

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
APRIL 22, 2019  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2019-0138  
1903 NEW YORK AVENUE

### PROPOSAL

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Demolish a ca. 1894 house.

### ARCHITECTURE

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One-story, wing-and-gable plan frame house with a partial-width inset porch on turned wood posts; fenestration consists of single 4:4 units with a fixed-sash window in the projecting gable and in the main flank of the façade, each with a diamond-paned transom.

### RESEARCH

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The house appears to have been built around 1894. The first occupants of the house were Hal James, a porter at Nelson Davis and Company, a wholesale grocery firm, and Anthony Burditt, a porter for John Orr, a competing wholesale grocery firm. Hal James soon moved to another house on Leona Street, and Anthony Burditt owned and lived in this house until his death in 1928. He was a porter for wholesale grocery businesses for many years before going to work for the Austin Country Club, where he is listed as a helper and a groundskeeper in city directories of the 1910s and 1920s. His widow, Jannetta, does not appear to have stayed in this house after Anthony died. She passed away in 1936.

Henrietta Becks, a widow, bought the house in the early 1930s, and lived here until around 1936. The 1930 census report shows her as a laundress, and with adult daughters who were also engaged in domestic work – cooks for private families, a laundress, and a servant. From here, Henrietta Becks moved to Pennsylvania Avenue, where she passed away in 1943.

Embry J. and Jessie Scales purchased the house around 1936, and lived here for the rest of their lives. Embry Scales first lived in an African-American settlement in South Austin, where he built a house in 1917 on W. Johanna Street. He worked as a janitor at the First Baptist Church until his death in 1942. Jessie Scales was a laundress; she continued to live in this house until her death in 1982.

### STAFF COMMENTS

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The house is recommended for local landmark designation by the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (2016).

Staff has evaluated this house for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that the house meets the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

- a. **Architecture.** The house is a very good example of turn-of-the-century wing and gable vernacular design with many features remaining intact; the house has diamond-paned transoms above the two fixed-sash windows in front, an uncommon feature, and a rarity to maintain.
- b. **Historical association.** The house has been the home of three long-term African-American families who were engaged in typical work for African-Americans in segregated Austin. Each family owned this, a significant achievement in and of itself, given the size and ornamentation of the structure. While none of the owners of this house stands out independently as significant, it is the context and continued history of the families associated with this house as representative of the African-American experience and demographic in Austin that is important.

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

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Initiate historic zoning under the criteria for architectural distinction as a good example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century house type, and for its historical associations with several African-American families as a representation of architecture associated with a particular demographic in Austin's history, or postpone to June 24, 2019 to fully evaluate alternatives to demolition. Both the East Austin survey and staff recognize the potential significance of this house and every consideration should be given to preserve and restore the structure.

LOCATION MAP



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 333'

**NOTIFICATIONS**

CASE#: HDP-2019-0138  
 LOCATION: 1903 NEW YORK AVE



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

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1903 New York Avenue  
ca. 1894





## OCCUPANCY HISTORY 1903 New York Avenue

City Directory Research, Austin History Center  
By City Historic Preservation Office  
April, 2019

- 1893-94      No listing for known occupants of this house.  
NOTE: Harrell James is listed at 1309 Comal Street.  
NOTE: Anthony Burditt is not listed in the directory.
- 1895-96      Hal James (colored)  
Porter, Nelson Davis & Company, wholesale groceries, 117 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Anthony Burditt (colored)  
Porter, John Orr, wholesale groceries, 401 Congress Avenue.
- 1897-98      Anthony Burditt (colored)  
Porter, John Orr, wholesale groceries, 401 Congress Avenue.  
NOTE: Hal James is listed as living on the west side of Leona Street, 2  
blocks east of Comal Street; he was a porter for Nelson Davis, wholesale  
groceries, 117 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1898-99      Anthony Burditt (colored)  
Porter, John Orr, wholesale groceries, 401 Congress Avenue.
- 1900-01      Anthony Burditt (colored)  
Porter, John Orr, wholesale groceries, 401 Congress Avenue.

