

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Lackner House

**OWNER:** Charles E. Burgess

**APPLICANT:** Same

**LOCATION:** 2002 Bolsover Street – Southampton

**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** N/A

**AGENDA ITEM:** III.a

**HPO FILE NO:** 09L221

**DATE ACCEPTED:** Jun-18-09

**HAHC HEARING:** Dec-10-09

**PC HEARING:** Dec-17-09

### SITE INFORMATION

Lot 8, Block 10, Southampton Place, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story wood frame residence with brick veneer.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Lackner House at 2002 Bolsover was built in 1932 for Laura and Fred Lackner, and designed by noted Houston architect, Joseph W. Northrop, Jr. Northrop got his start in Houston overseeing the construction of the Rice University campus, and went on to a successful independent career in which he designed numerous public buildings, including First Evangelical Church on Holman Street and St. Matthew Lutheran on Main Street. Northrop laid out the Houston subdivision of West Eleventh Place, and is perhaps best known for designing many residences in Houston's more affluent early 20<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods, such as Shadow Lawn, River Oaks, and Boulevard Oaks.

The Lackner House at 2002 Bolsover is one of three designed by Joseph Northrop for the Lackner family. The house is unusual in that the main floor of the house is elevated approximately seven feet above ground. This floorplan was made at the request of Laura Lackner, who wanted the house's living space to be all on one floor but also wanted her new home to fit in with the two-story houses in its Southampton neighborhood. Laura Lackner was a descendant of the Reinermann family, early German pioneers to Harris County who immigrated to Texas in 1834. The Reinermann family land grant encompassed much of the territory north and east of Memorial Park. Portions of this land were later used to develop the Shady Acres and Timbergrove neighborhoods.

The Lackner House will be the first City of Houston landmark in Southampton, and meets Criteria 1, 3, 5, and 6 for Landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Lackner House was built in 1932 for Laura and Fred Lackner, both of whom were descendants of early German immigrants to Texas. Laura Lackner was born Laura Quensell in Houston in 1871 or 1872, and lived in Harris County her entire life. She was the great-granddaughter of John and Anna Reinermann, who immigrated to Texas from Oldenburg, Germany, in 1834 with their sons, John, Jr., and Henry. The Reinermanns were on board the schooner 'Sabine' from New Orleans when it wrecked near Galveston Island on December 22, 1834. The family settled along the north side of Buffalo Bayou near Memorial Park, where they established a farm, built a log cabin, planted orchards, and cultivated a few small fields. Within a year of landing in Galveston, John Reinermann died and was buried in the

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family cemetery on the farm. John's death in 1835 brought hardships to the family, but they were determined to remain in the area.

In an effort to secure title to their farmland, John's widow, Anna, applied for a land grant from the State of Texas on the grounds that John qualified for the grant since he was an immigrant to the area before the Texas Revolution. On April 28, 1847, a league (4,338 acres) and a labor (177 acres) of land were granted by the State of Texas to the heirs of John Reinermann. The boundaries of the John Reinermann league were Buffalo Bayou on the south, the west edge of the John Austin league on the east (i.e., Reinerman Street), what is now Post Oak Blvd. on the west, and approximately 15th Street on the north. Henry Reinermann was granted one third of a league immediately to the north of his father's league. Its northern boundary was 26th Street, just south of the North Loop, and its western boundary was Mangum Road. Loosely speaking, the two Reinermann surveys contain much of the land inside the Loop west of the John Austin survey.

On December 19, 1840, John's son, Henry Reinermann, married Louisa Margerethe Agnes Schiermann. The couple had two children, including Louisa Reinermann, Laura Lackner's mother. After Henry's untimely death in 1844, his widow married Joseph Sandman on April 27, 1845. They had a son, Joseph Sandman, Jr., in 1846. After Joseph's death, Louisa married Christian Lodovic Bethje, another German immigrant, with whom she had a daughter in 1850. Christian Bethje, 28 years old, listed himself as a farmer in the 1850 census and his household included his 34-year-old wife Louisa and their combined family of four children. They had property valued at \$5,250, which indicated that they were prospering. By the 1860s, their farm in the Memorial Park area had its own sawmill, several cultivated fields, three hundred head of cattle and various farm animals.

