

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**  
**OCTOBER 22, 2018**  
**DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS (PARTIAL)**  
HDP-2018-0499  
1908 Pennsylvania Avenue

## **PROPOSAL**

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Alter a ca. 1912 house.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

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One-story, rectangular-plan, hip-roofed house with asbestos siding, 1:1 windows (boarded up but likely wood-sash), and a corner porch. The house is the southernmost building on the property; no work is proposed to the other house on the property, which faces Poquito Street.

## **PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS**

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The proposed project includes the following work:

- 1) Construction of a second-story addition atop the existing house. The addition is proposed to be capped with a side-gabled roof, clad in hardiplank siding, and include 1:1 and sliding vinyl- or composite-sash windows. It will be set back approximately 9 feet from the front wall of the house.
- 2) Reconstruction of the existing roof into a side-gabled roof.
- 3) Replacement of existing windows with vinyl- or composite-sash windows.
- 4) Replacement of the front door with a fully glazed wood or composite door.

## **RESEARCH**

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Constructed around 1912, 1908 Pennsylvania Avenue has been occupied by a series of short-term renters, with two exceptions. Buena Vista Cummings, an African American teacher, was the longest-term resident. She lived in the house for the better part of a decade (1918-28), with a brief break in the early 1920s when the house was rented by a fellow Huston College teacher. John and Eva Swisher lived there in 1952-59. John Swisher worked for the City Sewer Department.

## **STAFF COMMENTS**

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The building does not appear to meet the criteria for designation as a historic landmark. It was recommended as contributing property in a potential historic district by the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (2016).

### *Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark*

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building retains a moderately high degree of integrity. The siding has been replaced.
- 3) Properties must meet two historic designation criteria for landmark designation (City of Austin Land Development Code, Section 25-2-352). The property does not appear to demonstrate significance according to any criteria.
  - a. **Architecture.** The building does not appear to possess architectural distinction.
  - b. **Historical association.** Buena Vista Cummings lived in the house for approximately nine years, and John and Eva Swisher lived there for

approximately eight years. There do not appear to be significant historical associations.

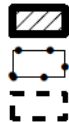
- c. **Archaeology.** The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d. **Community value.** The property does not appear to have a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, a neighborhood, or a particular group.
- e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Release the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.

## LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT

PENDING CASE

ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 167'

## NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2018-0499

LOCATION: 1809 Pennsylvania Avenue

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



## PROPERTY INFORMATION

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### *Photos*



*Primary (south) façade and east elevation of 1908 Pennsylvania Avenue.*

### *Occupancy History*

Completed by Historic Preservation Office staff  
September 2018

1910	Address not listed
1912	Curtis Kilgore (colored), renter Laborer
1914	Lillie Johnson (colored), renter Domestic worker
1916	Diana Everett (colored), renter Teacher
1918-20	Buena V. Cummings (colored), owner Teacher, model school department at Samuel Huston College (1918, 1920)
1922	Luther E. and Mary Askey (colored), renters Teacher, Samuel Huston College
1924-27	Buena V. Cummings (colored), owner Cummings Private School at 1908 Pennsylvania Ave (1924); teacher, Tillotson College (1927)

	William A. and Jessie L. Brooks (colored), renter Carpenter
1929	Frank and Annie M. Richardson (colored), renters No occupation listed
1932	Eugene and Inez Patterson, renters Porter, Railroad Commission of Texas
1935	James and Rosa Braggs, renters No occupation listed  Jess Braggs, renter Deliveryman, Caldwell Potato Chip Factory
1939-41	Henrietta Becks, renter No occupation listed
1944	Jesse and Frances Bevins, renters Steel molder
1949	Crawford Nunn, renter No occupation listed
1952-59	John J. and Eva M. Swisher, renters Employee, City Sewer Division (1952, 1955); representative, City Sewer Department (1959)
1962	Mrs. Alex Jackson, renter Maid
1968	Mrs. Birda Sauls (widow of Willie), renter Retired
1973	Leon and Emma Scott, renters Porter, State Attorney General
1977	Verttry Maynard, renter Retired
1986	No return
1992	Martha Azpata, renter No occupation listed