- 1903           Unknown  
NOTE: Anthony Burditt is not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: Hal James (colored) is listed at the rear of 1313 Chincapin (later Rosewood Avenue); he was a driver for Bell and Randolph, wholesale fruits, produce and commission merchants, 500 Colorado Street.
- 1905           Unknown  
Anthony Burditt is not listed in the directory.
- 1906-07       Anthony Burditt (colored)  
Employed by Mrs. John Bremond
- Lindsay Willis (colored)  
No occupation listed
- 1909-10       Anthony Burditt (colored)  
Porter, John Bremond, wholesale groceries and coffee roaster, 109-13 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1910-11       Anthony Burditt (colored)  
Porter, John Bremond, wholesale groceries and coffee roaster, 109-13 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1912-13       Leon Keys (colored)  
Porter, Van Smith Drug Company, 600 Congress Avenue.  
NOTE: Anthony Burditt is not listed in the directory.
- 1914           Anthony Burditt (colored)  
Porter
- 1916           Anthony Burditt (colored), owner  
Helper, Austin Country Club
- 1918           Anthony and Jeanetta Burditt (colored), owners  
Groundskeeper, Austin Country Club
- 1920           Anthony and Jeanetta Burditt (colored), owners  
No occupation listed
- 1922           Anthony Burditt (colored), owner  
Greenskeeper, Country Club  
NOTE: Jeanetta Burditt is not listed in the directory.
- 1924           Anthony and Jeanette Burditt (colored), owners  
Laborer, Country Club
- 1927           Anthony and Jeanetta Burditt (colored), owners  
No occupation listed
- 1929           Anthony and Jeanette Burditt (colored), owners  
No occupation listed  
Also listed is Emmett Burditt (colored), a porter at Sherwin Williams Paint Company, 817 Congress Avenue.

- 1930-31 Curry and Gladys Ramey (colored), renters  
Porter, Kinser Barber Shop, 113 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street.  
NOTE: Anthony Burditt died in 1928; Jeanetta Burditt is not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: Henrietta Beck (colored) is listed at 606 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Street; she had no occupation shown.
- 1932-33 Henrietta Becks, renter  
No occupation listed
- 1935 Henrietta Becks, owner  
No occupation listed
- 1937 E.J. and Jessie Scales, owners  
Janitor, First Baptist Church  
Also listed is Cetus Scales, no occupation shown.  
NOTE: Henrietta Beck is listed at 1810 Pennsylvania Avenue. She had no occupation shown.
- 1939 E.J. and Jessie Scales, owners  
Janitor, First Baptist Church  
Also listed is Wilmer Scales, a porter.
- 1941 Embry J. and Jessie Scales, owners  
Janitor, First Baptist Church  
Also listed is Cletis V. Scales, a porter for James T. Tillman.  
NOTE: Embry J. Scales died in 1942.
- 1944-45 Mrs. Jessie M. Scales, owner  
Widow, Embry Scales  
No occupation listed  
Also listed are Cletis V. Scales, a porter, and Wilma [sic] M. and Ethel Scales, no occupation shown.
- 1947 Mrs. Jessie M. Scales, owner  
No occupation listed
- 1949 Jessie M. Scales, owner  
Widow, Embry Scales  
Janitor, First Baptist Church
- 1952 Jessie M. Scales, owner  
Maid
- 1955 Mrs. Jessie M. Scales, owner  
No occupation listed
- 1959 Mrs. Jessie M. Scales, owner  
Widow, Embry Scales  
Cook, First Baptist Church
- 1962 Jessie M. Scales, owner  
No occupation listed

1965	Mrs. Jessie M Scales, owner Widow, Embry Scales Cook, First Baptist Church
1968	Mrs. Jessie M. Scales, owner Widow, Embry Scales Cook, First Baptist Church
1973	Mrs. Jessie M. Scales, owner Widow, Embry Scales Retired
1977	Mrs. Jessie M. Scales, owner Widow, Embry Scales Retired
1981	Mrs. Jessie M. Scales, owner No occupation listed
1985-86	Jessie M. Scales, owner Retired NOTE: Jessie M. Scales died in 1982.
1992	Vacant

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:**

##### **Anthony and Jeanetta Burditt (ca. 1895 – ca.1928)**

The 1900 U.S. Census shows Anthony and Janetta Burditt as the owners of this house. Anthony Burditt was 37, having been born in Texas in 1863. He was a day laborer. Janetta Burditt was 32, having been born in Texas in 1868. She had no occupation listed. They had a son, Willie E., born in Texas in 1887.

Anthony and Janetta Burditt appear at this address in the 1910 U.S. Census. Anthony Burditt was 47, had been born in Texas, and was a porter at a wholesale grocery. Janetta Burditt was 42, had been born in Texas to Kentucky-born parents, and had no occupation listed. With them lived Janetta's father, Willis Lindsay, an 84-year old Kentucky-born widower with no occupation listed.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Anthony and Jannetta Burditt as the owners of this house. Anthony Burditt was 57, had been born in Texas to Kentucky-born parents, and was a porter at the Country Club. Janetta Burditt was 51, had been born in Texas to a Kentucky-born father and an Alabama-born mother, and had no occupation listed. They had no children listed with them.

