



# Historic Downtown Chandler Self-Guided Walking Tour



Courtesy of the City of Chandler's Public History Program

Produced by

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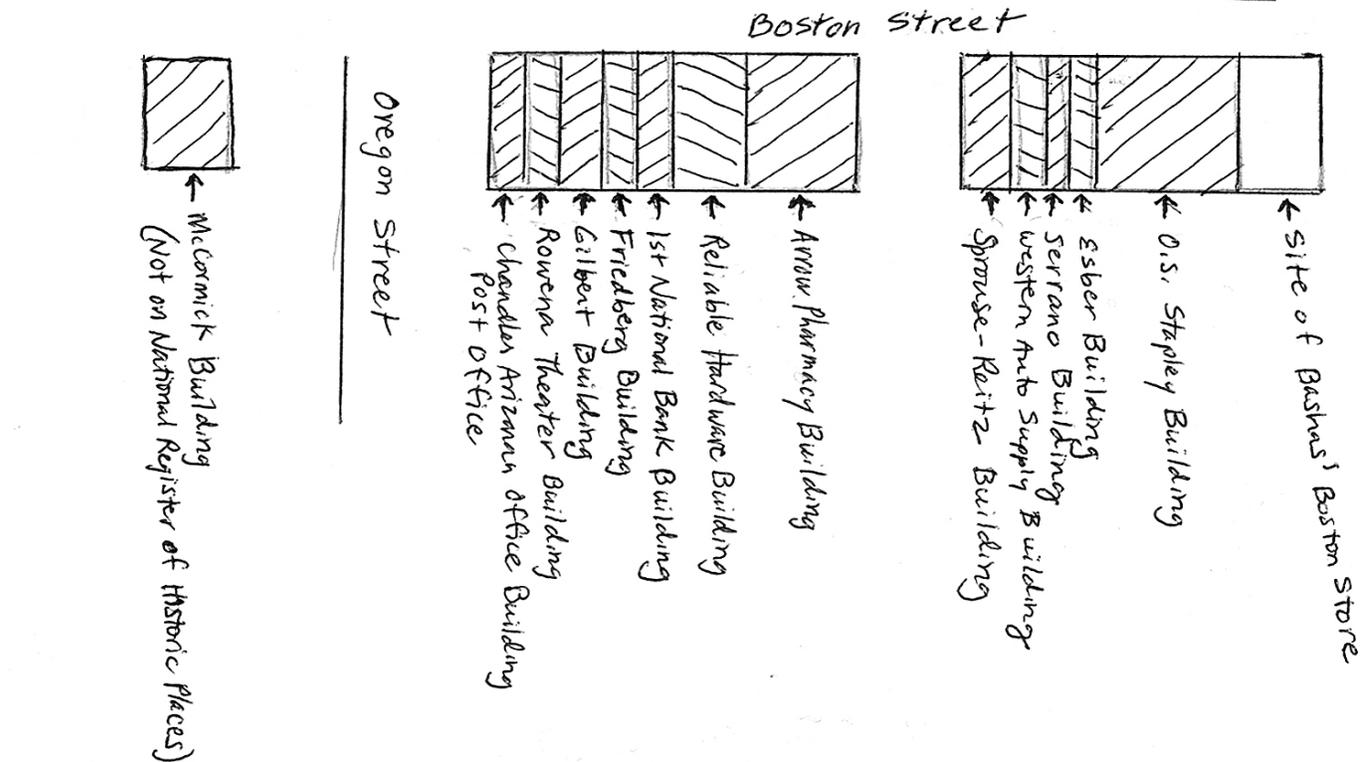
