1602 West Lynn Street, Austin, Texas

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Basic Facts and Arguments:

According to the West End National Register Historic District (NRHD) nomination,1602 West Lynn was identified as one of ten Italian Renaissance Revival style houses contributing to the district. In 2003 the district had a total of 2,519 buildings with 1,568 listed as contributing. Three subdivisions are encompassed in the boundaries with the subject property located in the Enfield subdivision. The period of significance is from 1853 to 1953. Two Italian Renaissance Revival styles are specifically mentioned in the nomination:

> 1602 Niles in Table 3 as designed by an architect, Henry B. Thomson, and
> 1400 Wathen, the Hemphill House as a representative property, photo 33.

The question presented: does 1602 West Lynn meet Austin's threshold for individual landmark designation? To answer that question, we will examine three categories used in evaluating historic-age resources for Austin's Historic Designation Criteria: Architecture, Historical Association and Community Value.

1 - Architecture –

1602 West Lynn was identified in the West End National Register Historic District as a contributing resource and identified as an Italian Renaissance Revival style. A total of 10 Italianate Renaissance Revivals were noted in the NRHD.

Virginia & Lee McAlester (*A Field Guide to American Houses*) describes the Italian Renaissance style as:

The style was popular during the 1890-1935s and had common architectural elements consisting of:

- Low pitch roof
- Tiled roof
- Often Symmetrical façade
- Widely overhanging eaves supported by decorative brackets (often brackets are coupled)
- Recessed entry: often arched and flanked by columns
- Upper story windows are smaller and less elaborate than first floor windows

1602 West Lynn does have a low pitch roof with wide overhanging eaves supported by plain brackets, a recessed entry with arched door and smaller second stories windows which marks it as an Italian Renaissance Revival. However, the expression of the style is low compared to the original intent of the architects and the other an Italian Renaissance Revival examples in the district.

According to the original drawings, the architectural firm of Giesecke & Harris designed the house for G.E. Bryson. In reviewing the drawings, we have determined that the house was not built to the architect's original specifications thereby simplifying the articulation of the style.

1. Lintels of interlocking vertical laid brick with stone, keystones and stone endcaps were replaced with simple lintels.
2. Window sills or stools are plain brick instead of stone.
3. Red cedar shingles were to be used on the roof and the ridges capped with galvalume metal. We do know that the roof material has been replaced twice and is currently metal.
4. The 1935 Sanborn Map does not match the drawings as there is no portico outline. The architect's drawings states that the columns are to be "union metal #224 Roman Doric" topped with a decorative diamond shape crest. Today's cresting is plain balustrade similar to a guard railing rather than a decorative wrought iron fence as portrayed on the drawing.
5. The *porte cochure* is now covered by a modern garage door.
6. The sun room has been infilled to be used as an indoor room.

It is important to note that this house also has characteristics notable from the Craftsman Bungalow which include the 3/1 lights of the windows on the first floor, large eave overhang and emphasis on the horizontal massing.

Within the West End NRHD, the 2003 NRHP nomination identifies 10 Italian Renaissance Revel style houses, one located two doors down at 1510 W Lynn and a High style architect designed house at 1602 Niles street around the corner.



1602 Niles Road (Google Maps)

1602 Niles retains the red clay tile roof. The first floor is elongated and capped by a belt course. The first floor has both flat and rounded windows as well as an arched entry.

2 - Historical Association

Architects

Bertram Giesecke and August Harris, former UT Austin classmates, formed the partnership of Giesecke & Harris in 1921. The firm was in partnership from 1921 to 1941 and dissolved when August Harris went into the Army for World War II. Both architects were members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Giesecke served as President of the Texas Society of Architects in 1946. Giesecke died in 1950 at age 58 and Harris came back from the war and began a private practice and later formed a partnership with his son William Harris.

The significant works of Giesecke and Harris are documented and designated as National Register Buildings. Three of the firm's buildings are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places: Bryan Municipal Building in Brazos County (1925), Kurt and Meta Schmedes House in Travis County (1923), and Brenham High School in Washington County (1925). According to the National Register nomination on the Schmedes house: it "incorporates elements of Craftsman, Prairie School, Mediterranean and Classical styles".

