

## PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** The Hirzel-von Haxhausen House

**AGENDA ITEM:** C

**OWNERS:** FW Heritage, LLC

**HPO FILE NO:** 16PL127

**APPLICANT:** FW Heritage, LLC

**DATE ACCEPTED:** 3/24/2016

**LOCATION:** 2120 Sabine Street – First Ward

**HAHC HEARING:** 4/21/2016

**SITE INFORMATION:** Tracts 11B and 12, Block 23, Beauchamp Springs, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a one-story Queen Anne style wood-frame house with a wrap-around porch.

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

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Hirzel-von Haxhausen House at 2120 Sabine Street in the First Ward was designed and built in 1883 for Carl and Anna Hirzel. The First Ward is one of the four original wards created by the city of Houston in 1840. The house is a classic example of the Queen Anne residential style.

The Hirsels resided at the home for 22 years until they sold the property to August and Minna von Haxthausen. August von Haxthausen (1874-1931) ran the Texas Deutsche Zeitung (TDZ), the city's German-language newspaper. He also served as a Texas state representative from 1909-1917. In addition, he was the youngest elected Grand President of the Sons of Hermann, O.D.H.S., the largest fraternal insurance benefit society headquartered in Texas.

In recent years, rampant construction of townhouses in First Ward has drastically reduced the inventory of historic houses in the neighborhood. Nevertheless, First Ward still has a small number of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century homes, such as the Hirzel-von Haxhausen House, representing some of the oldest structures in Houston. The house was sensitively rehabilitated in 2015.

The Hirzel-von Haxthausen House was constructed prior to 1905 and meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8 for Protected Landmark Designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### *Carl and Anna Hirzel*

The 1894 Houston City Directory shows that the Hirsels resided on the SE corner of Sabine and Alamo Streets where 2120 Sabine is located. Carl Hirzel was a bookkeeper with Pereira & Randolph, a manufacturer of ready-mixed paints at 1018-1020 Preston Avenue that also had a factory at 808 Commerce Avenue. The Hirsels owned the house for 22 years, until 1904, when the deeds show the new owners to be August and Minna von Haxthausen.

#### *Marcel von Haxthausen and Isabelle Kniep von Haxhausen and Texas Deutsche Zeitung (TDZ)*

Marcel von Haxthausen (1838-1885) founded Texas Deutsche Zeitung (TDZ), a Houston-based German-language newspaper in 1873. Following Marcel's death, his wife, Isabella Kniep von

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Haxthausen (1853-1896), ran the newspaper and became one of the few female members of the Texas Press Association. She worked alongside her son August, who took over the paper upon his mother's death.

The 1886 Houston City Directory shows that TDZ was published at 114 Prairie with Isabella von Haxthausen listed as the proprietress. The newspaper was issued every Thursday. In 1897, TDZ relocated to 1208 Congress Avenue after August von Haxthausen became the proprietor and it continued to be published each Thursday until 1917, the year the United States entered World War I and censorship was imposed on German-language publications. The paper likely folded due to anti-German sentiment.

## *August von Haxthausen and Minna Spanuth von Haxthause*

August von Haxthausen (1874-1931) inherited the Texas Deutsche Zeitung (TDZ) from his parents and ran the newspaper from 1885-1917. August's wife, Minna Spanuth von Haxthausen (1873-1952) assisted in the paper's operation, particularly during the eight years August served as a Texas State Representative. August von Haxthausen was elected four times as a Texas state representative, serving from 1909 to 1917 in the 31<sup>st</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup>, 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> legislatures. At their passing, the husband and wife were buried in Spring Branch, Texas.

August von Haxthausen was the youngest Grand President ever elected for the Sons of Hermann, a German fraternal insurance benefit society. He served as the organization's seventh and eighth Grand President. It was during his tenure that the Hermann Sons Altenheim was built. The Altenheim (home for the elderly) was a retirement home for members of the Sons of Hermann in good standing. August's connection to state politics likely made possible Governor James Ferguson's attendance at the dedication of the home. Ferguson and von Haxthausen each delivered an official address at the home's opening and dedication on Thursday, May 11, 1916, in Comfort, Texas.

