

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
MAY 20, 2019  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2019-0223  
507 W. 17<sup>TH</sup> STREET

## PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1904 house.

## ARCHITECTURE

One-story, wing-and-gable frame house with a partial-width shed-roofed independent porch on battered posts and brick piers; single and paired 2:2 fenestration; front door has sidelights; what appears to have been a front window has been replaced with a multi-light frame door. The house has a two-story historic addition to the rear, which has been badly damaged by fire.

## RESEARCH

The house appears to have been built around 1904. City directory research did not yield information about occupants prior to 1905, and the house does not appear on the 1900 Sanborn map. The first known resident was a D. Starr, who worked as a railway mail clerk. Until 1925, the house had a series of occupants, including a salesman at Scarbrough and Hicks, an employee of a printing and bookbinding firm, a piano tuner, a pharmacist, and the chief clerk of the Texas Supreme Court. All of these occupants only lived here for a short period of time.

From around 1925 until around 1970, this house was the home of August and Hazel Achilles, who operated a prominent grocery store on Lavaca Street in Austin until 1957. August Achilles was the son of Herman Achilles, and grandson of Andrew Achilles, both in the meat market business. The Achilles family operated meat or food stores in Austin from 1881 until August Achilles closed the family grocery in 1957.

## STAFF COMMENTS

The house was listed as a Priority 2 for research in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984).

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 an excellent example of vernacular wing-and-gable-style residential architecture, very popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but an increasingly rare building type in Austin now. All features of the house appear to be intact from the time of its construction, including its 2:2 fenestration. While the house has suffered a fire in the attic and the rear addition, it appears that the original portion of the house is salvageable and there is a strong possibility for restoration. The house, even with its damage, qualifies under the criterion for architecture.
- b. **Historical association.** The house was the long-time home of August and Hazel Achilles, the proprietors of a beloved Austin grocery business on Lavaca Street. August Achilles was the grandson of the founder of the Achilles family businesses in Austin in the early 1880s, beginning with a meat market. The Achilles family businesses closed in 1957, but the house represents the contributions of the last owner of the business to the community. The house has significant historical associations.

- 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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Encourage rehabilitation and restoration of the fire-damaged house if it is not too far gone, with the possibility of removing the rear addition and construction a new rear addition to provide new office space in an otherwise well-preserved vintage building in downtown Austin. Staff recommends either initiation of a historic zoning case or postponement to explore the possibilities of rehabilitation and restoration, including the financial feasibility of a preservation project, and consideration of the property as a historic landmark.

## LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

## NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2019-0223

LOCATION: 507 W 17TH STREET

1" = 333'

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.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



507 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
ca. 1904



Detail of the front of the house showing fire damage to the attic vent





Fire damaged rear of the building

## OCCUPANCY HISTORY 507 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center  
By City Historic Preservation Office  
December, 2015

1992	Vacant
1985-86	The address is not listed in the directory.
1981	Impressions Donna O'Clock and Fred Edlin, proprietors
1977	Lewis Supply Company, handcrafted furnishings Martin Lewis, proprietor
1973	Vacant
1968	August A. and Hazel E. Achilles, owners Retired
1962	August A. and Hazel E. Achilles, owners No occupation listed
1959	August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners No occupation listed

- 1955 August A. and Hazel E. Achilles, owners  
Proprietor, H.L. Achilles Food Store, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.
- 1952 August A. and Hazel E. Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with Herman G. Achilles), H.L. Achilles Food Store, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.
- 1949 August A. and Hazel E. Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with Herman G. Achilles), H.L. Achilles Food Store, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.
- 1947 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with Herman G. Achilles), H.L. Achilles Food Store, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.
- 1944-45 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with William O. Achilles), H.L. Achilles Food Store, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.  
Also listed is Herman G. Achilles, U.S. Army.
- 1941 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with William O. Achilles), H.L. Achilles Food Store, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.
- 1939 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with William O. Achilles), H.L. Achilles Food Store, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.
- 1937 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Meat cutter, Herman L. Achilles Food Store, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.
- 1935 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with Herman L. and William O. Achilles), H.L. Achilles & Sons, groceries, 1612 Lavaca Street.
- 1932-33 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with William O. Achilles), H.L. Achilles & Sons, groceries, 1604 Lavaca Street.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1930-31 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with Herman L. and William O. Achilles), H.L. Achilles & Sons, groceries, 1604 Lavaca Street.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1929 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with Herman L. and William O. Achilles), H.L. Achilles & Sons, groceries, 1604 Lavaca Street.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1927 August A. and Hazel Achilles, owners  
Proprietor (with Herman L. and William O. Achilles), H.L. Achilles & Sons, groceries, 1604 Lavaca Street.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.

