

Texas Historical Commission staff (BB), 2/2/2012
Official Texas Historical Medallion and 16" x 12" plaque with post
Harris County (Job #11HR04) Subject (Atlas) UTM
Location: Houston, 2 Courtlandt Place

JOHN & BESSIE PARKER HOUSE

JOHN WILSON PARKER (1861-1930) AND BESSIE COELHITE SMITH (1865-1948) MARRIED IN TAYLOR IN 1881; THE COUPLE HAD TWO DAUGHTERS. JOHN WAS ADMITTED TO THE BAR IN 1881 AND APPOINTED AN ALTERNATE JUSTICE TO THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS IN 1899 AND 1902. THE FAMILY CAME TO HOUSTON IN 1903, WITH JOHN A PARTNER IN THE LAW FIRM OF BROWN, LANE, GARWOOD AND PARKER. BESSIE WAS A CHARTER MEMBER OF THE HOUSTON PUBLIC SCHOOL ART LEAGUE. ARCHITECT JOHN F. STAUB DESIGNED THEIR 1925 HOME, A TWO-STORY TUDOR REVIVAL STYLE HOUSE WITH A STEEPLY PITCHED ROOF, BRICK FAÇADE WITH RAISED PATTERNS, PAIRED CASEMENT WINDOWS, AND A TALL CHAMFERED CHIMNEY.

RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK – 2011

MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

**RECORDED TEXAS HISTORIC LANDMARK MARKERS:
2011 Official Texas Historical Marker
Sponsorship Application Form**

Valid September 1, 2010 to November 15, 2010 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): Judge John Wilson and Bessie Parker House

County: Harris

Town (nearest county town on current state highway map): Houston

Street address of marker site or directions from town noted above: #2 Courtlandt Place

Marker Coordinates:

If you know the location coordinates of the proposed marker site, enter them in one of the formats below:

UTM Zone 15 Easting 269646 Northing 3292763

Lat: 29.7437088 Long: -95.3819355 (deg, min, sec or decimal degrees)

Otherwise, give a precise verbal description here (e.g. northwest corner of 3rd and Elm, or FM 1411, 2.6 miles east of McWhorter Creek): n/a

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.
 Check this box if the property is individually listed in the NRHP.

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; legal description of the property; site plan; floorplan; historic photograph; and current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure—please resize photographs to 1-2 MB, or approximately 1024 x 768 pixels).

- 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 November 15, 2010.
- 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.

- 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): Louis Aulbach

Mailing address: **City, Zip:**

Daytime phone (with area code): **Email address** (required): lfa@hal-pc.org

PERMISSION OF PROPERTY OWNER FOR MARKER PLACEMENT

Property owner: Debby and Cliff Crabtree

Address:#2 Courtlandt Place **City, state, zip:**Houston, Texas 77006

Phone:713-528-4111 **Email address:** debbycrabtree@sbcglobal.net

Legal Description of the property (metes and bounds, lot and block, etc.): TRS 1, 2A, B11 & C, Courtlandt Place

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): Debby Crabtree

Contact person (if applicable): same

Mailing address:#2 Courtlandt Place **City, zip:** Houston, Texas 77006

Email address (required):debbycrabtree@sbcglobal.net **Phone: 713-528-4111**

SHIPPING INSTRUCTIONS

In order to facilitate delivery of the marker, residence addresses, post office box numbers and rural route numbers are not permitted. To avoid additional shipping charges or delays, use a business street address (open 8 a.m.—5 p.m., Monday through Friday).

Name: Debby Crabtree

Street address:#2 Courtlandt Place **City, zip:** Houston, Texas 77006

Daytime phone (required): 713-528-4111 **Email** (required): debbycrabtree@sbcglobal.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
 - The narrative history (including documentation)
 - Legal description of the property
 - Detailed floor plan for each floor of the structure
 - Detailed site plan of the property
 - At least one historic photograph
 - Current photographs clearly showing each side of the structure

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>)

Texas Historical Commission
History Programs Division
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276
Phone 512/463-5853
history@thc.state.tx.us



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

Application for a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Marker for the

**JUDGE JOHN W. AND BESSIE “MONIE” PARKER HOUSE
#2 COURTLANDT PLACE, HOUSTON, TEXAS**

Written by Anna Mod, SWCA Environmental Consultants
for review by the Harris County Historical Commission

I. CONTEXT

Houston grew steadily in the second half of the nineteenth century due to ongoing enhancements to the port and additional railroads. City leaders invested in the city’s future and established infrastructure including electric service, streetcars, paved streets and public transportation. The Port of Houston was established in 1841 and steamships plied Buffalo Bayou and unloaded at the foot of Main Street. The railroad arrived in 1860 and by 1922 there were seventeen lines operating in Houston.¹ Buffalo Bayou, straightened and deepened, received her first ocean going vessel in 1876 and this enhancement - coupled with the railroad - propelled the city into a major transportation and shipping center.² The 1901 discovery of oil near Beaumont at Spindletop propelled Beaumont into an oil boomtown overnight, yet Houston was better positioned for explosive growth due to her established infrastructure and better social and cultural amenities; the city absorbed many newcomers over the following two decades as newly chartered oil companies moved their headquarters there.³

In the late nineteenth century, wealthy Houstonians built large mansions along the main avenues south of downtown in the Victorian-era styles that were popular at the time. Sited on large parcels, it was not uncommon for the house, outbuildings and gardens to occupy an entire city block.⁴ Live Oak trees were planted along the lot perimeters and these oaks, now a century old, can still be seen sporadically in what is now Midtown. The city’s population doubled in the first decade of the twentieth century⁵ and the residential avenues south of downtown began to experience commercial encroachment. Homeowners realized the value of a planned community

¹ Weiskopf, Douglas L. Rails Around Houston. Charleston, et al: Arcadia Publishing, 2009, p. 2

² *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. “HOUSTON SHIP CHANNEL”
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/HH/rhh11.html> (accessed May 30, 2010).