### *Background Research*

Buena Vista Cummings (nee Terry) was an African American woman born to a single mother in Brenham between 1875 and 1883. She and her mother had moved to Austin by 1880, where her mother worked as a live-in laundress; in 1885, they both lived and worked on a farm at San Jacinto and Mulberry streets. Cummings married at age 20, but was listed as single and living with her mother in various houses on Neches, San Jacinto, and E. 12<sup>th</sup> until about 1905, when her mother died. She attended two years of college, according to

the Census, and taught at home in 1903; by 1909, she was living and working as a matron at the Texas Institute for Colored Deaf, Dumb, and Blind. She worked as a teacher at the model school department at Samuel Huston College from at least 1918 until at least 1920. In 1920, Tillotson College opened a Model School Department for grades 1-6, and Cummings was teaching there by 1923. At least in 1924-25, she ran the Cummings Private School at her home. By 1927, she was teaching at Tillotson again, which was limited to African American women at the time. She married Boyd Simpson in 1928 and moved to a house on Poquito Street. Buena Vista Simpson was operating a school in her home when she died in 1957.

**CHRISTMAS CONCERT—Given by children of Miss H. V. Cummings' private school, Tuesday night, Dec. 23, 1925, at Wesley chapel tabernacle, corner Navasota and Hackberry, 8:30 p. m. Admission, 10c. Benefit playground apparatus.**

*Advertisement for Christmas concert given by students in the Cummings Private School, The Austin Statesman 12/22/1925.*

**MRS. BUENA VISTA SIMPSON**

Funeral services for Mrs. Buena Vista Simpson, 74, of 1180 Poquito Street, will be held Saturday at 11 a. m. at Wesley Methodist Church.

The Rev. Robert S. Mosby will officiate. Burial will be in Oakwood Cemetery under the direction of King-Tears Funeral Home.

Mrs. Simpson, who died at her home Monday, operated a private pre-school institution. She was formerly an instructor for the Austin Public Schools.

She is survived by her husband, Boyd A. Simpson; and one daughter, Mrs. Alberta Williams of Houston.

*Obituary for Buena Vista Simpson (nee Cummings), The Austin Statesman 3/8/1957.*

John Jefferson Swisher was born in 1894 in Austin to Texas-born parents. His father was a farmer, and John and his siblings grew up working as laborers on the farm. In 1930, he was working on his own as a cotton farmer, but had transitioned to manual labor on road construction—either for the City of Austin or the State—by 1940. That same year, his two oldest sons worked on “park improving,” likely for the City. By 1952, when he and his family moved into 1908 Pennsylvania Avenue, John Swisher was working for the City Sewer Division, where he remained until at least 1959. He died in 1971 in Austin.

**JOHN SWISHER**

Funeral for **John Swisher**, 77, of 2013 Peoples St., who died in a local nursing home Sunday, will be Saturday at David Chapel Baptist Church with Rev. J. E. Obey officiating. Burial will be in the Evergreen Cemetery under direction of King-Tears Mortuary, Inc.

Survivors include his widow, Mrs. Eva Swisher; seven daughters, Mrs. Mary Harris and Mrs. Etta Mae Morris of Oakland, Calif., Mrs. Queen Ester Horton and Mrs. Ada L. Ignont of Berkeley, Calif., Mrs. Marjorie Finnen of El Paso,

Mrs. Maggie Rhodes of Port Arthur, Mrs. Marie A. Gordon of Ft. Dix, N.J.; five sons, Lee J. Swisher of Tulsa, Okla., Jimmie Swisher, Ladell Swisher, and Richard Swisher, all of Austin, Ernest Swisher of Pasadena, Calif., four sisters, Mrs. Ada Canady, Mrs. Mary Frances Houston, Mrs. Edna Hodge, Mrs. Beatrice Johnson, all of Austin; three brothers, Rev. Isiah Swisher, Lubbock, Rev. Wesley Swisher of Kenedy, Rev. Patrick Swisher of Lubbock; 38 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren.

