

Texas Historical Commission staff (BB), 5/15/2008
Official Texas Historical Medallion and 16" x 12" plaque without post for attachment to wood
Brazoria County (Job #08BO01) Subject (Atlas) UTM
Location: West Columbia, CR 300G #104

JAMES AND SELINA PHILLIPS HOUSE

JAMES PRICE PHILLIPS, DESCENDANT OF A BRAZORIA COUNTY OLD 300 FAMILY, MARRIED SELINA HARRIS LEE IN 1911. THEY HAD FOUR CHILDREN, AND PRICE BUILT THIS HOUSE FOR HIS WIFE TO COMMEMORATE THE BIRTH OF THEIR YOUNGEST CHILD, OLIVER WENDEL, IN 1920. THE SITE HAD BEEN A PECAN ORCHARD NEXT TO THE DR. REES PORTER HOME, WHICH SERVED AS A HOSPITAL FOR SOLDIERS OF THE TEXAS REVOLUTION. THE PHILLIPS HOUSE IS AN AMERICAN FOURSQUARE DESIGN WITH PRAIRIE AND CRAFTSMAN STYLE DETAILING. THE TWO-STORY FRAME CONSTRUCTION HOUSE HAS A SQUARE FLOOR PLAN AND BLOND GONZALES BRICK IN THE PORCH COLUMNS AND CHIMNEY. THE HOME REMAINED IN THE PHILLIPS FAMILY UNTIL 1978.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 2008

MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

**RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS:
2008 Official Texas Historical Marker
Sponsorship Application Form**

Valid November 1, 2007 to January 15, 2008 only

This form constitutes a public request for the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to consider approval of an Official Texas Historical Marker for the topic noted in this application. The THC will review the request and make its determination based on rules and procedures of the program. Filing of the application for sponsorship is for the purpose of providing basic information to be used in the evaluation process. The final determination of eligibility and therefore approval for a state marker will be made by the THC. This form is to be used for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (building marker) requests only. Please see separate forms for either Historic Texas Cemeteries or subject markers.

Proposed marker topic (official title will be determined by the THC): **The James Price Phillips Home**

County: Brazoria

Town (nearest county town on current state highway map): **West Columbia, TX 77486**

Street address of marker site or directions from town noted above: **CR 300G #104**

NOTE: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers must be placed at the structure being marked.

Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers definition: Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) markers are awarded to structures deemed worthy of preservation for their historical associations and architectural significance. RTHL is a legal designation and comes with a measure of protection; it is the highest honor the state can bestow on a historic structure, and the designation is required for this type of marker. The RTHL designation becomes effective upon approval by the THC. Official Texas Historical Markers signify the RTHL designation, which comes only through application to and approval by the THC and must include public display of an Official Texas Historical Marker. Owners of RTHL-designated structures must give the THC 60 days written notice before any alterations are made to the exterior of the structure. RTHL status is a permanent designation and is not to be removed from the property in the event of a transfer of ownership. Only the THC can remove the designation or recall the marker. The marker must remain with the structure and may not be removed or displayed elsewhere until or unless the THC gives express approval in writing for such action. Once designated as RTHL, properties are subject to provisions of Texas Government Code, Section 442.006(f).

Criteria:

1. **Age:** Structures eligible for the RTHL designation and marker must be at least 50 years old.
2. **Historical significance:** Architectural significance alone is not enough to qualify a structure for the RTHL designation. It must have an equally significant historical association, and that association can come from an event that occurred at the site; through individuals who owned or lived on the property; or, in the case of bridges, industrial plants, schoolhouses and other non-residential properties, through documented significance to the larger community.
3. **Architectural significance:** Structures deemed architecturally significant are outstanding examples of architectural history through design, materials, structural type or construction methods. In all cases, eligible architectural properties must display integrity; that is, the structure should be in a good state

of repair, maintain its appearance from its period of significance and be considered an exemplary model of preservation. Architectural significance is often best determined by the relevance of the property to broader contexts, including geography. Any changes over the years should be compatible with original design and reflect compliance with accepted preservation practices, e.g., the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

4. **Good state of repair:** Structures not considered by the THC to be in a good state of repair are ineligible for RTHL designation. The THC reserves the sole right to make that determination relative to eligibility for RTHL markers.