³ Johnston, Marguerite, Houston: The Unknown City: 1836-1946. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1991, pp. 129-131.

⁴ Sanborn Maps, City of Houston, 1885-1951, Volumes 1 and 5.

⁵ Morrison and Fourmy, *City Directory of the City of Houston, 1910-11*, p. 11.

within a city adamantly opposed to zoning, and true to the Houston entrepreneurial spirit, developers responded and provided new neighborhoods with deed restrictions following design principles of the City Beautiful movement: Westmoreland (1902), Hyde Park (1905), Courtlandt Place (1906), Avondale (1907) and Montrose (1911).⁶

II. OVERVIEW

Judge John Wilson and Bessie Coelhite Parker

John Wilson Parker (1861-1930)⁷ was born in Bagdad, Texas to Joseph Jerome “Rome” Parker and Mary Ann Faubion, both natives of Tennessee. Rome Parker died in 1866 in Bagdad when John was only five years old. In 1868, his mother remarried William Wilson, a North Carolinian, and the couple had eight children. At the time of the 1880 Williamson County census John was living in Williamson County with his grandparents, John and Elizabeth Faubion, both born in Tennessee. His grandfather was a farmer.⁸ The family followed the railroad when it eclipsed Bagdad in favor of Taylor.⁹ John was educated in the public schools and admitted to the bar in 1881.¹⁰

Bessie Coelhite Smith Parker grew up in Newnan, Coweta County, Georgia, and was the third of four children. Her father, Andrew Jackson Smith, was born in Georgia and practiced as an attorney. There are conflicting census records about whether her mother, Elizabeth Susan Emily Tench, was born in Georgia or South Carolina.¹¹ The value of the Smiths’ personal estate was decimated by the Civil War.¹² This and her father’s death in the late 1870s prompted her

⁶ Houghton, Dorothy Knox Howe, et al. Houston’s Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors 1824-1914. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1991, preface and introduction.

⁷ “Parker Funeral will be Sunday,” *Daily Court Review*, July 12, 1930

⁸ 1880 United States Federal Census, [database online]. Provo, UT, USA: Source Citation: Year: 1880; Census Place: Williamson, Texas; Roll 1332; Family History Film: 1255332; Page: 471B; Enumeration District: 157,

⁹ O’Leary, Joan Davis, great-granddaughter of Monie Parker, interview with Anna Mod, June 2010.

¹⁰ Men of Affairs of Houston and Environs: A Newspaper Reference Work. Houston: Houston Press Club, 1913, p. 121.

¹¹ United States Federal Census, Source Citation: Year: 1870; Census Place: Newnan, Coweta, Georgia; Roll M593_145; Page: 243B; Image: 491; Family History Library Film: 545644 and Year: 1860; Census Place: Newnan, Coweta, Georgia; Roll M653_118; Page: 689; Image: 141; Family History Library Film: 803118.

¹² United States Federal Census, Source Citation: Year 1870; Source Citation: Year: 1870; Census Place: Newnan, Coweta, Georgia; Roll M593_145; Page: 243B; Image: 491; Family History Library Film: 545644.

mother, Elizabeth, to move the family to Austin, Texas by 1879.¹³ Family heirs describe Monie as a great music lover and she taught piano lessons in Taylor. There she met and married John Wilson Parker in December of 1881.¹⁴ Parties and other social functions given and attended by the Parkers were often reported in the local and Austin papers and included prominent guests such Texas Governors Sayers and Culberson.¹⁵ The couple had two daughters, Mary Emmett “Matty” (b. 1883) and Bessie Coelhite (b. 1886), both born in Taylor.

The Judge was of counsel for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, a railroad union founded in 1873 to address insurance benefits. By the late nineteenth century the union involved itself more with labor issues. In 1905 Judge Parker supported the efforts of the Brotherhood on several legislative issues, most importantly legislation relieving railroad employees of the assumed risk of using defective equipment or appliances.¹⁶ Parker served as an alternate justice to the Supreme Court of Texas in 1899 and 1902, appointed by Governors Sayers and Culberson respectively.¹⁷ Prior to 1945, the SCT had only three justices and a single recusal for illness or conflict would require a special judge. These appointments were made by the governor from a pool of qualified attorneys and the work was rotated around the group equitably.¹⁸

The Parker family arrived in Houston in 1903, and the Judge was a partner in the law firm of Brown, Lane, Garwood, and Parker. Joseph Brown represented the firm at their La Grange office. The Houston office was on the second floor of the Kiam building on Main Street. Judge Parker and Bessie lived at 2206 Milam Street near the intersection of Webster Street. The family had two servants, Miss Rosa Kramolis, who lived on their property on Milam Street, and George Sampson, an African American man.¹⁹ By 1908, Parker had entered a new partnership with John Lovejoy and their firm, Lovejoy and Parker, was on the fourth floor of the Binz building. By this time the Parkers had moved to 3201 Main Street at Elgin and they had a staff of

¹³ Austin City Directory, 1879-1880.

¹⁴ Williamson County, Texas Marriage Records, 1848-1888. Compiled by Williamson County Genealogical Society, 1983, license #432, 8 December 1881.

¹⁵ O’Leary, family newspaper clipping files.

¹⁶ *Locomotive Firemen’s Magazine*, Volume XXXVIII, January – June, 1905, Accessed through Google Books, <http://books.google.com/books?id=HmxJAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA848>

¹⁷ Speer, Ocie, ed. Texas Jurists, Austin: Ocie Speer, 1936.

¹⁸ Pugsley, Bill, Executive Director, Texas Supreme Court Historical Society, email with Anna Mod, June 2010.

