

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** The House at 917 Pinckney Street

**AGENDA ITEM:** B.2

**OWNERS:** Ronald D. Powell, Jr.

**HPO FILE NO.:** 17L321

**APPLICANTS:** Ronald D. Powell, Jr.

**DATE ACCEPTED:** July 11, 2017

**LOCATION:** 917 Pinckney Street, A.C. Allen Addition,  
Houston 77009

**HAHC HEARING DATE:** July 26, 2017

**SITE INFORMATION:** Tracts 7A & 8, Block 34, A.C. Allen Addition, Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a one-story wood frame single-family residence with 1,092 square feet of living space on a 5,000-square-foot corner lot.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The House at 917 Pinckney Street is a Folk Victorian residence built ca. 1892 in Houston's historic Near Northside. The house was constructed with a "T" shaped floorplan with porches on the front and rear facades, typical of the small working-class houses found not only in the Fifth Ward, but also in Houston's historic First and Sixth Wards. The area still contains many of the Victorian-era houses and cottages built by its early residents.

In the late 1800s, many of the Near Northside's residents were railroad workers. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Southern Pacific Railroad shops were said to be the largest in the Southwest, employing some 5,000 workers and contributing greatly to the growth of the Fifth Ward. Many early residents were immigrants of Irish and German descent, but after World War II, the neighborhood became predominantly Hispanic, which it remains today.

Throughout its history, the House at 917 Pinckney Street was home to many Near Northside craftsmen and skilled workers. The first documented resident is John S. Hale, who is listed in the 1892-1893 Houston City Directory as a carpenter for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company. Hale was the first of many tradesmen to occupy the house, who held occupations as blacksmiths, cabinet makers, switchmen, piano repairmen, and even a real estate dealer.

The House at 917 Pinckney Street is a prime example of traditional Folk Victorian design and is representative of the Near Northside's Victorian-era residences. The home's history reflects the neighborhood's development and evolution over more than 120 years. Designation would make 917 Pinckney Street only the second City of Houston Landmark in the eastern section of the Near Northside, along with the William L. Shipp House (ca. 1900) at 1511 Everett Street.

The House at 917 Pinckney Street meets Criteria 1, 3, 4 and 5 for landmark designation.

## HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

### *Near Northside*

Development in what became the Near Northside began in earnest after the Fifth Ward was formed in 1866 out of the sections of the First and Second Wards north of Buffalo Bayou and east of White Oak Bayou. Houston's wards were established as political districts, each represented by elected aldermen. When Houston adopted a commission form of government in 1905, the political life of the wards ended, yet their names continue to be used to describe geographic areas of the inner city. The area commonly called the Fifth Ward today lies east of Maury Street and US 59/I-69, while the area west of Maury Street – the historic Fifth Ward – is known as the Near Northside.

The plat for the earliest subdivision in the Near Northside, the Ryon Addition, was filed on November 17, 1862. Ryon's boundaries were Maury Street on the east, Line Street on the south, Terry and Robertson streets on the west and Gaines Street on the north. The plat for the A.C. Allen Addition was filed shortly afterward, on December 30, 1862, and carved 65 blocks of varying sizes out of roughly 300 acres located north of Burnett Street. The A.C. Allen Addition ran north to Boundary Street, and from White Oak Bayou on the west to about Common Street on the east. The plat established several of the principal streets in today's Near Northside, including North Main (originally called Montgomery Road), Hogan and Quitman.

Early residents of Houston's Near Northside were working class, with many employed in the nearby railyards. Significant numbers of these early residents were Irish and German immigrants. With the decrease in rail traffic and growing suburban development, the area transitioned into a predominately Hispanic neighborhood, which it remains today.

The Near Northside contains one of Houston's most significant concentrations of Victorian residential architecture. Most of the houses in the neighborhood were built between 1880 and 1910, with Queen Anne and Folk Victorian styles predominating. The area also includes bungalows from the early twentieth century, with a scattering of later ranch style houses and, increasingly, twenty-first century townhouses.

Although a portion of the neighborhood west of North Main Street has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Near Northside Historic District, designation of the house at 917 Pinckney Street would make it only the second City of Houston Landmark in the eastern section of the Near Northside. The ca. 1900 William L. Shipp House at 1511 Everett Street, also in the A.C. Allen Addition, is a designated protected landmark.

