



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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Five unique noteworthy structures receive historic designation

HOUSTON, September 23, 2015 – Houston City Council designated the Alley Theatre, East End State Bank and the Cullen Clinic as protected historic landmarks and the T.J. Donoghue House and the Hulsey-Davis House as historic landmarks.

The Alley Theatre was founded in 1947 by Nina Vance, one of the most outstanding theatrical directors in the U.S. and Texas in the mid twentieth century. The Alley is now one of the oldest non-profit, professional, resident theater companies in continuous operation in the United States.

From its inception, the Alley Theatre staged productions in an “arena” or “in the round” spatial format, a practice associated with cutting-edge theatrical companies in the mid-twentieth-century period. In the Alley’s first season (1947-48), performances were held in a dance studio on Main Street. Audience members had to walk along a narrow outdoor passage to get to the performance space; this passage was the origin of the Alley’s name.



In 1962, the Alley Theatre was given a half-block site in the 600 block of Texas Avenue. The Alley Theatre opened on Texas Avenue in 1968. The new building was designed by New York architect Ulrich Franzen, in collaboration with theatrical consultant George C. Izenour and acoustical consultants Bolt, Beranek & Newman. Franzen (1921-2012) was known for his fortress-like buildings in the New Brutalist style, of which the Alley is a prime example. The building’s exposed cast-in-place concrete in both external and internal spaces, protruding windowless walls, nine octagonal turrets, and overlapping convex and concave balconies give the theater’s block-long Texas Avenue facade a dramatic, even defensive, appearance.

The Cullen Clinic at 7703 Cullen Boulevard was built in 1965 in the Sunnyside neighborhood. The clinic was constructed for Zeb F. Poindexter, Jr., DDD, one of the first two African-American students admitted to the University of Texas School of Dentistry at Houston in 1952. The Cullen Clinic was later known as Poindexter Dental, Inc. The building was designed by John S. Chase, the first African-American student to enroll in the University of Texas School Of Architecture in 1950 and the first licensed African-American architect in the state of Texas. The one-story, flat-roofed building is sided in brick veneer. It’s most distinctive architectural feature is the roof on the central bay, which is capped by a connected series of seven peaked gables supported by square beams.





The East End State Bank at 4215 Leeland was built in 1946 by Tom Tellepsen, a resident of Eastwood and the founder of Tellepsen Construction. Tom Tellepsen founded the East End State Bank and was president from 1946 to 1952. The stucco one-story building features simple Art Moderne architectural detailing. The building was constructed without windows on the front facade.

The T.J. Donoghue House, built at 17 Courtlandt Place in 1915-16, is one of 18 prominent residences facing an avenue which still retains the ambience of its early 20th century origins. The house is an excellent example of Georgian revival architecture, and features wood and stone carvings by master artisan Peter Mansbendel. It was designed by noted New York Architect Whitney Warren of the firm of Warren and Wetmore for Thomas J. Donoghue, A Texas Company (Texaco) founder and executive, and his wife, Mary.



The Hulsey-Davis House was constructed in 1920 as a one-story residence. Located at 1216 Wrightwood Street, just outside the Germantown Historic District and adjacent to Interstate 45, the home backed up to the southern edge of Woodland Park, Houston's second oldest park. The first owner of 1216 Wrightwood Street was J.A. Hulsey, a railroad firefighter. The Davis family owned the house from 1940-2014. In the 1930's, a second floor was added.

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