

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
PERMITS IN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS
MAY 1, 2024
HR-2024-043566
SIXTH STREET NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
516 EAST SIXTH STREET

PROPOSAL

Remodel a ca. 1935 stucco commercial building associated with Louis D. Lyons.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

The proposed alterations will convert the building from retail to restaurant, maintaining as much of the historic fabric as possible. The proposed design recommends repainting the painted stucco façade. It keeps the existing openings and replaces and reconfigures the new storefront and non-historic second-floor windows. A new painted metal awning is proposed

ARCHITECTURE

Two-story building with a painted stucco façade and simple tile details. The existing storefront is altered from the original design; however, it maintains the historic fabric of 6th Street. There are two lion sculptures on the stop cornice of this building, and the initials LDL are carved into the stucco.

RESEARCH

In the 1930s, African American businessman and civic leader Louis D. Lyons purchased the building at 514 E. 6th Street and constructed a new “sister” building next door at 516 East 6th, which eventually became a paint store. L.D. Lyons is a well-known historical figure throughout Austin's history. Son-in-law to Edward Carrington (who originally owned the store at 520-522 E. 6th Street before Lyons took over the business in 1919), Lyons played a crucial role in helping Black business owners by extending lines of credit to them when many banks would not. Notably, either the upper floor or a rear building behind 514 and 516 E. 6th Street was the home of the American Woodmen, a Black fraternal and benefits organization begun in Austin by Cassius M. White and Granville W. Norman at the turn of the century.¹ By the 1950s, the Woodmen boasted about 50,000 members.² Lyons owned and operated community facilities for the Knights of Pythias, a charitable fraternity, and Lyons Hall, a gathering space above the grocery store; he also served as head of the Chamber of Commerce.

By the 1960s, both buildings contained businesses owned by the Olson family under the Southern Investments umbrella. 516 housed the finance offices.

DESIGN STANDARDS

The design standards established by Ordinance No. 20230720-160 ([July 2023](#)) and based on the Citywide Historic Design Standards for properties in the 500 and 600 blocks of East Sixth Street apply. The proposed project was evaluated based on the following applicable standards:

Rehabilitate and adaptively reuse contributing buildings, including at least the first 15 feet of historic facades.

The proposed alterations include the retention of most of the building's historic-age façade and do not appear to preclude potential future designation. While evidence of an awning was not found for this building during the historic period, the proposed awning does not appear to negatively impact the building's existing fabric. The applicant has amended the proposal to better incorporate some Committee feedback.

Summary

The project meets the applicable standards.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

The property contributes to the Sixth Street National Register district. The 2020 East Sixth Street Snapshot Resurvey lists

¹ “American Woodmen of Kentucky,” <https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/3024>, citing Schmidt, Alvin J., “Fraternal organizations,” Notable Kentucky African Americans Database.

² “Cassius M. Wright,” *Civil Rights Memorials*, 2018.

https://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMY4PC_Cassius_M_White_The_American_Woodmen_Denver_CO_USA

the property as contributing to the historic district.

Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain moderate integrity. The windows and storefront have been replaced.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it meets two criteria for landmark designation:
 - a.* Architecture. The building, though simple, retains physical evidence of the Lyons legacy in its exterior materials and ornamentation.
 - b.* Historical association. The property is associated with L.D. Lyons.
 - 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 may 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.