Special National Register considerations for RTHL marker applications: If a structure has been individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under either Criterion A or B and Criterion C (Architecture), the historical text compiled as part of the National Register nomination process may be submitted as part of the marker process, provided it includes the required reference notes and other documentation. Acceptance of the National Register information for the purposes of the marker process will be up to the sole determination of the THC. Listing in the NRHP does not guarantee approval for an RTHL marker. See the THC web site at <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigns/madnrcrit.html> for National Register criteria.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Any individual, group or county historical commission (CHC) may apply to the THC to request an Official Texas Historical Marker for what it deems a worthy topic. Only complete marker applications that contain all the required elements and are submitted online as required can be accepted or processed by the THC. For RTHL markers, the required elements are: sponsorship application form; narrative history; documentation; online map (see details below); site plan; floorplan; historic photograph; and current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure.

- Completed applications must be duly reviewed, verified and approved by the county historical commission (CHC) in the county in which the marker will be placed.
- The sponsorship application form, narrative history and documentation must be submitted as Microsoft Word or Word-compatible documents and sent via email attachments to the THC by no later than January 15, 2008.
- Required font style and type size are a Times variant and 12-point.
- Narrative histories must be typed in a double-spaced (or 1.5-spaced) format and include separate sections on context, overview, significance and documentation.
- The narrative history must include documentation in the form of reference notes, which can be either footnotes or endnotes. Documentation associated with applications should be broad-based and demonstrate a survey of all available resources, both primary and secondary.
- Applications for RTHL markers must include a current city or county map through TopoZone.com that clearly denotes the proposed marker location. Instructions for using TopoZone.com are available on the THC web site.
- Upon notification of the successful preliminary review of required elements by the THC, a non-refundable application fee of \$100 is required. The fee shall be submitted to the THC within ten working days of application receipt notification.

APPROVAL BY COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The duly appointed marker representative (chair or marker chair) noted below for the county historical commission will be the sole contact with the THC for this marker application. To ensure accuracy, consistency and efficiency, all information from and to the THC relative to the application—and throughout the review and production processes—will be via direct communication with the CHC representative. All other inquiries (calls, emails, letters) to the THC will be referred to the CHC representative for response. By filling out the information below and filing the application with the THC,

the CHC representative is providing the THC with notice that the application and documentation have been reviewed and verified by the CHC and that the material meets all current requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker program.

As chair or duly appointed marker chair, I certify the following:

- Representatives of the CHC have met or talked with the potential marker sponsor and discussed the marker program policies as outlined on the THC web site. CHC members have reviewed the history and documentation for accuracy and made corrections or notes as necessary. It is the determination of the CHC that the topic, history and documentation meet criteria for eligibility.

CHC comments or concerns about this application, if any:

Name of CHC contact (chair or marker chair): Marie Beth Jones

Mailing address: 130 East Cedar St. **City, Zip:** Angleton, TX 7715

Daytime phone (with area code): 979/849-5467 **Email address** (required): mbjones@brazoria-county.com

PERMISSION OF PROPERTY OWNER FOR MARKER PLACEMENT

Property owner: Michael Leebron & Marlene E. Neeley

Address: CR 300G #104 **City, state, zip:** West Columbia, TX 77486

Phone: 979/345-4663 **Email address:** MLEEBRON@FHL-LAW.COM

Legal Description of the property (metes and bounds, lot and block, etc.): Located at the intersection of Duval and Main Street in the residential community of East Columbia approx. 2 blocks from SH35. Sited as Lot 84, Block 2.

Upon receipt of the application, the THC will provide the owner with a letter that outlines the legal responsibility of ownership under the Recorded Texas Historic Landmark statute. The letter must be signed by the owner and returned to the THC before the evaluation can be completed.

NOTE: The property owner will not receive any additional copies of correspondence from the THC. [All other correspondence—notice of receipt, request for additional information, payment notice, inscription, shipping notice, etc.—will be sent via email to the CHC representative, who is encouraged to share the information with all interested parties as necessary.] Given the large volume of applications processed annually and the need for centralized communication, all inquiries about applications in process will be referred to the CHC for response. The CHC is the sole liaison to the THC on all marker application matters.