In 1869, members of the Reinermann family bought a house on fifteen acres in the Brunner Addition located along the Washington Road, near today's Shepherd Drive. Some of the heirs continued to live on the original property near Memorial Park, but by 1883, that property was abandoned. The heirs sold off tracts from the north and west part of the original Reinermann grant to various timber operators. Later, they sold out to land speculators, although as late as 1915, they retained a tract that became the eastern part of Camp Logan. In the early 1920s, 100 acres were sold to the Shadyacres Investment Company from the Henry Reinermann Original Grant in Harris County. The Reinermann home, which was located a few blocks northwest of the modern intersection of Washington Avenue and Shepherd Drive, was demolished in the 1920s. The Reinermann name is perpetuated by Reinerman (sic) Street that runs south from White Oak Bayou to Buffalo Bayou, five streets west of Shepherd Drive.

Louisa Reinermann, Henry's daughter and mother to Laura Lackner, married William Quensell on September 4, 1853. Carl Wilhelm Adolph Quensell (aka William) was born in 1829 in Hanover, Germany. In Germany, William worked for the forest service, but he left his job and his homeland due to political unrest. While on board the ship that brought him to the United States, William kept a diary detailing his experience. Later, his grandson Edgar Lackner (Laura and Fred Lackner's son) taught himself German, translated the diary, and in 1975 published it under the title "From Tyranny to Texas: A German Pioneer in Harris County" (out of print). William Quensell served in the Civil War in "Mechling's-Haldemann's Battery, Texas Light Artillery" with which he fought in the battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill. He died in 1890 in Houston. Louisa Reinermann Quensell died on March 18, 1916, in Houston.

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When Louisa and William were first married, they resided on the family farm in what is now Shady Acres. The Quensell family was listed in the Houston City Directory as living at 219 Dallas, corner of Caroline, from 1882-1891. Louisa and William had ten children together, but only two girls, including Laura, lived past infancy. Each of the eight deceased children were buried on the family farm.

Fred Lackner was born in July 1873 in Texas. He was the oldest of five children. His father, Carl Lackner, was born in 1830 in Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1848. Fred's mother, Minnie Lackner, was born in 1848 in Germany and moved to the United States in 1849. Carl and Minnie were married in 1870. Minnie was the mother of ten children, six of whom were living in 1910, according to the Federal Census of the same year. The 1900 Federal Census lists Fred Lackner as living with his parents and four siblings on East 8<sup>th</sup> Ave, Temple City, Texas.

Fred and Laura Lackner were married in Temple City, Texas, in 1901. Fred was employed by Southern Pacific Railroad as a ticket agent at Houston's Grand Central Station from 1905 until 1940. In 1905, the couple resided at 1304 Crawford Street, where they lived for 26 years, until 1931. Fred and Laura had three sons: Fred W. Lackner, Jr. (wife Beulah O. Lackner), Edgar E. Lackner (wife Pauline Lackner), and Adolph Q. Lackner.

Laura established the Lackner Realty Company in 1929 with the sole purpose of selling and leasing the land she inherited from the Reinermann land grant of 1847. The real estate company's office was located at 1026 West 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Shady Acres. Lackner Realty Company was listed in the Houston City Directory until 1954. Some of the real estate transactions of the Lackner Realty Company were listed in the Galveston Daily News. For example, on September 26, 1928: Laura Lackner transferred to John W. Beall Lot 371 of the Shadyacres Third section for \$1,575. The same day she transferred to Mrs. Rosa Albe Lot 344 of Shadyacres Third addition for \$1,650.

