

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
AUGUST 22, 2016  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2016-0482  
1617 S. 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET**

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**PROPOSAL**

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Demolish a ca. 1911 house.

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**ARCHITECTURE**

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One-story, rectangular-plan, hipped-roof, frame cottage with a partial-width inset porch on turned wood posts; many windows have been recently replaced.

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**RESEARCH**

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The house appears to have been built around 1911 and was first occupied by Robert H. Davis, a bartender in a beer saloon on S. Congress Avenue. Robert Davis lived here until around 1914, when the house was occupied by a laborer, Lucio Hernandez. A painter, Jesse C. Chaney, is listed as the occupant of the house in the 1916 city directory, and in 1918, it appears that the first African-American family moved into the house. Wiley and Bessie Miller are listed as the renters of the house. Wiley Miller was a laborer. The house was vacant around 1920, then rented (and later owned) by Melvin and Sadie Battle, who lived here until Sadie's death in 1960. Melvin Battle had a number of occupations listed in the city directories, including a farmer, a teamster, a laborer, a yardman, and a cook at the State School for the Deaf. The 1940 U.S. Census shows Melvin Battle as the greens keeper for a golf course, while Sadie Battle was a laundress at home for a private family.

There is some confusion as to whether this is the house that was owned and occupied by Melvin and Sadie Battle. There is a demolition permit in city building records to demolish the house in 1971, but then another in 1974 to remodel and repair the existing house. Another building permit in 1974 indicates that move of a frame house to the site.

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**STAFF COMMENTS**

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The house is listed in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984) but without a priority for research.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Postpone to September 26, 2016 to fully evaluate alternatives to demolition and to fully understand the history of this house. If this house is the Battle house, then it, as well as the one next door (1615 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street), also up for demolition, reflects the history of the neighborhood as it moved from a lower-income Anglo neighborhood to an African-American neighborhood. Melvin and Sadie Battle, who lived in this house for almost 40 years, represent typical occupations for African-Americans in Austin in the mid-20th century – he worked as a greenskeeper on a golf course, while she did a private family's laundry, and had also been a maid. Aside from the replacement windows, the house is intact, and rehabilitation and restoration of this house is certainly an open option. Staff recommends the postponement for the applicant to consider preservation of this house, if it can be determined that it is the original house on the site, and not the one referenced in the 1974 building permit to move a frame house onto the site. If the Commission votes to release the permit, then staff recommends relocation over demolition, and completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package prior to release of the permit.

## LOCATION MAP





1617 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
ca. 1911



## OCCUPANCY HISTORY

### 1617 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center  
By City Historic Preservation Office  
August, 2016

1992	Alec Hernandez, renter No occupation listed
1985-86	Alec A. Hernandez, owner Proprietor, Golden Slipper Shoe Shop, shoe repairs, 1903 S. 1 <sup>st</sup> Street.
1981	Guemercindo and Amelia Lopez, renters Employed by the New Creek Gravel Company (no listing in the alphabetical section of the directory).
1977	Gomez Lopez, renter Employed by the Onion Creek Gravel Company (no listing in the alphabetical section of the directory).
1973	The address is not listed in the directory. NOTE: Gomez Lopez is not listed in the directory.
1968	Vacant
1965	Vacant

1962	Vacant
1959	Melvin A. and Sadie Battle, owners No occupation listed
1955	Melvin A. and Sadie Battle, owners No occupation listed
1952	Melvin A. and Sadie Battle, owners Cook, State School for the Deaf
1949	Melvin A. and Sadie Battle, owners Cook, State School for the Deaf
1947	Melvin A. and Sadie Battle, owners Cook, State School for the Deaf
1944-45	Melvin A. and Sadie Battle, owners Yardman
1941	Melvin and Sadie Battle, owners Laborer NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street.
1939	Melvin and Sadie Battle, owners Yardman, Willow Springs Golf Course NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street.
1937	Melvin and Sadie Battle, owners No occupation listed NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street.
1935	Melvin and Sadie Battle, owners No occupation listed NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street.
1932-33	Melvin and Sadie Battle, owners No occupation listed NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street.
1930-31	Melvin and Sadie Battle (colored), owners No occupation listed. NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street.
1929	Melvin and Sadie Battle (colored), owners No occupation listed NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street.
1927	Melvin and Sadie Battle (colored), renters No occupation listed NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street.
1924	Melvin and Sadie Battle (colored), renters Teamster

NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

- 1922      Melvin and Sadie Battle (colored), renters  
Farmer  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- 1920      Vacant  
NOTE: Melvin and Sadie Battle are not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- 1918      Wiley and Bessie Miller (colored), renters  
Laborer  
NOTE: Melvin and Sadie Battle are not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- 1916      Jesse C. Chaney (no indication as to race)  
Painter  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- 1914      Lucio Hernandez  
Laborer  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- 1912-13   Robert H. Davis  
Bartender, Max Himmelreich, beer, 302 S. Congress Avenue; and saloon, 212  
W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.
- 1910-11   The address is not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: Robert H. Davis is not listed in the directory.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

### **Melvin and Sadie Battle (ca. 1921 – 1960)**

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Melvin and Sadie Battle as the renters of a farm house on the Austin-Lockhart Road in Travis County, Texas. Melvin Battle was 34, had been born in Texas, and was a farmer. Sadie Battle was 25, had been born in Texas, and was a farm laborer. With them lived Sadie's mother, Katie White, a 52-year old Texas-born widow who worked as a washerwoman.

Melvin and Sadie Battle appear in the 1930 U.S. Census as the owners of this house, which was worth \$480. Melvin Battle was 39, had been born in Texas to North Carolina-born parents, and was a yard man for a country club. Sadie Battle was 27, had been born in Texas, and was a maid for a private family. They had no children listed with them.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows M.A. and Sadie Battle as the owners of this house, which was worth \$300. M.A. Battle was 55, had been born in Texas, and was the greens keeper for a golf course. Sadie Battle was 46, had been born in Texas, and was a laundress at home for a private family. They had no children listed with them.

Her 1960 death certificate shows that Sadie Lee Battle was born in Travis County to Willie Shite and Katie Sneed White in 1900. She was living in this house at the time of her death. She was a housewife.

**MRS. SADIE BATTLE**

Funeral services for Mrs. Sadie Battle, who died Sunday in a local hospital, will be held at Goodwill Baptist Church Thursday at 3 p. m. with Rev. E. B. Brown officiating. Burial will be in Evergreen Cemetery under direction of Fuller Mercer Sheffield Funeral Service. Pallbearers will be Titus Darby, J. L. Prosser, Limuel Franklin, William Bradshaw, Willie King and T. E. Davis.

Survivors include her husband, Melvin Battle of Austin; one sister, Mrs. Roberta Harris of Austin; four nephews and two nieces.

Obituary of Sadie Battle  
Austin American, February 18, 1960

NOTE: Roberta Harris, Sadie Battle's sister, lived next door at 1615 S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

**MELVIN A. BATTLES**

Funeral for Melvin A. Battles will be 3 p.m. Saturday in Fuller Sheffield Funeral Chapel with Rev. Leslie M. Warren officiating. Burial will be in Evergreen Cemetery under direction of Fuller Sheffield Funeral Service.

Survivors include a sister, Mrs. Lelia B. Gilbert, Austin; two daughters, Mrs. Lillie Mae

Teague, Austin; Mrs. Rosie Lee Watrous, Austin; three grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

Pallbearers will be A. B. Huff, Dan Dallas, Henry Underwood, Roger Taylor, Edgar Bunton and Monroe Taylor Jr.

Obituary of Melvin Battle  
Austin American-Statesman, February 3, 1968

OWNER Rosalee Watrous ADDRESS 1617 S. 2nd St.  
 PLAT 116 LOT 45' x 200' (Melvin A. Battle) BLK C  
 SUBDIVISION J. E. Bouldin Estate  
 OCCUPANCY res.  
 BLD PERMIT # 107867 DATE 4-29-68 OWNERS ESTIMATE \$1,000.00  
 CONTRACTOR owner NO. OF FIXTURES yes  
 WATER TAP REC # -- SEWER TAP REC # --  
 remodel & repair frm res to bring to min stdrs.

9-7-71-124994-demolish frm residence \*( Lillie Mae Teague  
 Building permit to Rosalee Watrous for repairs and remodeling (1968) and to demolish the house (1971)

OWNER Aleck A. Hernandez ADDRESS 1617 South 2nd  
 PLAT 116 LOT Melvin A. Battles Et ux BLK  
 SUBDIVISION Unplatted  
 OCCUPANCY Residence  
 BLD PERMIT # 141059 DATE 3-5-74 OWNERS ESTIMATE ~~\$1,000~~ \$1,000.00  
 CONTRACTOR owner NO. OF FIXTURES  
 WATER TAP REC # SEWER TAP REC #  
 Remodel existing residence.

Building permit to Alec Hernandez to remodel the house (1974)