The Sons of Hermann aka O.D.H.S. (*Order der Hermanns Söhne*) was the largest fraternal insurance benefit organization headquartered in Texas. From the time of its founding in San Antonio on July 6, 1861 until 1920, the Texas organization was part of a national order of the Sons of Hermann. A few men of German descent organized the order in New York City in 1840, naming it after Hermann the Defender, an early German hero known also as Arminius. By 1848 there were six Sons of Hermann groups with 800 members in the United States, and, on December 25, 1848, a national grand lodge was formed in Milwaukee. In 1861 two representatives of the national grand lodge came to San Antonio to organize the first Hermann Sons lodge in Texas. In 1890, the Texas grand lodge was formed, consisting of eight newly formed lodges in Austin, San Antonio, Taylor, Temple, Waco, La Grange, Brenham and Houston. Lodge memberships continued to grow in Texas and both sister lodges and coed lodges were created. In 1920, the Order of the Sons of Hermann in Texas, which by then was financially stronger and had more members than all of the lodges in the rest of the United States combined, broke away from the national order and became autonomous and independent of the national group. The organization still operates from its headquarters in San Antonio.

## *The First Ward*

The First Ward is one of the four original wards created by the City of Houston in 1840. It included part of Houston's early business district, and was strategically located at the intersection of Buffalo Bayou

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and White Oak Bayou near Allen's Landing at the foot of Main Street. First Ward was defined as all areas within the city limits northwest of Congress Street and Main Street.

In 1866, First Ward's boundaries were changed; land to the north and east of White Oak Bayou and Little White Oak Bayou became part of Fifth Ward. Although the ward system is no longer in place, the name First Ward is still used to describe the general area immediately west of I-45, east of Sawyer Street, south of I-10 and north of Washington Avenue.

In recent years, development in First Ward has drastically reduced the inventory of historic houses in the neighborhood. Rampant and rapid construction of townhouses predominate over the preservation of historic homes. Nevertheless, First Ward still has a small number of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century homes representing some of the oldest structures in Houston. A portion of First Ward that does not include 2120 Sabine Street has been designated a City of Houston historic district.

More recently, First Ward has also become a magnet for artistic activity with the Washington Avenue Arts District. It is a state-recognized cultural district; several converted First Ward warehouses, which previously housed facilities related to the city's produce industry, are now home to studio spaces for artists and creative entrepreneurs, as well as exhibition and event space. Because of this unique aggregation of creative space, the district boasts the highest concentration of working artists in the state of Texas.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The Hirzel-von Haxthausen House is a one-story Queen Anne style house of wood construction on pier and beam foundation, with a large wrap-around porch. The house includes many design elements that are typical of Queen Anne style residential architecture. The asymmetrical footprint, cutaway corners on the projecting front bay, wood shingle detailing in the bay and the elaborate turned-spindle decoration on the wrap-around porch exemplify the Queen Anne style.

Victorian-era decorative trim came in many different designs. Everything from Italianate egg-and-dart molding to carved Gothic Revival fascia can be found on Victorian homes. According to Victorian design rules, the trim should be painted a distinctly different color than the siding for emphasis as it is on 2120 Sabine Street. In most cases, three to five different colors of paint were used. The houses were made to be individual and unique.

The house at 2120 Sabine Street is a traditional frame Queen Anne style house. The one-story house faces west on the SE corner of Sabine and Alamo streets. The house is four bays wide.

The first (north) bay projects from the main body of the house and has cutaway corners with vergeboard decoration under the eaves. The angled sides and the front wall of the bay each contain a single center two-over-two window. The recessed front gable is decorated with alternating fishscale and rectangular shingles around a wooden vent. The front gabled roof meets the hipped roof over the main body of the house with a cross-gable connection.

