

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Hulsey-Davis House
OWNERS: Thomas and Sara Braud
APPLICANTS: Same
LOCATION: 1216 Wrightwood Street

AGENDA ITEM: C
HPO FILE No.: 15L303
DATE ACCEPTED: Jan-13-2015
HAHC HEARING DATE: Jan-29-2015

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 23 Wrightwood, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story residence and a detached garage (the garage is not part of the landmark application).

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Hulsey-Davis House was constructed in 1920 as a one-story residence. Located at 1216 Wrightwood Street, just outside the Germantown Historic District and adjacent to Interstate 45, the home backed up to the southern edge of the second oldest park in the City of Houston, Woodland Park. At the time of construction, this property would have been considered lake-front property, as the park featured a dam at Little White Oak Bayou before it entered White Oak Bayou, forming a lake for recreational purposes. Directly to the south of the property was another park, Hogg Park. To the south of Hogg Park was Luna Park. Wrightwood Street was located between these parks and surrounded by green space.

The first owner of 1216 Wrightwood Street was J.A. Hulsey, a railroad firefighter. The Davis family owned the house from 1940-2014. In the late 1930s, a second floor was added and the home was converted into a duplex. The two-story condition of the home, as well as the intact nature of the original materials, which were protected under several inappropriate alterations, makes this house a unique and imposing structure in the area.

The Hulsey-Davis House at 1216 Wrightwood Street meets Criteria 1, 4, and 5 for Landmark designation of Section 33-224 of the Houston Historic Preservation Ordinance.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Wrightwood Addition to the City of Houston

On March 11, 1918, Daniel C. Wright subdivided a tract of land off Houston Avenue between several City of Houston parks and the Little White Oak Bayou. As time progressed, Wrightwood Street was cut off from the remaining original development to the east with the construction of Interstate 45. Few remaining original homes of the Wrightwood Addition remain on the west side of the interstate. Approximately eight of the original homes are still lined on the street. Many of the homes to the east were presumably demolished in order to construct I-45 while the remaining lots to the west have been returned to parkland. The area has a history of flooding. The properties along Wrightwood Street border the southern boundary of the Germantown Historic District.

Woodland Park¹

Woodland Park was developed by the Houston Electrical Company in 1903. It was comprised of 30 acres and cost \$30,000 to construct. Originally named Highland Park, this was only the second park in Houston at the time. It included a restaurant and dance pavilion for up to 1,000 people, as well as an artificial lake for small motorboats, created by damming a portion of Little White Oak Bayou. A street car line from downtown terminated at the park entrance. The park officially opened on July 4, 1903, with a ceremony that included 5,000 people. In 1911, the park was purchased by the City and renamed Woodland Park. Houston's first zoological collection was started here in 1915 with a pair of ostriches. Within a year, the park included more than 60 specimens. Woodland Park remains a City park today.

Ownership History

- 1918: Daniel A. Wright develops Wrightwood Addition between Houston Avenue and North Main St. (Montgomery Highway)
- 1920: D.A. Wright sells 1216 Wrightwood to J.A. Hulsey (Railroad Fireman)
- 1920-1931: J.A. Hulsey occupies home
- 1932-1934: H.J. Murray occupies home

Home is converted to duplex:

- 1935-1938: J. W. Smith occupies 1216 Wrightwood
- 1935-1940: W.P. Giles occupies 1216½ Wrightwood
- 1939-1940: G. E. Skelton occupies 1216 Wrightwood
- 1940-2014: J.A. Davis family purchases and occupies 1216 Wrightwood
- 1940-1950: Numerous residents occupy 1216½ Wrightwood

The Davis Family owned the property from 1940 to 2014.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The Hulsey-Davis House sits on a 50' x 100' 5,000 square foot city lot. The setbacks from the street are around 20', (or roughly 15' from the front property line). All adjacent homes are in alignment, allowing for a consistent streetscape. All remaining original structures on either side are one story Bungalow homes, allowing the two-story Hulsey-Davis House to stand out among them. The home occupies approximately 2,200 square feet of living space.