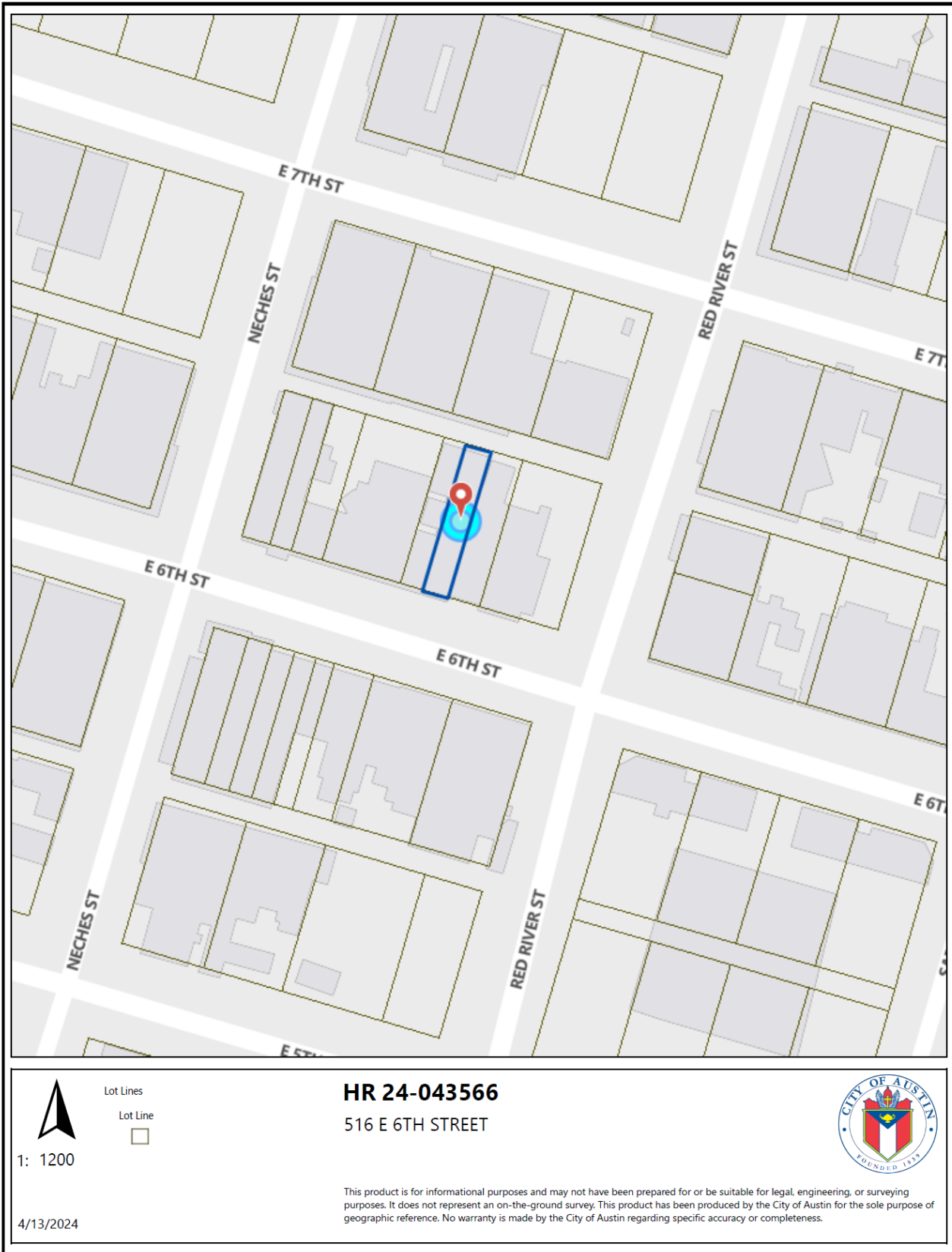
COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Retain tile where extant, replacing in-kind where needed.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