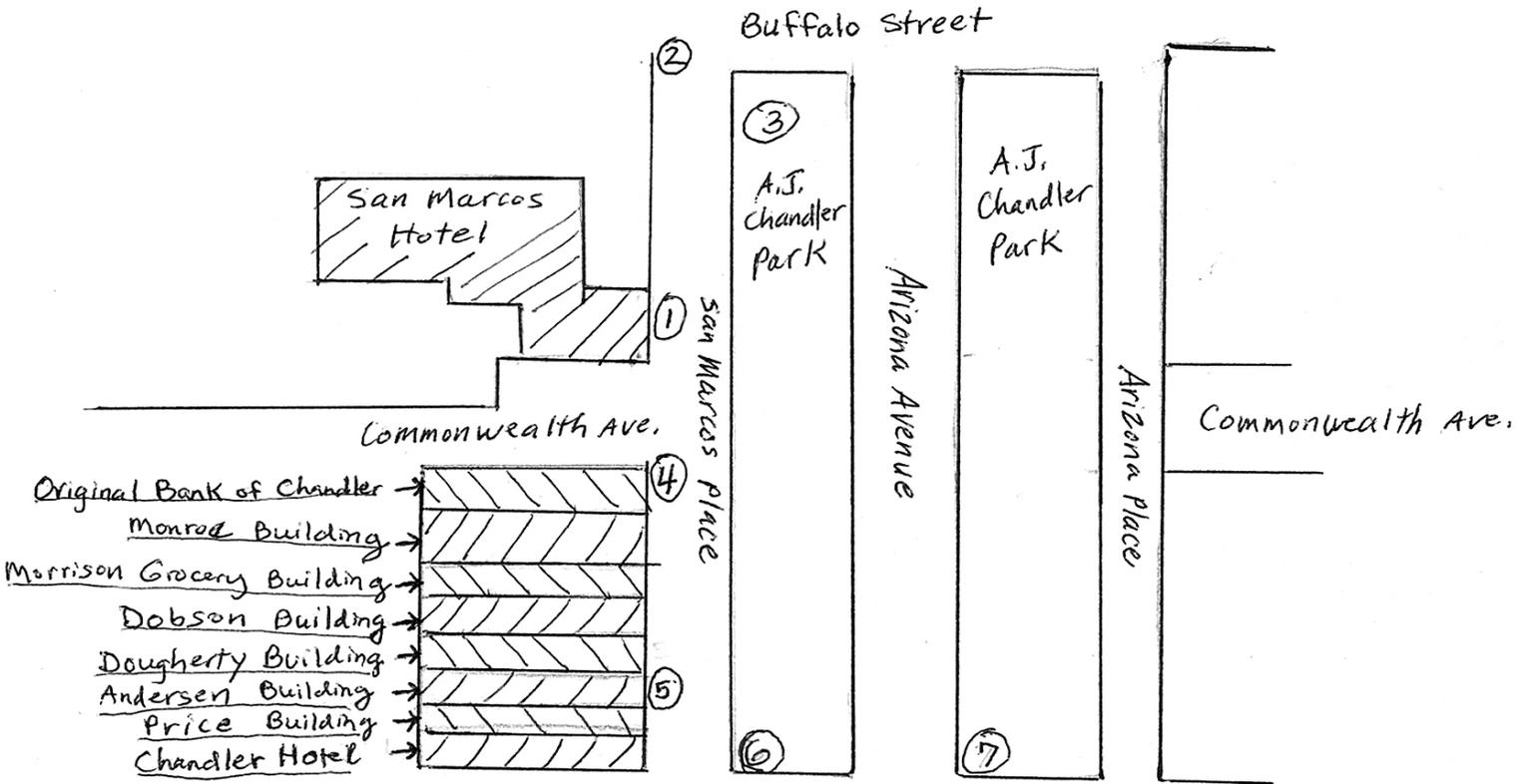
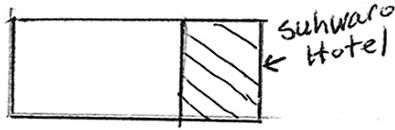
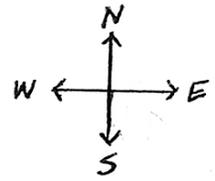
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Chandler • Arizona