The Hulsey-Davis House features a double front gable roof with broad eaves and exposed rafters. The triangular knee braces remain intact. The pier and beam construction raises the house approximately 36-42" above the natural ground level, though there was minor shifting at the north east corner, the level of the house was in very good shape. The house also features a distinctive skirt surrounding the base of the house.

¹ <http://www.friendsofwoodlandpark.org/about/>

The Hulsey-Davis House features a prominent double gallery partial front porch. Two square brick veneered columns originally held up the second floor porch. However, due to structural concerns the brick veneer was removed and the wood supports replaced with new wood and cementitious structural members matching the dimensions of the original brick columns. The downstairs porch railing mimics the style of square rails (altered to meet current code with spacing and height), but remains true to the original style. New second-story railing was added to the existing pony (matching the design of the first-story elements) wall due to safety concerns since the original wall was only 22" in height. The original bead board ceiling remains on both downstairs and upstairs porches.

The ground floor entry porch is accessed by poured in place concrete steps, typical to the style, which are cracked and will need to be repaired. The steps are flanked with low brick side walls. A stamp on one of the sidewalks of presumably the contractor will be preserved if and when any concrete work is initiated.

When purchased by the current owner, the home had a yellowish vinyl siding covering the entire home. When the vinyl siding was removed, the original 'teardrop' or 117 siding appeared. Though not in the best of shape, the majority of the original wood siding has been retained and repaired. Missing siding was replaced in-kind. After the vinyl siding was removed, it was also discovered that when the vinyl siding was originally installed all protruding trim/moldings, such as over the windows or at the gables, was torn off. Much of this trim has been replaced with similar trim matching the original. The front gables were also restored by removing the aluminum shingles and replacing with new cedar shingles to match the original condition of the house.

Through peeling back several layers of paint there are hints of what some of the original colors may have been. Several greens reflecting the natural color schemes typical to the Craftsman style were noted.

The wide 42" entry door is a single double paneled door that faces the street. Small glass lites with beveled edges are at the top of the solid wood door with two recessed wood panels below. Due to a cracked glass panel, one of the lites will need to be replaced to match the other panes. A wonderful turn knob door bell ringer is intact and fully functional.

The Craftsman style encouraged the use of natural light by ganging two or three windows together to allow light into each room. The original large, vertically proportioned wooden double hung windows with single panes with the counterweights still remain. About 50% of the windows still have the vintage glass. Once the windows are refurbished to their original condition, storm windows with minimal profile will cover the windows for protection from further deterioration.

A large fireplace remains, though the original built-in cabinetry is missing. However, some settling on the base of the chimney requires repair. The original brick at some point in the past had been painted.

The existing, detached two car garage (though probably not the original) sits at the rear corner of the house at the end of double strips of concrete. However, recent studies of the paving patterns lead us to believe that the house had a single vehicle garage. The paving included two strips of concrete leading back to the garage and a sidewalk then leading to the back of the house to a covered porch and the kitchen. Plans are to replace the non-original structure with a garage more appropriately suited for the house.

The original exterior landscape elements are lacking, other than the concrete steps by the sidewalk. Though unknown when the trees were planted, Wrightwood Street has a distinct usage of crepe myrtles located at each original home between the street and the sidewalk which will be maintained.

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When purchased in January 2014, the home was in very poor condition. It had sat vacant for approximately 3-5 years as the prior occupants passed away. A family member had been taking very rudimentary care of the property, by keeping the yard mowed and making crude repairs of some windows from time to time. The garage was patched together with mismatched materials in order to maintain the appearance of a storage structure.

Due to the exterior of the home being covered with vinyl, it was difficult to view the condition of the original siding at the time of purchase. Vines had made their way through the walls and sprouted out of the top gable. The front porch had several layers of plywood at varying degrees of deterioration, and was a hazard.

