

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: The Proebstle-Whorton House

AGENDA ITEM: C

OWNERS: Kyle W. Fake Seydler

HPO FILE NO.:

APPLICANTS: Kyle W. Fake Seydler

DATE ACCEPTED: 7/21/20

LOCATION: 911 Woodland Street, Houston, Texas, 77009 –
Woodson Place

HAHC HEARING: 9/2/2020

SITE INFORMATION: Lot 23, Block 7, Woodson Place, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas.
Designation is requested for the one-story, single-family home. The 1,232 square-foot frame house and
is on a 5,000 square-foot lot.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Proebstle-Whorton House is a one-story frame, Craftsman-style bungalow built in 1923. The house is located north of downtown Houston in the Woodson Place subdivision, one block outside the boundary of the Woodland Heights Historic District.

Woodson Place was established by the prolific Houston developer William A. Wilson in the early 1920s. The transfer of this land occurred in 1921; D. W. Michaux sold the land to the Woodson Realty Company, of which Wilson was a director. Wilson founded the William A. Wilson Realty Company in 1898, and was active in the development of the Houston Heights, Woodland Heights and several subdivisions.

Robert M. Schneider, a salesman, and his wife Claire resided at 911 Woodland from 1923 to 1925. In 1926, Caesar Hohn, an insurance agent, and his wife Elanor moved in. The couple owned the house briefly. The house was owned the longest by two families – the Proebstles and the Whortons. By 1928, the Proebstles began residing at 911 Woodland. Anna Margaret Meyer Proebstle, a domestic worker, and her husband Louis, a farmer, lived at this address until Louis's death in 1930 and Anna's death in 1962. Thomas Benton Whorton, a machinist, owned the property in the late-1970s with his wife Wanda Martha Hebbe Whorton. Thomas died in 1989, and Martha passed in 2003. Their son Glenn owned the property until 2003. Subsequent owners include Joseph D. and Diane Incognito (1997 to 2003), and Paul Simon (2003 to 2005).

The current owner Kyle W. Fake Seydler purchased the property in 2005. She is seeking a protected landmark designation for the house in order to preserve this example of the historic housing stock in Woodson Place. The Proebstle-Whorton House meets criteria 1, 3, and 4 for landmark designation and criteria 1 for protected landmark designation.

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HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

WILLIAM A. WILSON AND THE WOODSON PLACE SUBDIVISION

The Woodson Place subdivision is located north of downtown Houston, near the area known as Woodland Heights. The subdivision lies one block outside of the Woodland Heights Historic District. William A. Wilson was responsible for developing Woodson Place in the early 1920s, as well as the earlier Woodland Heights neighborhood.

William A. Wilson (1864-1928) was one of Houston's leading developers during the early twentieth century. He was originally from Syracuse, New York. When he visited Houston in 1892, he was impressed by the new Houston Heights development. Convinced that the City of Houston would grow and prosper, he moved to Houston in 1893 at the age of 28, and lived with his wife and young children in a rooming house until 1902, when the family moved into a home at 921 Heights Boulevard. He founded the William A. Wilson Realty Company in 1898 and was an active participant in developing Houston Heights; Wilson built and sold several homes in the Heights as well as other areas around Houston.

Wilson began the development of Woodland Heights in 1907 with the purchase of 106 acres on Houston Avenue less than two miles northwest of downtown Houston. In 1910, Wilson built a new home for his family at 205 Bayland Street in Woodland Heights, where he lived until his death in 1928 at the age of 63. His widow remained in the home until 1938.

The *Houston Chronicle* contains several ads and announcements about Woodson Place. An article published on October 23, 1921, "Sells 35 Acres Adjoining Woodland Heights for \$40,000," noted the land, located on the west side of Woodland Heights, was transferred from D.W. Michaux to the Woodson Realty Company. The 35-acre tract was to be "subdivided into 208 full-sized building lots" and "known as Woodson Place...an extension of Woodland Heights." An additional \$40,000 was to be spent installing gas and sewer lines, sidewalks, curbs and streets. All utility pipes and poles were to be placed in a three-foot easement at the rear of the homesites. William A. Wilson was one of the directors of Woodson Realty.

Through advertisements published in the *Houston Chronicle* throughout the early 1920s, it is evident how popular and attractive the subdivision was for homeowners. For example, an advertisement from April 15, 1923, in the real estate section of the *Chronicle* was titled, "The Environment that Pleases May be found in Woodson Place." The ad described Woodson Place as an "attractive residential district" with "many new bungalows...beautiful ones of brick and stucco" with prices "far lower than for equally desirable properties elsewhere in the city." The 50' x 125' lots were advertised as having "every modern convenience – curb, gutter, graveled streets, sewer, water gas, etc." Another selling point was the subdivisions convenient location to transportation – one block from the Watson Avenue streetcar line – and proximity to schools.

OWNERSHIP HISTORY

911 Woodland Street (previously avenue) was first listed in the Houston city directories in 1923. Robert M. Schneider, a salesman, and his wife Claire resided there until around 1925. In 1926, Caesar Hohn and

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his wife Elanor moved in. Caesar worked in insurance. The couple owned the house briefly. By 1928, the Proebstles had begun their lengthy residence at 911 Woodland.