2008

# ~ Historic Downtown Chandler ~



1. Self-guided tour begins at the **San Marcos Hotel**, located at 1 N. San Marcos Place. Stand in front of the hotel or across the street for the best view of its architecture.

## How the City of Chandler Began

Dr. Alexander John “AJ” Chandler, a Canadian veterinarian, founded the City of Chandler in 1912. Chandler came to Arizona in 1887 to work as Territorial Veterinary Surgeon for the Livestock Board. Unimpressed with the desert, Chandler decided to find his fortune in California. While he was waiting to leave, a rainstorm hit the Valley and several railroad bridges washed out. Chandler could not leave, and as he waited he noticed how the desert area became green after the rains. Chandler decided to stay in Arizona and bought 80 acres of land south of Mesa in 1890. Here, he established a small ranch and the Southside Trading Post. He bought parcels of land from dry-farming homesteaders, and entered a deal with Mesa to create a more efficient canal system. Eventually he amassed 18,000 acres south of Mesa, known as the “Chandler Ranch.”



A.J. Chandler addresses the townspeople, c. 1930

During the 1890s and early 1900s, a reform movement in architecture and urban planning influenced Dr. Chandler. The “City Beautiful” movement, championed by architect Daniel Burnham, emphasized the placement of parks and landscaped squares surrounded by monumental public buildings. Inspired by this idea, Dr. Chandler contacted architects from Southern California to design a town plan featuring a large park in the midst of a business plaza,

accented by fountains, landscaped boulevards, foot bridges across the Commonwealth Canal, and imported exotic trees. The townsite, located in the center of the Chandler Ranch, opened on May 17, 1912, three months after Arizona became a state. The Mesa Improvement Company, run by Dr. Chandler, sold developed farmland for \$100 an acre. Residential lots in town were as low as \$200, and business sites were only \$1,200. At the end of the first day the Mesa Improvement Company earned \$50,000 in sales! The *Arizona Republican* newspaper speculated that at least 300 people visited the Chandler townsite that day.

## San Marcos Hotel



The showpiece of Dr. Chandler’s “City Beautiful” was the magnificent **San Marcos Hotel**. Chandler envisioned a great desert getaway, which, of all his accomplishments, would become his proudest. He named his resort after Fray Marcos De Niza, the Franciscan friar believed to have been the first European to explore the Salt River Valley. Prominent California architect Arthur Burnett Benton, an expert on old Spanish missions, designed the building in the Mission Revival style. The local Chandler Brick Yard could barely keep up with the massive supply needed to construct the San Marcos. The Hotel opened with great celebration November 22, 1913. It quickly established a reputation as one of the most luxurious resorts in the country, billed as the place “where the summer spends the winter.”

The San Marcos operated from October to May every year and attracted fame, wealth, and celebrity of all kinds. It has had an impressive lineup of guest over the years, including Errol Flynn, former President Herbert Hoover, Clark Gable, Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, Joan Crawford, Cher, Christian Dior, the Firestones, and French and British nobility alike. It was home to the first grass golf course in Arizona. The San Marcos also offered tennis, horseback riding, polo, tours by automobile, afternoon tea and shopping. Dr. Chandler sold the hotel in 1937 for \$1,000,000. It changed hands several times. John Quarty managed and owned the property from the 1940s until his death in 1979, which forced the Hotel to close. Upon Quarty's death, the grounds of the San Marcos sat vacant until 1987, when it was purchased, restored and reopened as a commercial hotel.

## 2. Walk north to Buffalo Street and San Marcos Place. Look north across the street.

### Suhwaro Hotel

Along Buffalo Street you will see the distinctive façade of the **Suhwaro Hotel**. The hotel was originally built with the thought that Chandler needed a hotel for those who could not afford the opulence of the San Marcos. The Suhwaro was constructed in the summer of 1916 by Chandler contractor W.P. Pleasant. It was two stories tall, constructed of brick and designed in the Mission Revival style, its facade reminiscent of the famous Alamo in Texas. The Suhwaro opened for business October 24, 1916. Its life as a hotel was short-lived, though, as eight short years later in 1924, the building was leased by the San Marcos for staff housing. It remained in the hands of the San Marcos until the resort closed in 1979. The building saw other functions as well in the early years. Elementary students used this building for classrooms in 1921 until the Cleveland School was completed. In 1924, it became home to the Chandler Public Library, run by the local Woman's Club. Its shelves offered over 400 books that residents could check out.