SPONSORSHIP PAYMENT INFORMATION

Prospective sponsors please note the following:

- Payment must be received in full within 45 days of the official approval notice and must be accompanied by the THC payment form. The THC is unable to process partial payments or to delay payment due to processing procedures of the sponsor. Applications not paid in the time frame required may, at the sole discretion of the THC, be cancelled or postponed.
- Payment does not constitute ownership of a marker; Recorded Texas Historic Landmark markers and other Official Texas Historical Markers are the property of the State of Texas.

- If, at any time during the marker process, sponsorship is withdrawn, a refund can be processed, but the THC will retain the application fee of \$100.
- The Official Texas Historical Marker Program provides no means of recognizing sponsors or property owners through marker text, incising or supplemental plaques.

Marker sponsor (may be individual or organization): Columbia Historical Museum

Contact person (if applicable): Nita Kennemer

Mailing address: 104 Reid Road **City, zip:** West Columbia, TX 77486

Email address (required): nkennemer@hotmail.com **Phone:** 979/345-5865

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

In order to facilitate delivery of the marker, neither post office box numbers nor rural route numbers can be accepted. To avoid additional shipping charges or delays, use a business street address (open 8 a.m.—5 p.m., Monday through Friday).

Name: West Columbia City Hall

Street address: 512 E. Brazos **City, zip:** West Columbia, TX 77486

Daytime phone (required): 345-3123 **Email** (required): dasutherland@warpspeed1.net

TYPE AND SIZE OF RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS

As part of its review process, the THC will determine the appropriate size marker and provide options, if any, for the approved topic based on its own review criteria, including, but not exclusive of, historical significance, replication of information in other THC markers, relevance to the Statewide Preservation Plan and the amount of available documented information provided in the application narrative. In making its determination, however, the THC will also take into account the preference of the CHC, as noted below.

The sponsor/CHC prefers the following size marker:

- 27" x 42" RTHL marker with post (\$1500)
- 27" X 42" RTHL marker without post* (\$1500)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker with post (\$1000)
- 18" x 28" RTHL marker without post* (\$1000)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque with post (\$750)
- RTHL medallion and 16" x 12" plaque without post* (\$750)

*For an RTHL marker without post, indicate to what surface material it will be mounted:

- wood
- masonry
- metal
- other (specify)

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION (via email required)

When the CHC has determined the application is complete, the history has been verified and the topic meets the requirements of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, the materials should be forwarded to the THC via email at the following address: markerapplication@thc.state.tx.us.

- The CHC or marker chair should send an email containing the following attachments (see attachment function under file menu or toolbox on your computer):
 - This application form
 - A TopoZone.com map of the proposed marker location
 - The narrative history (including documentation)

RECORDS RETENTION BY CHC: The CHC must retain hard copies of the application as well as an online version, at least for the duration of the marker process. The THC is not responsible for lost applications, for incomplete applications or for applications not properly filed according to the program requirements. For additional information about any aspect of the Official Texas Historical Marker Program, see the Markers page on the THC web site (<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/markerdesigs/madmark.html>).



THE JAMES PRICE PHILLIPS HOME
~1920~

DUVAL & MAIN STREET
EAST COLUMBIA, TX

OWNERS:

MARLENE E. NEELEY & MICHAEL LEEBRON, II

CR 300G #104

WEST COLUMBIA, TX 77486

(713)751-0025

(979) 345-4663

EMAIL: MLEEBRON@FHL-LAW.COM

COMPILED BY: NITA KENNEMER

COLUMBIA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

(979) 345-5865

nkenemer@hotmail.com

2007

JAMES PRICE AND SELINA LEE PHILLIPS HOME

I. CONTEXT

The James Price and Selina Lee Phillips Home is sited on Lot 84, Block 2 in the old river town of East Columbia. Records show the purchase of the home by Connie T. Munson and Milam A. Munson from Anne Casey Phillips Smith on March 13, 1978, found in Book #579, page 901, Document #1978007375 and sites it at L84, B2, Columbia, Bell 1 ½ LG A40. Recorded is the sale and purchase of the home on May 31, 2006 from the Munsons to Marlene E. Neeley and Michael W. Leebron, II, Lot 84, Block 2, Town of East Columbia, Document #2006031509.¹