¹⁹ Morrison & Fourmy Directory Co., Inc. Directory of the City of Houston, 1903-04.

three: Carrie Hearst, servant; James Hearst, yardman; and, Daniel Jones, servant. All were African American and lived on the Parker property.²⁰

Bessie Parker was involved in various Ladies Clubs and was a member of the Houston Public School Art League from its inception in 1907.²¹ The League evolved into the Houston Art League and then the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Their daughter Bessie married DeWitt Clinton Dunn, a stockbroker, and the couple lived in River Oaks with their children until soon after the death of Judge Parker when they moved to #2 Courtlandt Place. Judge John W. Parker died in Houston on July 4, 1930. He was initially buried in Bagdad, and then reinterred by his widow in Taylor after his mother's death in 1933.²² Bessie Parker died in Houston on January 7, 1948 and is buried next to her husband in Taylor.

The house was leased in the 1940s and 50s; tenants included Frank Gardner, president of the Cosmo Petroleum Company, and Clarence Brown, an oil operator. In 1951, George and Inez McHale purchased the house from the Parker heirs.²³ George McHale was a Houston architect and his wife, Inez, was an interior designer. Inez was heavily involved in the research and writing of the individual and district National Register nominations in 1979 and 1980. She remained in the house following the death of her husband in the mid 1980s. In 1995 Thomas and Rebecca Lawler purchased the property from her estate. The Lawlers sold in 1999 to Michael McGee and Craig Anglemier and they sold in 2003 to the current owners, who are only the fifth family to have owned the house.

John Fanz Staub

John Fanz Staub, one of Houston's renowned twentieth century residential architects, designed the house at #2 Courtlandt Place for Judge J. W. and Bessie Parker. This house was one of his earliest commissions after starting his own Houston architectural practice.²⁴ Staub, a Tennessee native, received his Masters of Architecture degree from MIT in 1916 and went to

²⁰ Morrison & Fourmy, Houston City Directory, 1908-09.

²¹ Museum of Fine Arts-Houston, archives. Membership Roll, Houston Public School Art League, 1907-1914, p. 96.

²² O'Leary, interview.

²³ McHale, Inez. National Register of Historic Places nomination, #2 Courtlandt Place, 1979.

²⁴ Barnstone, Howard. The Architecture of John F. Staub: Houston and the South. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979, p. 318.

work for Harrie Thomas Lindberg in New York. Lindberg sent him to Houston to supervise commissions there and Staub stayed and opened his own office in 1923. A year later, he was one of the co-founders of the South Texas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and served as its second president. Staub is best known for his high end residential work in the Houston neighborhoods of Broadacres, River Oaks and Shadyside and his ease in adapting romantic revival styles to the Houston heat and humidity and for his elegant proportions and fine detailing. His most well known house is Bayou Bend, designed for Ima Hogg and her two brothers.²⁵ Bayou Bend now showcases an important collection of American decorative arts and along with its gardens is part of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.²⁶

Courtlandt Place

A. L. Hamilton, T. A. Cargill and Sterling Myer incorporated The Courtlandt Place Improvement Company on August 8, 1906 for the purpose of creating a neighborhood with “residences of good class” as far as possible from the “noise, dust, constant traffic and other annoyances” of a growing city.²⁷ Plans for the new Courtlandt Place neighborhood were announced in the *Houston Post* a month later with a report on the purchase of 15 acres of land by the Courtlandt Improvement Company from Terry Smith of New York and plans for a subdivision named “Courtlandt Place . . . one of the finest residence sections in the South.”²⁸ On the 1907 plat map, the land is described as “situated within the city limit of Houston, Texas north of and adjoining Westmoreland, being the south one third of Lot 23 of a subdivision of the Obedience Smith survey according to a map recorded in Vol. Y, page 15, Harris County Deed Records.”²⁹

The neighborhood was surveyed by A. J. Wise, a civil engineer, who laid out a 110 foot long boulevard with four central medians and a total of 26 lots: 24 measuring 100' x 170' and two

²⁵ Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. “John Fanz Staub”
<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/fst94.html> (accessed 8 August 2010).

²⁶ Museum of Fine Arts website: <http://www.mfah.org/bayoubend> (accessed 9 August 2010).

²⁷ Agreement Creating Courtlandt Association, dated June 29, 1912. James L. Autry papers, “Courtlandt Place,” box 20, file 15, Woodson Research Center, Rice University.

²⁸ “New Residential Addition Planned,” *Houston Post*, Sept. 6, 1906.

²⁹ Deed Records of Harris County, Map Book 2, page 26.

polygonal shaped lots (lots 1 and 26) adjacent to the east entrance.³⁰ The vision of the developers was to establish an exclusive neighborhood with houses of high quality. Six primary restrictive covenants were incorporated into each deed *in perpetuity* and included: no business or commercial houses; only one house, not less than two stories, per purchased lot; setback footage required to maintain uniformity; fences in the rear only; front hedges can be no higher than three feet high in the front 50 feet of the property line; and, no house may cost less than \$10,000.³¹ In 1912, the Courtlandt Place Improvement Company created the Courtlandt Place Association, still in existence today, and appointed ten trustees and deeded the street to them as joint tenants.³²

The neighborhood ran the equivalent length of three standard city blocks from Taft on the west to the entrance, a semicircular bend at Brazos and Stuart Avenue. The eastern entry was one block south of Elgin and two blocks west of the South End streetcar stop.³³ The initial development was successful and the first two houses (#s 4 and 6) were completed in 1910. By the beginning of World War I four years later, nine houses were completed on the street. Four more houses were completed by 1920 and an additional four by the decade's end. In 1937, the eighteenth house was built on the street and construction ceased until 1979 when the house at #13 was built. In 1985, #1 Courtlandt Place was built, the last house on an undeveloped lot. Thirteen years later in 1998, another new house, #3, was built on the side yard of the Autry house (#5) replacing an iron frame greenhouse, designed by the Lord and Burnham Company of Philadelphia, and a tennis court, both demolished after the 1980 City of Houston survey.³⁴ These three non-contributing houses respect the setback and massing of the other houses on the block, a requirement of the restrictive covenants, and do not detract from the historic character of the street. Today, there are a total of 21 houses and no remaining vacant lots: eleven houses on the north side and ten on the south side of the street.

