

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

August 25, 2010

Mary Ingle
3406 Duval Street
Austin, TX 78705

RE: 408 E. 33rd Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Dear Ms. Ingle:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding a proposal to initiate local historic zoning for the building at 408 E. 33rd Street, in Austin, Travis County. We have not had the opportunity to visit the property, and are only offering our opinion on the materials that have been submitted to our office.

The historical record regarding this property is incomplete, and thus any assessment of the building's provenance is based on circumstantial evidence. The research effort undertaken to document this property is commendable, and all of the sources typically used to determine the history of the property have been included in the materials reviewed by THC staff. These records include Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps, tax records, building permit records, census reports, and city directory entries. The Sanborn maps are very useful in documenting the existence and physical characteristics of buildings, as well as their change over time. They should not, however, be taken as authoritative, as the building footprints and their location on lots were not drawn to scale, so maps illustrating the same building over time may indicate inaccurate changes in size and configuration. Nevertheless, given that a building roughly the same size of the current building existed on the lot in the early 20th century, and that the building permit issued in 1945 reads "relocate res. on lot and add two rooms" (and not "relocate res. to lot") it is reasonable to conclude that the house at 408 E. 33rd Street could be the same one that is indicated on earlier Sanborn maps, rather than a house from another neighborhood.

The Texas Historical Commission will not evaluate this building's eligibility for a city landmark designation, as making such determinations is not within our authority. After applying the National Register of Historic Places criteria for evaluation, we cannot determine that the building is individually eligible for listing in the National Register at this time, due to the gap in the historical record and lack of evidence that the building is historically or architecturally significant as an individual property. If the neighborhood were to be nominated to the National Register as a district, however, we would be inclined to include the property as a contributing building, as it has been in the same location since 1945, is a good example of an early 20th century board and batten house (despite being moved and subsequently altered, albeit within the period of significance), and most importantly, reflects the economic diversity of the neighborhood. The Texas Historical Commission encourages the owner and the City of Austin to take steps to identify ways that the building could be put to productive use while keeping its historic characteristics intact.



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