

This Month in Austin AGC History – Houston AGC Transfer Counties in June 1946 to Newly Formed Austin AGC

On June 4, 1946, leaders of the newly formed Austin Chapter of the Associated General Contractors (Austin AGC) held their regular weekly meeting at the Driskill Hotel beginning at 12:30pm. In attendance that day were 9 contractor members and topics on the agenda included labor and wage concerns among local bricklayers, as well as fundraising for a World War II veterans dormitory building in the amount of \$1 million.

Perhaps most importantly though for the AGC Chapter was a letter from the Houston AGC congratulating Austin contractors on creation of their new organization. The letter also noted that the Houston Chapter had unanimously voted to relinquish 17 counties previously under their jurisdiction to the Austin Chapter, effective June 1, 1946. With that agreement complete, the road was paved for the Austin AGC to formally receive an official charter from the AGC of America, an important document that is framed and proudly displayed today in our building's front entry.

The Austin AGC is one of 89 chartered Chapter affiliates of the [AGC of America](#). Based in Washington, DC, the national AGC was founded in 1917 and provides Chapters and their members with advocacy at the national levels of government, along with professional development and networking opportunities, up-to-the-minute information and trends in the industry, and discounts on products, programs and services. These benefits come on top of those provided here locally by the Austin AGC, including industry advocacy and the state and local levels, safety services, networking events, education classes, building information, workers comp and a 401k program. When a company joins a local Chapter such as ours, a portion of those dues flows up to both our state ([AGC Texas Building Branch](#)) and national organizations.



J.M. Odom served as Austin AGC President in 1946

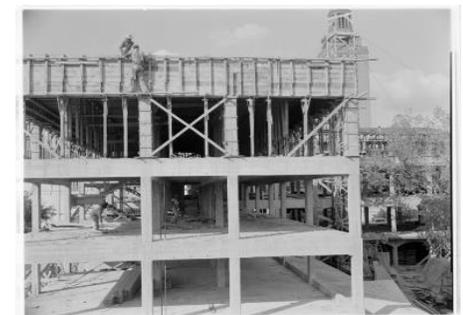
Looking back at our inaugural year of 1946, the Austin AGC's first elected leader then was Jamie Odom, owner of J.M. Odom Construction which he started in 1928. Mr. Odom was a graduate of University of Texas and served on its Development Board. He also served on Governor John Connolly's Committee on Higher Education and was a charter member and president of the Headliner's Club of Austin. Mr. Odom was also a member of the Board of Governors of the San Antonio branch of the Federal Reserve Bank, and he served on the Board of Directors for the American Bank, University of Texas' Ex-Students Association, and the Texas Fine Arts Association.

With regard to local construction projects, Mr. Odom was a one of Austin's most prolific builders of his time whose work continues to have a positive impact on our community today. One prominent project he completed was the [Seaholm Power Plant and Intake Building](#), the City-owned and retired power generation facility located in the heart of downtown Austin. It was [built of cast concrete in two phases](#) in 1950 and 1955. Seaholm operated as a power plant until 1980 and then, in 1996, the Austin City Council authorized the decommissioning of the plant and its adaptive reuse. Today the site features a renovated Power Plant, along with a high-rise multi-family residence, a new office building, and an underground parking garage. The Intake Building is set to be repurposed as well. Odom also went on to build the [Holly Street Power Plant](#), started in 1958 and demolished in 2011, as well as [the Decker Creek Power Station](#) completed in 1970.

Mr. Odom also built on the University of Texas campus, including [Parlin Hall](#) (originally known as English Hall) which opened in 1955 and is one of the six red-roofed campus buildings on the South Mall commonly referred to as the "six pack." Several historic photos of this building under construction are [available here](#). More recently, an elevator enthusiast [published a short video](#) highlighting the 1954 Otis elevators still running in Parlin Hall today.



Seaholm Power under construction in the 1950s



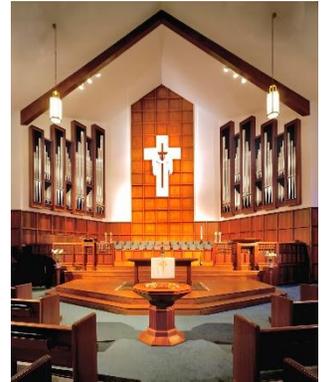
Parlin Hall under construction at the University of Texas in 1954



Hirschi Library under construction in 1940s

Another education project for Odom Construction was the [Hirschi Memorial Library](#) once located at 3400 East Avenue (now I-35) on the original downtown campus of Concordia University. While that campus has since been razed and relocated to Northwest Austin to make way for [new office and residential projects](#), a series of [Certificate of Payment documents](#) from 1948 and 1949 between Odom and the Library's architect remains in online archives here. Odom Construction also built two Austin high schools - [McCallum](#) and [Travis](#) – in the 1950s. (Phil Thoden, current Austin AGC President, greatly appreciates this contribution to our local school system as all three of his children have attended McCallum!)

Some of Mr. Odom's projects completed years ago continue to benefit the work of our contractor members today. For example, the main sanctuary for the [University Presbyterian Church](#) located at 2203 San Antonio was constructed by Odom Construction in 1953. Many years later, Austin AGC member company [Braun and Butler Construction](#) renovated the sanctuary, upgraded the mechanical and electrical systems, created a sunken amphitheater outdoor area, and then finished out the basement. Also of note is that the President of Braun & Butler, Kenton Heinze, served as Austin AGC Chairman in the years 2012-2013. The basement and amphitheater project received an Austin AGC Outstanding Construction Award in 2013 as well.



The sanctuary of University Presbyterian Church today, after renovation by Braun & Butler Construction



St. Louis Catholic Church under construction late 1950s in North Austin

Another church project by Odom Construction is the original [St. Louis Church](#) Parish Hall begun in 1952 and located on Burnet Road in North Austin. Hard to believe today, perhaps, but [photos from the jobsite](#) reveal that area was wide open country at the time! Years later in 2006, AGC member Rizzo Construction continued work on this church by building the narthex and chapel addition. That firm was started locally in 1982 by Bob Rizzo who served as Austin AGC Chairman in 1997 and was the architect of our office building remodel in the early 2000s. In 2019 Rizzo Construction merged with [Braun and Butler Construction](#) to continue providing their clients with exceptional construction services and experience. This firm is the legacy of two strong and successful companies with roots that date back almost 40 years.

It's always fascinating to us here at the Austin AGC to learn how a previous Chapter leader continues to have a positive impact on today's AGC members who carry on the proud tradition of building our quality of life in Austin and throughout Central Texas!