Five of the firm's buildings are currently listed as Registered Texas Historic Landmarks: Edinburg Junior College Auditorium in Hidalgo County, Kleberg Public School in Kleberg county, Becker School, Mathews School (1930s renovation) and Norwood Tower all located in the city of Austin. The firm is best known for their educational and public schools as part of the Public Works Administration (PWA) in the 1930s (PWA Docket Tex-1300R). Since the schools are part of projects constructed under the PWA program those buildings have a higher significance as they are relevant at the National Level, versus the state or local level.

Most importantly, located within the NRHD boundaries is Pease Park. The Tudor house located in the Park was built by the firm of Giesecke & Harris in the 1920s, so the firm's work is already represented in the neighborhood at the local level of significance.

There currently are 260 drawings of 46 projects of their work located at the Austin History Center. Identified in the index of the Harris papers are three houses built during his partnership with Giesecke and one box of unidentified residence, quantity not known at this time. Future research may reveal better, intact and high style examples of their residential work.

Owners

According to the National Bulletin 15 "a person associated with the property must *be individually significant* within the historic context. A property is not eligible if its only justification for significance is that it was owned or used by a person." Association of a property should "reflect the *productive* life and time period when the person achieved significance". Furthermore, each property associated with that person need to best identify the property that reflects the individual's historic contribution.

GE Bryson, according to the 1922 Austin City directory was in partnership with two other men as cotton buyers for the firm of M.H. Reed & Co. Based on the company's name, Reed appears to be the principle partner. Reed went on to become a west Texas oilman in the 1930s and land development in the Texas Panhandle. The Reed Estate located in Pemberton Heights is listed as an Austin Historic Landmark and is a "high style" example of Italian Renaissance villa designed by Hal Thomson.

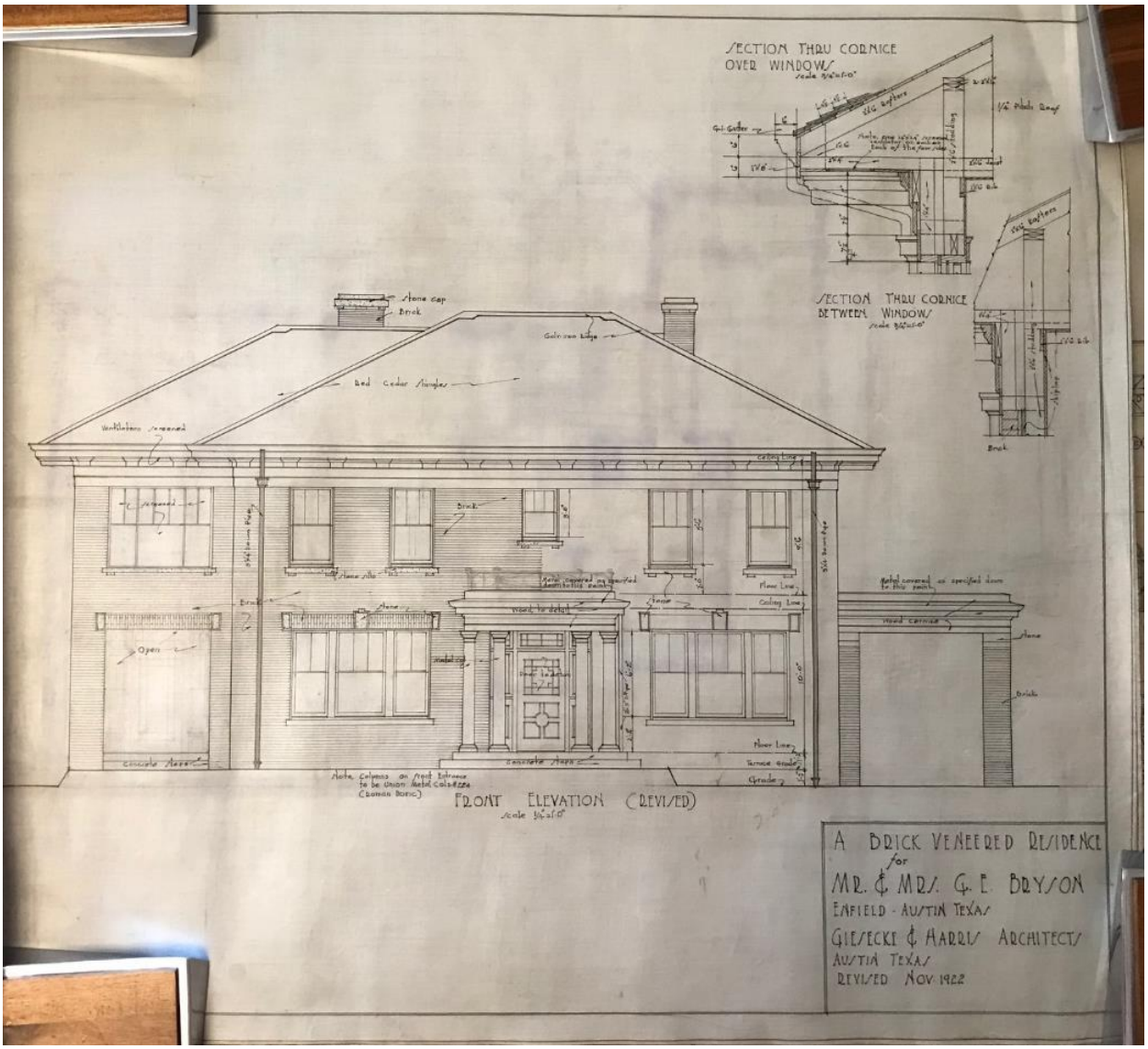
Bryson individual importance is not justified as there is no specific information about Bryson regarding his contribution to the cotton industry, or impact upon commerce or politics in Austin.

