

**LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT**

**LANDMARK NAME:** East End State Bank Building  
**OWNERS:** City of Houston  
**APPLICANT:** City of Houston  
**LOCATION:** 4215 Leeland Street

**AGENDA ITEM:** D.1  
**HPO FILE NO.:** 15PL121  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** Apr-01-2015  
**HAHC HEARING DATE:** Apr-23-2015

**SITE INFORMATION**

Lot 15, Block 3, Moody L B, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a one story commercial building.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Protected Landmark Designation

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY**

The East End State Bank Building 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 first stockholder meeting was held in Eastwood's Church of the Redeemer (also built by Tom Tellepsen), which further illustrates the bank's ties with the Eastwood neighborhood.

The stucco one-story building features simple Art Moderne architectural detailing.

The East End State Bank Building meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 for Protected Landmark designation of Section 33-224 of the Houston Historic Preservation Ordinance.

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

In March 1946 local builder Tom Tellepsen met with community leaders to solicit their interest and support for a bank in the area. The Banking Commissioner of Texas needed to be shown the need for a bank in the area, so a petition with thousands of signatures from the area was produced. On May 27, 1946 a charter was granted to the East End State Bank, and the first stockholders meeting was June 7, 1946 in the Tellef Hall of the Church of the Redeemer, constructed by Tom Tellepsen in 1952. Tom Tellepsen was elected president of the bank from 1946 to 1952.

The owners of the property at 4215 Leeland St. sold it to the East End State Bank for \$10,000. H. C. Donahue, who worked for Tellepsen, was asked by the owners to return to their property at which they wanted to sell "right away." He wrote out an escrow agreement on a scrap of paper and pulled a \$10 bill out of his pocket to serve as earnest money. That scrap of paper was still in the vault when the book, "Tom Tellepsen: Builder and Believer," was written in 1956.

Construction was begun by the Tellepsen Construction Company immediately, but was interrupted by a three-month long general strike. They opened at a temporary location across the street at the Fehr Baking Company's bread shop on the corner of Leeland and Ingeborg St. (named for Tom Tellepsen's wife.) That opening, on September 18, 1946, was celebrated as the bank's birthday at a party including the

directors and all employees and their spouses or guests. Similar events were held at places like the Houston Club, The Shamrock and the Houston Country Club (today the Gus Wortham Golf Course.) A second opening was held on December 16, 1946 in the new building. That date was celebrated with an informal Christmas-time gathering at which the employees received their Christmas bonus – one month's salary. As of December 16, 1946, deposits were \$1,357,000 and grew to over \$22,500,000 in over 15,500 accounts by 1956, by which time it ranked 9th among the thirty-one banks in Houston.

According to the National Information Center, from a repository collected by the Federal Reserve System, the bank changed from a State Member Bank to a Non-member Bank on March 1, 1973. On January 26, 1982 it was renamed to Enterprise Bank – Houston, which was acquired by Sterling Bank on January 3, 1995 and closed entirely on July 27, 2007.

In 1975, the building became the locally acclaimed Ballatori Italian Restaurant. After the restaurant's closing, the building was purchased by the City of Houston and became part of the Water Department.

### *Tom Tellepsen*

Tom Tellepsen, who built the East End State Bank at 4215 Leeland Street, was born in Tvedestrand, Norway, in April 1888. His descendants relate that after starting his working life as a cabin boy on a sailing ship at the age of 14, Tellepsen passed the exam to become a captain less than two years later. At the time, it was customary to purchase stock in a shipping company before becoming their captain and Tellepsen decided to come to America, land of opportunity, to earn the funds. He landed at Ellis Island one month after his 17th birthday in 1905.

His first job in New York was as a carpenter, following in his late father's footsteps. He was quickly promoted due to his great skill, and he also was allowed to apprentice in other construction disciplines. One of his early projects was building the concession stands at Coney Island. Later, while working on a housing project, he learned the skilled and exacting tasks of home building, including the art of cabinetwork. He also learned about an excellent opportunity for work, when in 1906, he left for Panama to work on the construction of the Panama Canal.

