upstairs was office space, while the ground level was a gas station. The prestige associated with the use of the building as a regional headquarters makes this an exceptional and uniquely elaborate station.

The whole building has been converted into office space, a simple conversion because of the centralized location and size of the building. And, while one facade is now stamped with the modern tenant's name (Lott & Barber), the north side sign still reads "Standard Oil."



The Standard Oil Company building, located on Drayton Street, retains its historic 1924 exterior appearance.

About a half mile outside of the Landmark District on Old Louisville Road on the left hand side just beyond the entrance ramp to Route 516 sits a great old station with egg and dart detail around the exterior cornice. Detailing of this nature is fairly unusual for commercial architecture. This building was originally a Gulf Station, built approximately in the 1920s, since a similar station at the corner of 37th and Price Streets has been documented to 1926. Neither of these two buildings appear to have been altered on the exterior. A third station matching these two at the southwest corner of Henry and East Broad Street was demolished in 1982.

This architecture is a part of Savannah's history and cultural heritage. In the early 20th century the automobile introduced a completely new way of life and architecture adapted to accommodate the need to drive in, drive through, and service our cars. These buildings should not be obliterated from the landscape. Rather, they should be used in a variety of new ways. These buildings were built to be functional places of services. Their size makes them ideal for small shops, florists, and eateries.

REVIEW BOARD RETREATS!

How should a review board look at an historic structure? What lessons can be learned from past review board actions? How can the review board better educate the public about historic preservation issues? These were but a few of the topics discussed in a day-long Historic Review Board retreat held in January.

In the morning sessions, Mayor Floyd Adams requested that the Board adopt new member orientation policies. Michael Brown, Savannah's City Manager, urged the Board to educate the community about the value of preservation. He expressed concerns about dealing with buildings of large mass and floor plates within the Historic District, and the potential loss of significant buildings both within the Historic District and other neighborhoods. He was particularly concerned that proposed changes to the Historic District regulations make design requirements as clear as possible. Other topics he addressed were the recognition and preservation of buildings of the recent past and the promotion of compatible new construction on vacant lots. Outstanding issues that need to be addressed in the current design standards include demolition, the revisions to the height map, construction of carriage houses, and the use of new materials in renovation.

The Board reviewed and discussed projects where individual members felt the decision making process might have been improved. From this a number of procedural changes were suggested, including wording of denials, timetable for submission of revised drawings, extensions of approvals, and enforcement.

The afternoon session, led by Jennifer Martin Lewis, Certified Local Government Coordinator for the State Historic Preservation Office, featured a lively interactive presentation on how to look at historic structures, rehabilitation, additions, and newconstruction. The tax workshop and gas station article are direct outcomes from this day.

REHAB MADNESS! Historic Tax Incentives Workshop

The Board of Review, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and the Savannah Development and Renewal Authority co-sponsored a tax incentives workshop for historic rehabilitation on Thursday, March 6, 2003, at the MPC Hearing Room. The four hour workshop provided information on the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Incentives program, the State Preferential Property Tax Abatement program, the upcoming State Rehabilitation Tax Credit program, the differences between requirements of the tax incentives programs and the local preservation ordinance and guidelines, Historic Savannah Foundation's Facade Easement program, and provided the insight of a local preservation consultant.

Speakers included Ms. Martha Gravely and Mr. Bill Hover of the Historic Preservation Division, Ms. Casey Grier and Mr. Dirk Hardison of the Historic Savannah Foundation, Ms. Lise Sundrla of the Savannah Development and Renewal Authority, and Mr. Greg Jacobs of Renaissance Restoration and Starland Dairy. The workshop had over 50 participants from the fields of real estate, architecture, and development, and 15 historic preservation students from SCAD.

Savannah produces the largest volume of tax incentives projects in Georgia, more than any other city in the state. According to Ms. Gravely, 44% of the approved Federal tax credit applications originated from Savannah. The hosting of a tax incentives workshop was identified as a means to provide valuable information to applicants, and would enable these agencies to provide a much needed public outreach service.

MPC Historic Preservation Review Activity

Fourth Quarter, 2002

	number of reviews
Historic Review Board.....	42
Victorian District	6
Cuyler-Brownsville.....	21
Site and Monument.....	8
Environmental Reviews	9

First Quarter, 2003

Historic Review Board.....	50
Victorian District	6
Cuyler-Brownsville.....	4
Site and Monument.....	1
Environmental Reviews	67

In The News...

Ms. Dian Brownfield has joined the Historic District Board of Review. Ms. Brownfield is the owner of the Ziegler House, a bed-and-breakfast inn on Jones Street in the Landmark Historic District. Welcome Ms. Brownfield!

At the January meeting, Ms. Gwendolyn Fortson-Waring was named to a second term as Chair of the Review Board. Mr. John Neely will serve a second term as Co-Chair of the Review Board. Thank you to Ms. Fortson-Waring and Mr. Neely for your outstanding leadership.

Ms. Forston-Waring is also on the Board of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions. Congratulations and thank you for representing Savannah!

Mr. Milton Newton has retired from his position as Executive Director of the Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission after 36 years of service.