## 2. Look across San Marcos Place to A.J. Chandler Park

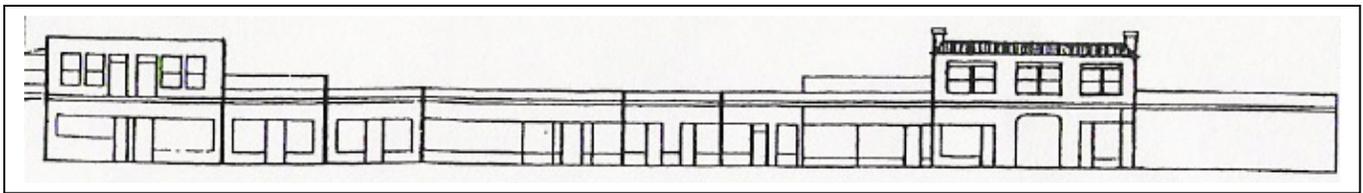
### A.J. Chandler Park

You are looking at one quadrant of what remains of the great round park that was the centerpiece of Dr. Chandler's "City Beautiful" when it was built in 1912. In the early years, this park was covered in Bermuda grass and a variety of trees, and it was much larger than it is today. The park spanned from San Marcos Place to about where the city complex is today across the street. The north-south boundaries were and still are Boston Street to the south and Buffalo Street to the north. The park has always been a gathering place for the town.



Originally, Arizona Avenue abruptly curved on either end when it reached the park, which confused many motorists and caused more than a few collisions with trees. In 1940 the town council approved a plan to expand Arizona Avenue as a state highway. As a result, the central park was divided in half for the new highway, in order to improve safety and accommodate the increase in traffic. Local residents and Dr. Chandler did not like the change, but ultimately accepted it because the highway brought in more travelers and business. In the park's later years, it included vibrant

displays of annual flowers and a display of a F86-D fighter jet once used at the Williams Air Force Base. Since 1957, the Tumbleweed Christmas tree has attracted admirers to the park every December, as well. In 1986 the City remodeled the park to the current design and layout.



Chandler Hotel Building (1914)	Price Building (1914)	Andersen Building (1914)	Dougherty Building (1914)	Dobson Building (1912)	Morrison Grocery Building (1912)	Monroe / Parkway Theater Building (1912)	Bank of Chandler Building (original 1912)
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4. Walk south along San Marcos Place to the southwest corner of Commonwealth and San Marcos Place. Stand in front of the former Bank of Chandler building.

### San Marcos Place (1912 buildings)



San Marcos Place, 1913.

The stores in front of you are actually in separate buildings. We are much accustomed to strip malls today, but back when these were built, it was convenient for storeowners to construct their businesses side by side. The buildings were built from brick, and each one included a façade of white glazed bricks.

The first building has been remodeled several times through the years, however it is possible that some of the original building remains. This building originally housed the office of Dr. A.J.

Chandler's Improvement Company, where he bought, sold, and leased land. In the 1920s it became the **Bank of Chandler**. In 1954 Valley National Bank moved into the building. It later became a Bank One branch, until 2005. The original building here, along with the next three you see to the left, was constructed in 1912.

The two-story building is the **Monroe Building**, which was originally built as a meeting hall for the Chandler Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber met upstairs and the lower floors were leased to stores.



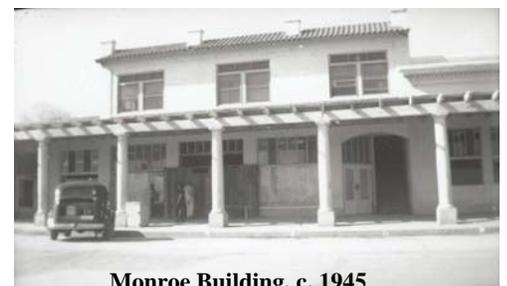
Bank of Chandler, c. 1925



Pay-N-Takit Grocery, 1928

Merchant E.W. Monroe, after whom the building is named, leased the first floor for the Monroe Hardware Company, Chandler's first hardware company. In 1915, the top floor space was converted into Chandler's first movie theater, where silent pictures were shown. In 1919, the second floor became offices for Chandler's first attorney Arthur E. Price, after whom Price Road is named. In 1925, Monroe Hardware vacated the bottom floor and the "Pay-N-Takit" grocery moved in. Pay-N-Takit was unique in that customers could tell a cashier behind the counter what they needed, and he would get it for them. In 1929, Pay-N-Takit closed

