

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK/SITE NAME: Beatty-West Building
OWNER: Davis Holdings, LP
APPLICANT: Anna Mod, Preservation Consultant
LOCATION: 815-817 Main Street
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: Aug-23-2004

AGENDA ITEM: II
P.C.MEETING DATE: 09-30-04
HPO FILE NO.: 04L118
DATE ACCEPTED: Aug-20-04
HAHC HEARING DATE: 09-23-04

SITE INFORMATION

Lots 6 and 7, Tract 12B, Block 93, SSBB, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site is a six-story, reinforced concrete commercial building with clay tile backup and a brick veneer.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The Beatty-West building is a good example of early 20th century reinforced concrete construction. This type of building was typically two-part commercial blocks with ground floor commercial spaces and professional offices above. Henry C. Cooke of Cooke and Co. Architects designed the building for David R. Beatty, who had his oil and gas operations here. The building opened in 1912 as the Beatty Building. Henry C. Cooke, originally from England, practiced in Galveston and relocated to Houston after the Great Storm of 1900. In 1922, James M. West bought the building and renamed it. James M. West was a prominent Houston businessman, who had interests in lumber, oil, banking and ranching. His ranch, which covered over 35,000 acres, was located midway between Houston and Galveston, and a portion of the ranch later became the site of NASA. West was also a prominent Texas philanthropist.

Sanborn map research from 1885 through 1907 shows Block 93 as completely residential with large and modest frame dwellings. On the northeast corner was a large two-story house with front and rear one-story porches and a bay window on the south (Walker) façade. The house fronted onto Main Street. By 1896 two of the larger structures on the block were adapted for boarding houses and the Salvation Army built a meeting hall mid-block on the east (Fannin) side of the block. This hall was shared between the Salvation Army (first floor) and Bryan Hall (second floor). The next Sanborn map available is from 1924 and by then the entire block is commercial with multi-story buildings. On the northeast corner is a six-story office building with ground floor commercial called "Beatty Building." There were four ground floor tenants spaces one that was occupied by the Gulf State Bank. All of the tenant spaces had frontage onto Main Street. Other businesses on the block included the Stower's Furniture Company located in the extant ten-story reinforced concrete building directly to the east on the corner of Walker and Fannin; the Salvation Army Meeting Hall, the Cotton Hotel, the Corona (a boarding house), a drug store and the University Club. Updates to the 1924 maps and prior to 1950 shows the Beatty Building was renamed as the West Building. This map also shows the Betty-West Building Annex that was added along the east side of the Walker façade with two additional commercial spaces fronting onto Walker Street.

Research in the City Directories from 1915 to 1944 lists professional tenants on the upper floors of the building such as jewelers, dentists and physicians, engineers, real estate and construction businesses and oil and gas concerns. Architect Birdsall Briscoe is listed as a tenant in 1915 as well as John McLelland, another architect. The building owner, David R. Beatty, had an office in suite 517 for his oil production company. The 1929 City

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Directory lists the building as the Beatty-West Building and as owned by Freed & Sakowitz and G. Frank Lipper, and listed as the manager was Ike L. Freed and Tobias Sakowitz, who comprised Freed & Sakowitz, purveyors of men's and boy's clothing. Their partnership also had an office in the building. By the 1940s more vacancies appear in the building. Ground floor tenants were Craig's, a local clothing store for children, and the Vogue Shoe Store. Another famous local chain, James Coney Island, had its original location in the ground floor of the building from 1923 to 1993.

The following ten paragraphs are taken verbatim from the West Mansion, National Register Designation Application: "James Marion West, Senior, was in many ways the quintessential rags-to-riches Texas millionaire. Born in Waynesboro, Mississippi, in May 1871, West's parents moved to the community of Pennington in Trinity County, Texas in 1880. His father, Silas Wesley, and mother, Maffle Clark, eventually settled near Groveton establishing a family farm. Silas West farmed the property until his death in 1909."

"At 14, West began pushing trucks at a sawmill owned by the Trinity County Lumber Company. By the time West completed school in the Groveton public schools he served as foreman of the planer at the Trinity County company and later superintendent of another plant owned by Peter Jossierand near Groveton. West gradually accumulated his own timber lands and established the West Lumber Company at Westville, roughly four miles west of Groveton, in the mid 1890s. Westville, named for James West, centered around the West's sawmill and at one point reported a population of one thousand with community center and church. "

