

**TO: HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
CITY OF AUSTIN  
PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT  
Public Hearing: Feb. 22, 2016**

From:  
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**RE: OPPOSITION TO ZONING REQUEST  
C14H-216-0005  
1502 Hardouin**

I received a Zoning Change Review Sheet from Steve Sadowsky on February 17. Relevant portions of that report are attached to this email. It is possible that prior to the writing of this document, a revision version of that has been prepared but I have not seen one.

Unfortunately the report Mr. Sadowsky gave me incorporates large portions of the **rezoning application**, which is chock full of internal contradictions, unsubstantiated claims, and assertions that defy common sense.

In order for this property to be designated a Historic Landmark per the Austin City Code it must meet certain requirements. In no way has it been shown that this property does so.

### **1. Historic Name: Brydsen Warren House?**

No one named Brydsen ever owned or lived in it. The deed shows that Brydsen sold *a portion of the land* to William F. Warren in May 1930. This is insufficient to support naming the house Brydsen Warren House.

### **2. Architecture: HC Staff offers "Architecture" as one basis for recommending rezoning. Houses built from pre made plans or pattern books or not adequately original or significant.**

No one disputes the house was *constructed* by Brydson Lumber Co. However, The rezoning application itself notes that Brydson Lumber company normally used "plans appearing in pattern books or other publications used by builders and buyers alike, rather than having drawings done by an architect."

The record shows that the house is located within a local historic district. Nothing in the record suggests that the design meets the criteria for uniqueness, significance or originality in style. No one even suggests let alone proves that an architect was involved in the design.

From the Austin code

*" A property located within a local historic district is ineligible to be nominated for landmark designation under the criterion for architecture, unless it possesses exceptional significance or is representative of a separate period of significance."*

**3. The Application and Staff review sheet fail to say how William F. Warren, rather than his uncles, the Brydson brothers, made even one positive contribution to Austin's history.**

It might be arguable that the Brydsen Brothers contributed but William F. Warren's connection to their achievements is not shown. The fact that he was their nephew is not enough.

**4. No proof for claim that "during William F. Warren's tenure as president, the company grew to be "one of the two biggest lumber companies in Austin".**

There is nothing in the rezoning application or public information to support this conclusion in the Staff report. Where did that come from? How can the validity of the claim be evaluated?

What did William F. Warren do between 1935 and 1966? No newspaper clips or historic references included in the application relate to significant company growth or civic contribution during his tenure as leader of the company

**5. The application and staff report include the express statement that "William F. Warren started Brydson Lumber Company with his two uncles in 1909". When he was 14 years old. Don't believe it.**

William F. Warren was born in 1895. The likelihood that he played a role of any significance in the founding of the company when he was fourteen (and his wife was three)years of age not only defies common sense and is without credible support.

The staff report says that the uncles brought him in at some point during the '20s but I can find no record to substantiate that assertion either. Where did the staff find this information? Its source needs to be identified otherwise there is not way to evaluate its accuracy.

**6. Brydson's achievements as enumerated in the application and staff report occurred before William F. Warren was born. It is nonsensical to give him credit for these.**

The alleged historical significance of the Brydson Lumber company includes a variety of building projects...all but one of which took place prior to the birth of William F. Warren and all of which took place prior to his assuming the job of president in 1935, Oddly, one of the "significant Austin buildings" that Warren is credited with (apparently by virtue of being a nephew of the founders of the company) is "St. Mary's Baptist Church." No one seems to know where that is, might have been, or why anyone would deem it a "significant" Austin building. What is going on here? One gets the impression that a narrative with the credibility of a fairy tale is offered as justification for this rezoning.

## **7. Brydson Lumber company may have built some homes in Hyde Park but there is no evidence that it did so during the lifetime of William F. Warren.**

In the application and the staff recommendation for rezoning, the staff credits Brydson Lumber one of the "most active builders in Hyde Park" in the late 19th and early 20th century.

According to the application, Bryson Lumber was not founded until 1909 and William F. Warren was a child in the late 19th and early 20th century.

