

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Hugh Roy Cullen House

OWNERS: Bates and Coleman, P.C.

APPLICANTS: Same as Owners

LOCATION: 1402 Alabama Street

30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: IV

HPO FILE NO: 09L212

DATE ACCEPTED: Nov-10-08

HAHC HEARING: Jan-15-09

PC HEARING: Jan-22-09

SITE INFORMATION

West sixty-two and one half feet (62.5') of Lots 9 and 10 and the West sixty-two and one half feet (62.5') of the North twenty-five feet (25') of Lot 8, all of which is located in Block 11 of the Empire Addition, a subdivision in Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a two-story house. See pages 7-8 for photos and map.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The land on which the home at 1402 Alabama now stands was originally owned by Joseph Chappell Hutcheson. Hutcheson served under General Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1862 and was eventually in command of Company E of the Fourteenth Virginia Infantry. He was elected to the Seventeenth Texas Legislature in 1880 where he drafted the bill that established the University of Texas. In 1890 he served as chairman of the State Democratic Convention and was elected to the House of Representatives of the Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth congresses.

Hugh Roy Cullen and family owned the home at 1402 Alabama for 34 years. He and his wife, Lillie, gave more than \$11 million each to their favorite projects including, the University of Houston and Houston hospitals. In 1947, he established the \$160 million Cullen Foundation to provide for continual aid to education and medicine. Their \$160 million gift was, at the time, one of the largest individual endowments ever funded in the United States. By 1955 he had given away an estimated 90 percent of his fortune. He entered into the oil business in 1918 and his largest oil field, the Tom O'Conner Field in South Texas, still produces oil today.

The Hugh Roy Cullen House meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6 for Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

In 1901, the land on which the home at 1402 Alabama now stands was owned by Joseph Chappell Hutcheson Sr. and Lizzie J. Baker, executor of the deceased I.B. Baker. On June 15, 1901 Home Building and Investment Company purchased the following land from Hutcheson and Baker for \$10,500: all of Empire Addition except Block 5, Lots 1-4, 10; Block 7; Block 8, Lots 4-5; Block 17, Lot 4; Block 18, Lots 1-4.1 The deed was notarized by Hutcheson's son, Joseph C. Hutcheson Jr. At the time of the transaction both father and son resided at 1417 McKinney and were attorneys at the Law

¹ Harris County Deed Record Vol. 126, Page 626, Record #34878

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Offices of Hutcheson, Campbell and Hutcheson. In addition, Joseph Chappell Hutcheson Sr. was the Vice President of the Galveston and Houston Investment Company.

Joseph Chappell Hutcheson (1842-1924), legislator and Confederate soldier, was born near Boydton, Virginia, on May 18, 1842, the son of Charles Sterling and Mary Hutcheson. In 1861 he graduated from Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia, and immediately enlisted in Company C of the Twenty-first Virginia Infantry; he served under General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley campaign of 1862. By the time of Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox, Hutcheson was in command of Company E of the Fourteenth Virginia Infantry. Subsequently he entered the law school of the University of Virginia, and he graduated in 1866. He then moved to Texas and established a practice in Anderson. In 1874 he moved to Houston, where he was elected to the Seventeenth Texas Legislature in 1880. There he drafted the bill that established the University of Texas. He also served, in 1890, as chairman of the State Democratic Convention. Hutcheson was elected to the House of Representatives of the Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth congresses but declined to run for a third term. He married Mildred Carrington in 1867, and they had eight children. Mildred died in 1882. In 1886 Hutcheson married Betty Palmer Milby, and they had two sons, both of whom became Houston attorneys. Hutcheson died at his summer home near Chattanooga, Tennessee, on May 25, 1924, and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery, Houston.

On June 3, 1902, Home Building and Investment Company sold to W.I. Williamson Lot 8, Lot 9, Lot 10, and the west half of Lot 11 for \$1,300.² At the time of the transaction, Joseph Chappell Hutcheson Sr. was the president of Houston Building and Investment Company, and J.C. Cooper was the secretary. Williamson later sold the land to J.P. Ehrlich for \$2,600 on May 26, 1906. The residence which now stands on the site was constructed when the land was owned by B.F. Greenwood, who purchased the property for \$2,250 on August 9, 1909. Greenwood contracted C.W. Leavens on June 11, 1911 to construct “... a new 2-story frame, shingled roofed residence, 46 feet x 50 feet to be built on brick piers to have 2 brick flues built from ground up, 8 rooms, front, back, and side porches, bathroom and pantry and all necessary plumbing, wiring, and screening, painting and papering and fencing...” The total cost of the home was \$3,500, of which \$500 was payable as worked progressed and \$3,000 was payable in promissory notes.