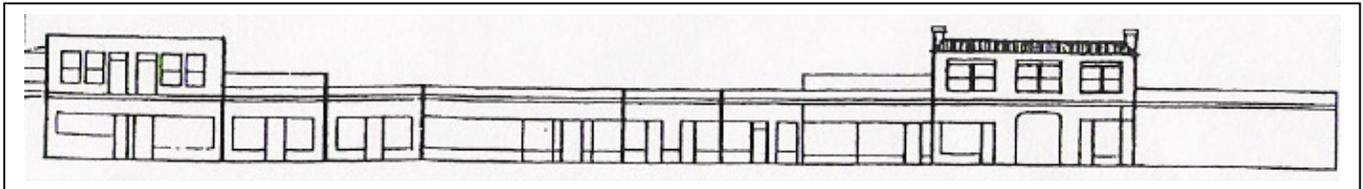
and Piggly-Wiggly moved in. During World War II, the Chandler Improvement Company turned the old Monroe building into a recreation center for servicemen. Then, as the war came to a close in 1945, Joe and Alice Woods, proprietors of the Rowena Theater on Boston Street (which we will see soon) bought the building from Dr. Chandler's Improvement Company and applied to the federal government for additional supplies to build a second theater to support the huge number of GIs coming from Williams Air Force Base to see movies. It was approved, and the couple built the 740-seat Parkway Theater. The Woods family closed the theater and sold the building in 1979.



Monroe Building, c. 1945

The next building to the left of the Monroe building is the **Morrison Grocery Building**, which includes both the green storefront on the right and the white one on the left. The Morrison Brothers, Ernest and Leroy, were the first grocers in Chandler, opening their business in a wooden shack in May of 1912. They operated their more permanent store here for only a few years. In 1918, Abe Lukin opened Lukin's Cash Grocery, which operated until 1930. Lukin's was very popular for its convenient phone-in orders and twice-daily deliveries.

The last of the 1912 structures is the **Dobson Building**, named for John H. Dobson, who first homesteaded in the Mesa area in the 1890s. Dobson was one of the most instrumental men in Chandler's early history, financing many private and public ventures, as well as establishing the First National Bank in 1919. The Dobson building is unique in that it has continuously since 1912 held professional offices, a barbershop and a café.



Chandler Hotel Building (1914)	Price Building (1914)	Andersen Building (1914)	Dougherty Building (1914)	Dobson Building (1912)	Morrison Grocery Building (1912)	Monroe / Parkway Theater Building (1912)	Bank of Chandler Building (original 1912)
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## 5. Move down the sidewalk to the Dougherty Building.

### San Marcos Place (1914 buildings)

The four buildings on the south end of the street were constructed in 1914. The first building is the **Dougherty Building**, which includes the two storefronts between the barbershop and the florist. This single building is painted to look like two today, orange on the left, and whitish yellow on the right. The building is named for Michael F. Dougherty, the businessman who had it built. The building is best known as the first Saba's Department Store, which opened in the 1940s.



Inside Sink's Pool Hall, 1930s

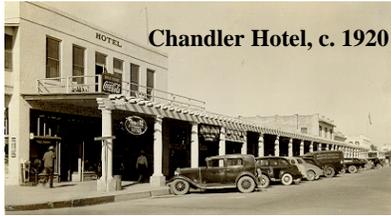
building's historic reputation as a place to relax.

The red building next door is the **Price Building**, named for Arthur E. Price. He was Chandler's first attorney and drafted Chandler's incorporation charter in 1920. He was also heavily invested in the downtown district businesses in the 1920s and 1930s. Originally this building housed Curry and Frye's pool hall. The Chandler Pharmacy was the longest lasting of the building's tenants, opening in 1937.