Though deemed livable by the previous owner, the plumbing was non-existent as the pipes were cracked. Water had not been in the lines for over 3-5 years. As for the electrical, the house had the original knob and tube lines still intact, though some new lines had been run at some point to new panels in order to accommodate modern conveniences such as a dryer and stove. The original gas lines were intact as each room was heated through floor or room heaters. Air conditioning was provided with window units placed throughout the house, which in turn caused damage to some of the wooden window casings. Burglar bars were installed into the wood window and door jambs throughout the ground floor. Due to roof damages, there was some water infiltration within the home, though due to the non-insulated walls, they seemed to have dried out over time.

At some point the home was made into a duplex with a side entry under the carport leading directly to the second floor. The address of 1216½ was painted over the carport. There were two separate kitchens and two bathrooms within the home. However, within the 'discovery' phase of finding out what was under various layers of paneling and wallpapers, wall details were found that indicated that the stairs were originally installed in a different location than they are today. Presumably when the home was modified into a duplex around 1935, the stairs were altered to flow directly to the outside of the house. There were also conversations with the original owner (who lived in the house as a boy around 1940) that initially the second floor may have been added after a fire that destroyed the roof very early after the house was constructed. Evidence of charred wood within the house was uncovered. The Sanborn Maps also confirm that the house was originally a single-story residence and that a second floor was later constructed.

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 Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

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EXHIBIT A PHOTOS

THE HULSEY-DAVIS HOUSE
1216 WRIGHTWOOD STREET



Current photo

EXHIBIT A
PHOTOS (CONTINUED)
THE HULSEY-DAVIS HOUSE
1216 WRIGHTWOOD STREET



Condition prior to purchase and restoration.

EXHIBIT A
PHOTOS (CONTINUED)
THE HULSEY-DAVIS HOUSE
1216 WRIGHTWOOD STREET



Condition prior to purchase and restoration.