"In these early days of the developing Texas timber industry, West controlled a substantial part of the timber holdings and bought and developed other lumber mills in East Texas and Louisiana. After Westville, he acquired sites at Bedford and Potomac, twenty miles east of Westville, which offered abundant stands of yellow pine that doubled in value in 1905-1906. He sold his property later to Lynch Davidson of Houston and began a series of transactions to acquire more property. In 1908 West traded Jesse Jones of Houston all his stock in the National City Bank that he had founded for the Orange Sawmill Company in Orange, Texas. The sawmill processed approximately 125,000 board feet daily and held another 300 million feet of stands along the Sabine River making it one of the largest in operation in Texas at the time. In the same year, West purchased the Hawthorne Lumber Company in Hawthorne, Louisiana, along the Kansas City Southern railroad. This sawmill soon burned, never to be re-operated by West because of the expense of reforestation.(Lumber Trade Journal, January 1910). Later in 1908, West's fortune changed when he acquired from C. L. Smith some 200 million feet of Louisiana long-leaf pine and a sawmill with a capacity of 85,000 daily. Many in the lumber industry considered this tract the finest of his holdings."

"James West Senior became known for the size and value of his many timber dealings. His most famous deal occurred in conjunction with Colonel R.C. Duff of Beaumont. It is reported as the largest deal ever closed in the lumber industry in Texas. This transaction with William Carlisle & Company of Onalaska, Texas, encompassed more than one billion feet of stumpage, numerous sawmills, and a railroad. The property included 143,000 acres of timber in Polk, Tyler, and Trinity counties, reportedly the most valuable timber land in the state (Historical Review of Southeast Texas, Vol. II). By the early 1920s, West's lumber companies cut 400,000 feet of lumber each day, operated 24 lumber yards and employed over 1500. This amounted to approximately 6% of the entire lumber work force at the height of the lumber industry in Texas. "

"In February 1910, the Lumber Trade Journal described James West Senior as follows: 'The deal brings into renewed prominence a man destined to take front rank with the eminent industrial leaders of the South, James M. West. By his friends and all who know him, Mr. West is regarded as a man in every sense of the word, and as one fitted by nature to assume executive charge of industrial propositions of great magnitude. Big physically, nature endowed him with a capacity and courage unsurpassed by any of his fellow immortals of Texas history. His personal career has been remarkable for its, unbroken progress from a humble employee of a sawmill to a place in the front rank of the industrial captains of the period.' "

"T.C. Gooch in *Texans and Their State* later described West as, 'One of the big things in Texas is lumber; one of the big men in lumber is J.M. West.' "

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“Besides his interest in lumber, West accurately perceived the need to diversify as the lumber industry began to slow down in the 1920s. One of his first ventures was in the emerging oil industry. West acquired oil and gas holdings in the Pierce Junction and Thompson Fields with his sons and Hugh Roy Cullen by 1928, and later a field in the Clear Lake area. He also eventually headed the West Production Company. Another business venture included acquiring ranches. West owned the 120,000 acre Fort Terrett Ranch in Culberson County and the 209,000 acre Longfellow Ranch in Brewster and Pecos counties. West also owned real estate including the Sterling Building in Houston and the Tribune Building in Austin. He maintained a penthouse in the latter. He also acquired the Beatty Building in Houston, later renaming it the West Building.”

“During the early 20th century, West served in many social, civic, and business positions. The following is a partial list of activities and organizations: Board of Directors, Texas Tech College; Board of Directors, Southwestern University; Officer, Gage Cattle Company; Member, The Houston Club; Member, The Lunar Club; President, Hawthorne Lumber Company; President, Orange Lumber Company; President, Fort Terrett Ranch Company; President, National Iron and Steel Company; President, South Texas Hardwood Manufacturing Co.; Vice-President, National City Bank; Affiliate, B&P Order of Elks; Affiliate, Knights of Pythias; Affiliate, The Hoo Hoos (prestigious lumber organization); Director, Lumberman's National Bank; Member, Methodist Episcopal Church; Treasurer, Davis-Fowler Company (Houston); Consistory 32nd Degree Mason.” He was also a Director of the Second National Bank.

“In 1939, James M. West received an appointment to be chairman of the Texas Highway Commission by Governor W. Lee (Pappy) O'Daniel. The Texas Senate, however, failed to confirm West for the appointment. In response, West purchased the Dallas Journal and Austin Tribune in order to report his side of the controversy.”

“Jessie Dudley (1871-1953) a native of Washington County, Georgia, married James West in 1897. The couple had three children: James Marion West, Jr., known as "Silver Dollar West," Wesley Wendell West, and Mildred, who later married Frank Lee Hewitt, Jr. In 1905 the West family moved to 2106 Crawford in Houston to be near the center of the West businesses. This circa 1900 Queen Anne house was demolished circa 1943. In the early 1920s, West began to accumulate land in southeast Harris County eventually amounting to approximately 30,000 acres. This became the site of the James and Jessie West Mansion in 1929-30.”