The neighborhood reads as an architectural and social history of early twentieth century Houston. Architects Sanguinet and Staats of Ft. Worth designed six houses (#s 5, 9, 23, 4, 6 and

³⁰ Wise, A. J. 1907 plat of Courtlandt Place. James L. Autry papers, "Courtlandt Place" box 20, file 15, Woodson Research Center, Rice University.

³¹ Autry papers, "Courtlandt Place."

³² Autry papers, "Courtlandt Place."

³³ Baron, Steven M. Houston Electric: The Street Railways of Houston, Texas. Houston: Steven M. Baron, 1996, p. 41.

³⁴ Autry papers, "Courtlandt Place."

8); Birdsall Briscoe also designed six (#s 11, 13, 19, 16, 18 and 20) including one (#18) with Olle Lorehn; New York architects Warren and Wetmore, architects of Houston's Union Station (NR, 1977), Villa de Matel and the Texas Company building (NR, 2003) designed #17. John Staub and Alfred Finn each designed one house, numbers 2 and 24 respectively.³⁵

The eastern entry gates to the neighborhood, paired masonry pylons, were in place by 1908. As home sales increased in the adjacent Montrose subdivision to the west, there was an increase in traffic down Courtlandt Place towards Main Street. In 1912, William Ward Watkin (brought to Houston in 1909 by the architectural firm Cram & Goodhue for the design and construction of the earliest buildings for the Rice Institute [now Rice University] designed and oversaw the construction of the western wall as well as curbs, sidewalks, iron entry fencing, rear wooden alley gates and the plantings in the medians.³⁶

Later the same year, Montrose developer J. W. Link, claiming that the western wall and the private street were illegal, lobbied city hall to tear down the wall and reopen the street so as to provide car traffic from Lovett Blvd. with direct access to Main Street via Courtlandt Place.

The city agreed; the western wall was removed and the city took the street from the Association, paved it and installed streetlights. While this was a loss to the exclusivity of the Courtlandt Place development, it was still buffered to the north by the Westmoreland subdivision (1902) and on the west by Montrose (1911), both contemporary City Beautiful residential neighborhoods of similar quality and with similar restrictive covenants until after World War II.

In addition to its architectural significance, Courtlandt Place was home to many of the city's early businessmen and their families. A. S. Cleveland (#8) was a wholesale grocery owner and cotton factor whose civic activities included service as president of the Houston Chamber of Commerce and the Houston chapter of the American Red Cross. Cleveland was also a trustee of Rice University. James Lockhart Autry (#5) came to Texas from Mississippi and worked on a ranch in Navarro County. He apprenticed with a lawyer in Corsicana and was admitted to the bar. There he met J. S. Cullinan who left Corsicana to establish the Texas Company, later Texaco, in Beaumont following the discovery of oil at Spindletop. Autry was of counsel to the

³⁵ Landon, Marie D. Courtlandt Place Historic District, National Register of Historic Places nomination, 1979.

³⁶ William Ward Watkin papers, 1903-1956, Woodson Research Center, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

Texas Company, and a pioneer in petroleum law in Texas.³⁷ Another important household on the block was that of Charles Ludwig Neuhaus (#6), a director of the Texas Rice Mill Company, Union National Bank and an investor in the Courtlandt Improvement Company.³⁸

The houses were large and were staffed by servants, many of whom lived in the second story apartments above the garages. It was not uncommon for a household to have three or more servants, including a housekeeper, cook, grounds keeper and chauffeur. Study of the city directories prior to 1950 clearly shows that African-American staff lived in the rear above the garage, while an Anglo nurse or housekeeper would sometimes live in the main house with the family, following the segregated customs of the time. Other servants would commute from their own neighborhoods nearby.

The area to the east of Courtlandt Place was predominantly residential in use due to its location away from the commercial center. However, without deed restrictions it was not immune to commercial encroachment. The 1924 Sanborn map shows the beginnings of commercial development creeping into the two blocks directly to the east and southeast of the Courtlandt Place entry gates. By 1951, a dry cleaner was in business at the corner of Brazos and Elgin, directly north of the Courtlandt Place entry gates. This same map shows the two-block area to the east bordering on 50% commercial in use.³⁹

Early plans for the city's freeway system show a dotted line on the 1959 Key Map for the proposed location of SH 59, known locally as the Southwest Freeway. It was completed by 1965. The initial freeway construction removed direct access to Main Street from the neighborhood and in 1968 the Bagby-Brazos ramp cut into the eastern edge of the neighborhood,⁴⁰ necessitating the removal of the twin entry pylons, electric iron and glass lamps and "several of the largest Cottonwood trees in Harris County."⁴¹ The bricks were saved from the pillars and the existing pylon in the eastern median is constructed of the rescued bricks.⁴²

³⁷ Air, Murray and Sallie Gordon, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark application for #5 Courtlandt Place, 2009.

³⁸ Gordon and Jones, p. 100.

³⁹ Sanborn map, 1924-51, Vol. 5, sheet 544.

⁴⁰ *Houston Post*, 6 July 1982, Section E.

⁴¹ *Houston Post*, 17 May 1965, Section 2.

⁴² "Courtlandt Place," *Houston Post*, 11 December 1974, page 3AA.

The neighborhood suffered from the suburban flight in the 1950s and 60s as younger generations sought new houses with modern appliances away from the city as the older generation was dying off. By this time the deed restrictions in neighboring Montrose and Westmoreland began to expire and small apartment buildings began to sprout up in place of single family dwellings. Beginning in the 1970s there was a small renaissance of the inner city, and young families began to move back.⁴³ By the early 1980s the neighborhood had stabilized and the Courtlandt Place Association pooled resources and purchased the street back from the city for \$103,115.⁴⁴ The Association is required to hold liability insurance and to ensure access for emergency vehicles.