The Phillips home does possess special significance in terms of history, architecture and cultural importance. It was built in 1920 making it 87 years old. The home serves as a landmark in the history of Columbia and Texas, illustrating the features that were characteristic of the times of wealthy Texas Ranchers and Oilmen. Many houses built during the prosperous twenties and thirties in this community are now gone. Just down the street one block are the romantic and picturesque houses that remain from the previous era of elegance of the 19th Century. This section of East Columbia was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in Washington, D. C. in 1990. The home was included in the National Register Nomination as a non-contributing property.²

The American Foursquare is an American house style popular from the mid 1890's to the late 1930's. A reaction to the ornate and mass produced elements of the Victorian and other Revival styles popular throughout the last half of the 19th Century, the American Foursquare was plain, often incorporating handcrafted "honest" woodwork (unless purchased from a mail-order

¹ BRAZORIA COUNTY CLERK SEARCH RECORDS: WWW.BRAZORIA.TX.US.LANDATA.COM

² NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION: EAST COLUMBIA, TX 1989-90, PG 58.

catalogue). This style incorporates elements of the Prairie School and the Craftsman styles. The American Foursquare style showed changes in taste and style and a shift from upper to middle class patronage.³

The National Trust for Historic Preservation president, Richard Moe, states, “Older houses that grace America’s communities are valuable historical documents in brick, wood, steel and glass. They trace the changes in taste, technology and lifestyle that have shaped our nation’s neighborhoods. And with their varied styles and details, they are a visual banquet for residents and visitors alike. In short, older neighborhoods and houses are vitally important chapters in the story of who we are as a nation and people. Working together we can keep key chapters of that story alive.”⁴

The Phillips home serves as a landmark in the formerly, First Capital of the Republic of Texas—1836, Columbia, TX where the Phillips Family fought for Texas Independence. Price Phillips’ grandfather, James Ray Phillips joined the Texas forces at Velasco and fought with Henry S. Brown’s Div. I. Brazoria County records show that James Ray was a brother of Zeno Phillips, one of the “Old 300” with land in Brazoria County. Sidney Phillips fought at Velasco and also at San Jacinto. He was a half-brother of Zeno and James Ray.⁵

The land, originally owned by Dr. Rees Porter, has significant historical value because it was there that the first hospital was built in Texas. It was also the site of the first cloth manufacturing in Texas 1836.⁶

Privately owned, the Phillips home is on the Brazoria County tax roll. The current appraised value of the home, before restoration, is \$133,940. One lot of land is included in the

³ ARCHITECTURE COACH, *THE AMERICAN FOURSQUARE*, PG 1-2.

⁴ EXCERPT FROM *NATIONAL TRUST NEWSLETTER*, OCTOBER 26, 2006.

⁵ *THUNDER ON THE BRAZOS*, BRAZORIA COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM, PG 47.

⁶ BRAZORIA COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM: SWEENEY FAMILY FILE, 1973 LETTER FROM PORTER SWEENEY TO HISTORIAN CATHERINE FOSTER.

appraisal value.⁷ The home is located at the intersection of Duval and Main Street in the residential historic community of East Columbia. It is situated approximately a half mile from SH35. State Highway 35 is a major highway leading east and west from Angleton, TX into West Columbia, and forms the northern boundary of the site of Duval and Main Street. The Brazos River and the old Front Street location form the southern boundary of the property. Historic Bethel Presbyterian Church is directly in front of the home. It faces south to Main Street and the Presbyterian Church. The surrounding development appears to be primarily historic with a few newer homes built in recent years. This is a small community with approximately 25 homes. The property is less than a half mile from the Bell's Landing Marker on the river bank and is adjacent to the Carrie Nations Marker. She became the proprietor of the Columbia Hotel (1877), which enjoyed patronage from steamboat travel on the Brazos and from the Columbia Tap Railroad. She was an unusual woman, one who was later to gain country-wide fame in her crusade against liquor, was noted as a hatched-wielding saloon-smasher.⁸ The site is diagonal from the historic Nash-Wright Home.