With regards to later property owners, additional research would need to be completed to determine if the person achieved significance not only while they resided at 1602 W Lynn and if that house best represents their historic contribution.

3 - Community Value

The property has been in this location since 1923. However, its unique location and setting has been greatly diminished by the demolition of the house across the street and the demolition and new construction of the house next door which is now located only three feet away from the property line.

Appendix A: Supporting Research and Documentation:



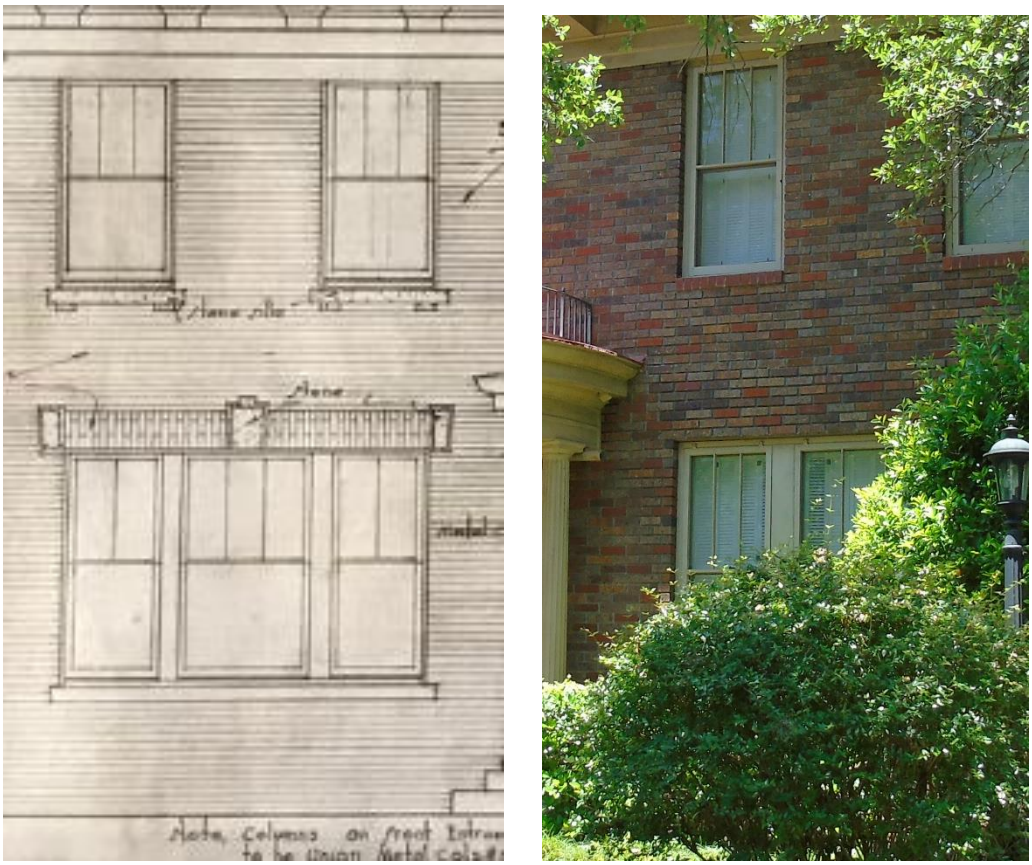
Photograph 1. Original Drawing for 1602 West Lynn Street, Dated 1922



