

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Otto Pech House  
**OWNER:** Four Square Design Studio LLC  
**APPLICANT:** Evan Michaelides  
**LOCATION:** 1810 Summer Street – First Ward

**AGENDA ITEM:** III.a  
**HPO FILE NO:** 12PL114  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** Oct-31-2012  
**HAHC HEARING:** Dec-06-2012

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 3, Block 305, Shearn Subdivision, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic one-story, wood framed, single family residence built circa 1907 on a 5,000 square foot lot.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Protected Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Otto Pech house at 1810 Summer Street was built circa 1907 in the Folk Victorian style. The house features a gable on hip roof with a partial front porch. The front porch features Folk Victorian detailing such as square turned columns with decorative wooden spandrels running in between.

The house was owned by Otto Pech, a carpenter for the Houston and Texas Central Railroad. Pech and his family lived at 1404 Bingham Street and most likely kept 1810 Summer Street as a rental property for railroad employees. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the railroad had emerged as one of the City's largest employers. During this time the First Ward became home to numerous railroad shops, many associated with rail companies such as Houston and Texas Central and Southern Pacific. These companies employed many of the residents from the First Ward.

The house went through a major restoration in 2010. 1810 Summer Street was just announced as a winner for Preservation Houston's 2013 Good Brick Award.

1810 Summer Street meets Criteria 1,3,4, and 5 for Protected Landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### *Otto Pech*

Otto Pech was born on November 18, 1846, in Saxony, Germany. Pech immigrated to the United States as a young boy in 1851. Pech worked as a carpenter for the Houston and Texas Central railroad, and Pech is listed as retired in the 1920 census. Pech and his family lived at 1404 Bingham Street and most likely kept the house at 1810 Summer Street as a rental property for fellow railroad employees, which was a common practice at the time. Otto Pech died on April 27, 1927, at the age of 80 years old.

The Pech family sold the 1810 Summer Street property sometime in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1960 the property was owned by the Shearn family.

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## *First Ward*

The First Ward was established by the City of Houston in 1839. The Ward is located northwest of the intersection of Congress Avenue and Main Street where the Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou converge. The Ward was settled largely by immigrants, first by German farmers and by the 20th century many residents were Italian immigrants. The First Ward was largely a working class community.

Because of the Ward's location along the Buffalo Bayou, which provided easy access to shipping, the First Ward became heavily involved in Houston's commodity and produce business. The Ward was home to many storehouses and family run grocery stores. By 1890 the Railroad had emerged as one of the City's largest employers. During the late 19th century the First Ward had become home to numerous railroad shops, especially those of the Houston and Texas Central rail company and later the Southern Pacific rail company.

Today the First Ward has become a blend of industrial buildings, historic houses, new condominiums, artist studios, and small businesses. The neighborhood is still a major corridor for the railroad with freight traffic moving through daily. Although the Ward still contains a number of historic buildings, a large number of the neighborhood's older structures face the threat of demolition due to an increase in new development.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY**

1810 Summer Street was built in the Folk Victorian style circa 1907. The house is 1,236 square feet and is sited facing south on a 5,000 square foot lot.

The house features a gable on hip roof. The prominent front gable features a fixed single lite window and decorative fish scale shingle detailing in the gable. The front façade features a partial porch with a shed roof. The porch features turned square wooden columns and decorative spandrels between the columns.

The front gable façade features two, 2-over-2 new wood windows. The front façade under the porch features three, 2-over-2 new wood windows and salvaged wood paneled and single lite Eastlake entry door with a single lite transom.

The current owner purchased the house in 2009 and carried out an extensive interior and exterior restoration of the property in 2010, and the final steps of the restoration were completed in July 2012. When the house was purchased, the house featured 1-over-1 aluminum windows. The windows were removed and replaced with period appropriate 2-over-2 wood sash windows. The original cypress siding on the upper portion of the house was repaired and the lower five feet of the siding that was either damaged by termites or had been replaced with asbestos siding was removed and replaced with cementitious siding that was installed with irregular spacing to closely match the original cypress siding. The house features a new corrugated metal roof.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Brannon, Marie, *The History of Houston's First Ward is Not Well Documented*, Examiner, <http://www.examiner.com/article/the-history-of-houston-s-first-ward-is-not-well-documented>. Oct. 6, 2009.



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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.

**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)).

**OR**

- The property was constructed before 1905 (Sec. 33-229(a)(2));

**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 (Sec. 33-229(a)(3));

**OR**

- The property is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark (Sec. 33-229(a)(4)).

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Protected Landmark Designation of the Otto Pech House at 1810 Summer Street.

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## EXHIBIT A

1810 Summer Street

Before 2010 Restoration



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## EXHIBIT B

1810 Summer Street

After 2010 Restoration



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## EXHIBIT C

### SITE LOCATION MAP

1810 Summer Street