II. OVERVIEW

The James Price Phillips Home, now 87 years in age, is of the practical and economical, balloon framed, American Foursquare design found throughout the United States and made popular by Frank Lloyd Wright, the popular American architect. This design became an American standard in the early 1900's and dominated neighborhoods throughout the first decades of the 20th Century, replacing the more complex Victorian fashioned houses.

⁷ BRAZORIA COUNTY TAX OFFICE: DOCUMENT #2900-008-000

⁸ CREIGHTON, JAMES, A *NARRATIVE HISTORY OF BRAZORIA COUNTY*, PG 312, 1975.

The Foursquare houses were built to meet the housing needs for a new century and changing lifestyles. This practical and solidly built home continues to express values sought by buyers today.⁹

Features of the Foursquare include: two story, four room square floor plan, hipped roof, single centered dormer, house-wide front porch with low roofline, square columns, arched entries from foyer to living room and living room to dining room, breakfast nook, craftsman style woodwork, built in cabinetry and square-shaped rooms.¹⁰

The Phillips home is a simple and efficient, two story, wood siding, with composition shingled roof structure. It is painted white with shutter green trim and blond Gonzales brick forms the chimney and porch columns. The building has a square floor plan and a symmetrical facade facing Main Street. This is the original home built in 1920 on this site with one exterior modification including a covered porch at the rear and the interior restoration includes unobtrusive lighting and air/heating vents. Also, a secondary outbuilding, an old carriage house, has undergone restoration and contributes to the property's overall history. Significant is its contribution of craftsmanship and original design and Gonzales brick flooring.

Precise detail has been given in the restoration process. The owners have gone to remarkable lengths to assure correctness in materials and methods; reclaiming original wood, wallpaper and bricks to complete the project plans, even removing an add-on sun porch and restoring the porch to its original configuration. Hidden by modern day paneling, the original wallpaper has been uncovered, restored and reveals Selina's fondness for beautiful flowers and birds. All tile and carpet has been removed revealing vintage Texas long-leaf pine flooring that

⁹ ARCHITECTURE COACH, *THE AMERICAN FOURSQUARE*, PG 1-2.

¹⁰ IBID

has been stripped, repaired and restored to a high-gloss flawless finish. Texas long-leaf pine is no longer commercially available. (See website of Interior Restoration photographs.)

The structure maintains its appearance from its period of historical significance and is an exemplary model of preservation.

In 1820 the Spanish government began issuing colonization land grants in Texas. Moses Austin became the first person to secure the opportunity to bring settlers to Spanish Texas. Austin died before he could implement his grant. Before his death he convinced his son, Stephen Fuller Austin, to carry out his Texas venture. There were others engaged in bringing inhabitants to Texas, but none would influence its development to the extent of the man who would be regarded as the “Father of Texas”.¹¹

The founder of the town of Columbia, of the State of Coahuila and Texas, Mexico, was Josiah Hughes Bell. He was granted the J. H. Bell League of Land within which the town site of Columbia is situated.¹² Bell came to Texas with Austin in 1821 and settled in southern Brazoria County on January 8, 1824.¹³ Bell became the titleholder of a portion of land that he would develop into an important commercial and shipping center. He built docks on the Brazos River for the port he called *Marion*, but would later be called *Bell's Landing*. About a mile and a half west of the landing, he surveyed and platted a town site to serve as the business and residential center for the port's shipping activities. He named it *Columbia*.¹⁴ This community would increase in business and political activity until it would become one of the most significant in

¹¹ EDWARDS, J. MICHAEL, *COLUMBIA: A Study of its Citizens' Participation in the Texas Revolution and the First Year of the Republic of Texas*, 1980, pg 1.

¹² BRAZORIA COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM & COMMISSION, *A WINDOW TO THE PAST*, PG 208.

¹³ CREIGHTON, JAMES A., *A NARRATIVE HISTORY OF BRAZORIA COUNTY*, ,PG 499, “THE OLD THREE HUNDRED”.

¹⁴ MEXICAN LAND GRANTS, *JOSIAH HUGHES BELL*, COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE, ANGLETON, TX PG 220-224.

Texas, especially during the revolution against Mexico. Today, the two communities are referred to as East and West Columbia.