### *A.C. Allen Addition*

The plat for the A.C. Allen Addition was filed by Charlotte Baldwin Allen (1805-1895) in 1862. Charlotte Allen was the wife of Augustus C. Allen (1806-1864), who along with his brother John Kirby Allen (1810-1838) founded the City of Houston in 1836 at the confluence of Buffalo and White Oak bayous. Charlotte Baldwin was the daughter of Dr. Jonas Baldwin, founder and mayor of Baldwinville,

New York. She married Augustus Allen in May 1831 and followed her husband to Texas, as did other Allen and Baldwin family members. Charlotte and Augustus Allen separated in 1850, and Augustus left Houston to conduct business and serve as a U.S. consul in Mexico. Augustus Allen signed over to Charlotte the bulk of his Houston businesses and properties, including unsold land he held in and around the city. In December 1862, she platted about 300 acres of that property as the A.C. Allen Addition. Charlotte Allen died in Houston on August 3, 1895, leaving an estate worth \$51,867.

## *Railroads in Houston*

The availability of jobs in the railyard spurred residential development in what is now the Near Northside, allowing railroad employees to live near their work. Construction began on Houston's first railroad, the Houston and Texas Central, in 1853. Within a few years, other railroads were building lines toward the city, and in 1856 Houston was named the hub of Texas' rail network by order of the state legislature. In 1861, Texas had around 470 miles of track; three quarters of the network passed through Houston. By 1889, the amount of rail lines statewide had increased to more than 8,440 miles, and shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, seventeen railroads operated in Houston. Many of the city's rail lines converged in the largely undeveloped area on the north side of Buffalo Bayou, opposite the business district and port, where the Southern Pacific Railroad built its expansive railyard and shops.

By the early twentieth century, Houston was calling itself the "Chicago of the South," a reference to its many rail connections. The 1903-04 Houston City Directory noted that "Seventy-two passenger trains arrive and depart from Houston every 24 hours. Three times as many freight trains are operated in the city during the same time. No city south of St. Louis can show such a railway traffic as this." The city even adopted an official motto that referred to the rail lines: "Where Seventeen Railroads Meet the Sea." The combination of rail connections and the Port of Houston directly fueled the city's phenomenal twentieth century growth.

## *Southern Pacific*

The Southern Pacific Transportation Company was founded as a land holding company in 1865 and later acquired the Central Pacific Railroad by lease. By 1900, Southern Pacific had grown into a major railroad system that incorporated many smaller lines, including the Texas and New Orleans Railroad and Morgan's Louisiana and Texas Railroad. Thus, Southern Pacific routes extended from New Orleans through El Paso across New Mexico and Arizona to Los Angeles. The railroad also operated lines throughout most of California, including San Francisco and Sacramento, and ran lines north to Portland, Oregon.

The now-demolished Southern Pacific repair shops and railyard in Houston's Near Northside were said to be the largest in the southwest, employing some 5,000 workers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The company-owned Southern Pacific Hospital (built ca. 1911, now the Thomas Street Clinic) still stands in the Near Northside. The railroad also had a significant presence in downtown Houston with regional offices in the Southern Pacific Building (1911, now Bayou Lofts) on Franklin at Travis.

## *917 Pinckney Street*

The house at 917 Pinckney Street is typical of the Folk Victorian homes built in working-class neighborhoods throughout the United States from 1870 to 1910. Folk Victorian design was the dominant house style in Houston's First, Fifth and Sixth wards, particularly in the residential areas that were adjacent to the city's burgeoning railyards.

The nature of American vernacular housing changed dramatically as railroads spread across the country in the late nineteenth century. As heavy woodworking equipment became widely accessible, houses that were earlier built with logs or heavy hewn frames could be constructed with lighter braced framing covered by wood sheathing. The railroads also gave local builders access to large supplies of inexpensive, pre-cut detailing, allowing carpenters to update familiar folk house forms with newly available trim. This trend was particularly evident in the construction of ornate Victorian porches, which were incorporated into new construction and often added to update older homes. In the South, the most popular form of Folk Victorian design was the one-story, L-shaped, gable-front-and-wing house.