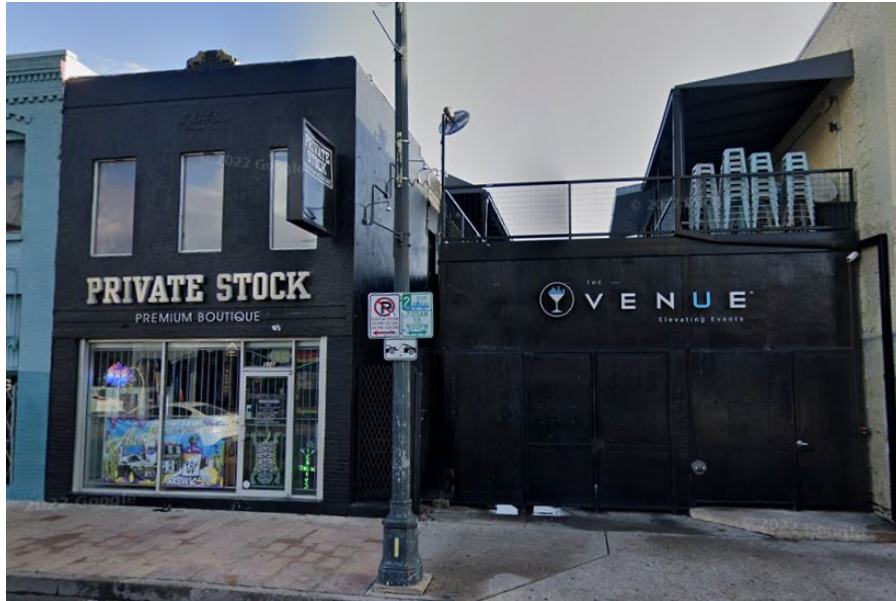
Comment on plans, concurring with Committee feedback. The proposed changes do not preclude future landmark designation.

LOCATION MAP



PROPERTY INFORMATION

Photos



Google Street View, 2022



514-16, nd: <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph677300/m1/1/>