Photograph 2. Current Front Façade of 1602 West Lynn Street (2018)

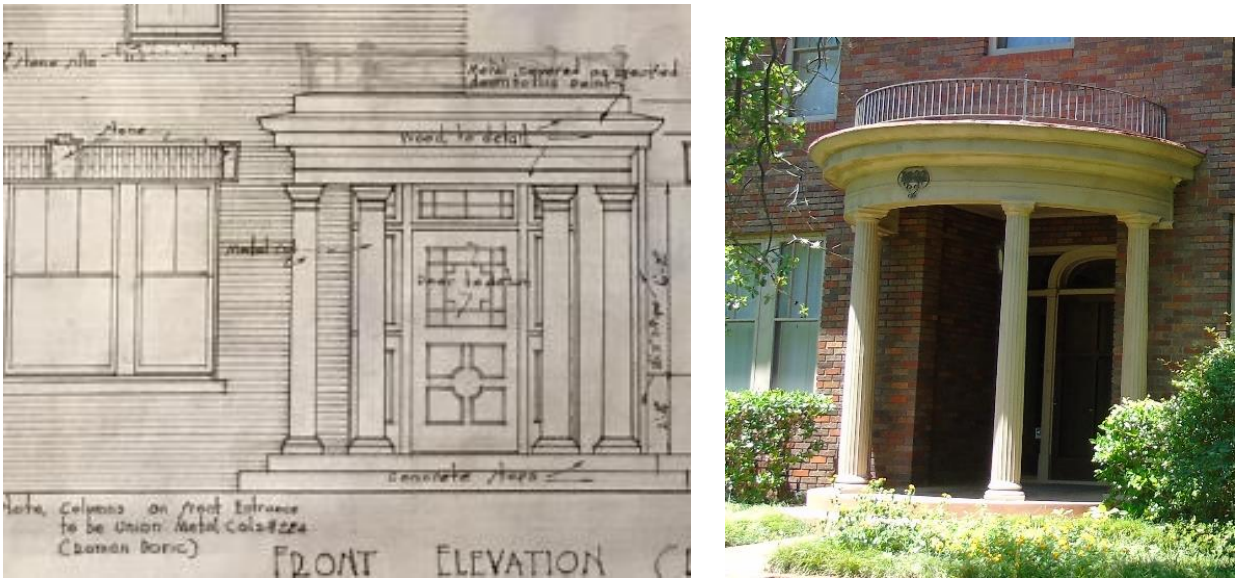
Note that the house was not built to the architect's specifications thereby simplifying the articulation of the style. The red Cedar Shingles have been replaced twice with the current material being metal (Photographs 1 and 2).

The lintels of interlocking vertical laid brick with stone, keystone and stone endcaps. Window sills or stools are plain brick instead of stone (Photograph 3).

