

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Albert W. Lackey House
OWNER: Suzanne Anderson
APPLICANT: Same as Owner
LOCATION: 239 Westheimer – Avondale Addition
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: II.c
HPO FILE NO.: 07PL41
DATE ACCEPTED: Feb-1-07
HAHC HEARING: Mar-14-07
PC HEARING: Mar-29-07

SITE INFORMATION:

Lot 18, Block 10, Avondale, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, wood frame residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The house located at 239 Westheimer was the home of Albert Wesley Lackey, a real estate investor in Houston during the early 20th Century and one time Superintendent of the Houston Parks System. The home was designed and constructed in late 1910 by the Russell Brown Company, a notable Houston and Dallas firm. Russell Brown was a builder of high end homes in Houston during the first quarter of the 20th century. Examples of this company's work may be seen elsewhere in Avondale, Broadacres, Montrose, South End, and Westmoreland. The home is one of the last remnants of the residential component to Avondale located on Westheimer Road. The house meets Criteria 1, 4, 5, and 6 for designation as a Protected Landmark.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The Albert Wesley Lackey house is located at 239 Westheimer in the Avondale subdivision, first platted in 1907, which originally included the 100, 200, and 300 blocks of Avondale, Stratford, and Hathaway (renamed Westheimer in 1960) streets. Today, the eastern portion of Avondale, which includes the 100 blocks of Avondale and Stratford and the eastern half of the 200 block of Stratford, is designated as the Avondale East Historic District, one of eight historic districts thus far designated by City Council.

Albert W. Lackey was a native of Jackson County, Ohio, born in 1868. He was the second of three children born to Adam and Nancy Lackey who lived in Bloomfield, Ohio. Adam Lackey was a county commissioner for Jackson County from 1866-1871. Albert's mother, Nancy Stephenson Lackey, was the daughter of a Jackson County judge.

Albert Lackey moved to Houston in 1910 with his two sisters, Permelia and Mary Lackey. The three siblings were enumerated in the same household in the 1910 census of Harris County. Permelia Lackey was aged 40 years and Mary was aged 60 years at that time. Albert Lackey was listed as 42 years of age and single. The Lackeys were boarders in a home in Houston's Third Ward when they first arrived in Houston, but would soon purchase the new home at 218 Hathaway (239 Westheimer) in January 1911.

Albert Lackey was involved in real estate during his first three years in Houston. He was appointed as one of the first superintendents of the Houston Parks System in 1915. At this time Houston was in the initial phase of a mammoth undertaking regarding its future development and how the use of green space and parkland would be integrated into this plan. In 1912, Houston Mayor Ben Campbell hired landscape architect Arthur Comey to create a master plan for the future development of Houston, which placed a great deal of emphasis on public

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green spaces and parks. Portions of his plan called for the use of Buffalo, Bray's, and White Oak Bayous as natural green corridors and the conversion of Main Street to a scenic boulevard with esplanades from downtown to Bellaire Boulevard. Elsewhere in the Comey plan for Houston was the creation of a "green belt" around the city, a concept first proposed in England in 1903. In 1914, the first Parks Board was created and included Houston notables George Hermann, Captain Edwin Parker, and Julian Settegast. In 1914, Hermann donated the large tract of land across from Rice Institute to the City of Houston for use as a park. The creation of Hermann Park and the landscaped esplanades on South Main between the Rice Institute and Hermann Park would be the only major part of the Comey plan to be implemented.

Albert Lackey purchased his home at 239 Westheimer, then known as 218 Hathaway, on February 21, 1911. He purchased Lot 18 in Block 10 of the new Avondale addition, which included a new two-story house. The purchase price was \$7,500, which was to be repaid in three payments. The seller was the Russell Brown Company, a local Houston and Dallas homebuilder that was very active in the area. The Russell Brown Company supplied the plans, labor and material for new homes that could be built either from existing plans or customized homes built to suit the needs of the client.

The 239 Westheimer house was built as a speculative house by the Russell Brown Company. The design was a two-story wood framed residence with prominent beveled bay windows on the main façade of the second floor. The house was the duplicate of another house built by the Russell Brown Company in March 1911 at 3518 Garrott Street in the nearby Westmoreland neighborhood. This particular house style bears strong resemblance to one of the George F. Barber designed homes from his 1902 catalog of house designs titled Art In Architecture. House Design Number 577, by Barber and Klutz Architects, was available as complete plans with blueprints for \$37. The Russell Brown design is not an exact duplicate of the Barber and Klutz design, however. The earlier Barber design features paired hipped roof dormers on the front and single hipped roof dormers on each side of the mansard roof. The Russell Brown design incorporates several style departures from the earlier Barber design, the most notable of which is the use of a low hipped roof with one large centered hipped roof dormer. The use of these elements was more in keeping with the Prairie School of architecture that was popular at the time.