The 1892 Houston City Directory lists Pinckney Street beginning at Keene Street on the west and continuing northeast to Morgan (now Gano) Street; on the 1895 Whitty & Stott map of Houston, Pinckney Street is shown as running from approximately Keene Street on the west to present-day Marion Street on the east. The house at 917 Pinckney, on the northwest corner of Pinckney and Gentry streets, appears in the 1892-93 city directory as the home of John S. Hale, a carpenter with the Southern Pacific Railroad. At the time, many Southern Pacific employees lived in the neighborhood, which was within easy walking distance of the company's railyard and repair shops.

In 1894-95, the house was occupied by James B. Marmion, a blacksmith, farrier and wheelwright, and his wife. Literature of the period describes Marmion as "the best horseshoer in Houston" and an active member of many fraternal organizations. Marmion was later elected Justice of the Peace and, in 1914, the last mayor of the independent city of Houston Heights, where he had moved with his growing family.

The home's first potential owner/occupier was James J. Lyles, listed in city directories as a real estate dealer, who lived at 917 Pinckney with his wife and children from 1895 to 1900. Lyles' white-collar profession was unusual for the neighborhood. After 1900, the house returns to shorter-term residency; occupations for subsequent residents include cabinetmaker, carpenter, switchman and piano repairman. The Near Northside's post-World War II transition from a neighborhood of European immigrants and native-born Anglo-Americans to a Hispanic neighborhood is reflected in the property's long ownership by the Gutierrez family.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY**

The one-story frame house at 917 Pinckney Street is built on a pier and beam foundation. The house was constructed in the Folk Victorian style as was typical of its neighborhood. The main body of the house is covered in lapped wood siding. The home was constructed with a T-shaped floor plan with front and rear

porches that have been altered over the years. The cross-gabled roof is covered in composition shingles. The house faces Pinckney Street, with its east façade visible on Gentry Street.

The front (south) façade facing Pinckney Street is two bays wide and presents as a gable-front-and-wing design. The projecting left (west) bay contains two tall, narrow two-over-two sash windows. The windows have wooden sills, surrounds and lintels, and are symmetrically spaced under a moderately pitched gable with boxed eaves and returns.

The recessed, side-gabled east wing features two symmetrically spaced two-over-two sash windows with surrounds that match those in the gable-front bay. A porch with a low-pitched, standing-seam, half-hipped roof occupies the “L” created by the junction of the two bays. The porch features Queen Anne-inspired detailing. Three symmetrically spaced turned columns support the roof. The flat jigsaw-cut elements on the porch include the balusters, fretwork and brackets.

The east façade, visible from Gentry Street, contains three bays of unequal width. The left (south) bay is the narrowest. This bay contains the porch with a single turned column and jigsaw cut balusters, fretwork and brackets. The paneled entry door is on the side of the projecting bay. The door features a wooden surround and single-pane transom.

The central bay is covered in lapped siding and contains a moderately pitched gable with boxed eaves and return. A single two-over-two sash window is centered in the bay. The wooden sill, surround and lintel match those on the front façade.

The right (north) bay contains a shed-roofed addition clad in pressboard siding with vertical scoring. A single two-over-two sash window is asymmetrically placed in the bay. The window is shorter than those on the main body of the house and has a plain wooden surround.

Tax photos indicate that sometime before 1965, the original porch columns were replaced with aluminum supports; what appear to be aluminum-frame windows were also installed on the façade under the porch. A 1965 photo shows an entry door with transom on the front façade under the porch along with the entry door on the east side of the projecting bay. Tax records indicate the exterior of the entire house was clad in asbestos shingles. A shed-roofed addition had been added where the original rear porch was located. The east façade of the addition contained a plate glass window flanked by one-over-one aluminum frame windows.

By mid-2011, all the wood sash windows had been replaced with aluminum frame windows. By late 2015, the porch had been completely removed along with the asbestos siding. The cladding on the right (east) side of the front façade and on the shed-roofed rear addition had been replaced with pressboard siding with vertical scoring. The aluminum windows on the porch façade had been replaced with historically appropriate two-over-two sash windows with wooden sills and surrounds. The entry door and transom on the front façade under the porch had been removed. The aluminum windows on the rear addition had been replaced with a single two-over-two sash with wood surround.



# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

- (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;
- (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 City Council the Landmark Designation of The House at 917 Pinckney Street.

## **HAHC RECOMMENDATION**

The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommends to City Council the Landmark Designation of The House at 917 Pinckney Street.

