

About The Historic Building

EBS leases the historic building at 1516 W. 3rd originally designed and built by Dan Stowers to house his architecture firm. It was completed in 1961.

The following description was researched and created by Rachel Silva at the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program for their "Sandwiching in History" tour of the building.

Mid-century modern architecture developed from the modernist movement in the early 20th century. Modern architecture broke away from the traditional forms of construction without creating standard characteristics to define it. Modernism incorporated ideas of cleanliness, sunlight, health, and openness following World War I. Cleanliness and sunlight contributed to physical and psychological health, which became intertwined with the built environment. As it applied to architecture, openness referred to open space within the building, along with an extension of the building's interior to the outdoors through design-incorporated walls of windows. The function of a building dictated which modernist form was used. Practicality and simple lines became a theme identified in most modernist buildings, and carried over into the mid-century period.

Technology and building materials in the machine-age emerged to offer options in construction materials and methods. Modernist architects used structural steel, reinforced concrete, and glass in their transformational designs. Modernism experimented with new ideas and designs, as well as materials, in a complete break from tradition. Unprecedented design freedom and immediate cost savings from prefabricated materials encouraged these changes.

For instance, plaster was the preferred material for interior walls at that time, but it was expensive. The advent of haydite block provided a more economical alternative. The main construction material of the Stowers Office Building is haydite block. Haydite blocks consist of an aggregate masonry substance but are much lighter and have a higher fire rating than concrete blocks. And screen block, which Stowers used on the east side of this building to shield the exterior staircase, was an experimental material used to screen the sun and create privacy.

Stowers followed the idea of function over form by specifically considering the building's use as an architectural office during the design and construction process. Somewhat unassuming from Third Street, the Stowers Building was oriented to take advantage of the view to the north and provide natural light for the drafting room. Although the majority of the building's walls are solid masonry, the northern elevation is composed of a glass curtain wall. This provided the perfect amount of indirect light for the drafting room. The room was positioned to reduce glare and supplement the artificial interior lighting to provide the standard 120 foot-candles of light required for drafting. One foot-candle is measured as one lumen--a computation of light intensity--per square foot. The north elevation also features a row of porcelain enamel panels. The light turquoise panels accent the roofline trim color. By the way, the turquoise color is original, or as close to the original as you can match it today.

- Very few changes have been made to the building, but Stowers made a few modifications to the interior in Fall 2013.
- This room (north room) was the drafting room with a kitchenette/lounge in the back corner (now the Dharma Hall). A wall separating the lounge from the drafting room was removed. The decorative screen wall behind the sink is original. A narrow hallway leading from the lounge to the lobby/reception area was used to increase the size of the restrooms.
- First room off lobby—Dan's office
- Conference room (now a small practice room for Tibetan Buddhists)—the western wall of the conference room is made of Mexican terrazzo. A poured terrazzo slab was saw-cut into blocks for the wall, giving it a unique appearance.
- Room in the front (southwest) corner of building (now the bookstore/reading room) was the bookkeeping and finance office.
- Lobby/reception area has the original terrazzo floor and the original Executone Intercom System, which was used to communicate with people throughout the building.
- Small room in lobby was the plan room. This is where contractors and subcontractors came to view plans in order to prepare figures for their bid on a given project. The architect would then choose the best bid.
- The rock garden in front of the building was redone by the Ecumenical Buddhist Society, but it now looks close to the original landscaping. The low brick walls/benches are original to the design. For many years, Stowers, Jr., had a problem with weeds growing in the garden, so he poured a concrete slab out front and covered it every year with Astroturf purchased at the annual War Memorial sale.