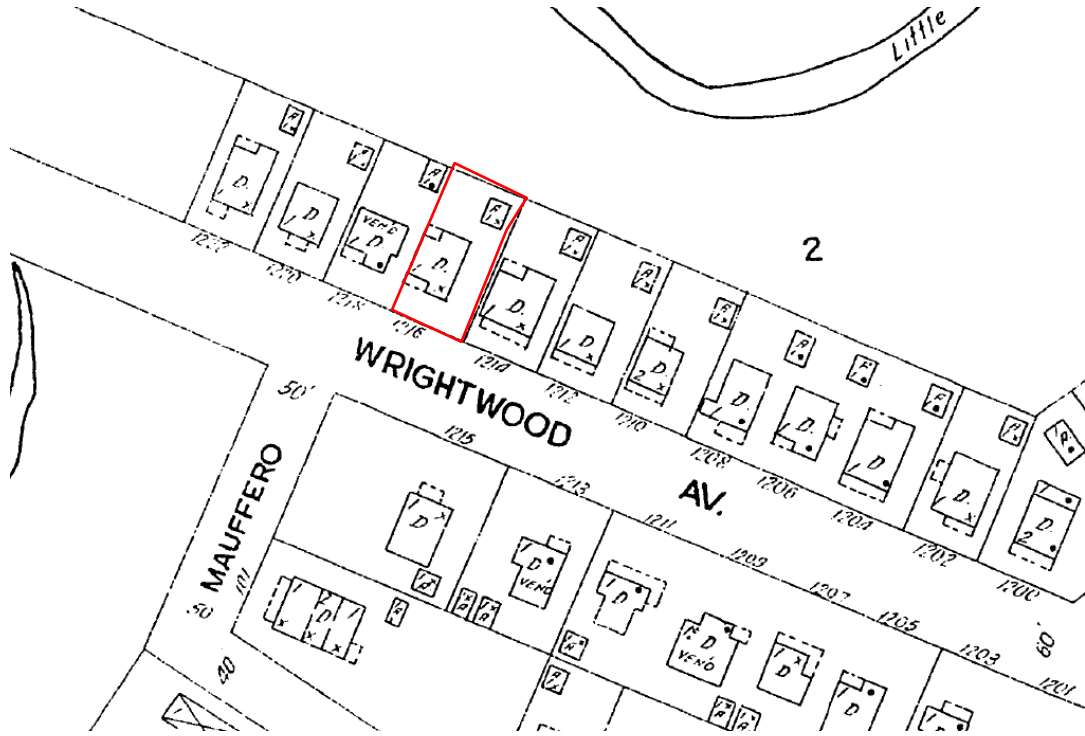
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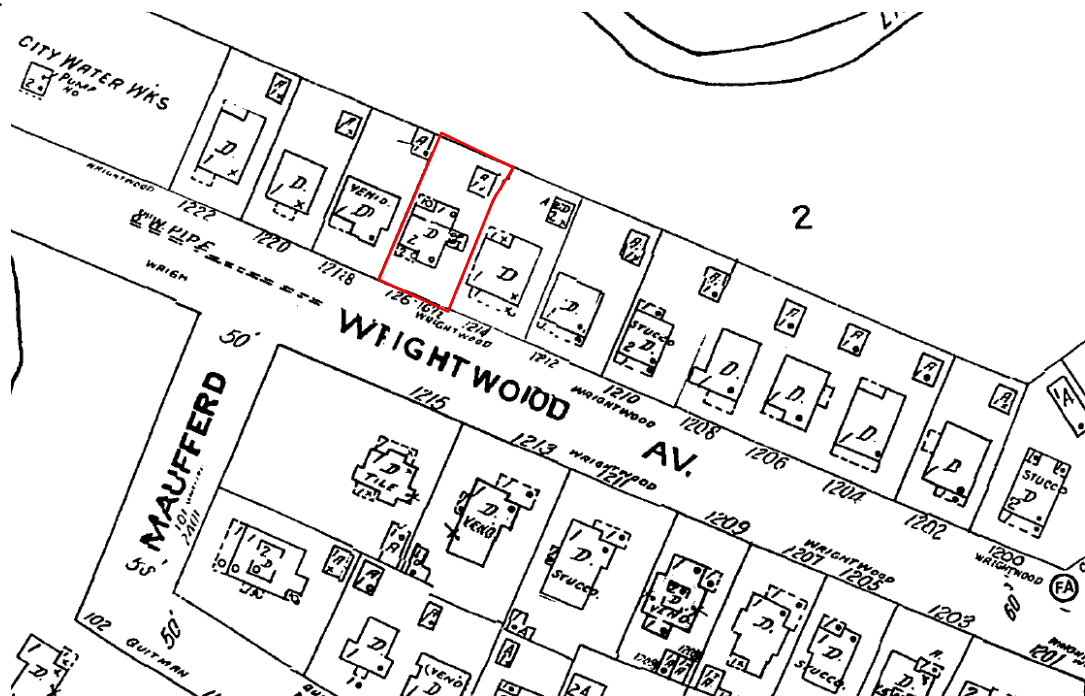
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EXHIBIT C SANBORN MAPS THE HULSEY-DAVIS HOUSE 1216 WRIGHTWOOD STREET