It was while in Panama that he was able to earn and save enough money to become financially established in only one short year. The family further relates that while Tellepsen was working on the Panama Canal, the conditions there were very harsh. In late 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt set up a commission to determine why the cost of the Canal was higher than expected. During the investigation, it was also determined that the housing and working conditions for the workers had to be improved, which they were, resulting in more US citizens applying for the high-paying jobs. Tom decided to return to the United States to file for citizenship. When he did, he found that the immigration laws had changed, and he couldn't return to Panama for five years. He decided to move to a growing area, and chose to move to Houston in 1908.

After living in Pasadena, Texas, through 1909 while working on various construction projects, he returned to Houston in 1910. His family relates that Tellepsen worked on house construction sketches in his spare time.

Deciding to receive more formal training, he enrolled in an architectural drawing course at the Y.M.C.A. After the third session, his teacher was so impressed with his work that she persuaded Tellepsen to allow the school to have his plans published in the Houston newspaper. The Houston Land Corporation bought

Tellepsen's house plan for their new development, Montrose Place. They also hired Tellepsen to build the house, which is still standing and is now the offices of the History Department at St. Thomas University on Yoakum Boulevard.

By this time, he had steady employment and had established himself in the construction and the remodeling of homes. His family descendants tell the story of when he took the White Star Liner from New York to Liverpool, and then to Norway, where he asked Ingeborg Lawson to become his wife. They were married on August 1, 1912 in Tvedestrand, and they sailed to Galveston where took the new interurban to Houston. For ten dollars a month, the newlyweds rented a house at 1506 Palmer, off Leeland Street.

Upon their return, Tellepsen went into business for himself as a building contractor, and later in 1914, he formed a partnership with Andrew Ness. On December 17, 1915, Tellepsen became a United States citizen. In 1923, while his wife and three children were spending the summer visiting the family in Norway, Tellepsen extensively remodeled the house when he added the second floor. In 1929, he turned his contracting business into the Tellepsen Construction Company, which became one of Houston's largest construction companies.

Through the years, Tom Tellepsen built many of Houston's landmark structures, including: First Baptist Church in Downtown Houston (1921; demolished), Miller Memorial Theater in Hermann Park (1922; demolished), the Manchester Wharfs (1922), Rice Institute Chemistry Building ( 1923), Palmer Memorial Church (1924), Gray and Temple Masonic Lodge (1924), Brazos River Bridge (1925), Ellington Field (1940), the Shamrock Hilton ( 1949; demolished) as well as others, including: the Melrose Building downtown, the Schlumberger complex on I-45, the Medical Center-Medical Tower Building, and the Children's and St. Luke's Hospitals. He also chartered and built the East End State Bank on Leeland Street (now the City of Houston Water Department).

Tellepsen Construction Company also built Church of the Redeemer (1952) at 4411 Dallas Avenue in Tellepsen's Eastwood neighborhood. According to Stephen Fox, Tellepsen was a parishioner of Redeemer, and "built a new church based on a vision he had had in a dream. At the time of its construction, the concrete building was described as the first windowless church in Houston. It was centrally air-conditioned and the nave was illuminated with concealed fluorescent lighting. Behind the altar is William Orth's mural 'Christ of the Workingman.'"

Tom and Ingeborg Tellepsen lived in their Park Drive home until 1971. When Tellepsen passed away in 1975, many of Houston's business leaders were joined by community leaders and many Eastwood neighbors of Tellepsen at his funeral services held at his beloved Church of the Redeemer.

According to his family descendants, his home designs became a guide for many of the homes built in Montrose. His strong construction skills and ethics earned him the respect as a trusted builder and international businessman. Tellepsen also had a very close personal relationship with his employees, neighbors, and business contacts, and he "left a personal legacy in Houston as solid as any building he constructed."

## **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND ALTERATION HISTORY**

The East End State Bank is a one story stucco commercial building with simplified Art Moderne detailing. Historic photographs and drawings show architectural detailing radiating from the centrally located entrance. The entrance consisted of a pair of decorative doors flanked by rectangular paneling

with a rectangular decorative carved plaque panel with a stacked curvilinear detail above. The overall form of the building is defined by three bays: the central entrance bay flanked by a stepped back smaller wing on each side. The central form is defined by a dentil detail along each side and the cornice with a central protruding flag base. Each side wing features three carved vertical flutes and a stepped back cornice. No windows were present on the front façade.