Louis Proebstle (b. April 8, 1858, d. May 27, 1930)

Anna Margaret Meyer Proebstle (b. February 16, 1869, d. March 4, 1962)

Louis Proebstle, a farmer, was born April 8, 1858, in Germany. Anna Margaret Meyer Proebstle was born on February 16, 1869, in Mulson, Hanover, Germany. The couple on September 5, 1889, in Cooke County, Texas, where they owned a farm. They had moved to Houston by 1928, where Anna was a homemaker and employed as a domestic worker. Anna and Louis had five children: Herman W., Rosa Louise, Bertha, Alfred and Clara. Louis Proebstle died on May 27, 1930. Anna passed away on March 4, 1962, at her home in Woodson Place. They are both buried in Glenwood Cemetery.

Thomas Benton Whorton (b. June 30, 1903, d. March 30, 1989)

Wanda Martha Hebbe Whorton (b. February 9, 1913, d. January 15, 2003)

According to tax appraisal records, Thomas Benton Whorton owned the property in 1978. He lived there with his wife Wanda Martha Whorton and their children.

Thomas Whorton was born on June 30, 1903 in Coolidge, Limestone County, Texas, to Thomas Emmett and Susan Elmer Whorton. Wanda Martha Hebbe was born on February 9, 1913, in Mart, McLennan County, Texas to Adolph Julius and Emma Lehna Stelter Hebbe. Thomas was a machinist who served in the United States Marine Corps. Wanda worked as a "janitress." The couple had five children: Wanda Marie, Patsy, Dorothy, Barbara and Glenn. Thomas died on March 30, 1989, and Wanda passed away on January 15, 2003. They are buried in Hillcrest Cemetery in Marlin, Falls County, Texas. Thomas and Wanda's son Glenn owned the property from 1992 to around 1996.

Joseph D. and Diane Incognito owned 911 Woodland from 1997 to 2003 (it was occupied by their daughter, Kimberly Incognito), followed by Paul Simon, who owned the house from 2003 to 2005. The current owner, Kyle W. Fake Seydler, purchased the property in 2005.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

American Craftsman

911 Woodland Street is a one-story frame, Craftsman-style bungalow. The Craftsman style evolved out of the popular Arts and Crafts Movement of the early 1900s, when architecture shifted away from the more elaborate Victorian style. It was the prevailing architectural style in the United States between 1900 and 1930. Craftsman style is often associated with bungalow house forms, and both were inspired by architect brothers Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene. The Greene's were from California and practiced together in Pasadena from 1893 to 1914. They began designing simple Craftsman bungalows around 1903, according to Virginia McAlester, author of *A Field Guide to American Houses: Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*.

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The defining features of bungalows include low-pitched gabled roofs, wide eaves (usually with exposed brackets under the eaves), partial or full-width porches supported by tapered square columns or piers and prominent but simple decorations.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The current owner was told by long-term Heights resident George Clogston that the angled skirting on 911 Woodland Street was a signature architectural characteristic of homes built by a construction firm owned by Robert Wendt (with his son, Otto) of Wendt and Son Construction. They were employed by developer William A. Wilson, and were the prime builders for Wilson Development. Clogston also reported that Robert Wendt was one of the founding members of Zion Lutheran Church in the Heights.

911 Woodland Street has a medium pitched, front-gabled roof with open eaves and exposed rafters. There is a wooden stringcourse with simple molding that runs the full-width of the house, separating the gables from the main body of the house. The roof is covered in composition shingles. There is an exterior brick chimney on the left side of the house. The upper two-thirds of the house, including the gables, is clad in narrow clapboard siding. The lower third features a flared cedar skirt clad in narrow clapboard. The house sits on a pier and beam foundation.

The front façade is two bays wide. The first (left bay) contains one single pane, plate glass window nested within a thin wood frame and a simple wood surround. There is a decorative Craftsman-style bracket under the eaves on the left side of the façade. The gable peak contains a latticed vent opening with a decorative surround, below a single Craftsman-style bracket.

The second (right bay) contains an inset, partial-width porch with a slightly projecting gable front. There is a latticed trim covering the pier and beam foundation. There are concrete steps on the left side of the porch. There is one, plain, square, newel post at either end of the porch gable, under the wooden stringcourse. Between the posts, there is a simple stick porch railing. The wooden front door is set within a simple wood frame. There is wood molding above the door. To the right of the door, there is an octagonal window within a simple wood frame. The porch gable peak contains a single Craftsman-style bracket.

RESTORATION HISTORY

The current owner, Kyle W. Fake Seydler, purchased the property in 2005. She has not made any changes to the exterior of the house.

A previous owner removed the original sash window in the first (left) bay and replaced it with plate glass, but the opening is the size of the historic window and could be restored. The octagonal window to the right of the door in the second (right) bay was also installed by a previous owner.