- 1924 Joseph T. and Ada Prater, owners  
Assistant examiner, State Comptroller's Office  
NOTE: August and Hazel Achilles are not listed in the directory. Herman L. and Emilie Achilles lived at 306 W. 16<sup>th</sup> Street.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1922 John W. and Ruth E. Swenson, owners  
Book-keeper, Shear Company, wholesale groceries, produce, and coffee roasters, 301-03 San Jacinto Boulevard.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1920 George M. and Edna Colvin, renters  
Pharmacist  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1918 W. Trueheart and Bonnie Ward, renters  
Chief clerk, Supreme Court of Texas  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1916 Vacant  
NOTE: The house is listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1914 Raye Smith  
Widow, Clyde D. Smith  
No occupation listed
- 1912-13 William P. Connelly  
Estimator, Von Boeckmann-Jones, printers and book binders, 811 Congress Avenue.
- 1910-11 Carl G. Rumpel  
Works at Scarbrough & Hicks, dry goods, notions, clothing, millinery, dressmaking, shoes, and hats, 512-24 Congress Avenue.
- 1909-10 Charles G. Rumpel  
Floorwalker, Scarbrough & Hicks, dry goods, notions, clothing, millinery, dressmaking, shoes, and hats, 512-20 Congress Avenue.
- 1906-07 Fred C. Biebel  
Piano tuner, Bush & Gerts Piano Company (J.R. Reed, manager), 800-02 Congress Avenue.
- 1905 D. Starr  
Railway mail clerk
- 1903-04 Unknown  
D. Starr is not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: The house does not appear on the 1900 Sanborn map.

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:****Carl (Charles) G. and Eula D. Rumpel (ca. 1909 – ca. 1912)**

The 1910 U.S. Census shows Charles G. and Eula D. Rumpel [sic] at this house, which is addressed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Charles G. Rumpel was 27, had been born in Texas to a

German father and Swedish mother, and was a salesman in a dry goods store. Eula D. Rumpel was 25, had been born in Texas to a Tennessee-born father and a Texas-born mother and had no occupation listed. They had no children listed with them.

According to his 1957 death certificate, Carl Gustave Rumpel was born in Austin in 1885 and had lived the last 18 years of his life in Highland Park, Dallas. He was the educational director for an insurance company. Eula Dixon Rumpel was born in 1883 in Tehuacana, Limestone County, Texas, and died in Dallas in 1973.

### **August and Hazel Achilles (ca. 1925 – ca. 1970)**

His 1917 World War I draft registration card shows that August Andrew Achilles was living in Encinal, Texas and was working as a farmer for H. L. Achilles. He was single, and had been born in Austin on August 14, 1896. He was of medium height and build, and had blue eyes and light hair.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows August Achilles as the 24-year old son of Herman L. and Amelia Achilles, who owned their home at 306 W. 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Austin. August was the oldest of the couple's 5 children listed. He is listed as working for this father, who was a meat market operator. The other siblings were William, 22, a clerk in a grocery store; Edmund, 20, who worked for his father; Walter, 18, a U.S. Army soldier; and Alice, 16, who had no occupation listed.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows August A. and Hazel Achilles as the owners of this house, which was listed as 505 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street, and which was worth \$5,000. August Achilles was a 34-year old Texas-born grocery merchant. Hazel Achilles was 28, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 3 children: Hazel, 8; Bess E., 6; and Herman G., 4. All of the children had been born in Texas. In addition, they had a lodger, James Dorbandt, 20, who had been born in Texas and was a waiter in a boarding house.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows August A. and Hazel Achilles as the owners of this house, which was worth \$4,000. August A. Achilles was 42, had been born in Texas, and was the owner and manager of a grocery store. Hazel Achilles was 38, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 3 children: daughter Hazel, 18; daughter Bess, 16; and son Herman, 13. All the children had been born in Texas, and none had an occupation listed.