How do we reconcile the alleged connection to Hyde Park development as supportive of the claim that William F. Warren's house deserves status as a historic landmark? He wasn't around when these things were happening in Hyde Park.

(Moreover, historical records of the Hyde Park district indicate that Brydson brothers were but one of several builders in the development of the area. It cannot be truthfully claimed that Brydson brothers were one of the most active builders. William F. Warren cannot take any credit for Hyde Park. If Brydson Lumber was not founded until 1909, how could it have been one of the most active builders? This is another discrepancy existing in the record that needs sorting out. The Brydson brothers are mentioned in the historical records of Hyde Park but those records also indicate that the role played by the brothers was not major.)

*"Calcasieu Lumber Co., which built many houses in Hyde Park, was founded in 1883 by William and Carl Drake and named for a parish in Louisiana known for its high-grade lumber. The firm is still active today [1990] although it has moved from its original downtown location. The Nalle Lumber Co., established by Joseph Nalle in 1871, arguably grew to be the city's largest building supplier during the late 1800s and early 1900s.*

*Although large lumber companies built many Hyde Park houses, many more were constructed by independent contractors, several of whom resided in the neighborhood. Ed Mallet, who lived at 4008 Avenue C, built houses at 4215 Avenue A, 4012 and 4204 Avenue B, 4115 Avenue H, and 4107 and 4115 Speedway. Other neighborhood contractors identified in city directories and mechanics liens include A. H. Edburg who*

*lived at 4109 Avenue C. W.O. Gustafson at 200 East 43rd and John F. Meier at 4318 Avenue C.*

*During the 1920s and 1930s, Hyde Park became fully developed. "*

- 8. The application and staff report state that William F. Warren and his family moved into the house at 1502 Hardouin on May 15, 1930. The deeds indicate that he did not own the land upon which the house could be built. until October of that year.**

There was no house to be moved into on May 15, 1930.

- 9. The application and staff report state in the " chronology of owners/occupants" that between 1930 and 1933 the house was owned/occupied by Brydson Lumber.**

Not so. The deed to William F. Warren clearly shows relinquishment of ownership in the property by Brydson Lumber in May of 1930.

- 10. William F. Warren and Eleanor Hill Warren supported and contributed to the racial segregation of Austin neighborhoods.**

There are additional serious questions regarding the desirability of recognizing William F. Warren and his wife as historically laudable.

A glaring feature of the property transfer William F. Warren negotiated , is his express promise that "no part of the property will be rented, leased, sold, conveyed or come into possession of any person other than white persons of strick (sic) caucasian blood."

Texas courts had no problems enforcing this sort of restrictive covenant for many years and today few people dispute the impact of racist restrictive covenants on the long standing history of racial segregation in Austin.

In addition, during Eleanor Hill Warren's term as Regent (President) of the Carrothers Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution that organization and that chapter continuously refused admission to women of color. This policy was not modified until 1977, when the daughters finally acknowledged that there were approximately 5000 persons of color fighting on the side of the patriots in the American Revolution.

Recall that Eleanor Roosevelt publicly renounced her membership in the DAR because of the open racism practiced by the organization. Eleanor Warren supported it.

Pemberton Heights remains lily white to this day. Brydson Lumber and William F. Warren helped make that so. I submit that's not something to commend.

## **11. Did the Brydson Lumber Company disappear in 1966 because of William F. Warren's poor leadership?**

In addition to the complete absence of references to anything William F. Warren contributed to the history of Austin between 1935 and 1966 (his tenure as head of the Brydson Lumber company) other than support of racial segregation in Pemberton Heights, one must ask, why did the company fall off the map in 1966?

It was not sold and no records are provided to show that it was merged into another organization.

It is reasonable to conclude that William F. Warren was the antithesis of a significant businessman and that because of his defective leadership a company, founded by his uncles, was run into the ground.

## **Conclusion**

**The case has not been made that we should recognize this house as a historic landmark either because of its architecture or its historical association to William F. Warren. We don't know enough about William F. Warren and his wife to conclude they made positive significant contributions to Austin's history.**