Neighborhood residents started the research and paperwork for listing Courtlandt Place on the National Register of Historic Places as a district in 1979 but this effort failed. Later that year, eleven houses were listed individually on the National Register, including the Myer-Hall house (NR 1979). The following year Courtlandt Place was successfully listed as a National Register Historic District. In 1996 Courtlandt Place became the City of Houston's first locally designated historic district following the establishment of the city's historic preservation ordinance in 1995.

There are also ten listed (nos. 5, 6, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22 and 24) Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks and four individual City of Houston Landmarks (nos. 5, 18, 19 and 24) in the neighborhood. Today Courtlandt Place is a well-preserved neighborhood and reads as an architectural and social history of early twentieth-century Houston. Arcadia Publishing released a neighborhood history, *Houston's Courtlandt Place*, in 2009.

Architectural Description

Number 2 Courtlandt Place is an asymmetrical, two-story, side gabled, Tudor Revival style house with a composition shingle roof. The wood framed house has a brick veneer with stretcher bond pattern. The original windows are extant and are wooden, paired casement type, each with three vertical lights. The asymmetrical facade has a large chimney between the fourth and sixth bays. There is a second chimney on the west elevation. The four-foot-wide door is original and is

⁴³ "Courtlandt Place," *Houston Post*, 11 December 1974.

⁴⁴ "Residents buy Houston Street," *Houston Chronicle*, 28 Sept 1982.

a wooden, nine-paneled type with its original hardware. There is a raised stepped brick design infilled with herringbone brick patterning surrounding the opening. There is a diamond-shaped window above, also with a raised brick surround. The rest of the main or south facade is symmetrical with equally spaced, paired casement windows on each floor. The east elevation is dominated by a projecting, square two-story bay window detailed with painted wood that evokes half timbering. The infill between the wooden members is brick set in a herringbone pattern. A terrace shown at the northeast corner on the original drawings is now a sun room enclosed with large fixed-glass windows on the east elevation and a portion of the north. There is also a pair of wooden French doors on the north elevation leading to the garden. This shed-roofed enclosure has wide painted clapboards above the glass wall and is clearly differentiated from the original brick veneer of the house. The next bay encloses the dining room, a single-story space, with a steeply sloping roof that meets the edge of the second floor gable. There is an unusual cut in this steeply pitched roof that allows for a window and light and ventilation for the second floor interior. The third bay is a symmetrical rear facing gabled ell with a short row of grouped casement windows on the first floor and two paired regular height casements on the second. The fourth bay has the rear entrance into the kitchen. Projecting out above the entrance, and clad in the same clapboard found above the sunroom is a cantilevered second-floor office addition that projects out over the rear entrance and to the west. The west elevation has a large brick chimney in the center of the side gable and a symmetrical, one-story gabled piece that projects west of the main house. There is a wood-framed, front-gabled, wide clapboard garage in the rear with a garage apartment above. There is a small one-story, flat roofed potting shed addition, on the east elevation of the garage.

The house is modest in scale when compared to its neighbors on the block. A narrow center stair hall opens to the parlor and living room on either side. The interior walls are painted plaster and the original woodwork, flooring, staircase with pattern sawn balusters and bookcases are extant. The original drawings note the staircase, newel post and flooring in the hall, living room and dining room are oak. The kitchen floor is pine and the ceiling sheetrock. There is a 50' fire hose cabinet on the wall in the rear staircase – this is shown on the original drawings and is extant. The main facade and two side elevations have not changed. Notes on the original plans

show the rear terrace (now enclosed as a sun room as described above), “to be completed by others.”⁴⁵

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The Judge John Wilson and Bessie “Monie” Parker house at #2 Courtlandt Place was designed in 1925 by noted Houston architect John Fanz Staub and is Staub’s only house in the neighborhood. The brick veneered, Tudor Revival style home was one of his earliest commissions after he started his own architectural practice. Judge John W. Parker was born in Bagdad, Texas and his wife Bessie was from Georgia. The couple married in Taylor, Texas where Parker established his law practice and was appointed as an alternate justice to the Supreme Court of Texas in 1899 and 1902, by Governors Sayers and Culberson respectively. The couple moved to Houston in 1903 and lived in a house on Milam that fell victim to the commercial encroachment that encouraged the development of new Houston residential neighborhoods that were restricted to residential use. The house is also significant as part of the Courtlandt Place neighborhood and its fine collection of architect designed houses from the early twentieth century for Houston attorneys, oil and lumbermen, bankers and financiers.

IV. ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Fox, Stephen, Houston Architectural Guide. Houston: American Institute of Architects: 1990.

Fox, Stephen, The County Houses of John F. Staub. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007.

Jones, Penny. Postcards from Texas, Channel 55, Houston Texas, March 2009, www.houston55.com/postcards-from-Texas/stories/2009-03-courtlandt-place.jsp

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1984.

Special Collections and Clipping Files

Courtlandt Place Clipping File, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

⁴⁵ Staub, John Fanz, Architectural Drawings for the Residence for J. W. Parker, Esq., sheets 2 and 3. Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

Maps

Bracey's Block Maps, City of Houston, Texas, 1942 and 1950.

Key Map of Houston, Texas, 1959-1969.

APR 18 2011

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Authorization for Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Designation

8087085

Date of RTHL designation: January 28, 2011

Property Name: Judge John W. and Bessie "Monie" Parker House

Physical Address: 2 Courtlandt Place

City: Houston, TX County: Harris Zip: 77006

Property reference number (Appraisal District/Tax Office property number, etc.): 010249000001

Legal Description (Lot and block, metes and bounds, etc.): TRS 1, 2A, B11 & C, Courtlandt Place

Additional description ("property encompassing the bridge and abutments," "the 1936 portion of the County Consolidated High School building," "the historic homestead, including the main house, barn, windmill, smokehouse and water well," etc.):

The RTHL nomination includes the house only; garage excluded.

The Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL) designation is awarded to historic structures deemed worthy of preservation for their architectural integrity and historical associations. Authorized by the Texas Legislature under Texas Government Code, Chapter 442, RTHL is the highest honor the state can bestow on historic structures in Texas. Designated properties are afforded a measure of legal protection and become part of the recorded history of the state's built environment.

Benefits of the RTHL designation:

- Recognition that a property is of local, regional or state significance.
- Protection for up to 90 days from exterior alterations, including demolition or relocation.
- Ad valorem tax exemptions, where granted by local taxing authorities.
- Inclusion in the Texas Historic Sites Atlas.
- Technical preservation assistance through the THC.

Responsibility of the property owner under the RTHL provision, as noted in Texas Government Code, Chapter 442.006 (f):

A person may not damage the historical or architectural integrity of a structure the commission has designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark without notifying the commission at least 60 days before the date on which the action causing the damage is to begin. After receiving the notice, the commission may waive the waiting period or, if the commission determines that a longer period will enhance the chance for preservation, it may require an additional waiting period of not longer than 30 days. On the expiration of the time limits imposed by this section, the person may proceed, but must proceed not later than the 180th day after the date on which notice was given or the notice is considered to have expired.

Additionally:

- The designation requires the public display of the RTHL marker. The marker is the property of the State of Texas and may not be removed or relocated without the prior permission of the Texas Historical Commission.
- RTHL status is a permanent designation which is retained with the property even upon transfer of ownership. Only the Texas Historical Commission may remove the designation.
- Structures designated as RTHLs do not have to be open to the public, but the marker must be accessible to the public.
- RTHL designation does not imply eligibility for federal tax incentives for rehabilitation.

I, the property owner or legal administrator of the property noted herein, signify below that I have read the information regarding Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks and that I voluntarily seek the designation for the property. I further promise to comply with the provision noted in the Texas Government Code.