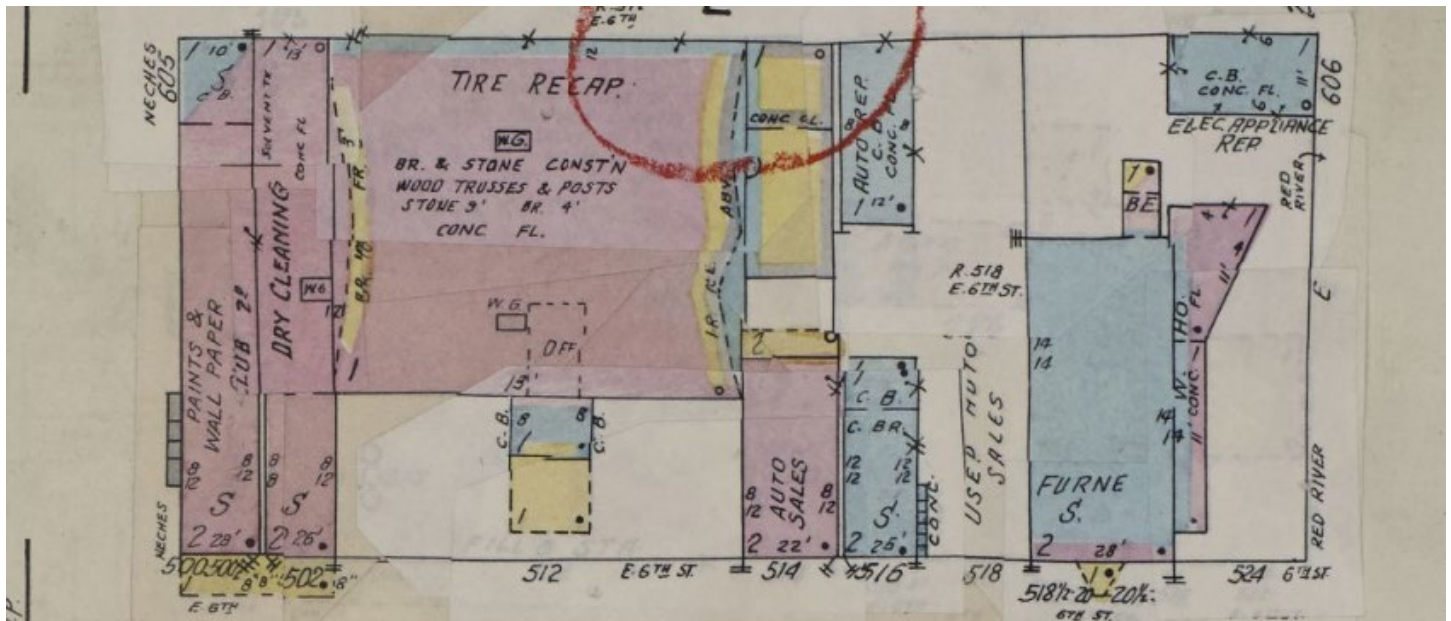
Occupancy History

City Directory Research, May 2022

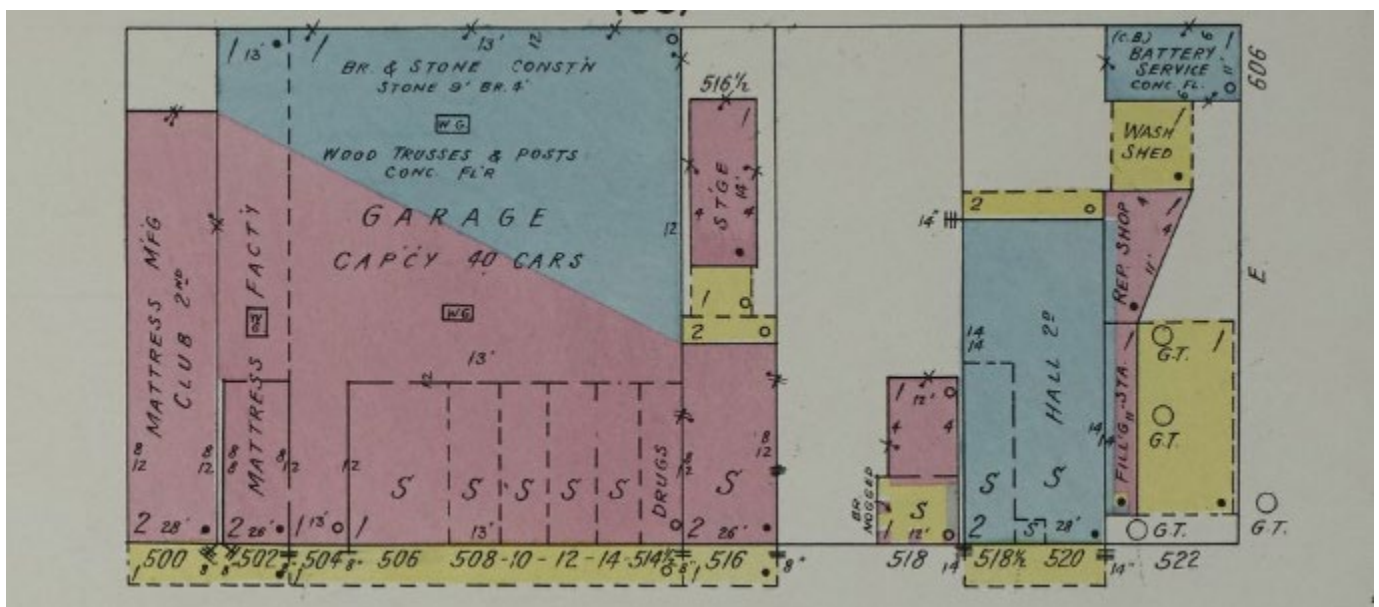
1959	514-16 – Vacant 518 – Southern Investment Company (auto loans) 520 – Olson Auto Company (used cars)
1957	514-16 – Vacant 518 – Southern Investment Company (auto loans) 520 – Olson Auto Company (used cars)
1955	514-16 – Olson Auto Company (used cars) 518 – Southern Investment Company (auto loans) 520 – Olson Auto Company (used cars)
1952	514 – Santa Fe Paint Company 516 – Olson Auto Company (used cars) 516 ½ - Vacant
1949	514 – Santa Fe Salvage (paints) 516-18 – Southern Investment Company (auto loans) 516 ½ – J. M. Holloway (physician)
1947	514 – Santa Fe Salvage (paints) 516-18 – Southern Investment Company (auto loans); Olson Automobile Company
1944	514 – Joseph Ponton 2 nd Hand Furniture 516-18 – Southern Investment Company (auto loans); Olson Automobile Company 520 – Leo Amaro (shoe repair) 520 ½ – Henry Williams (shoeshine); Lyons Hall 522 – L. D. Lyons Grocery
1941	514 – Jack's Place (restaurant) 516-18 – Southern Investment Company (auto loans); Southern Used Car Mart 516 ½ – American Woodmen; P. A. Williams (notary) 518 ½ – Lyons Hall; Reuben Jones; Pride of Austin Lodge No. 56; Knights of Pythias, Douglas Lodge No. 16; Eureka Lodge No. 14 (K.P.)
1939	514 – Bert Williams Electric Company 516 – Southern Finance Company 516 ½ – American Woodman (colored); P. A. Williams (notary) 518 – Kenney Patterson (auto accessories) 518 ½ – Lyons Hall; Reuben Jones
1937	516 – Southern Finance Company; L. W. Loden (plumber); Bert Williams Electric Company 518 – Williams Tire Service 518 ½ – Leo Amaro (shoe repair) 520 – L. D. Lyons (grocery) 520 ½ – Lyons Hall; Reuben Jones
1935	514 – Vacant 514 ½ – Jordan Drug Store 516 – S. M. Lightsey (furniture) 516 ½ – Vacant 518 – Williams Tire Service 520 – L. D. Lyons (grocery) 520 ½ – Lyons Hall; Reuben Jones
1932	514 – Vacant 514 ½ – Jordan Drug Store 518 – S. M. Lightsey (furniture) 518 – L. A. Hobbs (restaurant); A. Webster 520 – H. W. Admiral, renter; L. D. Lyons (grocery)
1929	514 – Vacant 514 ½ – J. C. Barnes (locksmith); Furniture Exchange 516 – Joseph Slawson (furniture)

