

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Henry Henke's Fifth Ward Grocery Building

**OWNER:** Blumenthal, Inc.

**APPLICANT:** Same

**LOCATION:** 1200 Nance Street – Warehouse District

**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** May-21-2000

**AGENDA ITEM:** I

**HPO FILE NO:** 00L091

**DATE ACCEPTED:** May-8-2000

**HAHC HEARING:** Jun-22-2000

**PC HEARING:** Jul-13-2000

**SITE INFORMATION:** Tracts 4B-1 and 5A, Block 11, Richey's Addition, NSBB, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The structure on the site is a polygon-shaped, 2-story masonry brick building with a flat roof.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Henry Henke's Fifth Ward Grocery Building, built circa 1880, is the oldest and most decorative building in Houston's Warehouse area. The building is not only the finest example of the Italianate style, but it is also one of the few surviving buildings of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the area where literally the "railroad met the sea." The grocery business was strategically located adjacent to the large railroad centers that connected directly to Buffalo Bayou where goods of every kind, businessmen and travelers convened to conduct business that made Houston the world city it is today. The grocery business was also a necessity for the locals in this working class, commercial neighborhood, just north of the downtown business center.

City streets in the area have changed names several times since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In order to research the history of the building, it is necessary to understand the periodic changes in street names which is directly related also to the history of the Richey Addition. Henke's Fifth Ward Grocery was located in the Richey Addition, which was named after Benjamin Richey. The Richey Addition was flanked by Richey, William and John Streets, also the names of two sons of Benjamin. Third Street was known interchangeably as Liberty Street in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. An 1860 map shows John Street which later became Walnut, then Hickory, and then Walnut again. By the 1950s, the street was known by its present name, Nance. Liberty was also known in the 1920s as N. San Jacinto. In 1935 the street name was changed to Rothwell, also known as N. San Jacinto in the 1920s. The current address of the building is 1200 Nance, although it is also known as 1200 Rothwell.

In a deed dated 1873, David J. and Eliza Wilson conveyed Lot 5, Block 11 for \$300 to W. R. McKee. McKee Street and later the bridge nearby were named after Mr. McKee. W. R. McKee and Nellie McKee deeded the property to Henry Henke in 1880, who most likely constructed the building. The 1881 city directory mentions a Fifth Ward Branch of Henry Henke's grocery business. The primary business was headquartered in the Pillot Building on Courthouse Square in downtown Houston. In 1882 Henry Henke purchased Lot 4, Block 11 from George and Margaret Sutor. The following year, Henke's Fifth Ward Grocery, southeast corner of Liberty Avenue and Hickory, appears in the city directory with Herman T. Keller as manager.

In the 1882-83 city directory, the grocery was listed on the southeast corner of Liberty Avenue and Hickory where Henry Henke was the proprietor, selling "groceries, provisions, wholesale and retail

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flour, butter and cheese.” Henke’s (also Henke & Pillot) was one of Houston’s first grocery chains. The 1890 Sanborn Map depicts the building and labels it the Fifth Ward Hotel (including Tony’s Barbershop). Hotel rooms were over the grocery and over a general merchandise store (Fifth Ward Hotel at 1206 Nance), also owned for a time by Henke. The hotel above Henke’s was not named in the 1882 directory of hotels, not because it did not exist or was not important to the area, but perhaps because the hotel business was secondary. Like the Fifth Ward Hotel next door, the hotel above the Henke’s Grocery was strategically located adjacent to the large railroad centers that connected directly to Buffalo Bayou.

In 1884-85 the grocery became known as Keller’s Grocery which sold the same goods as Henke. In 1887 the name changed again and George C. Davis and his wife, Hallie, were listed as a wholesale and retail grocers at 20, 22 and 24 Liberty Road (5<sup>th</sup> Ward), corner of Walnut. They lived above the Fifth Ward Hotel next door. The Davises also operated a saloon on the premises and by 1892 advertised liquors and feed in addition to groceries. In 1894 Henke sold the property to George Davis and later that same year Davis sold to Frank C. Colby. The Davises continued to operate the grocery and reside above at the hotel until 1900. In 1899 Milton W. Frank is listed as the owner with George Davis as manager of the grocery. It is possible that a civil suit caused the change in ownership by the Planters and Merchants Banks against Davis.

In 1903 the grocery became a saloon, billiard hall and restaurant, operated by Frederick R. Weathersby and Thomas R. Hamilton. The address at that time was known as 1202 Liberty, corner Walnut. Hamilton is listed individually in the city directory as a contract painter and paperhanger. Weathersby lived above the saloon which changed names and proprietors every two or three years. Later it was known as the Switch Saloon and then Turf Bar. Most of the operators lived above the establishment, a common practice at that time. In 1920 Ricardo Dorantes opened a restaurant at the site. The old saloon was divided into a tailor shop, called Square Deal Tailor Shop, operated by Louis Huff, an African American. Huff lived at 2617 Nance. In 1922 during Prohibition, John D. Arthur operated the restaurant, now billed as a restaurant and soft drink parlor. In 1923 Oakdale Sausage Company, operated by John and Mary Ludtke, Jr., moved into the space. Mr. Ludtke was associated with the grocery concern of Ludtke Brothers.

In 1925, Liberty Avenue changed names to North San Jacinto. Throughout the 1920s, during prohibition, several restaurants operated in the building. By the late 1920s, car repair shops began to appear in the building or in close proximity, as the area declined. In the early 1930s, a café opened in the building, known as the North San Jacinto Café. In 1935 North San Jacinto Street became known as Rothwell. The building continued to be either vacant or occupied by a café which operated as late as 1980.

The area around Henry Henke’s Grocery was an industrial and working class neighborhood in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Typical of regional trends of the periods, a larger percentage of the business owners or operators lived above their businesses. The hotel was used by the locals for their residences but was primarily used by the railroad workers after shifts and by the businessmen who traveled to the warehouse area of Houston, just north of the Downtown business center.

The building is located in the warehouse area, which grew up along Buffalo Bayou between the 1880s and the 1920s. According to Stephen Fox, “the area developed in response to the overlap of major transportation arteries - the bayou itself, navigable by barge, and a series of railroad lines. It was railroad expansion after the turn-of-the-century that made the lightly settled working-class neighborhood

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on the north bank of Buffalo Bayou and the somewhat denser middle-class residential district on the south bank attractive locales for commercial development. The north side (today’s NoHo), in Fifth Ward, became the ‘factory district.’ The south bank, in Second Ward, became the ‘wholesale district,’ reflecting Commerce Street’s long-standing identification as Produce Row, where wholesale grocery, meat, produce and baking establishments were concentrated until 1950. Much of the original character of the warehouse area remains with many industrial vernacular buildings, rail trackage and brick-paved streets still surviving.

**RESTORATION HISTORY AND CURRENT CONDITION**

Henke’s Fifth Ward Grocery has undergone changes on the first floor façade, but the changes are reversible. The pilasters that define the arched facades are in place and visible. The current owner is currently seeking a tenant before planning an appropriate rehabilitation of the façade.

**APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION**

**Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation**

(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:

- | <b>S</b>                            | <b>NA</b>                           | <b>S - satisfies</b> | <b>NA - not applicable</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
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- (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;

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- (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark Designation of Henry Henke's Fifth Ward Grocery Building since the application complies with the applicable criteria.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the Houston Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommends landmark designation of the Henry Henke's Fifth Ward Grocery Building to City Council since the application complies with the applicable criteria.

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## HENRY HENKE'S FIFTH WARD GROCERY BUILDING SITE LOCATION MAP 1200 NANCE STREET NOT TO SCALE

