The 2017 Most Endangered Places List

Annually in May, Historic Fort Worth, Inc. releases a most endangered places list as part of National Preservation Month. This program recognizes the changes that impact those places that comprise the unique, historic identity of Fort Worth, Texas. Buildings, structures and entire neighborhoods can be impacted by neglect, insensitive adjacent construction, encroaching development, vandalism, and lack of financial resources.

This year’s list includes 7 entries. One is a collection within an architectural style, one is alive, two are repeated from earlier lists for emphasis, one is threatened by limited access, one needs enlightenment, and one helps us understand how black women have socialized and supported each other. The Board of HFW sincerely thanks those who have nominated the places for this important list.

Examples of Saved Buildings and Structures placed on earlier Endangered Lists:

• Knights of Pythias Hall, 900 E 2nd Street  1928
• Max Mehl Building, 1228 S Henderson Street  1816
• Tandy Wire & Cable, 3500 McCart Avenue  1924
• Swift & Company Office Building, 600 E Exchange Avenue 1902
• Forest Park Gates, 2300 Block Park Place Avenue,  1917-1918
• Heritage Park Plaza, Bluff Street at Houston Street, 1976
• Inspiration Point Shelter, 2300-2500 Roberts Cut-Off Road,  1930s
• Ridglea Theater, Camp Bowie Boulevard, 6025 Camp Bowie Blvd.  1950
• Tarrant County Medical Society Building, 3855 Tulsa Way, 1945
• Getzendanner House, 760 Samuels Avenue, 1890s
• Fuller House, 4161 Charron Lane, 1953
• Chase Court Hemphill Street at Chase Court, 1906
• Meissner Brown Funeral Home, 2717 Avenue B,  1937
• 60 acres out of the 139-acre stockyards  1900

Thistle Hill was placed on HFW’s Endangered List in 2006, the year HFW received the property as a gift from another charity. Since then, HFW has raised funds and implemented a little over $1 million for restoration projects at the mansion. Another $3 million is needed to fully-redee Fort Worth’s first landmark, the c.1904 cattle baron mansion named Thistle Hill and its rare transitional carriage house.

Historic Fort Worth, Inc.
Established in 1969 and honored with the 2009 Governor’s Award in Historic Preservation, Historic Fort Worth, Inc. is dedicated to preserving Fort Worth’s unique historic identity through education, stewardship and leadership. Its headquarters, a museum, and a preservation library are located at the 1899 Ball-Eddleman-McFarland House at 1110 Penn Street. Its heritage tourism center and food truck park are located at the 1904 Wharton-Scott House (Thistle Hill), at 1509 Pennsylvania Avenue. Both properties are associated with cattle barons and are available for private events.
Downtown Fort Worth’s “Spaceship” Convention Center Arena

Address: 1201 Houston Street  
Date constructed: 1968  
Owner: City of Fort Worth  
Nominator: HFW’s Public Affairs Committee  
Historic Designations: None  
Listing Number: First

Fort Worth’s downtown Convention Center arena was designed in the 1960’s as an urban renewal project for the county by a consortium of architects that included Preston M. Geren, Herman E. Cox, Morris Parker, and the firms of Hueppelhueser & White, and Wilson, Patterson, Sowden, Dunlap & Epperly. Today, with a new arena under construction a few miles to the west, this funky “spaceship-styled” arena deserves a chance to be repurposed for a different function. It continues to attract the creative class valued by Fort Worth’s leaders and it has been photographed in almost every flyover video of the city. Perhaps a consortium of architects would, once again, adopt this Fred Flinstone-esque building and adapt it for a new purpose. It remains a top contender for Fort Worth’s most distinctive building.
Ellis Pecan Building / Klu Klux Klan Klavern No. 101

Address: 1012 North Main Street
Date constructed: 1924
Owner: Genaro Fabre (TAD listing)
Nominator: HFW’s Public Affairs Committee
Historic Designations: DD
Listing: Second; first listed in 2014

The building at 1012 North Main Street was originally constructed as the Ku Klux Klan Klavern No. 101 in 1920. It was bombed and immediately rebuilt in 1924. The auditorium was re-constructed according to the original design by Earl Glasgow and it seats approximately 4,000 people. The structure features red brick, hollow tile, and steel construction, and is faced in variegated buff-yellow brick. Below the high-peaked parapet, a central arched niche with formal base is flanked by tall arched windows. On the ground floor, a central tripartite entry is surrounded by large rectangular windows with cast-stone trim. Originally these windows were used as concession stands. Buttress piers and tall arched windows alternate down the sides of the structure. At the east end, a raised, flat-roofed area once contained a stage.

In 1931, Leonard Brothers Department Store purchased the building for use as a warehouse; by the mid-1930s, the building was used as Fox and Fox Boxing Arena. The best-known business of the structure was the Ellis Pecan Company, which started using the building for its pecan processing operations in 1946. In recent years the building was considered for use by the Texas Ballet Theater, which is most-likely why it is owned by a partnership named Sugarplum Holdings.