	518 – Peoples Auto Livery 520 – Benjamin Jefferson (barber); L. D. Lyons (grocery) 520 ½ – J. B. Hill (dentist); Lyons Hall
1924	514 – William Rogers (shoe shiner) 514 ½ – A. W. Rysinger (milliner) 516 – S. H. Patton (furniture) 518 – W. A. Rankin (2 nd hand clothes); Benjamin Jefferson (barber) 520 – L. D. Lyons (grocery)
1920	514 – Matthias Grein (baker); Addie W. Rysinger (restaurant) 514 ½ – A. W. Rysinger (milliner) 518 – Benjamin Jefferson (barber) 520 – L. D. Lyons (grocery)

Historical information



Sanborn map, 1961



Sanborn map, 1935

NEGROES PREPARING FOR 'JUNETEENTH'

The final rally prior to the Juneteenth celebration under the auspices of the Emancipation Celebration Organization will be held at the Taborian Park, on Tuesday night, June 17.

In connection with the rally a torchlight parade will be held and the music

will be furnished by the negro Knights of Pythias band. William Tears and Louis Lyons are slated to be directing officers of the rally and subsequent entertainment features, according to the announcement.

The annual Emancipation Celebration will be held at the Penn-Walker Emancipation grounds, the tract having been purchased by the Emancipation Celebration Organization. Elaborate entertainment features are promised for the Juneteenth celebration.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 15 June 1924: A7.

AUSTIN NEGROES TAKE ACTION TO GET VOTE

JUDGES REFUSE PRIVILEGE TO COUPLE

Denied the privilege of voting by election judges at two Austin polling places Saturday morning, a group of Austin negroes was preparing Saturday afternoon a mandamus action to force County Chmn. J. M. Patterson to permit them to vote in the democratic primary.