*Obituary for John Swisher, The Austin Statesman 10/23/1971.*

Eva Gregg Swisher was born in 1898 in Webberville. She married John Swisher around 1918 and had at least twelve children. Eva Swisher died in 1979 in Austin—three years after her mother, who died at age 106.

*Building Permits*

Boyd A. Simpson		1908 Pennsylvania Ave.	
36	5	9	-
Frame store room			
35154 9-11-47		\$200.00	
Owner		None	

*Building permit issued to Boyd A. Simpson for a wood-frame store room, 9/11/1947.*



1949 41324 STS 00 W TAP Permit

Type	W TAP Permit	Status	Expired
Sub Type	Wastewater	Parent ID	2134353
Work	Commercial	Row ID	2240153
Group	Permits		

### Primary Property

<b>Address</b>	1908 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, AUSTIN, Texas, 78702, USA	<b>Roll</b>	0208091306	<b>Prop ID</b>	213879	<b>Folder Unit</b>	
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**Location** 1908 PENNSYLVANIA AV, AUSTIN-FULL PURPOSE, 78702

### Tracking Dates and Reference Information

<b>In Date</b>	Sep 07, 1949	<b>Issue/Approve</b>	Sep 07, 1949	<b>Expires</b>	Sep 07, 1951
<b>Ref. No.</b>	41324	<b>Issued By</b>		<b>Final Date</b>	
<b>Name</b>	PIER Migration Sewer Tap - 1908 PENNSYLVANIA AV. AUSTIN-FULL PUR...			<b>Priority</b>	

### Description

*Record of water tap permit, 9/7/1949.*

Lot..... 5  
 Block..... 9  
 Subdivision.....  
 Received of..... Date 4-15-75  
 Service Address 1908 PENNSYLVANIA AVE. Size of Tap 7/4"  
 Mailing Address.....  
 Amount..... \$  
 Date of Connection.....  
 Size of Tap Made 3/4"  
 Size Service Made 3/4"  
 Size Main Tapped 6" D.I.  
 From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock 6'  
 From E Prop. Line to Curb Cock 18'  
 Location of Meter.....  
 Type of Box.....  
 Depth of Main in St. 5'-  
 Depth of Service Line 5'-  
 From Curb Cock to Tap on Main 35'  
 Checked by Engr. Dept.....  
 No. Fittings 35  
 Pipe 3/4" P.E.  
 Corp. Cock 3/4"  
 Cop. to Iron ell  
 Cop. to Cop. ell  
 Cop. to Iron Coupling  
 Cop. to Cop. Coupling  
 Angle Stop 3/4"  
 Stop  
 Bushing  
 Nipples  
 Service Clamp  
 Valve  
 Meter Box  
 Lock Lid  
 Drain Tile  
 Drain Tile Lid  
 Stop & Drain  
 Job No. 8213201-540364  
 Foreman John P. Buentello  
 W-75-121

*Water tap permit, 4/15/1975.*



9-4-84 RTMS			
OWNER	Mike Leff	ADDRESS	1908 Pennsylvania Ave.
PLAT	36	LOT	5
		BLK.	9
SUBDIVISION of Outlot 58			
OCCUPANCY	Repair & remodel res.		
BLDG. PERMIT #	179890	DATE	3-5-79
		OWNERS ESTIMATE	1,500.00
CONTRACTOR	Same	NO. OF FIXTURES	10
WATER TAP REC#		SEWER TAP REC#	
Repair & remodel res to min s			
standrs.			

*Building permit issued to Mike Leff for remodeling and repairs, 3/5/1979.*