

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Colburn House

OWNERS: Jerry and Kathleen Galbraith

APPLICANTS: Same

LOCATION: 301 E. 8th Street – Houston Heights Historic District South

AGENDA ITEM: IIIa

HPO FILE NO: 11PL106

DATE ACCEPTED: Oct-7-2010

HAHC HEARING: Jul-14-2011

SITE INFORMATION: West 82 ft of Lots 13 & 14 (aka Tracts 13a and 14a), Block 249, Houston Heights, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a one-story wood-frame single-family residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Colburn House at 301 E 8th Street is an excellent example of a Queen Anne style house in Houston Heights. Built in 1906, its first owner was Carey Marshall Colburn, the chief train dispatcher for the Texas & New Orleans Railroad, who lived in the house with his wife and three children. The house features typical features of a Queen Anne house – a steeply pitched pyramidal roof, a wraparound one-story porch, a multi-paned front bay window, and decorative wood detailing such as delicate turned porch supports and spindlework ornamentation. The house sits on a raised foundation and faces south on a corner lot at Cortlandt Street and E. 8th Street. The current owners have meticulously restored the house over the last 25 years.

The Colburn House at 301 E 8th Street is located in the recently designated Houston Heights Historic District South and is listed as a contributing structure to this historic district. The Colburn House meets Criteria 1, 4, and 5 for Landmark and Protected Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Houston Heights

Houston Heights, the largest, earliest planned community in Texas, was developed in 1891 by the Omaha and South Texas Land Company. Oscar Martin Carter was President of the American Loan and Trust Company, which created the Omaha and South Texas Land Company for the purpose of developing Houston Heights. O. M. Carter, born in Massachusetts in 1842, came to Houston from Nebraska in 1887 to scout out the new city and discovered that Houston was destined to soon become a great city. He was so impressed with what he saw that he felt investing there heavily, and encouraging others to do so, would be beneficial. Carter had been involved in banking and real estate in Nebraska and Colorado, and his move to Texas followed the organization of the Omaha and South Texas Land Company.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

In May 1891, Omaha and South Texas Land Company purchased 1,756 acres of land just northwest of Houston and made over \$500,000 worth of improvements before offering lots for sale in 1893. Carter chose this location, in part, because of the area's proximity to the Houston business center, and also because the elevation is higher "and healthier" (as promoted at the time due to frequent malaria outbreaks) than that of adjacent parts of Houston. In 1891, Carter and Daniel Denton Cooley purchased, merged and electrified both mule-drawn streetcar systems in Houston and extended the lines to their new community. In 1892, the directors of the Omaha and South Texas Land Company developed public utility systems, sidewalks, and streets, including Heights Boulevard with its grand, 60-foot wide esplanade and street car service; built and marketed 17 homes for sale as well as lots for home building by others; allocated sites for parks and schools; built the Houston Heights Hotel on West 19th Avenue to encourage the establishment of the business center served by streetcar; encouraged the establishment of churches; and facilitated the development of a major industrial, manufacturing district in the northwest section of Houston Heights, also served by railroads. The Omaha and South Texas Land Company deed-restricted lots on Heights Boulevard to control setback, use, quality and size of the new construction. These deed restrictions were also established on a few other lots throughout Houston Heights. This effort to enact deed restrictions was the first known instance of such in Houston, a practice that had been used successfully in other cities from which the investors of Houston Heights hailed. Since Houston Heights was so well planned from its inception, and therefore attractive to investors, Houston Heights grew rapidly and was incorporated as a city in 1896. It flourished as a distinct municipality until 1918 when the residents voted to be annexed to the City of Houston, mainly to guarantee the future funding for the proper education for their children. However, the original deed restrictions enacted by the developer of Houston Heights were not enforced after annexation in 1918, and lapsed. It has been necessary for residents to adopt new deed restrictions on a lot by lot basis.

301 E. 8th Street

Lots 13 and 14 of Block 249 of Houston Heights, located on the northeast corner of E. 8th Street and Cortlandt Street, were deeded to Mr. Carey M. Colburn in 1906 for a sales price of \$2,971.33. In the 1910 Census, Carey M. Colburn had a wife and three children listed as living with him at 301 E. 8th Street. Colburn was the chief train dispatcher for the Texas & New Orleans Railroad and worked in the Chief Clerk Superintendent's Office in downtown Houston. The Colburn family lived in the house for only a few years, soon moving to 1214 Heights Boulevard. By 1912, Lucius White, a civil engineer, and his wife Laura were living in the house at 301 E. 8th Street. The Whites were the first in a long succession of residents through the early 1930s, indicating that the house may have become a rental. In 1913, Frank Halmbacher and Thomas Waxenberger, both cabinetmakers, were living in the house.

