

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK/SITE NAME: The Hermann Loock House
OWNER: Mr. Larry Moore
APPLICANT: Mr. Larry Moore
LOCATION: 2217 Union Street - Old Sixth Ward Historic District
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: 04/20/97

AGENDA ITEM: IVa
PC MEETING DATE: 06/26/97
HPO FILE NO.: 97L021
DATE ACCEPTED: 04/15/97
HAHC HEARING DATE: 05/22/97

SITE INFORMATION:

Lot 12, Block 397 of the W. R. Baker Addition, NSBB, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas, being a 50' X 53' parcel, consisting of 2,650 square feet. The building on the site is a one-story, wood frame residence with a porch in the ell of the building.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The house is an excellent example of a vernacular Queen Anne style cottage in the Old Sixth Ward Historic District. The type of house represents an important era of middle-class housing for German immigrants whose architectural craftsmanship contributes uniquely to the historical significance of the Old Sixth Ward Historic District.

Prudent preservation practices throughout the country in regards to landmark designations by municipalities, including Houston, Texas are done under the premise that the term landmark is not applied only to singular or monumental structures but applies to any building, structure, site or object that the community considers worthy of designation and meets the criteria for the designation. To quote building historian Thomas Hubka, "The folk designer simply signs his signature much smaller (than notable contemporary designers) but by no means less forcefully. This signature is in the details, in the care, and in the craft of building (and while the modern observer might not see this signature you can be sure his contemporaries saw it). Vernacular (or folk) architecture that appears unified, homogeneous, even identical becomes, on closer inspection, rich, diversified, and individualistic."

The property is contained within the boundary of the Old Sixth Ward Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 (Reference No. 78002946). An application for historic district designation was initiated in accordance with the Historic Preservation Ordinance No. 95-228 by action of the Houston Archeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) at their public hearing on March 13, 1997. The application for historic district will be considered at the August 14, 1997 HAHC public hearing. Even though said application for historic district designation is pending, the owner of 2217 Union Street, located in the proposed historic district, wished to initiate an individual landmark designation application for his property.

Originally part of the First Ward until 1876, the district today has the largest concentration of Victorian-era buildings in Houston. The area maintains the feeling of a modest, self-contained neighborhood with its predominantly small 19th-century, one-story cottages, two-story Victorian-era homes, and some early 20th-century bungalow style buildings. The neighborhood also contains fire stations, churches, corner stores, and a school. The original boundaries of the Old Sixth Ward extended further south to Buffalo Bayou and streets

including Nelson, Richmond, and Bow were platted for houses which were destroyed or moved when Memorial Drive was constructed.

The building at 2217 Union Street is a one-story, wood frame cottage with a pyramidal hip roof intersected by a gable roof. The style of the building is a vernacular Queen Anne cottage. The most prominent features of the house include the front-facing gable which is clad with decorative wood shingles and the cutaway bay. The porch located in the ell of the building is partial width and features a shed roof. The porch features turned columns and simple lace-like brackets placed on either sides at the top of each column. Two single doors with upper transom windows face each side of the porch ell. Each door features a large, etched glass light below which are wood panels. The windows are wood sash, double-hung with 2/2 lights. The roof is clad with standing seam metal. A brick, ridge chimney pierces the pyramidal roof at its point. There is an original brick sidewalk on the north and west sides of the property.

The site of the house (Lot 12) including Lots 10 and 11 was purchased by Hermann and Henrietta Look on March 7, 1881. The City Directory of Houston for 1880-1881 shows Herman Look residing on Union between Hemphill and Taylor. His occupation was listed as a blacksmith for the H. T. & C. Railroad. Therefore, the house was built shortly after they purchased the lots in 1881. Later, they sold Lot 10 only in 1893. Lots 11 and 12 were sold probably due to delinquent tax payments at Sheriff's Auction in 1898 to D. E. Williams, but the Look's were able to repurchase their property in 1899. Apparently they never left the property during this one year period because it had been homesteaded. They owned and occupied the site, including Lots 11 and 12 until March, 1901 when they sold it to C. N. Fisher. Mr. Fisher sold the property in 1904 to Gustave Artz, who was a real estate investor and used the property for rental income. The property was used for that purpose by subsequent owners until 1994 when it was purchased by the applicant.

RESTORATION HISTORY/CURRENT CONDITION:

There have been only minor changes to the building since the original construction. The house was restored by the applicant who added a compatible balustrade featuring turned balusters (original one would most likely have been a stick balustrade) and applied overscaled, decorative drop brackets under the wall overhang of the cutaway bay (originally suspended from this area was probably a simple saw-tooth frieze which probably was applied as well between the brackets and columns of the porch). The original porch detailing was most likely similar to that found on the house at 2108 State Street. The six foot tall picket fence, probably installed for security reasons, is slightly out of scale with the cottage. The arched, eight foot trellis arbor over the fence entry gate is a compatible feature of the fence.

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 D NA **S - satisfies D - does not satisfy NA - not applicable**

(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.

HAHC RECOMMENDATION:

At a public hearing on May 22, 1997, the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission determined that the application complied with criteria found in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, and recommended that the Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the HAHC and forward it to City Council for the designation of the Hermann Loock House as a landmark to the Planning Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: That the Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and forward it to City Council for designation of the Hermann Loock House as a Landmark of the City of Houston.

Site Location Map
The Hermann Look House
2217 Union Street
Not to scale