The group of negroes, led by Louis Lyons, negro grocer, appeared at the precinct 5-A box at Wellmer's store and at the sixth ward box at the Labor temple, shortly before noon, the election officials said.

Courteous Request

Leo Mueller, election judge at the 5-A box, said Lyons and another negro, "named Frazier," presented poll tax receipts, declared they were willing to take the democratic party pledge and asked the right to cast ballots. Other negroes were also in the group but did not present poll tax receipts, Mueller said.

Mr. Mueller said he refused them the ballot privilege with the declaration that he was following instructions issued by County Chmn. Patterson. The negroes were courteous in their request, Mueller said.

Sent to Patterson

Tom Walling, judge at the Sixth ward box, also said a group of negroes, headed by Lyons, appeared there with a similar request and were also denied ballots.

"The negroes were rather insistent, but I turned them down and told them to see County Chmn. Patterson," Mr. Walling said.

Lyons said his and the other negroes' vote request was the predicate for a court action, to be filed in federal court in San Antonio, to force Chmn. Patterson to permit negroes the balloting privilege. Lyons said he was in touch with a San Antonio lawyer and expected the injunction papers to reach here some time Saturday afternoon.

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Test to Supreme Court

The Texas supreme court may be called on next week to enter a decision in the controversy over negro participation in democratic primaries.

It was possible the question would be presented to the supreme court next week on certified questions from the fourth court of civil appeals at San Antonio.

The San Antonio court of civil appeals today vacated an order holding in abeyance a mandatory injunction granted late yesterday by Dist. Judge S. G. Taylor prohibiting Bexar county party officials from challenging the vote of negroes.

The order of the appeals court was vacated when two of the three judges were unable to agree, the third having disqualified himself.

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Bar Fort Worth Blacks

At Fort Worth a few negroes who attempted to vote in the primary election today were turned away despite a notice from Asst. U.S. Atty. Gen. Nugent Johnson, from Washington, referred to two articles in the criminal code. The telegram, unsolicited, was sent to Federal Atty. Johnson. It read:

"Complaint made by R. D. Evans, Waco, Texas, negroes denied right to vote in primary election at Fort Worth. See section 19, criminal code, and case of L. A. Nixon vs. James Condon et al. Matter referred to you for such action as facts and law warrant."

Accordingly, Johnson notified Evans, a Waco attorney, and A. B. Horden that they should tell election judges that negro democrats are entitled to a vote in the primary, and that if the judges refuse they are not complying with U.S. laws.

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Denison Negroes Warned

At Denison anonymous circulars warning negroes not to vote were distributed last night and a fiery cross was lighted in front of the colored Hopewell Baptist church. Police extinguished it.

"Negro, the white people do not want you to vote Saturday," the circulars said. "Do not make the Ku Klux klan take a hand. Do you remember what happened two years ago May ninth?"

The May ninth reference was to the burning to death of a negro in the courthouse at Sherman after his arrest on a charge of attacking a white woman.

At the polls today voting was progressing in an orderly manner.

WIFE OF L. D. LYONS IS CLAIMED BY DEATH

The body of Mrs. Louis D. Lyons, 58, wife of one of Austin's best known negro citizens, was being sent to Austin from Chicago for burial here.

Mrs. Lyons died Thursday morning at Chicago, where she was visiting.

Funeral services will be held Tuesday at 3 p. m. from the family residence, 1704 East 13th street.

Surviving are her husband, L. D. Lyons, well known East Sixth street merchant, six children and four grandchildren.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 16 Feb 1935: 6.

LYONS CHARGED IN LOTTERY CASE

L. D. Lyons, negro "overlord" of East Austin, Friday faced charges of establishing a lottery after city police Thursday night staged a swift raid on Lyons' grocery store at 520 East Sixth street.

One of the raiding officers, Det. Wade Stubbs, said he was met at the door by Lyons, proprietor of the store and known as a professional bondsman. Twenty negro men were arrested in the raid, in which considerable equipment was confiscated.