West's huge ranch was located on the north bend of Clear Lake in southeast Harris County, where he built a large home, which became known as the West Mansion. West hired eminent Houston architect, Joseph Finger, to design his ranch house as headquarters for their ranch south of Houston. The 17,000-square foot house was built in 1928-29. It is an excellent example of the Italian renaissance revival style. It features exceptional ironwork by Berger & Son, classical pediments and arched windows. In 1939 West sold most of his property, including the West Mansion, to the Humble Oil Company, which developed the new town of Clear Lake City near it in the early 1960s. James M. West died in 1941. Later the house and 1,700 acres were donated by Humble Oil to Rice University. In 1961, Rice turned over 1,600 acres to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for the site of the Manned Spacecraft Center. The one hundred acre portion with the house and estate buildings was reserved. In 1968 the house was restored with a \$580,000 grant from NASA to the National Academy of Science. Called the Lunar Science Institute, it is maintained as a scientific conference center. The West Mansion (N.R.; R.T H.L.) is located at 3301 NASA Road 1 in Webster. (Source: “House for Mr. and Mrs. James M. West”, Houston Architectural Survey, 1980, Volume Two; National Register Designation Application)

Henry C. Cooke, of Cooke and Co. Architects, designed the building at 815-817 Main Street in Houston in 1912 originally for David R. Beatty. The architectural firm Cooke & Company also designed the two-story, reinforced concrete commercial building at 715 Franklin in 1912 for the Houston Ice and Brewing Company, also known as the Magnolia Brewery Tap Room and Café Building (N.R.; City of Houston Landmark). Henry C. Cooke (1852-1920) founded Cooke and Company, and the firm designed all the buildings for the Houston Ice and Brewing Company after 1901 following the death of Eugene T. Heiner, the primary company architect.

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Cooke was a native of England where he studied architecture and upon moving to Italy, studied classical architecture. This training is very evident in the neo-classical style of some of his buildings. He came to Texas in 1893 (Houston Chronicle) and opened an architectural firm in Galveston but retreated to Houston after the storm of 1900. Cooke also designed such buildings as the Macatee Hotel and the Prince William Theatre Company Building. (Source: City of Houston Landmark Application, "Magnolia Ballroom.")

The Beatty-West Building at 815-817 Main is located on the southwest corner of the block and at the northeast intersection of Main and Walker Streets in downtown Houston. The six-story structure is reinforced concrete with clay tile back up and a brick veneer. There is a sub-grade basement.

The Main Street or west façade is three bays wide with an A-B-A pattern defined by slightly projecting pilasters with cast stone pendant-type capitals. Decorative elements include a horizontal cast stone band between the first floor commercial space and the second story. This band is repeated between the fifth and sixth floors just above the capitals. The banding and the pendants continue on the Walker (south) façade. The sixth floor has engaged Doric columns between the paired windows in the first and third bays.

The windows on the Main and Walker facades are all one-over-one wooden sash that vary in width. The first and third bays have paired windows on floors two through five. The sixth floor has a narrower version of these paired windows. The central bay has equally spaced single windows. Windows on the secondary facades are metal sash two-over-two with wire glass.

The Walker (south) façade is four bays wide. The building was originally three bays wide and followed the composition and A-B-A rhythm of the Main Street façade. An annex was added in the early 20th century on the eastern edge of this façade. This single bay addition has four openings of paired one-over-one wooden sash windows.

RESTORATION HISTORY/CURRENT CONDITION

The Beatty-West Building has changed little with the exception of the ground floor commercial spaces. The building was slip covered in the 20th century and the slipcover was removed following a fire in 1999. Historic photos show a cornice on the building but this element was removed at an unknown date. The owners are participating in the 20% Investment Tax Credit program and plans are underway to rehabilitate the building in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The rehabilitation will include a complete restoration of the exterior and will maintain the majority of the original windows. A new commercial storefront is currently under design and a Certificate of Appropriateness will be filed after approval from the National Park Service. The owner, Davis Holdings, LP has hired architect Suzanne Labarthe, AIA for the rehabilitation.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION...:

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation of a Landmark.

(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:

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

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- (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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommends to the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark Designation of the Beatty-West Building at 815-817 Main Street.

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Recommends that the Houston Planning Commission accepts the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommends to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Beatty-West Building at 815-817 Main Street.

SITE LOCATION MAP
BEATTY-WEST BUILDING
815-817 MAIN STREET
NOT TO SCALE