

News Release



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Historic designation bestowed on John and Marie Etta Garrow House and Scientific Barbershop

HOUSTON, December 29, 2009 – Houston City Council designated the John and Marie Etta Garrow House in the Courtlandt Place Historic District and the Scientific Barbershop in Fifth Ward as protected historic landmarks. The “protected” designation means the property cannot be demolished or inappropriately altered.

The John and Marie Etta Garrow House at 19 Courtlandt Place was built in 1913 and designed by renowned Houston architect, Birdsall P. Briscoe, a long-term friend of the Garrows. The house is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style. John Wanroy Garrow was active in the cotton business in Houston. He was a director and president of the Texas Cotton Association and in 1929 of the Houston Cotton Exchange. John Garrow’s father, H. W. Garrow, was one of the founders of the Houston Cotton Exchange in 1882, and served as president and a director of the Exchange for many years. Marie Etta Brady Garrow was herself a member of a well-known Houston family. Her grandfather was General Sidney Sherman, a hero of the Battle of San Jacinto. Her father was John Thomas Brady, a lawyer and Texas legislator, who was instrumental in the creation of the Houston Ship Channel.



The Scientific Barbershop, located at 4610 Market Street, has been a Fifth Ward institution since the 1940s. Established circa 1944 by Willia “Bill” Glenn Scott, a female barber, Scientific Barbershop has served the Fifth Ward community through two generations of family ownership. The shop got its name because Ms. Scott had been trained at a barber college and thus understood the ‘science’ of barbering. The name is also reminiscent of the history of the profession, as in earlier times, barbers not only cut hair, but also performed surgery and dentistry. The barber pole with its red and white spiral indicates the two crafts - surgery in red and barbering in white.



Barbershops have long played a central role in black communities. In Fifth Ward, Scientific Barbershop functions as a neighborhood center in addition to barber shop – a place for community residents, businessman, politicians, educators, doctors, lawyers and preachers to gather, exchange information, and debate the topics of the day. Over the years, Scientific Barbershop has attracted many patrons from Houston’s African-American political leadership. Scientific Barbershop has been such an integral part of the neighborhood’s community life that it is popularly known as the “City Hall of the Fifth

Ward.” Willia Scott, the original proprietor of Scientific Barbershop, was a female in a male-dominated field. Ms. Scott and her older sister, Nannie Glenn, were the first female barbers in the Fifth Ward. Nannie Glenn was also an instructor at Tyler Barber College in Houston, which trained most of the African-American barbers in the 1930s and 1940s. Today, Scientific Barbershop is still in the family – owned and operated by Ms. Scott’s daughter, Bernadette Presley. The building is a two-story wood frame vernacular building with wood and asbestos siding. The barbershop is located on the first floor and a residence is on the second floor. The building is in good condition and has experienced minimal changes over the years.

Houston’s Historic Preservation Ordinance recognizes and protects the city’s historic sites. By preserving the city’s valuable historic resources, residents and visitors are visibly reminded of our culture and heritage, boosting civic pride and economic prosperity. More information is available online at the Planning Department web site at www.houstonplanning.com under Historic Preservation.