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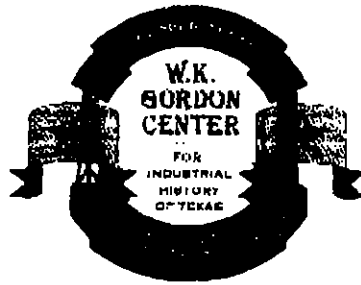
CITY COUNCIL OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

APRIL 1, 2004

C14H-04-0003

Un-named Houses at 802, 804 and 806 West Lynn Street

Additional back-up materials provided by
Old West Austin Neighborhood Association



29 March 2004

The Honorable Will Winn, Mayor of Austin
City of Austin
PO Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767

Dear Mayor Winn:

It is my understanding that the Austin Zoning and Planning Commission is considering the fate of three former railway section houses/bunk houses located at 802, 804, and 806 West Lynn Street.

With this letter I would like to point out the significance of such housing for industrial workers in terms of both history and architecture.

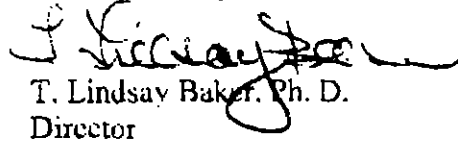
Having worked for twenty-five years in studying the history of engineering and technology in the United States, I have become aware of how few examples survive of the housing constructed by industrial enterprises for their workers. Section houses were built by railway companies for use by supervisory employees who headed gangs of laborers who maintained track, sidings, and auxiliary structures necessary for safe railway operation. In the instance of 802, 804, and 806 West Lynn Street, Austin has preserved together both the section house for the supervisor and his family and two bunkhouses for the track laborers. There are few instances of these types of housing surviving together. Generally when they survive, the structures are either one type or the other without associations with each other. The spatial relationships among these buildings are highly important to preserve.

Railways provided important impetus to the industrial development of the entire United States. Without the development and spread of railways in the nineteenth century, economic development of vast areas of the country would have taken greatly different forms. Today the routes of historic railways survive, either in operation or as abandoned rights-of-way, but the supporting wooden structures are rare and often-threatened resources. Depots tend to survive, as communities view them as local icons, but such important supporting structures as section houses and bunkhouses rarely survive. The examples at 802, 804, and 806 West Lynn Street are significant both because they remain

as used by employees of the Austin street railway system, but also because they preserve the appearance that they did at that time. They show the close relationships that allowed the section bosses residing in the section houses had with their track workers who lived in the bunkhouses.

The section house and bunkhouses in the 800 block of West Lynn Street in Austin, Texas, represent a significant survival in terms of both the history of engineering and the history of American economic development. They clearly deserve to be preserved in their original location.

Yours sincerely,



T. Lindsay Baker, Ph. D.
Director

TLB:hs

29 March 2004

Old West Austin Neighborhood Association
c/o Robin Carter
811 Blanco Street, #D
Austin, Texas 78703

Re: Potential for Archaeological Remains at 802, 804, and 806 West Lynn, Austin, Texas

Dear OWANA,

Based on information provided by your organization, I recently conducted a limited background review on the archaeological history of your neighborhood and the surrounding area. The goal of this work was to note previously recorded archaeological sites within the Old West Austin neighborhood, place them within the larger context of the City of Austin, and more importantly, analyze the potential for archaeological remains to be found at 802, 804, and 806 West Lynn Street.

Background Literature Review—OWANA Neighborhood

The background literature review was performed to determine if any portions of the neighborhood have been previously surveyed for cultural resources or if any archaeological sites are located within the project area. To conduct this review, I examined the Austin West and Austin East U.S.G.S. 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map at the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and also searched the THC's Texas Historic Sites Atlas (an on-line database) and site files at TARL. These sources provided information on the nature and location of previously conducted archaeological surveys and previously recorded cultural resource sites.

According to the review, no portions of the neighborhood have received a formal archaeological survey. The closest known survey is the 2000 City of Austin Shoal Creek survey, which included the majority of the Shoal Creek channel from the Colorado River to at least 45th Street. No abstract on this work could be found at the repositories, thus no information on the purpose of the survey or the ensuing results could be determined.