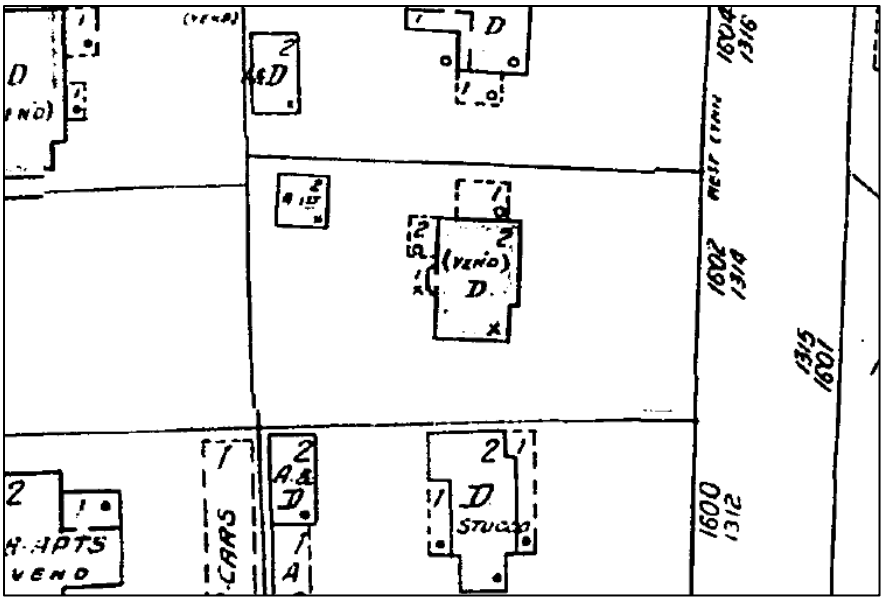


Photograph 3. Window details of 1602 West Lynn Street

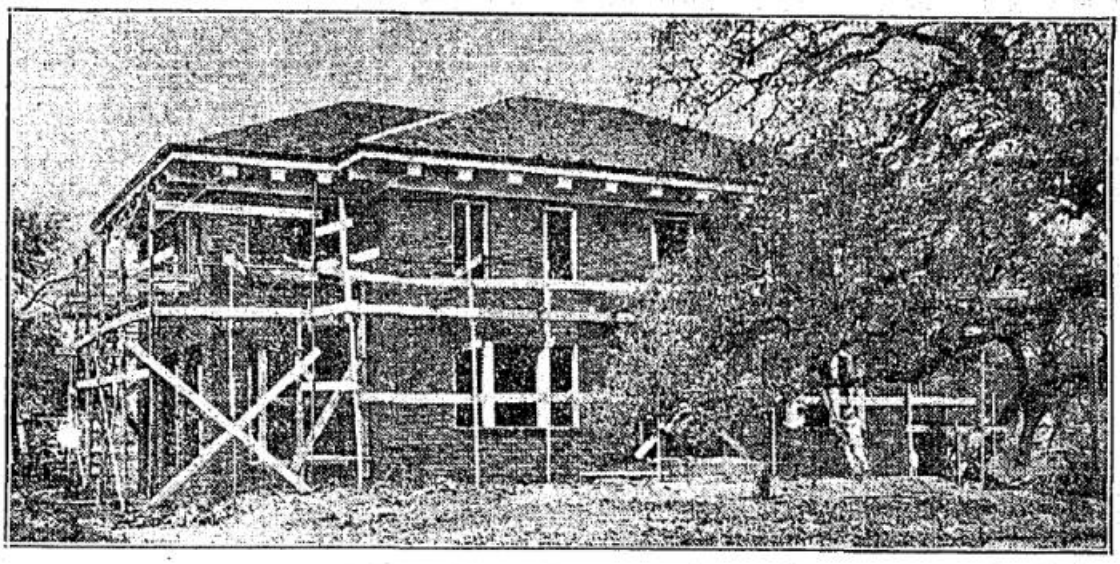
Finally, the 1935 and 1961 Sanborn maps, the maps do not match the architectural drawings as there is no portico outline. The architect's drawings states that the columns are to be "union metal #224 Roman Doric" topped with a decorative diamond shape crest. Today's cresting is plain balustrade similar to guard railing than a fence (Photographs 4 and 5).



Photograph 4. Porch details of 1602 West Lynn Street



Photograph 5. 1961 Sanborn Sheet 25, portico on front façade of 1602 West Lynn Street is missing.



GEORGE BRYSON HOME—West Lynn Street

The George Bryson home, now under construction in Enfield, will upon completion be one of the most attractive residences in Austin. It is a red brick and tile structure, and is to be two stories in height. Equipped with the latest of modern appointments, this home will be one of the most complete in Austin.

Photo of the house under construction
Austin Statesman, April 15, 1923

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Representative Samples of Italian Renaissance Revival Styles in West End Historic District:



1510 West Lynn Street



1510 West Lynn Street bracket detail.



1400 Wathen Avenue



1500 Lorraine Street



1504 Marshall Lane



1702 Windsor Road



1704 Windsor Road



2412 Harris Boulevard



1600 W Lynn Street, 2017



1600 W. Lynn Street, April 2009 (Google Maps)

29800



1602 W Lynn Street, April 2009 (Google Maps)

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