John Gayle Phillips, born 1858 at Waverly Place, TX near Columbia, is the son of James Ray Phillips and the father of James Price Phillips, born 1888. “Price”, as friends and family called him, built this home in East Columbia after purchasing the land from relative Bettie Patton Sweeny in 1917. James Rays’ sister, Francis, was Betties’ grandmother. The family legend is told by a granddaughter stating, “This house was built in 1920 by Price Phillips as a gift to his wife, Selina, at the birth of their youngest child, Oliver Wendel Phillips born July 1, 1920.”¹⁵

The land itself carries a high degree of significance. A member of the Sweeny family writes, “Another place of interest in East Columbia that has been rather overlooked is the Old Dr. Porter place which was the same place where Karl Hagemeyer lived. This property was bought by Price Phillips who tore down the old house and built his new home to the east of it in the pecan grove. This old Porter place should be marked by a historical marker because it was there that the first hospital was built in Texas for the soldiers in the Texas Revolution. It was also the site of the first cloth manufacturing in Texas. Mrs. Porter made cloth for the soldiers of the Columbia Company.”¹⁶

Deed records show that on July 3, 1917 James “Price” Phillips purchased three lots, 82, 83, 84 in Block 2 of East Columbia from Bettie Patton Sweeny, a relative and wife of Rees Porter Sweeny descendant of Old Dr. Rees Porter.¹⁷ Information on Dr. Porter was found on his marker at the Columbia Cemetery: born 10-30-1809, died 11-11-1892 and buried in the Sweeny—Patton Family Plot. Rees Porter Sweeny and Bettie R. Patton married on March 2, 1892 and became the owners of the Old Dr. Porter property. John D. Patton was Bettie’s

¹⁵ SOCIAL SECURITY INDEX AND QUOTE: JOYCE LEE PHILLIPS, DAUGHTER OF OLIVER WENDEL PHILLIPS.

¹⁶ ALBERT, MARGARET & CHARLES, *THE SWEENEY FAMILY IN TEXAS 1832—1990*, PG 116-117.

¹⁷ BRAZORIA COUNTY CLERK SEARCH RECORDS: WWW.BRAZORIA.TX.US.LANDATA.COM, BOOK #138, PG 489.

grandfather. She was born on the Patton Plantation, where Santa Anna was held prisoner after the Battle of San Jacinto, just a mile north of Columbia. The site is now known as Varner-Hogg Plantation and has been designated as a Texas State Park. 1880 U.S. Census for Texas revealed that Bettie was adopted by Dr. Rees Porter and his wife. Rees Porter Sweeny's mother was Elizabeth "Lizzie" Porter, a daughter of Old Dr. Porter. She married Benjamin Franklin Sweeny in 1851 and Rees Porter Sweeny was born on the John Sweeny Sr. Plantation at Old Ocean, TX, five miles SW of Columbia, in 1856.¹⁸

Present day owners have discovered the original foundation of the Porter home/hospital while putting in a "slave brick" patio. It is just to the west of the Phillips home and the brick is of the slave era, Brazos River clay type.¹⁹

Price Phillips built a home for his family in Columbia in 1920. Historic Deed Records confirm yet another piece of property described as "Lumber & Material", Price owned and operated a lumberyard in East Columbia at the time of the home construction and acted as contractor for the building project. During restoration of the home in 2006, many materials revealed the owners name inscribed upon them. Did Price write his name on those materials or was it there because it was shipped in on the Columbia Tap Railway? According to family members, the signature has been verified as that of James Price Phillips himself. (See website of Interior Restoration.)

The home was owned by the family up until 1978.²⁰ It was sold to Connie and Milam Munson at that time by Anne Casey Phillips Smith, widow of Joe Adriance Phillips, son of Price and Selina. The Munsons remodeled the home enclosing the east porch for a sun room, updated the kitchen area and added central air and heat. The exterior was painted moss green with

¹⁸ *THE SWEENEY FAMILY IN TEXAS—1831-1990*, PGS 84, 86, 172, 173, 174 ; AND COLUMBIA CEMETERY, LOT 11, BLOCK 6, GRAVE #8.