Much of the original exterior façade detailing is intact, though several alterations have occurred. The square carved plaque panel above the entrance has been removed. An aluminum awning anchored to the wall with two star shaped plates was installed above the front entrance. The original pair of decorative front doors has been removed and replaced with a single aluminum and glass door and sidelite. A large one story addition was constructed on the east side of the building, though its lower shed roof, visible seaming and slight setback provide differentiation. The west side has been altered with the installation of six square single lite aluminum windows low on the wall and a small shed-roofed addition toward the rear.

The original bank vault and door are still present inside the building.

DRAFT

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Flynn, Andrea K. Tom Tellepsen: Builder & Believer. A Biography, The Anson Jones Press  
Salado, Texas, c. 1956.

Houston Magazine, September 1951

Gupte, Pranay B. "Restaurateur Sergio Ballatori Banks on his Italian Dishes." *Ocala Star-Banner*,  
September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1979

National Information Center, accessed April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015

**PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

Grover and Nancy Newman (previous owners), May 6, 2005 and June 24, 2005.

Bill England, President, Eastwood Historical Commission (about May 8, 2005).

George Sondheim, inspector, May 26, 2005.

Karen Tellepsen on June 22, 2005 and July 3, 2005 (and subsequent other times).

June Tellepsen (Mrs. Howard Tellepsen) on July 3, 2005.

Virginia Hancock, Historian Houston Country Club Place Civic Club.

Anna Mod, Historic Preservationist.

Additional conversations with numerous current and former neighbors, and childhood friends of Tom Tellepsen's children and grandchildren held at a community porch crawl and open house on July 3, 2006, and the 2005 Home Tour, October 22 & 23, 2005, including, among others: Bob & Suzette Priut, long-time Eastwood residents, Sonny Preston, neighbor, Phyllis Maloney, neighbor, Tom Stringer, Howard Tellepsen's childhood friend, W. R. Gordon, neighbor, and Marl Anne Preston, neighbor.

*The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by the Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.*

**APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION**

**Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation**

(a) The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

<b>S</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>S - satisfies</b>	<b>D - does not satisfy</b>	<b>NA - not applicable</b>
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- (1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation;
- (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;
- (3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;
- (4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;
- (5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;
- (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;
- (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
- (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

**AND**

- (9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Protected Landmark Designation of the East End State Bank Building at 4215 Leeland Street.

**EXHIBIT A**  
**CURRENT PHOTOS**  
EAST END STATE BANK BUILDING  
4215 LEE LAND STREET



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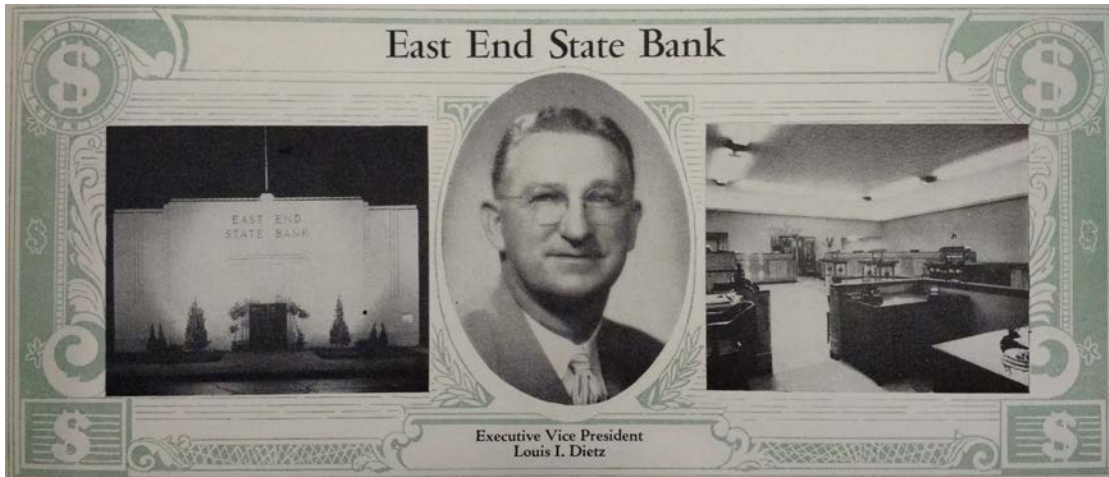
Photo of interior bank vault door  
Staff photo, April 3<sup>rd</sup>