The second bay contains the entrance to the house. The bay is distinguished by wooden front steps with square, paneled newel posts and turned spindle railings, which lead to the wrap-around porch. In this bay, the porch has turned posts with decorative vergeboard brackets, and vergeboard detailing highlighted by symmetrically spaced downward pointing finials. The spandrel consists of symmetrically spaced, turned spindles. All of the decorative elements are repeated in a symmetrical pattern that runs the length of the wrap-around porch. The single front door has a raised panel on its bottom half and a

large window framed with a stained glass border on its top half. A glass transom is located above the door.

The fourth (south) bay of the house contains the portion of the porch that wraps around the south side of the house. This section of the porch has a rounded end and the decorative elements are also rounded to accommodate the turn.

### *Restoration*

The three main goals of the restoration effort included:

1. Upgrade the house to meet current COH building codes; ensuring structural integrity with new electrical, sewer, plumbing and HVAC system in place
2. Respectfully restore the original charm of the house, and
3. Sensitively repurpose the house for use in the modern world

When the new owners purchased 2120 Sabine, it had two front doors. Research confirmed that the house was indeed used as a duplex. The Haxthausens, who made the conversion, lived in the northern half. The room with the three bay windows was used as their living/dining room, while the southern half of the home was rented out for extra income after August's death. The recent restoration has re-established the house as a single-family residence with 4 good sized bedrooms and 2 full bathrooms.

During the restoration, the layout of the house was completely inverted to better suit a 21st-century lifestyle. The living and dining rooms were converted into 2 bedrooms separated by a new bathroom. The kitchen became the master suite with a double vanity en-suite bathroom and walk-in closet. The hallway and the southern half were converted into open-plan living, dining and kitchen areas with access to the wrap-around porch. A laundry/mudroom and a small study anchor the back of the house.

The rear part of the roof was re-pitched with a new gable to incorporate the previous poorly framed-in back porch as part of the house. Braces and purlins were added to further strengthen and support the original rafters throughout the entire roof. The back porch is now rebuilt and has been turned into a small study and mudroom area. In order for there to be some exterior living space, a back deck was constructed. It also serves to connect the wrap-around porch to the exterior back.

The respectful restoration took the interior of the house down to the shiplap. All existing electrical wiring, sewer, and plumbing were replaced to meet City of Houston (COH) codes. A new centralized HVAC system was installed to ensure the house is well prepared for Houston's weather conditions. Attic and sub-floor insulation was also added for extra protection.

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*A History of the Texas Press Association (1880-1913)*, F.B. Baillio. Dallas: Southwestern Printing Company, 1916.

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

## APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The HAHC shall review each application for designation of a protected landmark that is included in an application for designation of a landmark at the same time and in the same manner as it reviews and considers the application for a landmark. The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to a protected landmark designation, and the City Council, in making a designation, shall consider whether the building, structure, site, or area meets at least three of the criteria in Section 33-224, or one of the criteria in Section 33-229, as follows:

<b>S</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>S - satisfies</b>	<b>D - does not satisfy</b>	<b>NA - not applicable</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
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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.

**OR**

- The property was constructed before 1905;

**OR**

- The property was 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;

**OR**

- The property was designated as a State of Texas Recorded Texas Historical Landmark.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Protected Landmark Designation of the Hirzel-von Haxhausen House at 2120 Sabine Street.

## **HAHC RECOMMENDATION**

The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommends to City Council the Protected Landmark Designation of the Hirzel-von Haxhausen House at 2120 Sabine Street.

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## EXHIBIT A PHOTOS

HIRZEL-VON HAXHAUSEN HOUSE  
2120 SABINE STREET

2015 PHOTO



2120 Sabine Street, Houston, Harris County, Texas; 2015. Courtesy photo.

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## EXHIBIT A PHOTOS

HIRZEL-VON HAXHAUSEN HOUSE  
2120 SABINE STREET

1992 PHOTO



2120 Sabine Street, Houston, Harris County, Texas; 1992. Courtesy photo.



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## EXHIBIT B SITE MAP

HIRZEL-VON HAXHAUSEN HOUSE  
2120 SABINE STREET