## **August Andrew Achilles**

**August Andrew Achilles, 89, of 7011 Town Crest died Friday.**

**A lifetime resident of Austin, Mr. Achilles was a member of the United Methodist Church, and the Sons of Herman Lodge. A World War I veteran, he was the retired owner and operator of Achilles Food Store on Lavaca Street.**

**Funeral services will be held at 10:00 AM, Monday in the Colonial Chapel of the Cook-Walden Funeral Home with Reverend Bruno Schmidt officiating. Interment will be in Oakwood Cemetery.**

**Mr. Achilles was the father of Herman Glenn Achilles, Mrs. Bess Emily Allred, Mrs. Hazel Irene Thomas, all of Austin; brother of W.O. Achilles of Ft. Worth, Ed Achilles of Albuquerque, New Mexico, Mrs. Alice Bedford of Galveston; grandfather of six; and great-grandfather of 12.**

**Arrangments by Cook-Walden Funeral Home.**

Obituary of August Achilles  
Austin American-Statesman, July 28, 1985

## **Hazel Ethel Achilles**

**Hazel Ethel Achilles, age 94, a lifetime resident of Austin, died Friday, June 7, 1991.**

**She was a member of the First United Methodist Church.**

**Funeral services will be held at 10:00 AM, Monday in the Davis Chapel at Cook-Walden Funeral Home. Interment will be in Oakwood Cemetery.**

**Mrs. Achilles is survived by her daughters, Hazel Irene Thomas and Bess Emily Allred; son, Herman Glenn Achilles, all of Austin; six grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren.**

**Arrangements by Cook-Walden Funeral Home, Lamar location.**

Obituary of Hazel Achilles  
Austin American-Statesman, June 9, 1991



Austin Statesman-United Press

August A. Achilles, whose father and grandfather were in the grocery business here before him, has closed his store at 1612 Lavaca Street to take a rest. Until this week there had been an Achilles store in Austin for the last 76 years. Achilles himself began working in the store when he was four—ringing a bell to summon his parents when a customer arrived.

# Grocery Store Closing Here After 76 Years

By NAT HENDERSON

A grocery dynasty that stocked pantries at the Governor's Mansion and loaded months of supplies on ox-drawn wagons of Hill Country farmers ended this week after three-quarters of a century.

August A. Achilles closed one of the city's oldest markets and grocery institutions to take time out to eat a leisurely meal himself. He hasn't had a vacation in 18 years.

The Achilles family of grocers and butchers first opened a store here 76 years ago, when Andrew Achilles moved from New Braunfels. Andrew, grandfather of August, began feeding Austinites in the old Max Paul building where the Austin Laundry now is located. Andrew called the store the General Mercantile Store, and it sold everything from food to farm implements.

The store moved shortly to the old Doehler Building, site of El Toro Restaurant today. Several blocks around the store was one big corral in those early days.

Hill country farmers used to bring their ox carts into the corral and camp for as long as a week while trading produce and wares. Very little money changed hands. It was all bartering.

Andrew's sons, Herman L. and Will A., worked with their father in the store as young men. When the old Capitol Building burned, important papers and documents were taken to Achilles store to be kept in the old wine cellar of the Doehler Building until the new Capitol was built.

At the start of World War I, with A. Achilles moved the grocery to the 1600 block of Lavaca. At the end of the war, Herman L. Achilles moved his meat market to the same block.

Back then markets and grocery stores were separate, and Austin had about 18 big meat markets. Then the groceries started handling meats, so the Achilles brothers combined their business to keep up with the times.