On June 9, 1914, Hugh Roy Cullen purchased the house at 1402 Alabama for \$10,300.³ However, the Houston City Directory does not list Cullen as living in the home, or even show that a house existed at 1402 Alabama until 1918. Cullen lived at 1402 Alabama Street for 16 years until moving to 1620 River Oaks Boulevard in 1935. The home remained under his ownership for a total of 34 years until February 16, 1948, when it was sold to Mary J. Sponsel.

Born on July 3, 1881, in Denton County to Cicero and Louise Beck Cullen, Hugh Roy Cullen was the grandson of Ezekial Wimberly Cullen. Ezekial had come from Georgia to Texas in 1835 seeking fame and fortune and had fought in the early days of the revolution against Mexico, eventually settling in San Augustine, the seat of the new revolutionary government. At the age of sixteen Cullen moved to Schulenberg and worked for a cotton broker; he later went into that business for himself and also dealt in real estate. On December 29, 1903 he married Lillie Cranz and they had four daughters, Lillie, Agnes,

² Harris County Deed Record Vol. 143, Page 149, Record #42403

³ Harris County Contract Record. Volume 42, Page 340, Record #

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Margaret, and Wilhelmina, and one son, Roy Gustav Cullen (in 1936 he died in a tragic oil field accident). In 1911 Cullen moved the family to Houston. He entered the oil business in 1918 and discovered his first producing oil field in 1921. In 1928, he collaborated with Jim West and the two of them quickly built a successful partnership. By 1932, Mr. Cullen had formed his own oil company, Quintana Petroleum, and almost immediately discovered several major oil fields, the largest of which, The Tom O'Conner Field in South Texas, still produces oil today. In 1938, the Cullens made their first major gift, a contribution of \$260,000 to build the Roy Gustav Cullen Building on the new campus of the University of Houston in memory of their son. He gave more than \$11 million each to his favorite projects, the University of Houston and Houston hospitals. In 1947 he established the \$160 million Cullen Foundation to provide for continual aid to educational needs, health care and arts in Texas, primarily in the Greater Houston Metropolitan Area. The Cullen Foundation has distributed over \$388 million in grants since its inception in 1947; the University of Houston and various hospitals in the Texas Medical Center as well as numerous cultural arts institutions are representative of the beneficiaries. Their \$160 million gift to establish the foundation was, at the time, one of the largest individual endowments ever funded in the United States. By 1955 he had given away an estimated 90 percent of his fortune. Cullen died in Houston on July 4, 1957 at the age of 76.

In his own inimitable way Mr. Cullen stated that, "Giving away money is no particular credit to me. Most of it came out of the ground - and while I found the oil in the ground, I didn't put it there. I've got a lot more than Lillie and I and our children and grandchildren can use. I don't think I deserve any great credit for using it to help people. It's easier for me to give a million dollars now than it was to give five dollars to the Salvation Army twenty-five years ago."⁴ As a student at the University of Houston, Jack Valenti wrote: "The riches that the Cullens have extracted from the earth, they have given back to their fellow-humans. All this they have done with simple directness and genuine tenderness; and with no thought of thanks, or the praise of other citizens, or public eulogies. Lillie and Roy Cullen want this world to be better when they leave it. This is Christian goodness at its height..."⁵

Third Ward

The Hugh Roy Cullen House at 1402 Alabama is located within Houston's Third Ward neighborhood. In 1840 Houston's charter was altered and the town was divided into four wards, with each ward electing two representatives to the municipal government. After slavery ended in Texas on June 19, 1865, ex-slaves were forced to live in separate enclaves within each of Houston's wards. As the White population moved out of the inner city, the African American population in the Third Ward increased, and they built their own churches, schools, businesses, and other institutions. Many of those institutions still thrive today, including Texas Southern University. In August 1870, two more wards were added as the town grew in population. These wards ceased to exist as political subdivisions in which elected representation was determined in 1912, but the terms are still used today to denote portions of the original wards.

In the years following the Civil War, blacks lived in each of the city's wards, usually at the edge of town. The largest numbers lived in the Third Ward, in Freedman town and similar neighborhoods on the

⁴ From, <http://www.cullenfdn.org>

⁵ From, <http://www.cullenfdn.org>

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outskirts of the Fourth Ward, and in the Frost town area of the Second Ward. By the early 1880s approximately 25 percent of the black households in the Third Ward were owner-occupied.