The next structure down is the **Andersen Building**, where the florist shop is today. In 1928, this became home to Sink's Pool Hall, one of the most popular hangouts in early Chandler for men of all walks of life. The building later housed Lonnie's Cocktails from the 60s through the 80s, in keeping with the



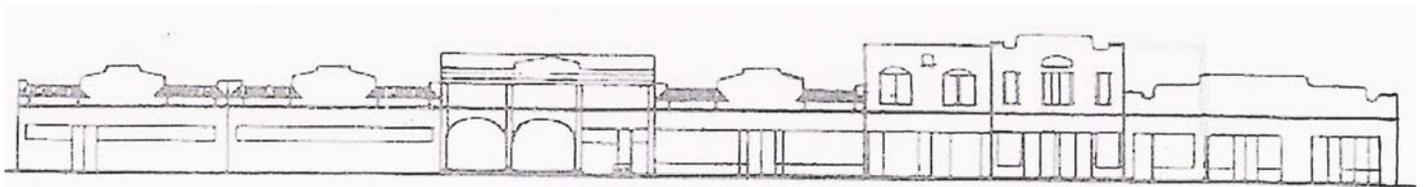
Arthur Price, c. 1920



Moving next door we come to the old **Chandler Hotel**. Chandler's first elected mayor, David A. Jacobson, financed the construction of this building. The bottom floor was leased out for stores, and the second story was a reasonably priced hotel, an affordable alternative to the San Marcos Resort. Many prominent Chandler businessmen, especially those working downtown, kept permanent residence in rooms at the Hotel. In 1917, Hugh Gardner opened the first of several drugstores that would occupy the first

floor of this building. Years later, Dudding's Rexall Drug Store occupied the space. For decades, the most popular Saturday night activity was to congregate on this corner outside Dudding's Drug Store. People would come from all over town to just sit and talk, since there were not many other places in town to do so.

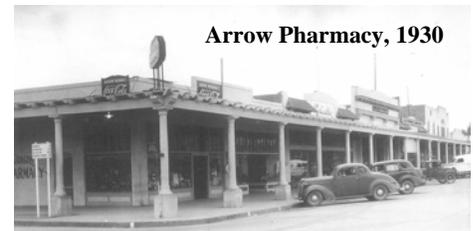
**6. Take a look at the buildings along west Boston Street. For the best view, stand on the northeast corner of Boston Street and San Marcos Place, across the street from the original First National Bank Building.**



<b>Arrow Pharmacy Building (1918)</b>	<b>Reliable Hardware Building (1918)</b>	<b>First National Bank Building (1919)</b>	<b>Friedberg Building (1918)</b>	<b>Gilbert Building (1919)</b>	<b>Rowena Theater (1920)</b>	<b>Chandler Arizonan and Post Office (1920)</b>
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### **West Boston Street (1918 / 1919 buildings)**

The first building on the east end, just bordering Arizona Avenue, is the **Arrow Pharmacy Building**, which was built in 1918, once again, by David A. Jacobson. He leased the property to John B. "Doc" Weber, the town's favorite pharmacist, who operated Weber's Arrow Pharmacy for years. Despite being only a pharmacist, they called him "Doc" because he would often tend to their more basic medical needs. Kids often stopped here for a Coca-Cola, which only cost a nickel. The building has had many owners through the years, but every one of them kept the Arrow name. After over 85 years of service to the Chandler community as the Arrow Pharmacy, the doors closed for the first time in July 2005. The space opened in 2007 as Uptown Bridal.



The **Reliable Hardware Building** next door was also built in 1918, the same year World War I ended in Europe. Alva Morgareidge, a town councilman and member of the school board, opened for business December 8, 1919. At Reliable Hardware, one could purchase dishes, utensils, paint, furniture, appliances, harnesses, and, of course, hardware. Reliable was unique as far as hardware stores went, in that it had a ladies restroom, which was an uncommon luxury for many of these buildings downtown in those days. In 1948 the building was purchased and combined with Arrow Pharmacy for additional space.

Next to the old hardware store is the 1918 **First National Bank Building**, where Kokopelli's stands today. John Andersen and John Dobson bought the property in 1917 and constructed this building in the Neo-Classical style in 1918. You can still make out the four pillars built into the front of the structure, which were once faced with marble, reminiscent of the grand structures of the ancient world. In 1925 the Bank of Chandler

bought out the First National Bank and moved their operations into this building. In 1936, Valley Bank took over and operated here until 1958.