Albert Lackey would have been considered "middle class" when he moved to Avondale in 1911. The Greater Houston Improvement Company marketed the new Avondale neighborhood to three tiers of socio-economic groups. Hathaway Street was the least expensive portion of the neighborhood and had the smallest lots at six thousand square feet, still comfortably sized by normal city standards. Homes along Hathaway were required to cost no less than three thousand dollars and to have at least a twenty-foot set back from the street. The homes on Avondale, one block north of Hathaway, featured 10,000 square foot or greater lots with homes costing no less than \$5,000 and set back 35 feet from the front property line. Albert Lackey, who lived in the less expensive part of the neighborhood, shared his rear property line with 16 Courtlandt Place, owned by J.J. Carroll, manager of his father-in-law's lumber company, the W. T. Carter Lumber Company. W. T. Carter was President of the Greater Houston Improvement Company which developed Avondale. Courtlandt Place was, at that time, Houston's most exclusive residential enclave. Residents along Hathaway in the Avondale subdivision were located directly between two of Houston's most exclusive residential streets.

The Lackeys lived at 239 Westheimer until 1930, when they sold the home and moved to the Magnolia Park subdivision. The house was next occupied by Edward and Mildred Owens. Edward Owens was an interior decorator when he first purchased the property, but was soon after listed simply as a "paper hanger." The change in status came shortly after the stock market crash of 1929, which sent the majority of the country into widespread economic depression. Owens' later occupation was given as farmer and finally "Real Estate." Edward Owens died in 1942, but his wife Mildred M. Owens continued to live in the house until 1973. At

various times, Mildred Owens was a teacher, and a writer and editor for the Marion Riddick Film Production Company. In 1967, she became the Executive Secretary Treasurer for the Houston Christian Mission Lighthouse for Women, with which she was involved for many more years.

The house at 239 Westheimer stayed in the Owens family for many years while many of the other homes in the neighborhood changed hands many times as the neighborhood changed from one of deed-restricted single-family homes to a mix of single-family, commercial, and multifamily occupancy. In 1995, the house became the offices for Suzanne Anderson Properties and was purchased by Suzanne Anderson in 1996. Suzanne Anderson Properties, which began in the early 1980s, has grown to become a well-recognized force in the real estate business with 39 agents in Houston, Galveston, and Austin.

Avondale was one of several upscale "suburban" neighborhoods developed during the first quarter of the 20th century, which included Audubon Place, Courtlandt Place, James Bute Addition, Montrose, and Westmoreland. This area attracted Houston's business and social elite more than a decade before the creation of River Oaks, Houston's undisputed upscale neighborhood. Avondale was first platted in 1907 and derived its name from a variation on the name of William Shakespeare's hometown in England, Stratford-upon-Avon. According to an Art Nouveau-style ad in the May 25, 1907 Houston Daily Post newspaper, the name Avondale was chosen from a publicly advertised naming contest. Nine contestants tied for the \$25 prize, which was increased to \$27 so that the nine winners could split the money evenly. The two major thoroughfares in Avondale were named Avondale and Stratford. Avondale offered many attractive perks to upper echelon Houstonians. All unsightly utility lines and garbage bins were accessed from the alleyways behind every home. The concrete curbs and sidewalks were tinted a pleasing shade of pink so as not to strain the eye in the afternoon sun, and streets were paved with oyster shell. Furthermore, no businesses, boarding houses, or structures costing less than \$5,000 were allowed within the neighborhood. The developers touted it as a "first class neighborhood." The streets were landscaped with a variety of oaks, palms, and camphor trees planted by the fledgling Teas Nursery.

Houston experienced a period of substantial growth after major oil strikes in the early 1900s in nearby East Texas oilfields, including Spindletop, Pelly, and Goose Creek. Cotton also played a major economic role, and was so important to the local economy that a Houston Cotton Exchange was created that tracked the price of cotton like commodities on New York's Wall Street Stock Exchange. Avondale played host to many of the men involved in the oil and cotton business. The neighborhood was close to the downtown business district, but far enough away from the hustle and bustle to accommodate spacious homes, large lawns, and broad streets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The Albert W. Lackey home is a two-story, wood framed, single-family residence. It is designed as a modified American Foursquare, which is two stories in height with equilateral sides and a hipped roof. The house departs from the strict interpretation of the foursquare design, however, through its use of prominent three sided bay windows on the second story of the main elevation. The home is clad in double drop wood siding and features windows of a multi light over single pane variety in both the upper and lower floors. This type of window is also used in a central hipped roof dormer window on the street facing side of the house. The house has been used for commercial purposes in recent years, but still maintains its identity architecturally as a single-family residence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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Johnston, Marguerite. Houston, The Unknown City 1836-1946 ; Texas A&M Press 1991.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. Maps, Houston 1925 Vol. 5 p. 544.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, and edited by Thomas McWhorter, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

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

- (a) The HAHC and the commission, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider three or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the Protected Landmark designation. If the HAHC reviews an application for designation of a Protected Landmark initiated after the designation of the Landmark, the HAHC shall review the basis for its initial recommendation for designation and may recommend designation of the landmark as a protected landmark unless the property owner elects to designate and if the landmark has met at least (3) three of the criteria of Section 33-224 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (HPO) at the time of its designation or, based upon additional information considered by the HAHC, the landmark then meets at least (3) three of criteria of Section 33-224 of the HPO, as follows:

| S | NA | | S - satisfies | D - does not satisfy | NA - not applicable |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event; | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | (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; | | | |

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- (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.

OR

- The property was constructed before 1905;

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;

OR

- The property was designated as a State of Texas Recorded Texas Historical Landmark.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation of the Albert W. Lackey House at 239 Westheimer Road.

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SITE LOCATION MAP
ALBERT W. LACKEY HOUSE
239 WESTHEIMER ROAD
NOT TO SCALE