1924-1950



1924-1951



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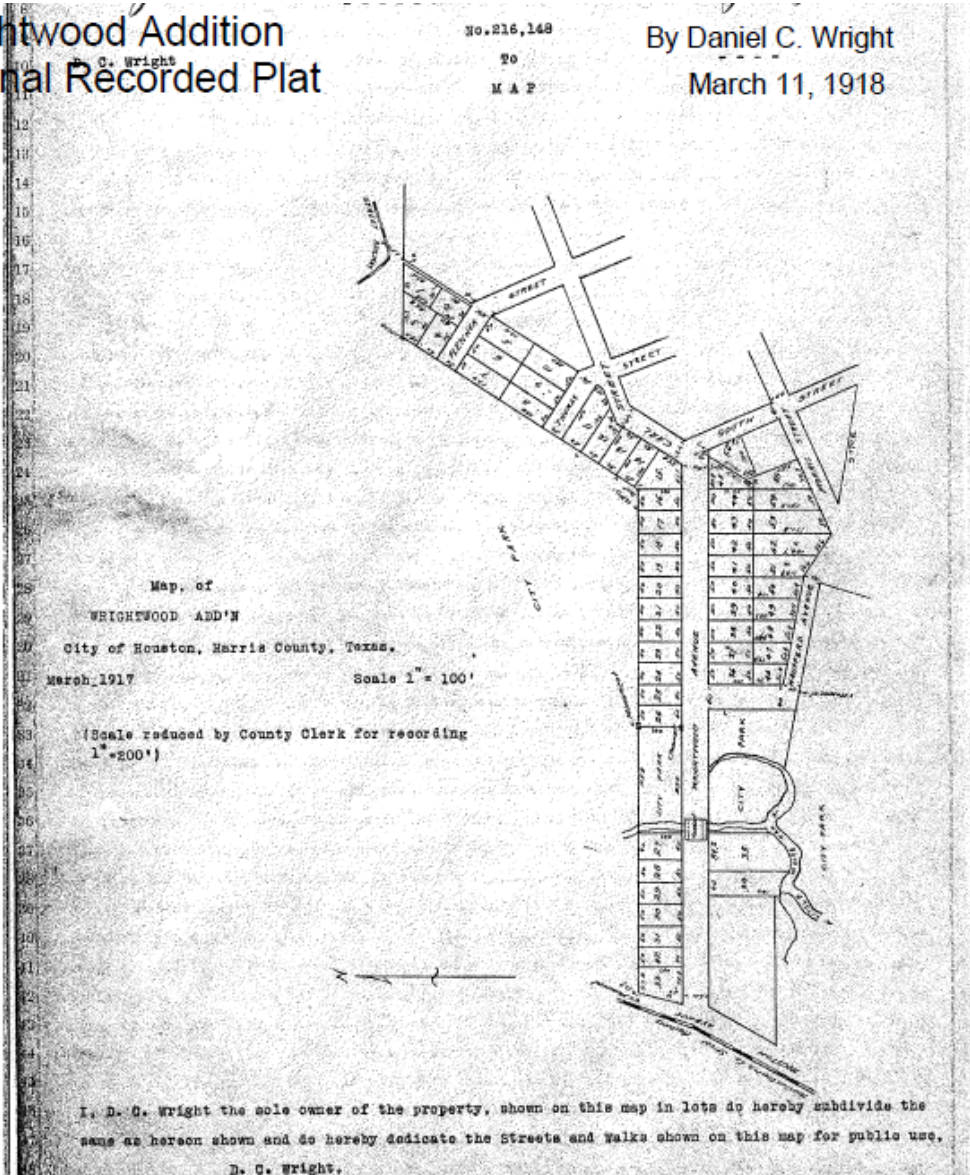
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EXHIBIT C ORIGINAL RECORDED PLAT THE HULSEY-DAVIS HOUSE 1216 WRIGHTWOOD STREET

Wrightwood Addition
Original Recorded Plat

No. 216,148
To
M A P

By Daniel C. Wright
March 11, 1918



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The State of Texas, County of Harris. Before me, the undersigned authority, a Notary Public, in and for Harris County, Texas, on this day personally appeared D. C. Wright, known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument of writing, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same for the purposes and consideration therein expressed.

Given under my hand and seal of office, at Houston, Texas, this 11th day of March, A. D. 1918.

F. W. Witt, Notary Public, Harris County, Texas. (SEAL)

Filed for record Mar. 11, 1918 at 10.25 o'clock A.M. Recorded Mar. 12, 1918 at 10.35 o'clock A.M.
Geo Jones Clerk County Court, Harris County, Texas, By *W. B. Guergens* Deputy.