Name (print): Debra F & Clifton A Castree

Mailing address: 2 Courtlandt Place

City, state, zip: Houston, TX 77006

Signature: Debra F. Castree

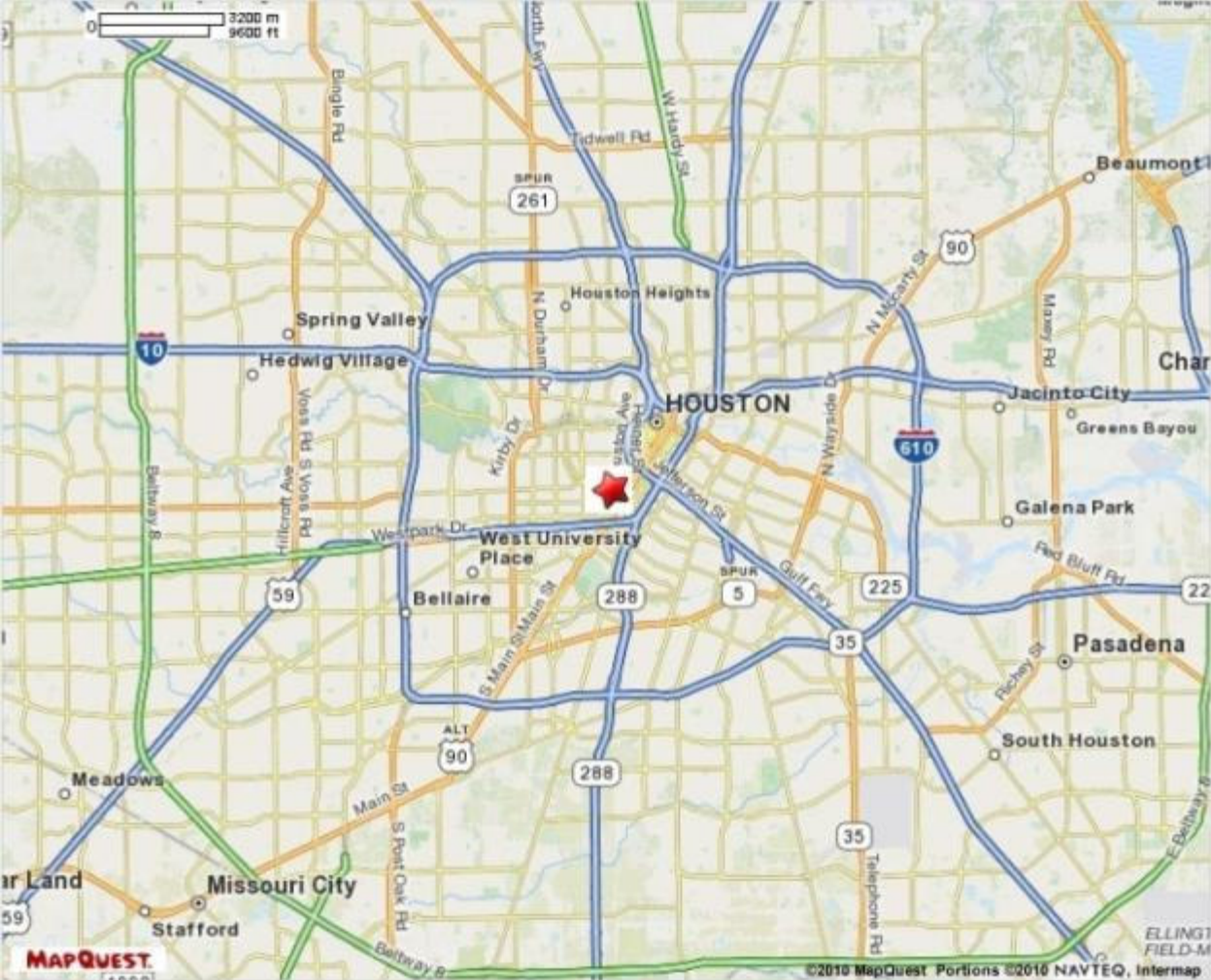
Phone: 713 528 4111 Date: _____

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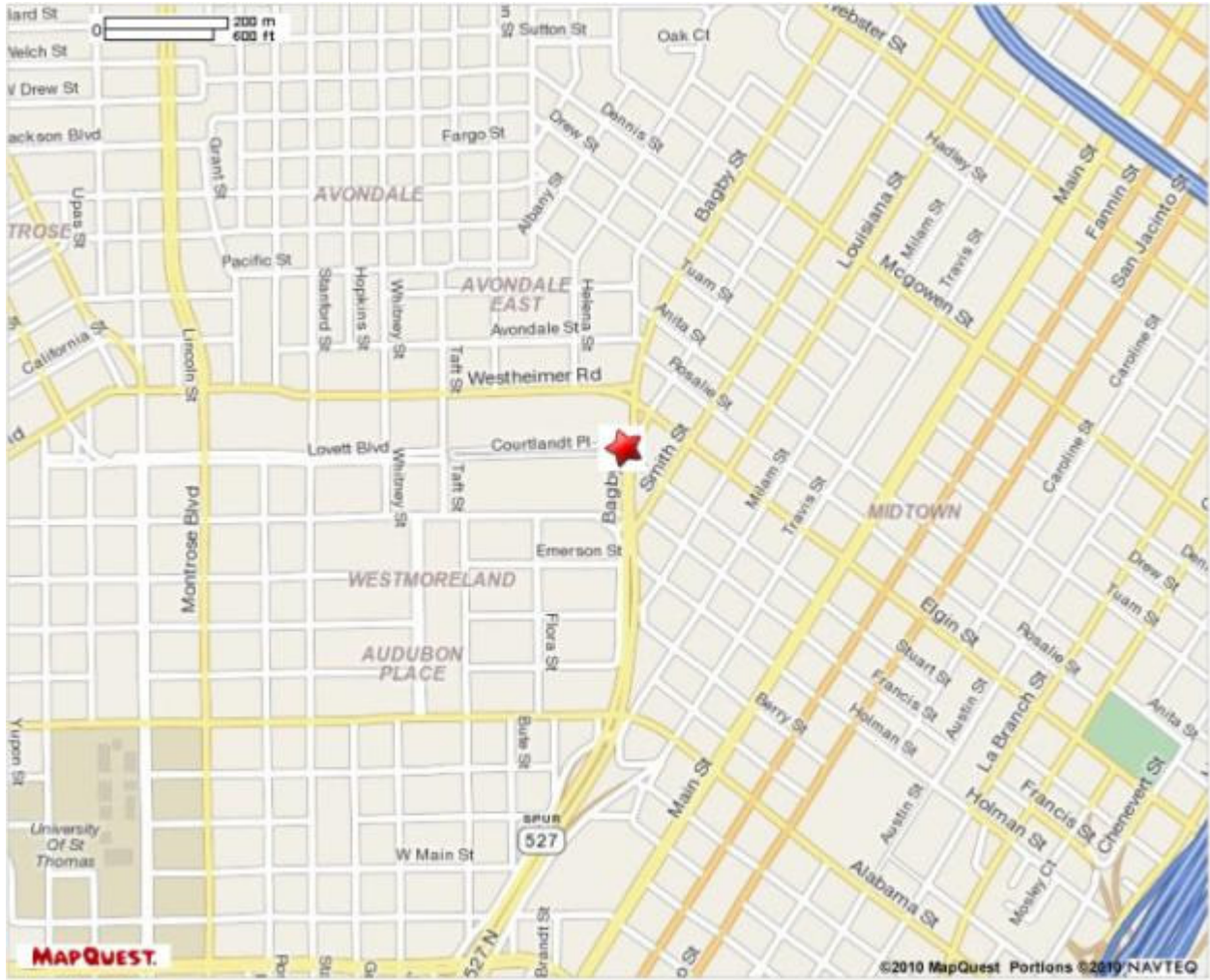
*OH#5495
\$750.00
na*

Legal Description: Tracts 1 and 2A, B11 and C in the Courtlandt Place addition, Houston, Harris County, Texas (Harris County Appraisal District).