Two previously-recorded sites are located within the OWANA neighborhood. Site 41TV157 was recorded by a University of Texas at Austin student in 1970 off of Johnson Branch just east of Mopac (Loop 1). No additional details on this site, such as temporal association or size, were recorded at that time, and the site has never been revisited. Site 41TV245 is the William Cruchon House and surrounding grounds, at 1200 Windsor Road. The site was recorded in 1971 by Wayne Robertson based on information provided by then-owner Lou Nora Spiller. The multicomponent site comprises both historic and prehistoric deposits, including historic ceramics, glass fragments, porcelain doll fragments and several small prehistoric uniface tools. Beyond this recordation, no formal survey or archaeological testing have been conducted at the site.

Background Literature Review—Downtown Austin

Although several archaeological survey and monitoring projects have been completed in downtown Austin, almost all of the projects were completed within the past 15 years to comply with the Texas Antiquities Code or the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Survey and monitoring projects within downtown include:

- Texas State History Museum survey by SWCA Environmental Consultants (41RV1875)
- Hilton Hotel survey by Hicks and Company (Hannig-Dickenson House site, 41TV1901)
- Downtown Post Office survey by Horizon Environmental (41TV1605)
- Supreme Court Complex Survey by TARL (41TV1374)
- Johnson State Office Building survey by Hicks and Company (41TV1814)
- Austin Convention Center survey by Hicks and Company (41TV1493-41TV1497, 41TV1887, 41TV1888)
- City Hall/Guy Town survey and significance testing by Hicks and Company
- GSC Lot 20 Parking Garage survey by SWCA
- French Legation Improvement survey by Lone Star Archeological Services
- Grant Building/Sixth Street monitoring by Alton Briggs

While also compliance driven, several other surveys have targeted known deposits at historic buildings or neighborhoods, including an archaeological survey for the Blackshear Neighborhood housing project by Hicks and Company (sites 41TV1608 and 41TV1609), research on the Texas Governor's Mansion (41TV1872) by Prewitt and Associates, investigations at the Texas State Asylum site (41TV611) by the University of Texas at Austin (UT), and eligibility testing at the Caswell House (West and 15th Street) by UT.

Despite all of the above projects, very few investigations have gone beyond the survey or monitoring stage. The few that have included testing (i.e., Guy Town, Austin Convention Center site, the Caswell House) concentrated on very specific segments of the population. The Guy's town project involved the excavation of several bordellos to explore the history of the socially marginalized who lived within the city limits and the Dickinson House work specifically targeted the remains of a famous woman in Texas history. Similarly, testing at the Caswell House and surveying of the Governor's Mansion sought to look at the material remains of the wealthy Austin elite.

Archaeology of 802, 804, and 806 West Lynn

Archaeological survey and testing at the West Lynn sites is imperative for several reasons. First, only two sites have been recorded in all of west Austin, despite the large area and immense potential for historic and prehistoric sites. Archaeological work on these lots could significantly contribute to the larger body of Austin sites in an area that has, until now, been virtually void of subsurface investigations. Second, the majority of archaeological work that has been completed within downtown Austin has been compliance driven and thus, rarely went beyond the survey stage. Very few testing or data recovery projects have been completed within downtown, which has created a general paucity of information that only testing or

large-scale data recovery can contribute. Third, only a very few of the recorded sites within downtown represent the working class. Although sites associated with prostitution and emancipated African-Americans have been recorded (both important segments within any urban population), sites representing the urban workforce living on the physical and social periphery of town have rarely, if ever, been explored in Austin. Everyone's story needs to be told, and this large body of turn-of-the-century Austinites has virtually be ignored in most of our history books. Lastly, OWANA is a vibrant and varied neighborhood that greatly reflects the history of our community. In terms of the National Register of Historic Places criteria, the neighborhood easily complies with Criteria A-C (association with an important event, association with a famous person, and representative architectural style), but it is also significant under Criteria D, the ability to reveal knowledge about the history of an area. The three lots on West Lynn Street can reveal a tremendous amount on early life in West Austin, what the early landscape could have included, and even construction methods in this once marginalized area of town.