In the early 1920s, 100 acres were sold to the Shadyacres Investment Company from the Henry Reinermann land grant in Harris County. The acreage was sold in lots of one acre or smaller. The John Beall Realty Company and the W. T. Helberg Realty Company were two of the realtors who advertised property. The advertisements offered oversized lots and "an acre for the same price as a city lot." They boasted that the land was "close in" and that a gas line was being laid. The Shady Acres Civic Club was founded in 1938. The group's main concerns at that time were getting bus service, dealing with oil drillers and requesting city postal services be extended to the neighborhood.

On July 16, 1932, the Lackners purchased the corner lot at Bolsover and Hazard Streets from Euphemia G. Hull for \$2,500. The parcel of land was originally part of a 4,606 acre parcel of land on the southern and western edges of Houston that was granted to Obedience Smith in 1838. The Lackners hired architect, Joseph W. Northrop, Jr., to design a house to meet their particular requirements. Laura Lackner wanted a house that would fit in with the two-story homes being built in Southampton, but that had its living space on one level. Northrop accommodated this wish by building a 'raised' bungalow, with its main floor elevated over six feet above ground. The Bolsover house was owned and occupied by Fred and Laura Lackner from 1932 until the time of both their deaths. The 'Inventory and Appraisal of the Estate of Laura Lackner' (Oct 1954) valued the house at \$17,500. The Lackners subsequently had Northrop design the house next door at 2006 Bolsover for their son, Fred Lackner Jr., and the house at 2114 Bolsover was designed by Northrop for another Lackner son, Edgar. These two houses are in the more traditional Colonial Revival style for which Northrop is perhaps best known.

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Fred Lackner died in Houston on June 4, 1952. Laura Lackner died at her residence on July 23, 1954, and was buried at Washington Cemetery. Her separate estate was worth over \$2 million at her death, and her will set aside money to provide her cemetery lot with flowers at Easter and Christmas.

## **Joseph W. Northrop, Jr.**

Joseph Walter Northrop, Jr., was born on July 21, 1886, at Bridgeport, Connecticut, the son of an architect. He attended Bridgeport public schools and earned an A.B. degree from Wesleyan University in 1907. He received a B.S. in architecture at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1910, and that same year went to work for the Boston architectural firm of Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson. In 1911, the firm sent him to Houston to serve as clerk-of-the-works for construction of the initial buildings at Rice Institute (now Rice University), which Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson had designed. Although formally associated with the firm until 1919, Northrop embarked upon an independent architectural career in Houston in 1914. From the 1920s through the 1950s he was responsible for the design of a number of public buildings. These included a series of warehouse and retail buildings for Jesse L. Jones; the First Evangelical Church (1927, COH Protected Landmark) at 1311 Holman Street; the First Congregational Church (1927, now St. Matthew Lutheran) at 5315 Main Street; the San Jacinto Trust Company Building (1927-28), and Houston Title Guaranty Building (1952). Northrop laid out the Houston subdivision of West Eleventh Place (COH Historic District) in 1920, and designed four of the eight houses built there. He also designed two of the earliest houses in Shadow Lawn (COH Historic District), including one for John H. Crooker (1923-24), the developer of the subdivision.

Northrop was best known, however, for his single-family houses, especially those designed in the Colonial Revival and Federal styles. Northrop worked extensively in the affluent 'South End' neighborhoods of Houston and was one of the first architects commissioned by the Hogg family to design houses for the exclusive new River Oaks subdivision. George F. Howard, President of the San Jacinto Trust Company and developer of Ormond Place, commissioned Northrop to design a number of houses in Boulevard Oaks (COH Historic District, pending). One of the most expensive and well-conceived houses in Boulevard Oaks was Howard's own, designed by Northrop at 1707 South Boulevard on a large corner lot.