#2 Courtlandt Place, Houston, Texas

source: Mapquest, 2010



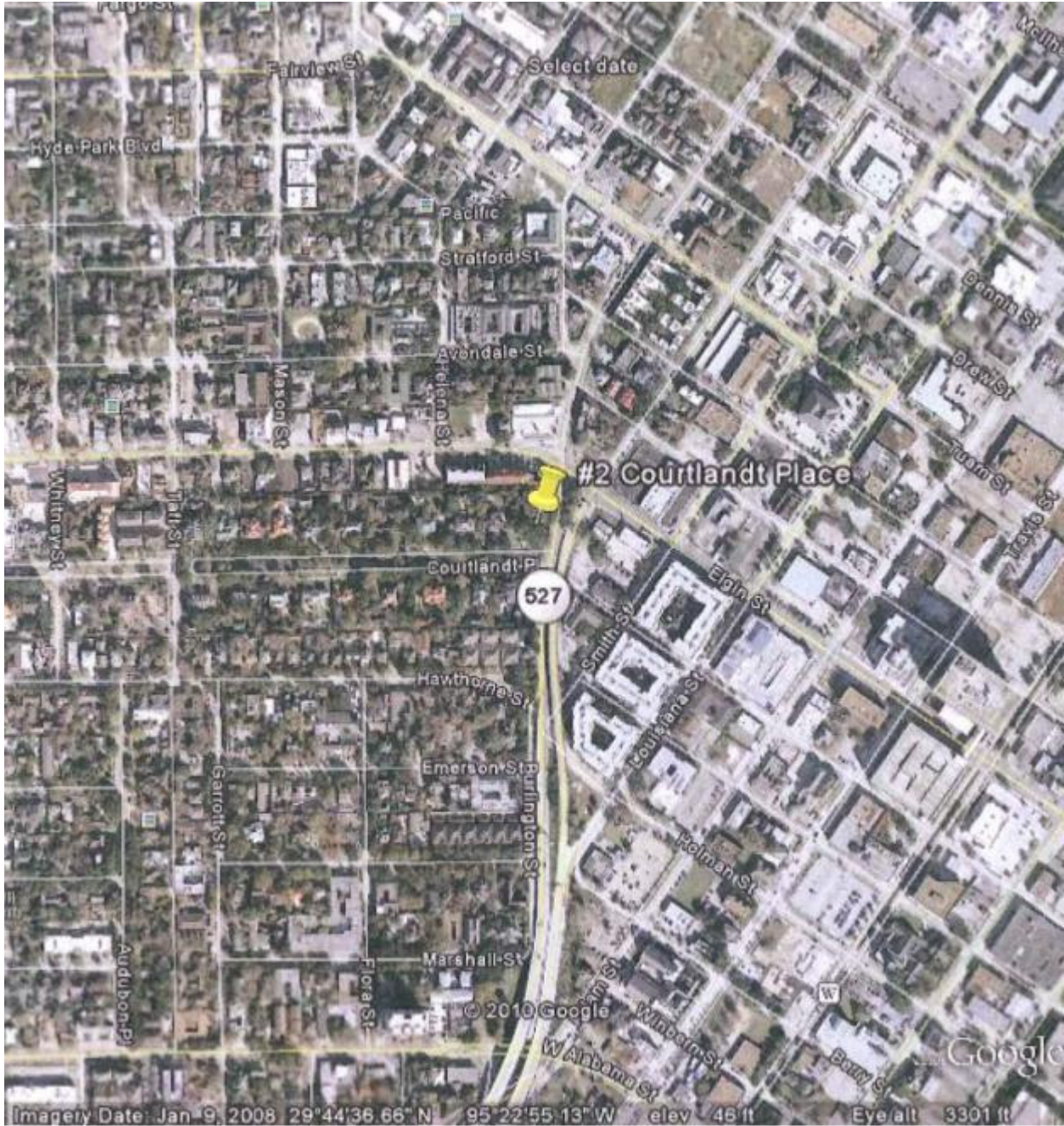
#2 Courtlandt Place, Houston, Texas

source: Mapquest, 2010



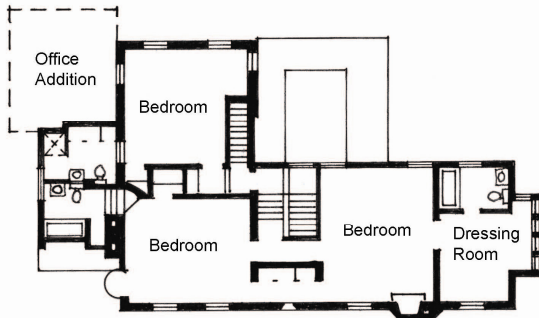
#2 Courtlandt Place, Houston, Texas

source: Google Maps 2010

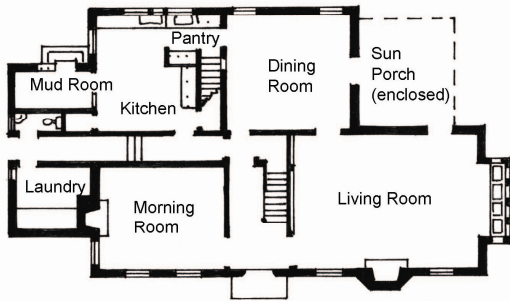


#2 Courtlandt Place, Houston, Texas

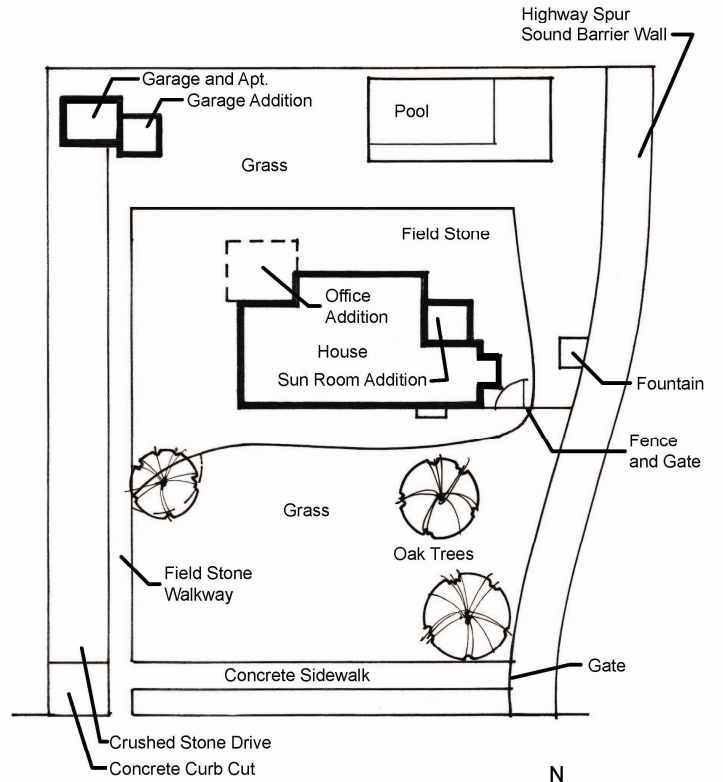
source: Google Maps, 2010



House Floor 2



House Floor 1



No. 2 Courtlandt Place





#2 Courtlandt Place, c. 1925

Courtesy: Woodallen Photography



Courtlandt Place gates, c. 1912

Source: William Ward Watkin papers, Woodson Research Center, Rice University



#2 Courtlandt Place, south facade, view north

Anna Mod for SWCA, 2010



Front door detail

Anna Mod for SWCA, 2010



Oblique of east and north elevations, view south

Anna Mod for SWCA, 2010



East elevation, view north



East elevation, view south Anna Mod for SWCA, 2010



West elevation, view north



Garage and garden shed addition, view north