

## Gibbs Brothers

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Adapted, by permission of *The Huntsville Item*, from: Gibbs Brothers Company. (1988, January 24). *The Huntsville Item*.

Read by Cheryl Spencer, Library Associate in Special Collections.

"Gibbs Brothers and Company." This is Cheryl Spencer, Library Associate at Newton Gresham Library at Sam Houston State University.

The first business located in Huntsville was the trading post established by Pleasant Gray. It was located on the downtown square. In 1841, Thomas Gibbs and Gardner R. Coffin opened a general merchandise store on the northeast corner of Cedar (11<sup>th</sup> Street) and Jackson (Sam Houston Avenue). Thomas Gibbs had purchased a lot, 75 by 75 feet, from Pleasant Gray for \$300. A wooden structure was erected, and this business venture was begun.

In 1844, after the death of Gardner R. Coffin, Gibbs purchased from the Coffin heirs the other one-half of the partnership for \$75. In 1847, Sanford St. John Gibbs, brother of Thomas, arrived in Huntsville from Union District, South Carolina, and paid \$500 for a share of the business. A partnership was formed January 26, 1847, and thus began the business of Gibbs Brothers and Company.

Remodeling and additional building was done in 1847, and the two-story structure was the home for this venture. It has remained in the same location since 1841.

Ledgers from the store show entries and read like a "Who's Who" of the citizens of Huntsville. Pleasant Gray held an account in 1844. Sam Houston was a regular customer of the establishment.

A back room of the structure was partitioned off for the safekeeping of the customers' money. The company owned a large iron safe. Banking became a regular part of the store. In 1890, the store also became known as the Gibbs Bank, and in 1922 it became the First National Bank.

Gibbs Brothers has always been a family affair. Thomas Gibbs married Nancy Teresa Rogers, and following her death, married Mary Sophia Blake. After the death of Thomas, Mary Sophia sold her share of the business to Sanford. Sanford St. John Gibbs married Mary Wilmuath Gary, and following her death, married Sarah (Sallie) Elizabeth Smith. After the death of Sanford, Sallie E. operated the business for many years. The children were taught sound business principles of partnership. Major land holdings were acquired and the business expanded.

The Gibbs building was awarded a medallion by the State Historical Survey Society in recognition of the historical significance of the structure. It is billed as the "oldest continuous business in Texas."