When Dets. Stubbs and Ned Morris closed in on the room, lights were snapped off, and two men and a woman escaped.

As L. D. Lyons was charged in the county court complaint with establishing a lottery, Joe Lyons pleaded guilty to the same charge and was fined \$100 and costs. Similarly charged were Joe Reed, Reuben Jones, Val C. Jones, Stacy Walton, Ben Hollis and George Plummer.

L. D. LYONS TRIAL TO START TODAY

L. D. Lyons, negro grocer and "professional bondsman," and six other negroes were scheduled for trial Thursday afternoon on charges of establishing a lottery in connection with the operation of a "policy" or "numbers" game.

First of the cases was due for consideration in county court at 2 p. m.

Meanwhile Thursday five other defendants, two of them white men, faced new lottery complaints in county court. The new complaints were against Jimmie Reed and Mack Morris, and three negroes—Robert Stevens, J. H. Stevens and Clabe Hankins.

*** Ceremony Held for Negroes

While Draft Boards Nos. 1 and 2, whose registrants live in the city, permitted them to have their last noon-day meal with their families at home, Draft Board No. 3, whose registrants are mainly from the rural areas, arranged a noon-day luncheon for the white registrants at the Driskill hotel.

Eight negroes in the group of 27 were honored in a separate side ceremony by the negro chamber of commerce headed by Louis D. Lyons, negro grocer, at Lyons hall on East Sixth street. The negroes were transported by car from the courthouse to Lyons hall at 11:30 a. m. and were given sandwiches, soft drinks, cigarets, candy and other tasty portions before being returned to the courthouse at 1 p. m.

Ten minutes later, the negro contingent were taken in cars to the passenger station by the negro chamber of commerce leaders, where the negro registrants joined the 19 white registrants for the ceremony at the passenger station and for the entainment to San Antonio.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 07 Jan 1938: 1.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 03 Feb 1938: 1.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 22 Nov 1940: 1

L. D. Lyons, Austin Negro, Dies Suddenly

Funeral Services

Pending for Store

Owner, Bondsman

L. D. Lyons, 1001 East Eighth street, died suddenly Saturday at 1:30 p. m. at his home.

Lyons, one of Austin's most prominent negroes and property owners, was born in Travis county and had lived in Austin for 71 years. His first job was as porter at an old hotel where the Austin National bank is now located. He also sold papers and shined shoes on Congress avenue prior to working for the postoffice as a mail carrier.

Grocery Business

Lyons resigned from the postoffice in 1919 to succeed his father-in-law in the grocery business, the same business he was operating at the time of his death. He owned the negro community hall above his red brick grocery store which is used for nearly all negro meetings.

One of the leading negro masons of Austin, Lyons was also a lay leader in the Wesley Chapel Methodist church, and Austin's only negro bondsman. It has also been said of Lyons that he did more to promote goodwill between the races in Austin than any other negro.

Survivors Named

He is survived by his widow; four daughters, Mrs. Louis Ellis, Mrs. Unice Prescott and Mrs. Emma Grant of Chicago and Mrs. Eva Sawyer of New York; two sons, Windell of Chicago and Joe, somewhere in England. One sister, Maggie Washington of Austin and a brother, Lonnie Goodwin of California also survive.

L. D. Lyons' Death Due To Natural Causes

Death of L. D. Lyons, well known negro business man and civic leader, at his home here on Nov. 18 was due to natural causes, according to a coroner's verdict entered by Justice Mace B. Thurman following an inquest made at the request of members of Lyons' family.

Thurman ordered Lyons' body exhumed and an autopsy performed about 10 days ago. He entered his coroner's verdict after the autopsy pathologist returned an official report stating that the cause of death was "adenocarcinoma of the lung."

The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex.. 19 Nov 1944: 16.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 06 Dec 1944: 8.