

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK/SITE NAME: W. L. Foley Dry Goods Building
OWNER: Foley Building Development, LC
APPLICANT: Minette Boesel, President
LOCATION: 214 Travis Street, Main Street/Market Square
 Historic District
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: 02/13/96

AGENDA ITEM: IIIc
P. C. MEETING DATE: 04/04/96
HPO FILE NO.: 96L003
DATE ACCEPTED: 01/17/96
HAHC HEARING DATE: 03/14/96

SITE INFORMATION

Tracts 1B, 1C, 2A-1, 2B, Block 19, SSBB, City of Houston. The W. L. Foley Building, facing southeast on Travis Street, is a three-story, two bay brick building with stucco surface. The first floor is glass storefront with recessed entry. A sidewalk canopy is supported by thin cast-iron columns. The second and third floors each display four symmetrically arranged 2/2 windows that are double-hung and wood sash.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

NHPA, 1983
City of Houston 1998

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The W. L. Foley Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on October 11, 1978, under criterion "A" and "C" (reference #78002942). It was also designated by the Texas Historical Commission as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1978.

The original building on the site was constructed in 1860 for John Kennedy, an early merchant and Indian trader. W. L. Foley, an Irish immigrant who came to Texas in 1871, met and married Kennedy's daughter. He operated his dry goods business at several locations in Houston. In 1878 when Kennedy died, Foley moved his business to the Kennedy establishment. After a fire totally destroyed the two northernmost sections of Kennedy's building in 1888, Foley hired Eugene T. Heiner to design the building at 214 Travis as well as remodel the facade of the remaining portion of the original building at 218 Travis. Heiner was one of the most prominent architects in Texas at the time. Descriptive accounts of Foley's dry-goods emporium appearing in the "Houston Daily Post" in early 1889 when the project was announced, referred to the proposed building as "magnificent and palatial."

The building is one of the few remaining examples of a building with the vaguely Renaissance Revival detailing. This detailing typified the then-popular vogue of "constructive" building detail - a symbolic representation of columns, piers and lintels. Elements of this "constructive" ornamentation also include vertical incisions, sunk panels, frieze bands, and segmental arched window hoods. The building also features a prominent corbelled limestone parapet. It is also one of the few remaining buildings that retains its original cast-iron columns that support the sidewalk canopy.

Although Foley died in 1925, the W. L. Foley Dry Goods Company continued to be operated at this site by his children until 1948. W. L. Foley is known as the "dean of Houston dry goods merchants," because so many young men learned the trade from him, including his nephews, James A. and Pat Foley. They later founded Foley Brothers in 1900. This organization still prospers as part of the Federated Stores chain.

RESTORATION HISTORY/CURRENT CONDITION:

In the mid-1950's, the first floor entry was recessed and plate glass windows were installed. In the mid-1970's wood panels were installed under the plate glass to make the alteration more compatible with the

building. While being occupied by a pizza parlor in May 1976, a fire caused damage to parts of the first floor and smoke damage to the second and third floors. Later, the building was purchased by Diverse Works, an art gallery. In 1989 another fire at 220 Travis caused additional smoke damage to the Foley Building. It remained vacant until being purchased in 1994 by the applicant.

Renovation included demolition of existing sheetrock partition walls and the installation of HVAC wiring, plumbing and new partition walls to sensitively adapt the use of the building on the first floor to art gallery space and two apartments on the second floor. The applicant repaired the roof of the building and the roof decking of the canopy. Only minor repairs have been made to the exterior of the building by the applicant.

HAHC RECOMMENDATION:

At a public hearing on March 14, 1996, the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission determined that the application complied with criteria 3 and 4 found in Section 33-224 and recommended designation of the W. L. Foley Building as a Landmark to the Planning Commission. The application was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL CRITERIA:

According to the approval criteria in Section 33-224 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance: The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission shall recommend to the Planning Commission with respect to designation of a Landmark upon finding that the application satisfies the following criteria, as applicable:

- (1) 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.

#6

W. L. Foley is known as the "dean of Houston dry goods merchants," because so many young men learned the trade from him, including his nephews, James A. and Paul Foley. They later founded Foley Brothers on Main Street in 1900. This organization still prospers as part of the Federated Stores chain.

After a fire destroyed the two northernmost sections of the W. L. Foley Dry Goods Building in 1888, Mr. Foley hired Eugene T. Heiner, one of the premier architects of Texas, to design both the building at 214 Travis as well as remodel the facade of his building at 214 Travis.