Anthony Burditt was born in 1860 and died October 23, 1928. Jannetta Lindsay Burditt was born in 1868 and died November 14, 1936 in Los Angeles, California. Both are buried in Plummers' Cemetery in northeast Austin. Neither had an obituary in the Austin newspapers.

The funeral of Anthony Eugene Burdett, the 17-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Burdett, who died Wednesday night, will be held this morning at 11 o'clock from the residence of his parents, No. 1903 New York avenue. Interment will be in the Rogers' cemetery, several miles east of the city.

Funeral notice for Anthony E. Burditt, the son of Anthony and Janetta Burditt  
 Austin Statesman, November 3, 1905

#### **Henrietta Becks (ca. 1931 – ca. 1936)**

The 1930 U.S. Census shows Henrietta Becks as the renter of the house at 606 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street [?]. She was a 65-year old Texas-born widow who worked as a laundress at home. Her parents had both been born in Alabama. With her lived her son, Leroy Nunn, 30, a Texas-born truck driver for a grain store, and his wife, Robbie, 25, a Texas-born cook for a private family, and 3 daughters: Lucy Nunn, 26, a cook for a private family; Frances Nunn, 19, a laundress at home; and Alice Nunn, 17, a servant for a private family.

Henrietta Beck was living with her daughter, Frances Nunn, in rented quarters at 1908 Pennsylvania Avenue at the time of the 1940 U.S. Census. Henrietta Beck was a 73-year old Texas-born widow with no occupation listed. Her daughter, Frances Nunn, 31, was born in Texas, and was a laundress for a private family. Also in the household was a nephew, Willie B. Nunn, 18, who had been born in Texas and was a caddie at the golf course.

According to her 1943 death certificate, Henrietta Beck was living at 1908 Pennsylvania Avenue at the time of her death. She was born on Christmas Day, 1881 in La Grange, Texas, and was a housewife. She did not have an obituary in the Austin newspapers.

#### **Embry J. and Jessie Scales (ca. 1936 – ca. 1990)**

Embry Scales received a building permit to construct a dwelling at 608 W. Johanna Street in January, 1917.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Embry and Jessie Scales as the owners of this house, which was worth \$1,200. Embry Scales was 49, had been born in Texas, and was the janitor at a church. Jessie Scales was 47, had been born in Texas, and was a laundress in a private home. They had 4 children: Wilmer, 26, a porter for a fraternity; Cletis, 21, a porter for a barber shop; Thelma, 16; and John, 13. All the children had been born in Texas.

Embry J. Scales was born in 1890 and died April 12, 1942. He did not have an obituary in the Austin newspapers. Jessie M. Scales was born in 1892 and died January 6, 1982. Both are buried in Evergreen Cemetery. Cletis Scales was living at this address at the time of his death in 1979. He was born in Austin in 1918 and was a porter at a motel. He never married.

**SCALES, Cletis V., 61, 1903 New York Ave., died Saturday. Services 3 p.m. Wednesday at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Burial, Evergreen Cemetery. Survivors: mother, Mrs. Jessie M. Scales of Austin; sisters, Mrs. Ura Lee Overton, Mrs. Thelma Foster, both of Austin; brother, Wilmer M. Scales of Detroit, Mich. (Fuller-Sheffield)**

Obituary of Cletis Scales  
Austin American-Statesman, December 4, 1979

Emory [sic] Scales' 1942 death certificate shows that he died of tuberculosis in 1942 at the Travis County Tuberculosis Hospital. He was living at this address at the time of his death. He was a married porter who had been born in Austin in 1892. Jessie M. Scales' death certificate shows that she was born in Texas in 1892 and was living in this house at the time of her death. She was a widowed homemaker.

**SCALES, Jessie, 89, 1903 New York Avenue, died Wednesday. Services 4 p.m. Monday at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Burial, Evergreen Cemetery. Survivors: daughters, Ura Lee Overton, Thelma L. Foster, both of Austin; son, Wilmer M. Scales of Detroit; sisters, Ruth Hill of Austin, Eva Barnes of Fort Worth; seven grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. (Fuller-Sheffield)**

Obituary of Jessie Scales  
Austin American-Statesman, January 10, 1982