From 1933-1956, the house was owned by the Sanford-Mansur family. In 1957, Jesse and Clara Stanley purchased the house. The Stanleys adopted Clara's sister's four children after the death of their parents and raised them in the house. In 1986, the current owners, the Galbraiths, purchased the house from the Stanleys. On December 10, 2006, the Galbraiths and their two sons, Justin and Travis, celebrated the house's 100th birthday with a home blessing by Reverend Barbara Lewis of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on Heights Boulevard.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

The Colburn House at 301 E 8th Street is located in the recently designated Houston Heights Historic District South and is listed as a contributing structure to this historic district.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The house at 301 E. 8th Street was built in 1906 and may have been the first house on the block. The house is a beautiful example of a Queen Anne-style house, a typical architectural style of the period in Houston Heights. The house features a raised foundation, a steeply pitched pyramidal roof, dominant cross gables, patterned shingles, cutaway bay windows, a one-story wraparound porch and decorative wood detailing such as delicate turned porch supports and spindlework ornamentation. The spindlework is also used in the wall overhangs left by the cutaway bay windows.

The house has had some alterations over the years, including the following:

- 1) Plumbing was added in 1912. (The 1.5" thick, solid oak toilet tank with copper lining was dated.)
- 2) Half of the north-side screened porch became a bathroom.
- 3) In the 1950s, a two-car garage was added, replacing a wood shed (which most likely was originally the horse-carriage shed and outhouse).
- 4) Also in the 1950s, the Standleys built a north-side addition to the kitchen. The roof line shows the addition, as does the piers. Soon after the addition, the Standleys poured a driveway from the garage to the street. When the current owners moved in, the north-side door to the kitchen was locked, so no one would fall straight down to the concrete driveway. There was another bathroom built in the kitchen, which the Galbraiths removed along with the northside kitchen door.

After purchasing the house in 1986, the Galbraiths restored all the exterior bevelled siding (removing asbestos siding) as well as all the interior cypress woodwork to its original, naturally-stained beauty, using dental tools on the mantel, and many hours of labor. The 1960 room additions to the front of the home were removed and the south side front porch was restored to its original design, following the roofline and original piers.

The Galbraiths' son, Travis, was granted the opportunity as a fourth grader to research the house's history in the Texas Room and at Clayton Library. He won the Texas History Award for "Back To The Future of 301 East 8th" and presented its history and the history of its owners at the George R. Brown Convention in 1992. The house is in excellent condition.

The information concerning the original general contractor came from the owners of 902 East 9th Street (Mrs. Cathey Harrison) who has the original deed and paperwork of her home (built circa 1908) explaining the construction contract. Because the two homes are almost mirror images of one another and were the first homes on each block, they may reflect the Sears & Roebuck Queen Anne Architectural Plan. The door window may have been an additional from the influence of Galveston architectural features.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Census records, 1910.

Galbraith, Travis, "Back & To The Future of 301 East Eighth, Houston Heights," 1992 paper.

Harris County Deed Records.

Houston City Directories, various dates.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, Field Guide to American Houses, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984.

Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Houston, 1924-1950, Vol. 7, Sheet 725.

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.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The HAHC shall review each application for designation of a protected landmark that is included in an application for designation of a landmark at the same time and in the same manner as it reviews and considers the application for a landmark. The HAHC and the Planning Commission, in making recommendations with respect to a protected landmark designation, and the City Council, in making a designation, shall consider whether the building, structure, site, or area meets at least three of the criteria in Section 33-224, or one of the criteria in Section 33-229, as follows:

S NA

S - satisfies NA - not applicable

Meets at least three of the following (Sec. 33-229(a)(1):

- (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;

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

- (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)).

OR

- The property was constructed before 1905 (Sec. 33-229(a)(2));

OR

- The property is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a “contributing structure” in an historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Sec. 33-229(a)(3));

OR

- The property is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark (Sec. 33-229(a)(4)).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation of the Colburn House at 301 E. 8th Street.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

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EXHIBIT A
COLBURN HOUSE
301 E. 8TH STREET



CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

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EXHIBIT B SITE LOCATION MAP COLBURN HOUSE 301 E. 8TH STREET NOT TO SCALE

