

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
OCTOBER 25, 2021
PR-21-139164
1601 CEDAR AVENUE**

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1915 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, rectangular-plan, hipped roof, frame transitional-style house with a partial-width inset porch with a segmental-arched bargeboard, raised rail, paired battered timber posts, and boxed panel spandrels; replacement single 6:6 fenestration; central, hipped roof frame attic vent dormer.

RESEARCH

According to Travis County real estate records, Mack Blocker purchased this property in the fall of 1914. The lot was across the street from his wife's father's property. He and his wife, the former Gertrude Parker, lived here until their deaths. Mack Blocker worked a variety of jobs, typical of African-American men in the first part of the 20th century: laborer, porter, truck driver, and janitor. He died in 1927, and his widow, Gertrude, continued to live in this house for decades to come. Gertrude Blocker apparently never remarried, and supported herself with work as a maid and cook for a private family.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

The property is recommended as contributing to a potential historic district by the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (2016).

Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

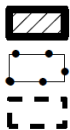
- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain medium to high integrity.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it may meet two criteria:
 - a. Architecture. The building is a good example of a transitional house, a period representing a bridge between the Victorian styles known for their architectural ornamentation and the more reserved and smaller-scale bungalow styles of the 1920s. Transitional houses were generally taller than the later bungalows, but began to exhibit a lower form than the Victorians of the past; a slow move from verticality to horizontality. Although the windows have been replaced, the house reflects a high degree of integrity for its age, and is also unusual for its continuous ownership by a Black family in an era where a house like this would have likely started off with white owners. The house appears to have architectural significance.
 - b. Historical association. The property was owned and occupied by Mack Blocker and his widow, Gertrude Blocker, during the entire historic period. Both Mack and Gertrude Blocker worked in professions typifying Black life in Austin in the early 20th century: janitor, porter, laborer, cook, and maid. After Mack Blocker's early death in the late 1920s, Gertrude Blocker continued to maintain ownership of this house until her own death many decades later. The house may have significance as a portrayal of the means of Black residents in East Austin in the early 20th century.
 - c. Archaeology. The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
 - d. Community value. The property 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

Postpone to the November 15, 2021 meeting or initiate historic zoning to fully evaluate the structural condition of the house and alternatives to demolition. If the Commission does not vote to postpone or initiate, then staff recommends that the

commission encourage rehabilitation and adaptive reuse, then relocation over demolition, but release the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of 8.5 x 11 photographs of all elevations, printed on photographic paper, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history for archiving at the Austin History Center.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT

PENDING CASE

ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: PR 21-139064

LOCATION: 1601 CEDAR AVENUE

1" = 292'

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.



PROPERTY INFORMATION

Photos



Google Street View, 2020

Occupancy History

City Directory Research, September 2021

1959	Gertrude Blocker, owner Occupation not listed
1957	Gertrude Blocker, owner (widow of Mack) Occupation not listed
1955	Gertrude Blocker, owner (widow of Mack) Maid
1952	Gertrude Blocker, owner Maid
1949	Gertrude Blocker, owner Dom
1947	Gertrude Blocker, owner (widow of Mack) Cook public school
1944	Gertrude Blocker, owner Maid
1941	Gertrude Blocker, owner Cook

1939	Gertrude Blocker, owner Cook
1937	Gertrude Blocker, owner Cook 2801 Rio Grande
1935	Gertrude Blocker, owner Cook 2801 Rio Grande
1932	Gertrude Blocker, owner Occupation not listed
1929	Gertrude Blocker, owner Not listed
1927	Mack and Gertrude Blocker, owners Janitor University YMCA
1924	Mack and Gertrude Blocker, owners Janitor
1920	Mack and Gertrude Blocker, owners Laborer
1916	Mack Blocker Porter State Comptroller's Department
	Shelly Blocker Cleaner State Department of Public Buildings and Grounds
1914	The address is not listed in the directory. NOTE: Mack Blocker, a laborer, is listed at 2108 E. 14 th Street. NOTE: Richard Parker, Gertrude Blocker's father, is listed at 1600 Cedar Avenue.

Biographical Information

Mack Blocker married Gertrude Parker in Travis County in 1913. He bought this property in September, 1914.

According to his 1917 World War I draft registration card, Mack Blocker was born in LaGrange, Texas in 1893, and was living at this address at the time of his registration. He was married and worked as a chauffeur for the Driskill Hotel. He was of medium height and build and had black hair and black eyes.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Gertrude Blocker as the owner of this house, which was worth \$900. Gertrude Blocker was a 43-year old Texas-born widow, and was a maid in a private home. With her lived her nephew, Charles Conley, 30, who had been born in Texas, and was a waiter at the Austin Hotel.

Gertrude Blocker is listed as the owner of this house in the 1930 U.S. Census. The house was worth \$900. She was a 34-year-old Texas-born widow who worked as a cook for a private family. She lived alone.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Gertrude Blocker as the wife of Mack Blocker; they rented their home in Fort Worth, Texas. Mack Blocker was a 27-year old Texas-born truck driver. Gertrude Blocker was 24, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had no children listed with them.

Gertrude Blocker died in Travis County in March, 1990. Mack Blocker died of apoplexy in 1927 on the road about 4 miles from San Antonio.

Accessory Structure demolished m.u. 5-1-75 1-4-79

OWNER Mrs. Gertrude Block ADDRESS 1601 Cedar Ave.

PLAT 38 LOT 7 BLK 9

SUBDIVISION Glenwood Addn

OCCUPANCY res

BLD PERMIT #149490 DATE 5-17-75 OWNERS ESTIMATE \$91.50

CONTRACTOR same NO. OF FIXTURES none

WATER TAP REC # SEWER TAP REC #

remodel existing res

Building Permit to Remodel the House, 1975