In 1941-42, Northrop served as chief architect for the Federal Housing Administration in Houston. His designs were published in several professional journals, including *Architect*, *American Architect*, and *Architectural Forum*. His Mediterranean-style First Evangelical Church in Houston, which recalls the architecture of Rice Institute, received honorable mention in 1930 in a nationwide competition sponsored by the Christian Herald. In 1931, *American Architect* awarded Northrop a certificate of merit for the Henry M. Holden residence (1924). Two houses he designed on South Boulevard in the West Edgemont subdivision of Boulevard Oaks were written up in *House & Garden* in the early 1930s.

Northrop was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and of the River Oaks Country Club. He joined the American Institute of Architects in 1923 and served two consecutive terms as president of the South Texas Chapter, from 1927 to 1929. He was a parishioner of Trinity Church. He married Mary Harris in Houston in 1915. They were the parents of three sons, the second of whom, Page Harris Northrop, joined his father in the firm of Northrop and Northrop in 1942. Joseph Northrop died in Houston on September 26, 1968, and was buried in Glenwood Cemetery.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The Lackner House was designed in 1932 by Joseph W. Northrop, Jr., in a raised brick bungalow style. The main living space of the house is located on the second level, elevated approximately seven feet above ground on top of an above-ground 'basement' and accessed by the front staircase. The house has a raised front partial porch, which features three brick "true" ellipses over brick rail with stone caps. The porch retains the original 6" by 6" tile floor. The porch is accessible via a 6'10" stairway; the steps are clad in tile and the rail is of masonry construction.

The wood-frame house with 4-inch brick veneer is approximately 2,260 square feet and features an asymmetrical floor plan. The home rests on a pier-and-beam foundation upon which rests the above-ground basement. The home retains the majority of the original one-over-one windows, accentuated by brick sills and flanked by the original, wood-hinged shutters. The house features a low pitched, hipped roof with ridge and two intersecting gables on the front facade and east elevation. The two cross gables feature louvres at the gable ends. The roof is clad in green Spanish clay tile and features wide, boxed eaves with wood frieze below.

The basement floor features a record storage room, two separate storage rooms, recreation and game room, laundry room, powder room, and a three-car garage. The floors are cement and the walls and ceilings are shiplap. The main 'second' floor of the house features a formal floor plan with living and dining room, kitchen, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a sleeping porch in the rear. The living room fireplace has a decorative wooden mantel and tile hearth and surrounds. Circulation between the rooms occurs via a long hallway in the center of the house that forms a long north-south axis that runs between the rooms. The hallway begins at a vestibule, preceded by the front entrance, and leads to a cedar lined closet at the north end of the home, between the kitchen and sleeping porch. The second floor walls are shiplap, canvas, paper, and plaster.

*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

Aulbach, Louis F., 'Buffalo Bayou: An Echo of Houston's Wilderness Beginnings,' <http://users.hal-pc.org/~lfa/BB20.html>.

Estate of F.W. Lackner, Deceased, in Probate Court, Harris County, Texas. Recorded: Volume 93, Page 406 P/M.

Estate of Laura Lackner, Deceased, in Probate Court, Harris County, Texas. Recorded: Volume 176, Page 398 P-2.

Deed #552628, Volume 905, Page 510 from Euphemia G. Hull to Laura Lackner.

WWI Draft Card of 1918-ticket agent at "S.P. Lines."

Conversation with Beulah Lackner, daughter-in-law of Laura Lackner. December 2, 2009.

Conversation with Linda Wheeler, daughter of Beulah Lackner. December 2, 2009.

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Katherine Brash Jeter. Reviewed work(s): *The C.S.S. Florida: Her Building and Operations* by Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr. *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Summer, 1988), pp. 306-308 Published by: Louisiana Historical Association. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4232677>

West End History, <http://www.ricemilitary.org/documents/history.htm>

## 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:

- | <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.

## 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 Lackner House at 2002 Bolsover Street.

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**EXHIBIT A**  
**LACKNER HOUSE**  
**2002 BOLSOVER STREET**



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**EXHIBIT B**  
**SITE LOCATION MAP**  
**LACKNER HOUSE**  
**202 BOLSOVER STREET**  
**NOT TO SCALE**