Eugene T. Heiner came to Texas in 1877 and his first commission was the county jail for Galveston County. During his career, he designed over 35 courthouses and jails throughout Texas. He designed many prominent buildings in Houston including the Cotton Exchange Building (202 Travis), the Henry Brashear Building (910 Prairie), and the Sweeney-Coombs Building (310 Main) which are still in existence and have been restored. He also worked on the redesign of the dome of the State Capitol Building in Austin.

- (2) 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.

#4

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Also #5, 1, 3,

CITY OF HOUSTON

Planning Commission

Planning and Development Department

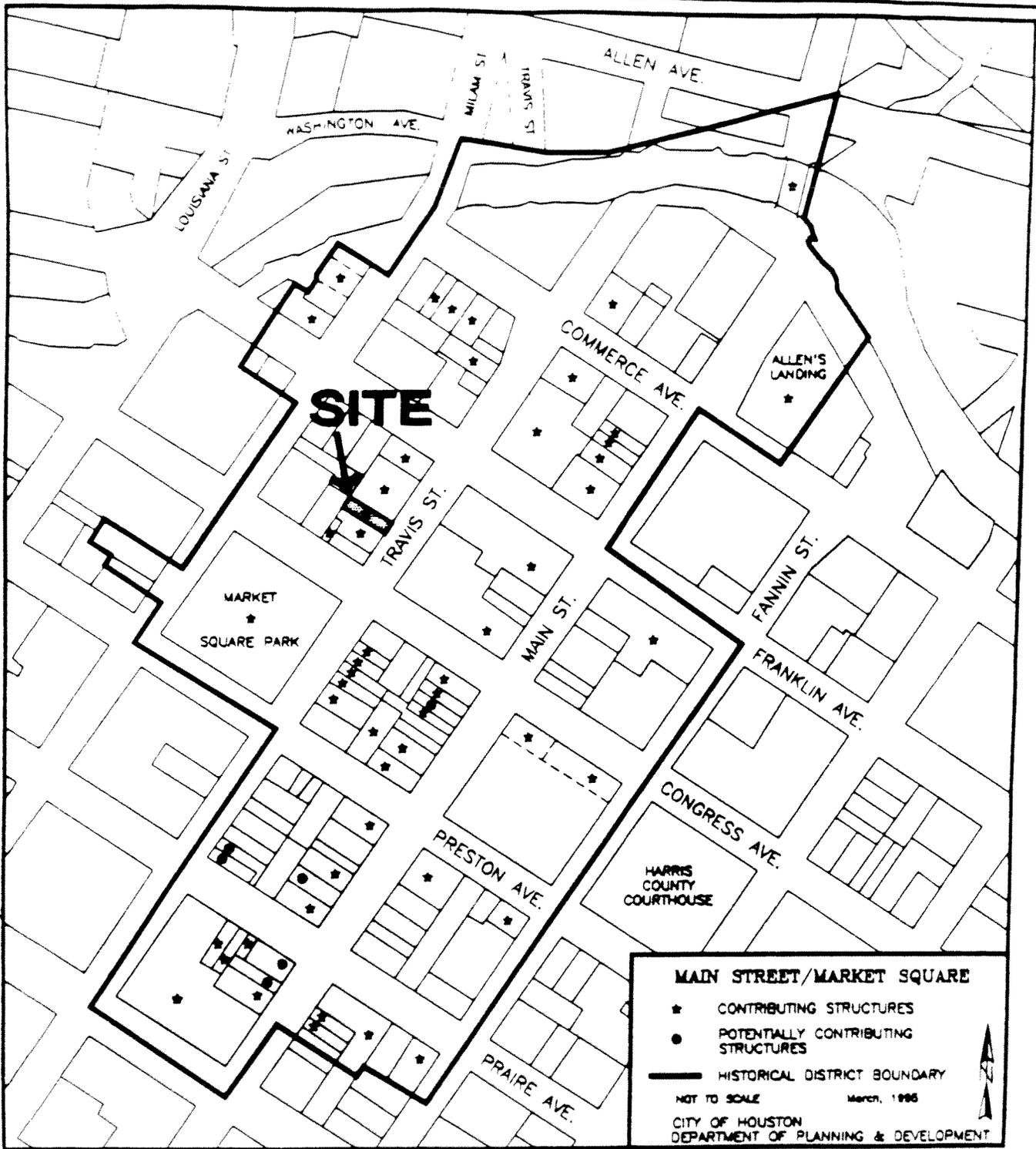
The building also features a prominent corbelled limestone parapet. It is also one of the few remaining buildings that retains its original cast-iron columns that support the sidewalk canopy.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission, and forward it to the City Council for the adoption of the W. L. Foley Building as a Landmark of the City of Houston.

W.L. FOLEY BUILDING



LANDMARK DESIGNATION ↑ NORTH