The sons of Herman L. Achilles were August A. and Willie O. Achilles. They eventually took over the business. Herman L. was killed in 1938, when he was in a wreck on his way to the valley to gather the fruit from his orchard there.

August is the last member of the Achilles family to leave the grocery business. He is 61, but he started in the business when he was only four.

As a little boy, he would sit in the trading post while his parents were back at the house. He would ring a bell to summon them when a customer came along.

August remained in the grocery business most of the time until this week, except for his Army service in World War I and a period of recuperation from wounds afterwards. He spent 18 months overseas and was in two major battles—one of them at the Argonne Forest.

August was shot and gassed at Argonne. He spent six months in the hospital overseas before returning to America. Then he was hospitalized three years at San Antonio undergoing treatment for the severe gas burns. He returned to the grocery business after leaving the hospital.



He has not had a vacation since his father died in the auto accident, or has he been to see his two daughters since they moved to their present homes. Mrs. Hughes Thomas has lived at Lubbock 11 years, and Mrs. William T. Horne has lived eight years in Madison, Wis.

August's son, Herman G. Achilles, helped in the store about 20 years, but he left to work for the Standard Tobacco Company here.

Q. C. Taylor, who was with August Achilles in the 90th Division, was like many Austinites who expressed regret at seeing the store gone.

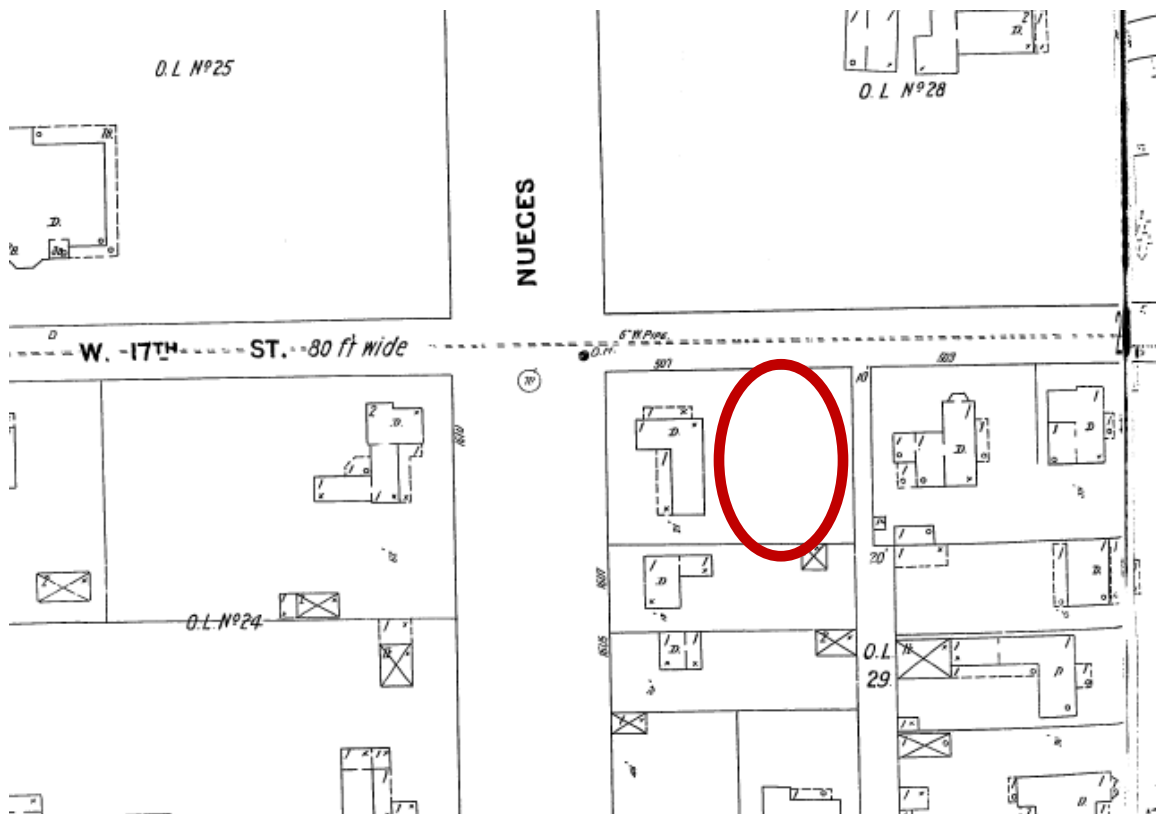
Mrs. John Robbins said, "For so many years there has been an Achilles grocery that I feel very sad to see discontinued what has become a tradition."

