

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Building at 1204 Nance Street
(aka Tony's Barber Shop Building)
OWNER: Blumenthal, Inc.
APPLICANT: Blumenthal, Inc.
LOCATION: 1204 Nance Street – Warehouse District
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: Nov-03-2000

AGENDA ITEM: Ia
HPO FILE NO: 00L092
DATE ACCEPTED: Oct-15-2000
HAHC HEARING: Dec-07-2000
PC HEARING: Jan-11-2001

SITE INFORMATION

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

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Building at 1204 Nance Street (aka Tony's Barber Shop Building), built circa 1885, is a unique one-story, narrow masonry building in the Warehouse area. The building is unique to the warehouse area in that it is the smallest and one of only a few of the 19th-century buildings that remain in existence. A unique feature of the extremely narrow building is the decorative, sheet metal cornice and brick corbelling that accents the façade. Since it was located in the warehouse area and adjacent to the Fifth Ward Hotel Building, and also owned by the hotel operators, it too was in the area where literally the "railroad met the sea." The Building at 1204 Nance, like the hotel, 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. Virtually every ethnic group, with perhaps German immigrants making up the largest numbers, worked for the railroad industry. Therefore, the Building at 1204 Nance would have been frequented by people from different national origins who sought lodging and the other activities at the hotel next door. Since the Building at 1204 Nance Street was owned by the hotel operators and was constructed as an auxiliary building for the hotel to provide additional services of the hotel or for the community, its importance and significance cannot be separated from the hotel.

The Building at 1204 Nance Street, known as Tony's Barber Shop Building, was constructed between Henry Henke's Fifth Ward Grocery Building (Pending Landmark Application) and the Fifth Ward Hotel Building (Pending Landmark Application). According to the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1885, a frame, 2-story structure connected the grocery and hotel buildings at the rear portion of the lot where Tony's Barber Shop is located today. By 1890, the Sanborn Map shows the existence of Tony's Barber Shop Building as a narrow, one-story, masonry building between the two buildings at the street front with the same 2-story frame addition at the rear.

Since the Fifth Ward Hotel Building was the only hotel north of Buffalo Bayou, the barber shop building was most likely constructed by the owners of the hotel to provide travelers with this service customarily found in or near hotels. The barber shop building is also one of the few surviving buildings of the late 19th century in the warehouse area where literally the "railroad met the sea." The hotel and

barber shop were 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 Building at 1204 Nance Street, by being adjacent to the hotel and by providing services to the community, would also have attracted large numbers of the railroad workers. While most railroad workers were German immigrants, other workers came from many other different nations, especially since Houston was a port city and had an extensive railroad system to other parts of the country.

City streets in the area have changed names several times since the 19th century. In order to trace the existence of the building, it is necessary to understand the change in street names during its history. Tony's Barber Shop Building is located in Richey's Addition, which was named after Benjamin Richey. Richey's 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 19th and early 20th 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 1204 Nance, although this short stretch of Nance is also known as Rothwell.

Tony's Barber Shop was named for the barber tenant of the Fifth Ward Hotel who had the most longevity of occupancy. The history of the barber shop building is closely tied to the history and use of the hotel building at 1206 Nance.

The hotel was first mentioned in 1884 in the Houston City Directory. An early advertisement for the Fifth Ward Hotel named B. W. McCarty as the proprietor. It also stated that it was centrally located and convenient to the "Principal Railroad Depots" and "having been enlarged and thoroughly renovated.

City directory records are spotty at best in indicating the occupants or tenants of the barber shop building at 1204 Nance which supports the fact that the hotel owners owned and operated the space and operated it as one business for the first two decades of the 20th-century. By 1886-1887 Zachariah T. Hogan, a wholesale grocer and commission merchant of the firm of Johnson, Hogan & Co., either operated the hotel on his own or with his business partner, J. W. Johnson. This same year, the city directory has a listing for Hogan's Fifth Ward Hotel. It is likely that the barber shop building was built just before or during Hogan's ownership. There were a succession of owners or operators who operated the site as a hotel with various names. Also, the ground floor continued to be leased over the years to various merchants including a furniture merchant, wholesale confectioners and candy manufacturers.

The property later became owned by Henry Henke, a prominent grocer merchant, who also owned the building next door at 1200 Nance. Henke continued to lease the space at 1206 Nance as a hotel and later sold the property to Frank C. Colby in 1895. The hotel continued its operation and the name remained unchanged until 1900 when it became known as the Hotel Belknap. The hotel was known as the Belknap from 1900 to 1907 when it was changed to Brooklyn Hotel, a name it kept until 1913. The only mention of the barber shop site was in the 1908 city directory which lists 1208 Nance (today the barber shop site at 1204 Nance) as vacant and 1210 Nance (the hotel today at 1206 Nance) as the Brooklyn Hotel. In 1915 C. L. Hammett, another tenant of the hotel owners, had a furniture business at 1208 Nance (barber shop site).

The 1920-21 city directory shows the Southwestern Bay Company, manufacturers and dealers of new and second hand burlap and cotton bags, doing business at 1206-1208 Nance (most likely the barber

shop location and the ground floor of the hotel). City directories show the barber shop as vacant from 1926 until 1940 when The Southwestern Trading Company operated a hide tanning business in the building. The 1942 city directory has the first listing for Tony’s Barber Shop. Anthony Dibello was listed as barber and thus the tenant with the street address given as 1204-1206 Rothwell (now Nance). Tony’s business remained at this location until the late 1970’s.

The area around the Fifth Ward Hotel and barber shop was an industrial and working class neighborhood in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Typical of regional trends of the period, a large percentage of the hotel operators were women, either widowed or married. Typical also was for merchants who had businesses in the buildings, including the hotel and barber shop, lived in one of the rooms above the hotel. While the hotel was also occupied by locals, it was primarily used by the railroad workers after shifts and by the business men who traveled to the warehouse area of Houston, just north of the downtown business center.

Tony’s Barber Shop Building is located in the warehouse area, which grew up along Buffalo Bayou between the 1880’s and the 1920’s. 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 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 & CURRENT CONDITION

The only alteration to the façade of the building is the entry door. However, the current door is compatible with the double transom window and sidelights, which are believed to be original to the building.

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"/> | | | |
| | <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;
- (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;

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- (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.

AND

- (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)).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark Designation of the Building at 1204 Nance Street (aka Tony's Barber Shop Building) since the application complies with the applicable criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Commission accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommends designation of the Building at 1204 Nance Street (aka Tony's Barber Shop Building) as a landmark to City Council since the application complies with the criteria in the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

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SITE LOCATION MAP THE BUILDING AT 1204 NANCE STREET NOT TO SCALE