The Fourth Ward lost its preeminence in the 1920s as the Third Ward passed it in population and began to attract more black institutions, including Houston Negro Hospital (now Riverside General Hospital), Yates High School (the second black high school in Houston), and Houston Colored Junior College (the antecedent of Texas Southern University). The Third Ward and the Fifth Ward became the home of Bayou City Blues and there were established many places in the Third Ward for this type of entertainment including both the high-class El Dorado Ballroom.

In the 1950s, almost 30,000 African Americans lived in the Third Ward, representing a majority of the population. Like most African American communities during segregation, the Third Ward was like a separate city within Houston, with Dowling Street as its main thoroughfare. The street was lined with black-owned businesses, churches, fraternal offices, apartment buildings, single-family housing, theaters, restaurants, and nightclubs.

While most of Houston's Wards declined during the mid-20th Century, the Third Ward prospered during this period. By the mid-1960s, although the three inner-city wards no longer contained the bulk of Houston's black population, the Third Ward had supplanted the Fifth Ward as the center of black business in the city. Even though only about 7 percent of the city's blacks lived in the Third Ward in 1970, almost 10 percent of the black-owned businesses were concentrated in the four census tracts that made up that neighborhood. More significantly, the Third Ward was the home of Riverside National Bank, Houston's largest and oldest black bank, as well as Standard Savings Association, the state's only black-owned savings and loan association, and the Houston Citizens Chamber of Commerce, the principal black business organization in the city.

During the last thirty years, the Third Ward has also become the cultural center of black Houston. To a large degree the Third Ward's preeminence as a cultural center was based on the emergence of Texas Southern University as a major educational institution. The original mission of the university was to provide black Texans with "educational opportunities equal to and comparable with those offered by other [state supported] institutions." As higher education in Texas became desegregated, TSU's focus shifted to the problems and issues that confronted the urban environment and inner-city residents. Today with an enrollment of nearly 9,000 students, Texas Southern is the third largest "historically black" university in the United States. Although it no longer serves an exclusively black clientele, Texas Southern has remained a predominantly black institution and a center of black education. In addition, with its FM radio station, library, art gallery, and active programs of music, art, and theater, it is a center for black culture in Houston. Furthermore, the presence of Texas Southern in the heart of the Third Ward has stimulated cultural development in the surrounding area: today the Third Ward is the home of the city's two leading black newspapers, its black-owned radio stations, and black theater, art galleries, and bookstores.

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The two-story house, located at 1402 Alabama Street, is of wood frame construction with clapboard siding, and is asymmetrical in plan. The house is a unique blend of the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Prairie styles. Its most prominent features include a hipped roof with cross gables, hipped dormers with wide eave overhang, original double-hung windows with tracery panes, boxed-in wide eave overhang with brackets, glass paneled door with transom light and flanked by sidelights, and full width porch. The first floor porch is supported by four square wood columns which are a later alteration as is the upper balcony railing. The foundation is brick pier and the roof is of wood shingle. Most of the exterior features are intact and in good condition. The interior includes built-in cabinets, original transom window found above one of the interior doors, a claw foot tub, and original wood staircase. The current owners purchased the home five years ago, and it has since been used as a law office. The current owners have made minimal changes to the structure.

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

“Cullen, Hugh Roy” <http://www.tshaonline.org>, Texas State Historical Association- Handbook of Texas Online.

Historical Owner Search report compiled by www.theresearchstaff.com, provided by the owner/applicant.

“Historical Reflections on the Third Ward” <http://eyeonthirdward.mfah.org/home.asp>, Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Eye on Third Ward exhibit.

“Hugh Roy Cullen (July 3, 1881 – July 4, 1957)” <http://www.cullenfdn.org>, The Cullen Foundation.

“Third Ward Project Hope History” report, City of Houston, Planning and Development Department.

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APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation of a Landmark.

(a) The HAHC and the commission, 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:

- | S | NA | S - satisfies | D - does not satisfy | NA - not applicable |
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Houston Planning Commission accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Hugh Roy Cullen House at 1402 Alabama Street.

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HUGH ROY CULLEN HOUSE 1402 ALABAMA STREET



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SITE LOCATION MAP
HUGH ROY CULLEN HOUSE
1402 ALABAMA STREET
NOT TO SCALE