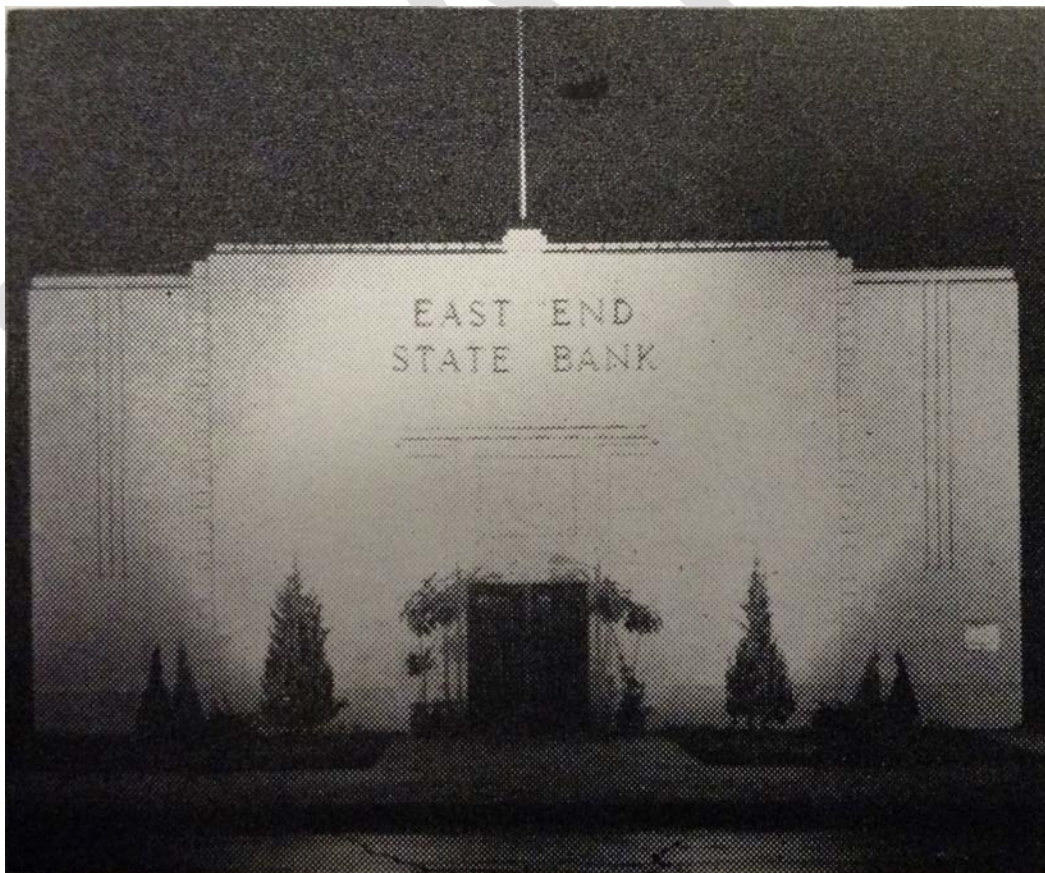
**EXHIBIT B**  
**SITE MAP**  
EAST END STATE BANK BUILDING  
4215 LEELAND STREET



**EXHIBIT C**  
**HISTORIC PHOTOS AND DRAWINGS**  
EAST END STATE BANK BUILDING  
4215 LEE LAND STREET



The East End State Bank Building, 4215 Leeland Street, Houston, Texas  
Source: Houston Magazine, September 1951



Exterior Photo Detail  
Source: Houston Magazine, September 1951



Interior Photo Detail

Source: Houston Magazine, September 1951



Print advertisement

Source: Houston Magazine, September 1951



NYT Photos

**Sergio Ballatori at vault of bank he converted to a restaurant**

The East End State Bank Building, 4215 Leeland Street, Houston, Texas

Source: Ocala Star-Banner, September 18th, 1979