Miss Esther von Rosenberg, daughter of the late Judge Frederick C. von Rosenberg, said, "Mother especially said it touched her sentimentally, because the Achilles family has served her in the grocery business 60 years."

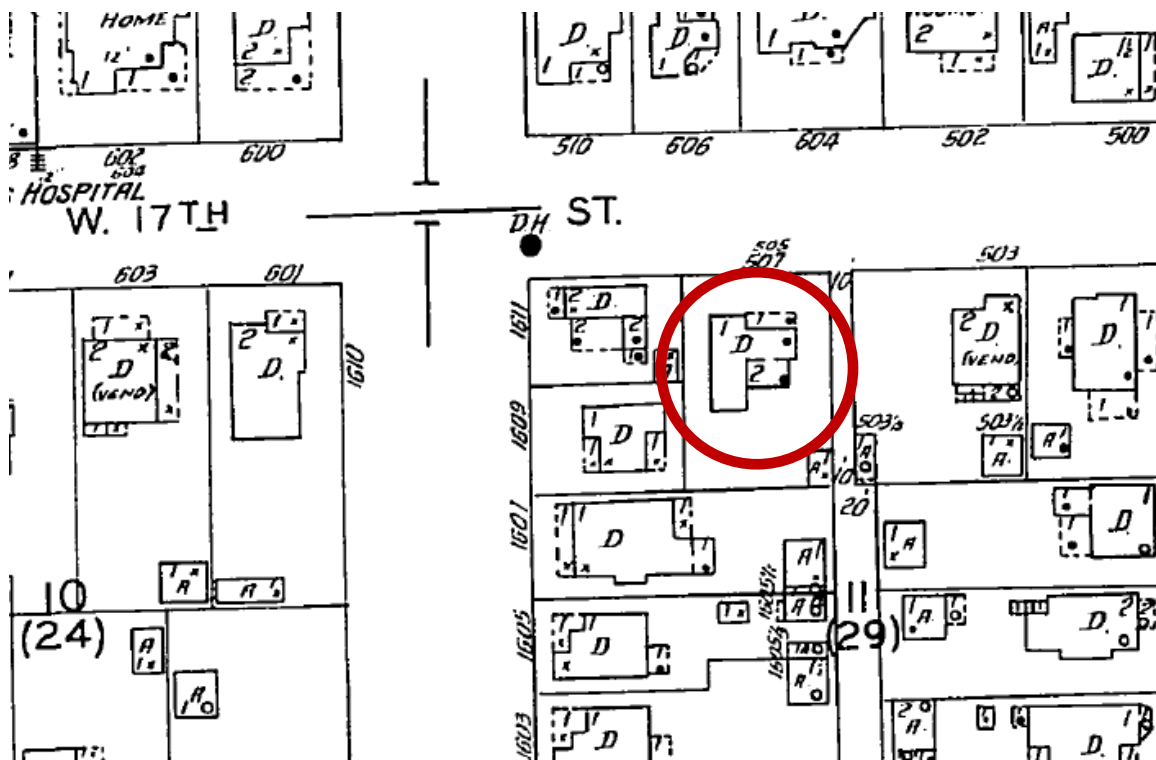
Writing to August Achilles, Miss von Rosenberg added, "You have always been patient with our orders and our getting the days of the week mixed up."

August says, "I'm not going to call this a retirement, since that sounds likt I'm planning to die soon. I'm just going to rest awhile."

News story on the closing of the Achilles grocery store  
Austin Statesman, October 17, 1957



The site of the current house is shown as vacant on the 1900 Sanborn map.



The house appears on the 1935 Sanborn map.