Next to the Bank building is the **Friedberg Building**, named for Joseph Friedberg, a dry goods merchant who got his start with a storeroom in the San Marcos Hotel. He constructed this building on Boston Street in 1918. In it, he operated his store, called "The Leader," selling dry goods and clothing. Friedberg operated The Leader until 1932, when the J.C. Penney Company moved in. In 1972, this became the first Saba's



First National Bank, 1919

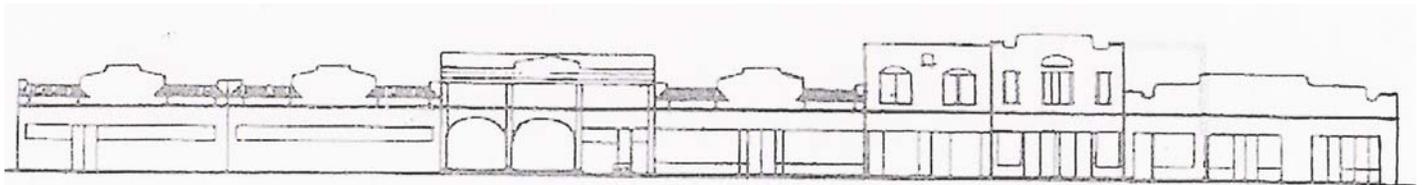


West Boston Street, c. 1920

Western Wear, which still does business there today.

The taller building to the right of that is the **Gilbert Building**, named for Dr. Kramer M. Gilbert. Dr. Gilbert came to Chandler in 1913 and set up his practice in a tent. For years he was Chandler's only physician. In 1918, he purchased this lot with the financial assistance of John H. Dobson. The following year, Gilbert's permanent office, the building you see today, was constructed at a cost of \$8,000. Doctors' offices would have been somewhat of a novelty at the time, since most doctors worked out of their house or traveled to the patient's own home. The

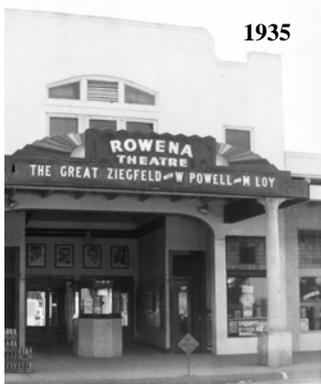
construction of the Gilbert building, however, may have been necessary, as it coincided with the outbreak of the 1918 Flu Epidemic. Dr. Gilbert was in practice for over thirty years. A dentist, Dr. Barackman, practiced in this building on the top floor.



<b>Arrow Pharmacy Building</b> (1918)	<b>Reliable Hardware Building</b> (1918)	<b>First National Bank Building</b> (1918)	<b>Friedberg Building</b> (1918)	<b>Gilbert Building</b> (1919)	<b>Rowena Theater</b> (1920)	<b>Chandler Arizonan and Post Office</b> (1920)
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### West Boston Street (Jacobson Block, 1920)

The last two buildings on the west end of the street were built in 1920 and are together known as the Jacobson Block, so named for the man who built them, David A. Jacobson, an associate of the Chandler Improvement Company and Chandler's first elected mayor, who served from 1920 to 1922. Jacobson erected the two buildings in the Mission Revival architectural style. The first is the two-story **Menhennet / Rowena Theater Building**, where diSciacca is today. This theater building was equipped with all the most modern amenities available in 1920, seating 600 patrons and complete with a heating and cooling system. Bill Menhennet opened this theater as the Chandler Theater in 1922, and also was the proprietor of the original theater in the Monroe building. Later, the Chandler Theater became the Grenada.



