As you follow the tour, it's important to remember that dozens of businesses have occupied each of these storefronts during the years. The ones mentioned below are just a sampling of the longest-tenured or the ones that have been recorded in photographs or narratives.

2 | 102 East Rusk
In the early 1900s, the building on the corner of this block was occupied by Fair Dry Goods. The store was operated by T.L. Townsend, and their simple slogan was, “It pays to trade with the Fair Dry Goods Company.” Payne's Furniture and Appliance opened for business in the same spot in the late 1940s. Payne's was a fixture on the square for more than thirty years.

4 | 116-118 East Rusk
In 1887, a man named Rose built the first brick building on the block. One of the earliest inhabitants of this building was Walker Brothers Dry Goods offering both “Staple & Fancy” groceries. The Walker brothers were well known for giving credit to farmers even when times were bad, and their business was one of the most frequented at that time. In later years, the building housed the Frank Clark Drug Store, the J.A. Wilkerson Variety Store, Mitchell Hardware, the Cain Variety Store, and the Roqueau Variety Store. In addition to a variety of occupants, this building has had a succession of owners. For many years it was called the Lovejoy Building, and then the Ellis Building after owner Richard Ellis financed an extensive renovation to restore its original façade.

Cross San Jacinto to the next block of Rusk.

As you cross the street, take a moment to look to your right. The storefronts along this passageway have always housed smaller businesses including, in 1911, an ice cream factory and a pool hall.

Now, continue down Rusk Street toward Fannin.

Around the turn of the century, this entire block consisted of frame buildings with a sidewalk in the front made entirely of plank boards. Termed “rat row,” the buildings' occupants consisted mainly of chili joints, soft drink stands, a meat market and a barber shop.

3 | 104-114 East Rusk
Prior to the current brick buildings, the Palace Saloon occupied a wooden structure in the middle of this block (at approximately 112 Goliad). At this time, women and children were not brought to the square on Saturday afternoons because of the abundance of cursing and fighting. The sheriff was called almost nightly to break up fights. By the turn of the century, respectability had taken over and stores such as J.R. Dumas (“Hardware & Stoves, Furniture and Undertaker”), the Scott Bailey Drugstore, Underwood Brothers Groceries, and the W.B. Womack Banking Company had taken up residence. By mid-century, Spafford's Grocery Market and Locker Plant and the Holt Grocery Store were long-tenured residents of this block.