¹⁹ RESTORATION DOCUMENTATION WEBSITE: WWW.MARLENE.PHANFARE.COM

²⁰ BRAZORIA COUNTY HISTORIC DEED RECORDS, #0006-0007, BOOK 171, PG 6.

burgundy trim and a metal roof was added. At that time, paneling was placed over the original wallpaper. Milam's family also goes back to colonist days. "The Munson Plantation, situated on Gulf Prairie, was a cotton and sugar plantation. It passed from the possession of the family many years ago. The members of the Munson family are still quite numerous in the county, and some have moved elsewhere. Many of them reside at Angleton, this county, among them being George Munson and family, a brother, Armour's family, and our present respected District Judge M. S. Munson—the father of these being Col. M. S. Munson, a Confederate veteran who moved from Gulf Prairie many years ago and made his home on Bailey's Prairie, where he reared a large family of boys and girls. All are respected for their probity of character and other virtues. They have kept up the name and fame of the old stock of colonists, making good citizens."²¹ In 2006, it was sold to Marlene Neeley and Michael Leebron present owners of the home.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The Phillips family originally came to America from middle England. The Texas Phillips line is traced back to Thomas Phillips born 1599 and his only son, William Phillips, Esq. born 1679. Son, William, the immigrant to America in the early 1700's, settled in Scurry County, Virginia. Family genealogy finds the 6th generation of descendants of Thomas and William in Texas. Joseph Phillips born 1734 in Wilkes County, Georgia served as a "Minute Man" in the American Revolution, receiving a grant of 250 acres of land in Washington County, Ga. for his service to his country.²² In later years we see Joseph's sons James Ray and his brother Zeno become "**sons of the Republic of Texas**". Zeno is listed as one of the original 300 settlers to Texas. All four Phillips brothers: James Ray, Zeno, Sidney and John Clarke came to

²¹ STROBEL, ABNER J., *THE OLD PLANTATIONS AND THEIR OWNERS OF BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX*, PG 15.

²² DICTIONARY OF ALABAMA BIOGRAPHY, PG 1358

Texas during the colonization by Stephen F. Austin, migrating from Alabama to Texas. James Ray Phillips originally settled along the San Bernard River in southern Brazoria County with his brothers.²³

On April 14, 1828 James Ray Phillips took the oath of allegiance to both the religion and laws of Mexico as required by article 3 of the colonization law of the state of Coahuila and Texas dated March 24, 1825. He was then 26 years old, single, 8 dependants, from Alabama and responsible for 9 souls total.²⁴

In June of 1832, James Ray fought with Henry S. Brown's Division I, at the Battle of Velasco.²⁵ James Ray's son, John Gayle is the father of James Price Phillips. Half-brother, Sidney, joined the militia at Brazoria and fought with Henry Smiths' Division II. He also fought at San Jacinto. Half-brother, John Clarke, served in Company D, 1st Regiment Cavalry of the Texas Army in 1837.²⁶ The North America map would be forever altered after the Battle at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836.

Descendant, James "Price" Phillips, at age 23 married Selina Harris Lee on September 25, 1911. They had four children: James Price, Jr., Lina Lee, Joe Adriance and Oliver Wendel "Wink" Phillips and settled in Columbia, TX. Price was both a businessman and rancher and the legacy he left his descendants before his death in 1944 at 56 years, was one of "a dreamer and a schemer".²⁷ Today, he would be seen as an intriguing man with a keen imagination and vision—someone who woke-up in a different world each morning full of ambition, aspiration and zeal. In other words, there was never a dull moment when Price was around.

²³ BRAZORIA COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM: GENEALOGY SEARCH

²⁴ STEPHEN F. AUSTIN'S REGISTER OF FAMILIES, #331.

²⁵ *THUNDER ON THE BRAZOS*, PG 47 & *A NARRATIVE OF BRAZORIA COUNTY*, PG 452, 453.