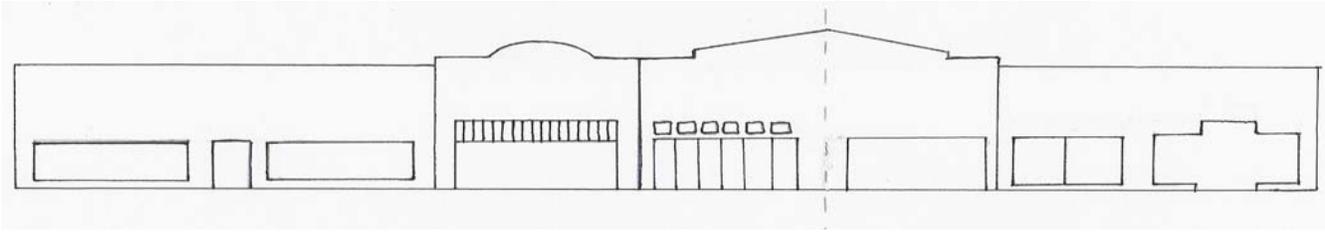
1935

In 1932, the building was purchased by Joe and Alice Woods, who named their theater "Rowena," after Joe's mother. In the early days, Joe Woods operated the projector and Alice would sell the tickets. A section was always reserved for prominent guests of the San Marcos. In 1939, Joe Woods had a new sound system installed that rivaled the finest theaters in the country. That same year,

guests to the Rowena might have enjoyed such classics as *The Wizard of Oz* with Judy Garland, or the re-release of *King Kong*, with Fay Wray. The Woods family closed the Rowena in 1960 and focused their attention on the Parkway Theater on San Marcos Place.

The building to the right held two very memorable tenants in the early years. Half of the building became the first dedicated **U.S. Post Office** in Chandler when it was completed in 1920, and it remained at this location until 1954, when the Post Office was moved into the building adjacent to the Suhwaro Hotel. The other half of the building contained the offices of the *Chandler Arizonan* newspaper from 1920 until well into the 1960s. Further west down the street is the McCormick Building, built in 1928 and once used as an IOOF Hall and Armory, although it is not included in the downtown historic district.

## 7. Walk or look across Arizona Avenue to the buildings along East Boston Street.



O.S. Stapley Hardware Building

Esber Building  
"Bargain Store"

Serrano Building  
"Popular Store"

Western Auto  
Supply

Sprouse-Reitz Building

### East Boston Street (1924 buildings)

Across Arizona Avenue along East Boston Street, we see the youngest of the original downtown structures, which were built in 1924. The corner building, where the lingerie store is today, was at one time the Chandler Chamber of Commerce, and later, a **Sprouse-Reitz** store. Sprouse-Reitz was what you might call the dollar store of its day, at the time boasting that nothing cost more than 49 cents.

This block was home to two of the most competitive businesses in town. Luis **Serrano** and his family, whose descendants operate the Serrano's Mexican Restaurant chain today, had their dry goods store here in the early years, which they called the "Popular Store." In direct competition, Albert **Esber**, a Lebanese merchant, opened his own dry goods store next door. He called his "The Bargain Store."



c. 1930s



O.S. Stapley, c. 1970

The building on the opposite end is the **O.S. Stapley Hardware Building**. The O.S. Stapley Hardware Company was a prominent company in the Salt River Valley, with branches in Mesa, Glendale, and Phoenix. In Chandler, many families purchased their farm equipment in this building, as well as all kinds of household and business goods.

To the left of the Stapley building is a parking lot. On that site in 1920, Lebanese immigrants Najeeb and Najeeby Basha opened their first store in the Valley. This store was a general mercantile business, called the Boston Store. In the early 1930s, the Basha family decided to move from dry goods to focus on groceries. They opened another store in the Ocotillo area, one in Mesa and continued to expand. Their successful supermarket chain was born. The building was demolished many years ago, but Chandler will always be proud to have been a part of the Bashas' legacy.



Boston Store, c. 1925

## **Conclusion**

Many of the families and men who pioneered this area have left behind their legacy in the commercial structures they built and maintained, which continue to be treasured by residents of Chandler today. The enterprising spirit that built and grew the City of Chandler is very much alive around the old city square and AJ Chandler Park. Though the occupants have changed many times over the decades and the buildings themselves have undergone renovation and change, downtown Chandler will always be the heart of the town, as it was in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was founded.

**Courtesy of the City of Chandler's Public History Program**

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