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- _____, "Real Estate, Woodland Heights, 911 Woodland." December 2, 1924.
- _____, "Mortuary, Louis Proebstle." May 28, 1930.
- _____, "Deaths, Wanda Martha Whorton." January 17, 2003.
- _____, "Local Deaths, Mrs. Anna M. Proebstle." March 5, 1962.

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The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by [Planner Name], Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

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APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, 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	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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;		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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;		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.		

AND

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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)).
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Sec. 33-229. Criteria for protected landmark designation

S	NA	S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) Meets at least three of the criteria for designation in section 33-224 of this Code;		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(2) Was constructed more than 100 years before application for designation was received by the director;		

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- (3) Is listed individually or as a contributing structure in an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places; or
- (4) Is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

HAHC RECOMMENDATION

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EXHIBIT A PHOTO

THE PROEBSTLE-WHORTON HOUSE
911 WOODLAND STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77009



PHOTO BY PRESERVATION HOUSTON, JULY 2020

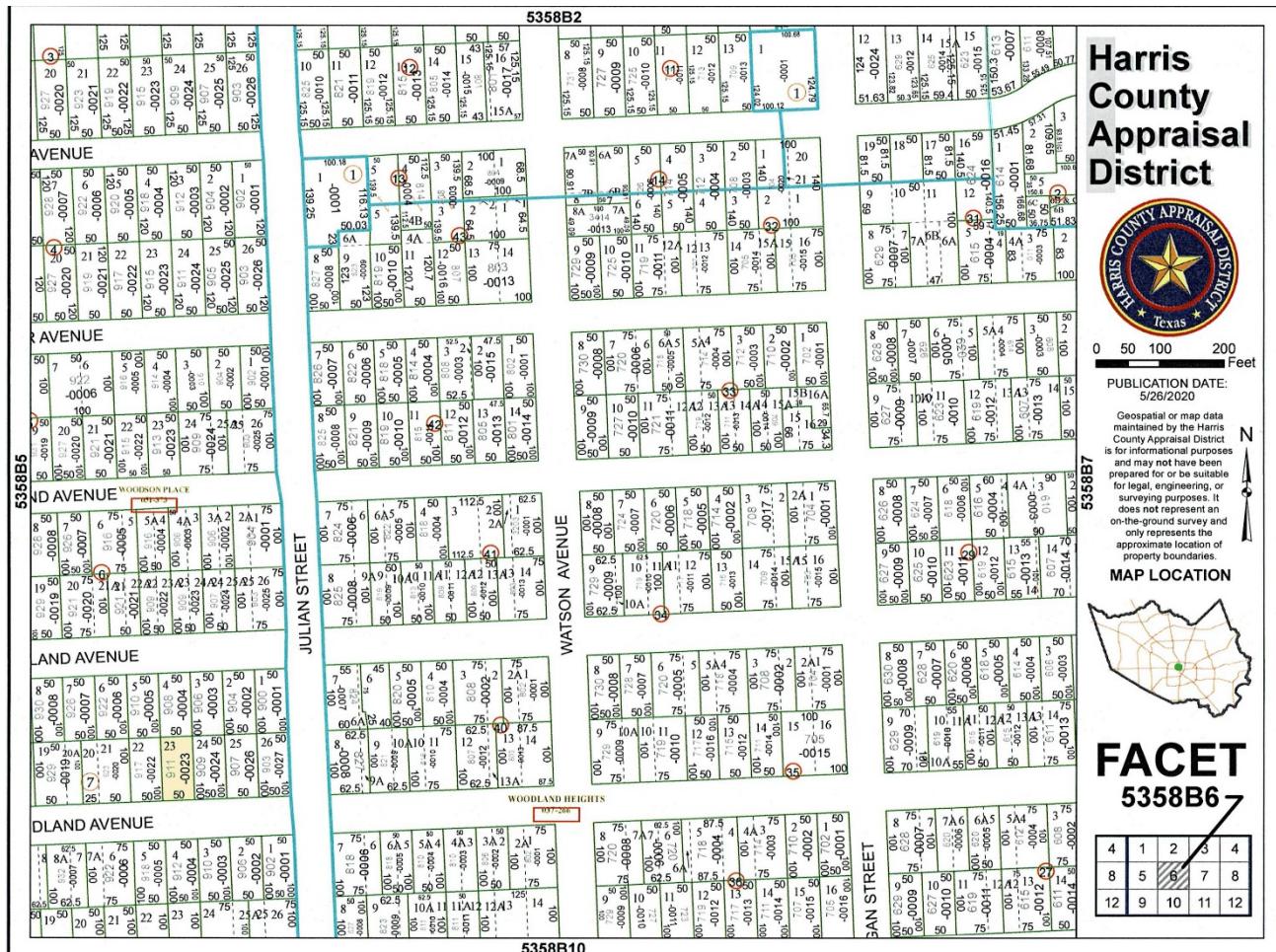
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EXHIBIT B SITE MAP

THE PROEBSTLE-WHORTON HOUSE
911 WOODLAND STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77009



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EXHIBIT C

SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP

HOUSTON 1924-1950 VOL. 2, 1924, SHEET 271

THE PROEBSTLE-WHORTON HOUSE

911 WOODLAND STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77009

