

# Restored Buildings Add to City's Looks

**T**HURMAN MAGBEE deserves commendation for what he has done to restore the former Oklahoma City Union Station to usefulness while retaining the basic beauty of its architecture.

It houses his business, apparently with room to spare and adds dignity to a near downtown section that might be redeveloped for industries, businesses and apartments.

Local owners of the Skirvin Plaza hotel also have done a fine job of restoring that handsome building after out-of-state owners had stripped it and allowed it to deteriorate.

Others also have contributed to the city's beauty by maintaining or restoring beautiful architecture in the time when the fad of constructing buildings without personalities is prevalent.

As usually occurs when a change of direction sets in, the reaction to what architects call rococo and gingerbread ornamentation has gone too far. They eliminated it without replacing its beauty.

Extremes of plainness now make

many structures of flat concrete and glaring glass resemble buildings down the street. They also lack identity, looking something like robots without faces. Some do not have definitive lines at the top, giving the appearances of being unfinished or "topless."

As with clothing and other things, there are architectural styles, fashions and fads. Most are good, but some lend distinction for awhile, only to become stale and ugly after a time.

One such fad is the practice of placing buildings at odd angles on their lots. Occasionally there may be sound reasons for doing so, but these are not always apparent and one wonders what may happen if and when building additions are needed.

The beauty of many buildings has been destroyed or marred by later addition of units conspicuously out of harmony with original structures. Changes sometimes are so radical that the new building might be construed as a criticism of the old.

Churches often abandoned tradi-

tional architecture to add modern structures to their facilities, producing patchwork effects. Universities do likewise on their campuses, resulting in a hodgepodge effect as successive administrations express their preferences in a heterogeneous mixture of beauty, function, bizarre and grotesque.

Similar trends in architectural designs may be found in home building. Many have beauty, others are functional, some have been adapted to materials available or to the needs of the times. Homeowners in Oklahoma City's Heritage Hills have done a magnificent job of restoring architectural beauties of fine old houses while renovating them for modern living.

It is unfortunate that many beautiful buildings have been destroyed in urban renewal and in thoughtless remodeling projects.

If "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," perhaps architects would do well to consider how the public regards their works. It might be better to do something well than something different.