²⁶ *TEXAS ARMY 1836-1841 RECORDS & MUSTER ROLL*, DAUGHTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS, 1986

²⁷ QUOTE: JOYCE LEE PHILLIPS BROOKS, GRANDDAUGHTER OF PRICE & SELINA PHILLIPS, 2006

Price built a new home for his family at the end of World War I, after the birth of his son Oliver Wendel “Wink” Phillips born July 1, 1920. President Woodrow Wilson had been reelected and America entered the “Great War” on April 6, 1917. WWI was known as the war to end all wars. It spanned four years and involved many nations. Armistice took effect on November 11, 1918—the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month and with its end many European dynasties fell. Ernest Hemingway’s great novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, is set against the background of the war in Italy and deals with his war-time experiences. John J. “Black Jack” Pershing was Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces while fearsome air ace, Eddie Rickenbacker, America’s top-scoring fighter pilot of the war obtained 26 victories all within a nine month period.²⁸

With the entry of the United States into World War I on April 6, 1917, changes were in store, but a consciousness of war was not immediate. Three days after the declaration of war, Bryan No. 3 on the H. L. & T. H. Bryan lease at Damon, TX (a few miles north of Columbia) became the news when it blew in a gusher at 1500 feet, producing ten to twenty thousand barrels per day. It threw oil over the derrick for several hours; people who had been expecting this came from over the county and were on hand to watch. The war was not real, it was too far away; oil was here at last. For a short time, the oil news especially “Da-money Mound,” competed with war items in the county paper. Businesses and families moved from all parts of the county to Damon.²⁹

Locally, at the time Price built his home, Columbia was caught-up in the “oil boom” with a frenzy of wildcatters, oil companies and 20,000 roughnecks and families converging upon the small community. In July 1920, the Abrams #1 well, located one mile NW of Columbia, was

²⁸ THE WAR TO END ALL WARS ONLINE: FIRST WORLD WAR.COM.

²⁹ CREIGHTON, JAMES, A *NARRATIVE HISTORY OF BRAZORIA COUNTY*, PG 329

proclaimed the “world’s greatest oil well” by a local newspaper!³⁰ Because the town grew to the northwest towards the oilfields the two communities became known as East and West Columbia. It was a time of prosperity and growth for Texas as the oil industry grew throughout much of the state.³¹

The Phillips Home, family heritage and site history are worth preserving. There is a great deal of significance in the land involved because tradition in the Sweeny family states that the first Texas hospital was built here for the soldiers of the Texas Revolution by Old Dr. Rees Porter. And it was also the site of the first cloth manufacturing in Texas. His wife made cloth for the soldiers of the Columbia Company. This researcher and Bettie Patton Sweeny’s grandson, Robert Rees Sweeny, agree that this account of Old Dr. Rees Porter and the hospital were passed to the next generation by oral history by Bettie because she actually lived in the Porter household from childhood until age 30. She was adopted by the Porters as a child. It may not have been a separate building, but a section of the Porter home site used for a hospital.³² According to the U.S. Civil War Soldiers, 1861-1965, Dr. Porters’ son, Robert Rees Porter served in the Confederate, Texas 35th Regiment ranked as an *assistant surgeon* following his father as a doctor.

Great detail has been given by the owners in the restoration process with a strong interest in preserving its architectural integrity. They have exerted considerable effort to restore the house to as close to its original condition as possible. Its prominent location at the corner of Duval and Main, combined with its original design qualities and good state of preservation, make it an architecturally important chapter in the story of the historic East Columbia community. The

³⁰ *THE ANGLETON TIMES*, JULY 20, 1920, ANGLETON, TX.

³¹ *BOOM TOWN DAYS*, PUBLICATION, 1988, WC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

³² TELEPHONE INTERVIEW: ROBERT REES SWEENY ON SEPTEMBER 12, 2007

American Foursquare style maintains its appearance in regards to its period of historical significance and is a superior example of preservation.³³

IV. DOCUMENTATION

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Photographs Enclosed:

1. James Price and Selina Lee Phillips Home—Duval & Main Street,
East Columbia, TX, February 2007.
2. Frontal View—Facing South to Main Street
3. Frontal Close-up View
4. West Side View
5. East Side View
6. Back View—Facing North to SH 35
7. Carriage House—Facing East
8. Bethel Presbyterian Church
9. Subject Marker—Phillips Family Cemetery
10. Subject Marker—W. H. Abrams Well #1
11. Subject Marker—Bell's Landing
12. Phillips-Munson Home after remodeling in 1978



James Price Phillips Home
March 17, 1939~Family Birthday Party for Price
Price is Top Row~Second from Left
Selina is directly in front of Price





Phillips - Munson

RESTORATION