Recommendations

Based on conversations with representatives from OWANA, it seems that very few of the empty lots within the neighborhood have both potential historic significance and, more importantly, good physical integrity. Both of these factors are very important in analyzing archaeological remains and placing them within the larger historic context of an area. Numbers 802, 804, and 806 West Lynn have a documented occupation and development history that is imperative to accurate and concise archaeological work. They would be ideal sites as case studies on working class Austin at the turn of the century. Archaeological testing and/or data recovery is, therefore, recommended at these sites. If the existing buildings are to be removed or the area developed, this work should occur beforehand to adequately examine the remains within their original context.

If you have any questions or comments on this review or the ensuing recommendations, please feel free to call me at (512) 441-9189.

Sincerely,

Kerri S. Barile
Professional Archaeologist

**Clarksville Community Development
Corporation
P. O. Box, 5975, Austin, TX 78763**

March 30, 2004

On March 26, 2004, the Board of Directors of the Clarksville Community Development Corporation (CCDC) passed the following resolution regarding the railroad section houses located off of West Lynn:

The railroad section houses located off of West Lynn represent a unique part of the history of Old West Austin in terms of their architectural style and their role in railroad building in Austin. Furthermore, the houses offer residents of Old West Austin with something rare in this part of Austin—an affordable place to live. Therefore, the board of directors of the Clarksville Community Development Corporation resolve that the section houses should be preserved and they ask the Austin City Council to support OWANA's efforts to save them from destruction.

Mary Reed

Secretary, Clarksville Community Development Corporation

THE AGE OF STEAM RAILROAD MUSEUM

A Collection of Historic Trains Located in Fair Park



(214) 428-0101
Fax: (214) 426-1937

PO Box 153259
1105 Washington Street, Fair Park
Dallas, Texas 75315-3259
www.dallasrailwaymuseum.com

March 11, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

The Age of Steam Railroad Museum at Fair Park, Dallas, Texas wishes to express its concern over the possible loss of a significant structure relative to railroad history in Texas. What is believed to be a section house located in East Austin is in danger of demolition.

We respectfully request the indulgence of the City of Austin in the form of an extension to any demolition/removal plans for these structures. This will provide for the necessary research and documentation of their history and significance to Austin. This is consistent with the Historic American Engineering Record guidelines for preserving significant sites before demolition or major site improvements. An extension will also allow for any efforts to preserve them by removal or adaptive reuse.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. It is in the best interest of all communities to preserve its past as part of building its future.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob LaPrelle
President & CEO



**TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR

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L. LAWRENCE OAKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 31, 2004

Mayor Will Wynn
City of Austin
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, Texas 78767

VIA FACSIMILE: 512-974-2337

RE: Houses at 802, 804 and 806 West Lynn

Dear Mayor Wynn:

We understand that the Austin City Council is considering whether or not to approve historic zoning for the houses at 802, 804 and 806 West Lynn. Although the full story behind these houses has not yet been revealed, initial research has uncovered some compelling connections to significant aspects of Austin's history. We hope that you will reserve final judgment on the properties' historical value until more thorough research can be undertaken to determine the full extent of these connections.

We cannot say for certain that 802, 804 and 806 West Lynn were constructed to house employees of the International and Great Northern Railroad (I&GN), but neither can we rule out that possibility. We do know that in the early 20th century they housed employees of the Austin Rapid Transit Co., a company with demonstrated ties to the I&GN. We also recognize similarities between these houses and those built by other railroad companies for worker housing. If the houses were in fact built for I&GN workers, they may well be Austin's only surviving examples of the type (we are not aware of any others). With relatively few alterations, the houses also retain a high degree of historic integrity.

Although there is still some uncertainty surrounding the history of these houses, we feel that their potential rarity, combined with initial findings that seem to support a connection to I&GN, warrants further research. With time, additional archival resources and experts with specific knowledge can be consulted for more conclusive determinations. These houses are certainly worthy of further consideration, and once demolished they will be lost forever. We hope that you will weigh your decision carefully, and that undue haste will not result in the loss of an irreplaceable historical resource.

Sincerely,

Peter Ketter, Historian

cc: Kip Garth, Austin