**EXHIBIT A**

**PHOTO**

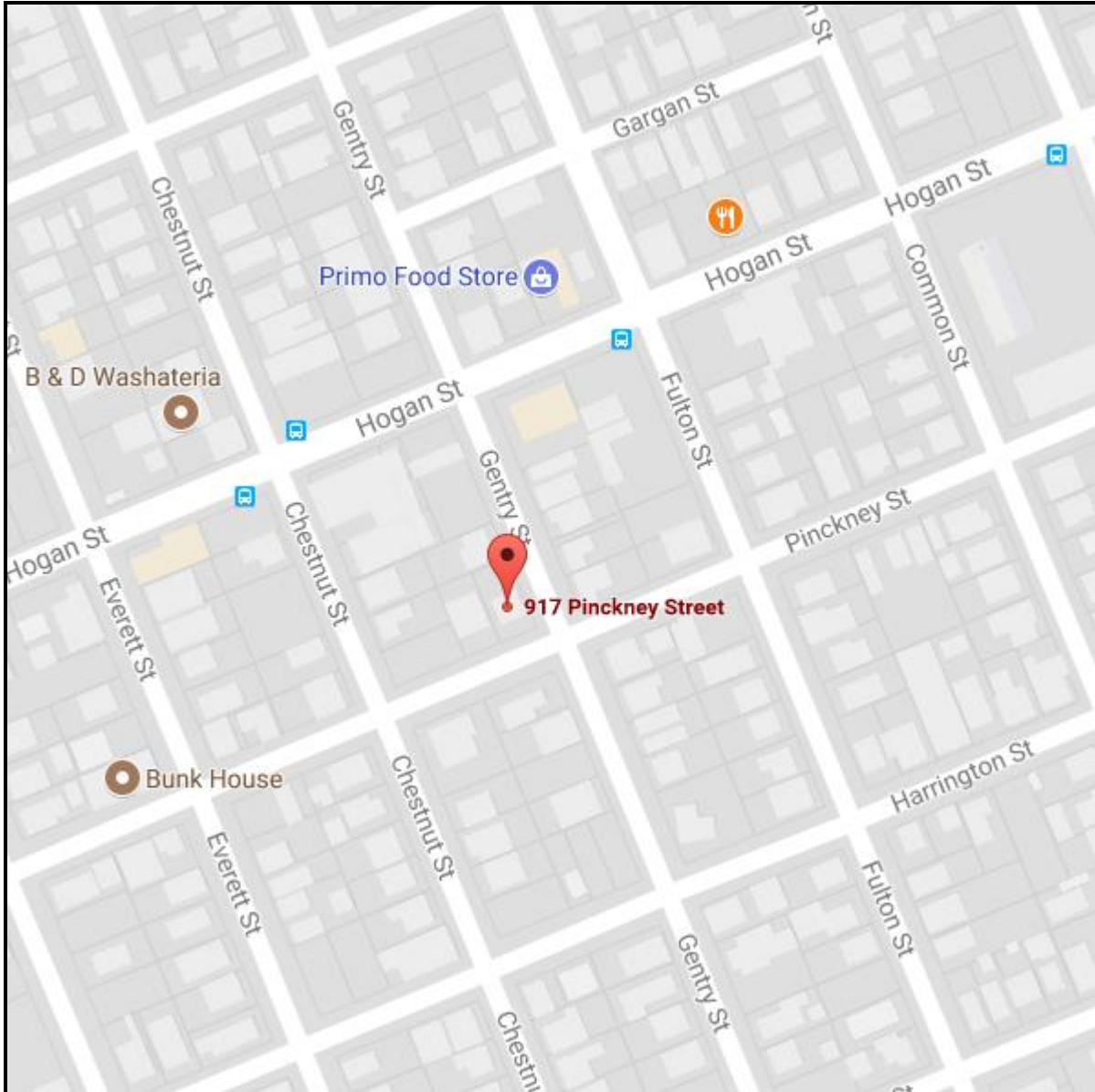
**THE HOUSE AT 917 PINCKNEY STREET**





## EXHIBIT B SITE MAP

### THE HOUSE AT 917 PINCKNEY STREET



**EXHIBIT C**  
**1965 TAX PHOTO**  
THE HOUSE AT 917 PINCKNEY STREET