Unfortunately, the building is in need of a number of repairs, including a new roof, and it is threatened by neglect. At the minimum, the building should be “mothballed,” which means the roof should be made watertight and the windows should be boarded.
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The Grand High Court of Heroines of Jericho

Address: 3016 East 4th Street
Date Constructed: 1952
Owner: A 501(c)(8) fraternal society/association providing support to its members
Nominator: Tarrant County Black Historical and Geological Society
Historic Designations: None
Listing: First

The Grand High Court of Heroines of Jericho had several chapters throughout Texas, and all existed to help their less fortunate members. The chapters began just 20 years after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1865.

In 1897 the Grand High Court of Heroines of Jericho was adopted in Texas as the first female masonic house of the Texas Prince Hall Masons and Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Texas. Then, in 1906 the Grand Lodge required the Grand Lodge and High Court’s Texas headquarters to be located in Fort Worth.

In 1907 a Masonic Temple was erected at the corner of Ninth Street and Jones Street, and in 1924 a new Masonic Temple was built at 2213 East First Street. This building was designed by architect H.L. Spicer and could hold 3,000 people. Photographs of prominent presidents including William Coleman and William Madison McDonald hung on the wall, and Duke Ellington and Count Basie entertained there. Then, in 1952 the Heroines of Jericho erected their headquarters at 3016 East Fourth Street.

The Masons sold their National Register-eligible building in 1985 and it was demolished by a new owner the next year. To avoid such a loss and to preserve the legacy of these African-American organizations, the Heroines seek ways to attract new members to their association. A revitalized organization will also help with the maintenance and restoration expenses of their distinctive building that includes a curved section in the front facade.
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Texas & Pacific Warehouse Building

Address: 401 West Lancaster Avenue
Date Constructed: 1931
Owner: Cleopatra Investments, Ltd.
Nominator: HFW’s Public Affairs Committee
Historic Designations: NR, RTHL, HSE

Historic Fort Worth, Inc. commends Cleopatra Investments, Ltd. for recently pumping out water in the basement of the Texas & Pacific Warehouse, for clearing the floors of debris, and for removing the foliage growing on the roof, along with other improvements. However, because the commanding T&P Warehouse Building is vital to Fort Worth’s heritage and the development of the Lancaster Corridor, the project promised and approved a few years back needs to start. Vacant buildings are never safe from vandals, fires and other impacts.

The T&P Warehouse was the outgrowth of a 1920’s Chamber of Commerce effort to build $100 million of civic and business improvements for Fort Worth. Designed by the Wyatt C. Hedrick’s firm, with Herman Paul Koeppel taking the lead, the building was constructed by P. O’Brien Montgomery of Dallas. Both the T&P Terminal and its companion warehouse are stunning examples of Zig-Zag Moderne architecture.

The warehouse is an enormous 8-story building measuring 100 feet by 600 feet. It is built of masonry block with a reinforced concrete steel frame. Clad in cream brick with limestone and blue tile trim, the warehouse features projecting end bays topped with octagonal towers that dominate each corner of the building. It is a treasure in our city and needs to be occupied.
Trader’s Oak

Address: East side of Traders Oak Park, 1200 Samuels Avenue
Pre-dates: Well before 1849
Owner: City of Fort Worth
Nominator: HFW Board
Historic Designations: None
Listing: First

Under this magnificent live oak tree one of the first trading posts in North Texas was established in 1849 by Archibald Franklin Leonard and Henry Clay Daggett, two business leaders who shaped the city that became Fort Worth. This trading post was one mile north of the military establishment named after General William J. Worth, a celebrated hero in the Mexican War and our city’s namesake. At the time the fort was first established, the US military prohibited any businesses from operating within a one mile radius of the fort, so the two partners found this massive tree just outside the “no-trade zone” and set up shop. Leonard and Daggett recognized the opportunity to start a trading post to serve the fort, as well as develop trade with the Indians who wished to sell furs, trinkets and fruits. Soldiers from the fort also enjoyed the activity around the trading post where, from time to time, whiskey was available. Additionally, this tree was also the site of the first election in Tarrant County in 1850 when Birdwell was voted the county seat, and it is where Sam Houston spoke to a crowd in 1859 on Independence Day.

Today, with apartment dwellers and others who do not know the sacred nature of Trader’s Oak, the tree is vulnerable to insensitivity. With more and more people living on Samuels Avenue who do not know the heritage of this magnificent tree, Traders Oak Park is experiencing escalating traffic. A few years back a citizens’ group wrote a landmark nomination for the tree that was never advanced and HFW would be honored to work with others towards that goal.
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Access to the newly-restored Van Zandt Cottage

Address: 2900 Crestline Road
Date Constructed: 1850
Owner: City of Fort Worth
Nominator: HFW’s Public Affairs Committee
Historic Designations: NR, RTHL, H&C
Listing: First

Historic Fort Worth, Inc. applauds the city of Fort Worth for its partnership with Van Zandt Cottage Friends, Inc. to restore the Van Zandt Cottage. As the home of Major Khleber Miller Van Zandt, a generous philanthropist who was known as “Mr. Fort Worth,” this house is thought to be the oldest in the city on its original site. A man of boundless energy, Mr. Van Zandt established the post office, school system, a newspaper, a church, a construction company and a bank. He is also credited with bringing businesses and railroads to Fort Worth, and he built the first 7th Street Bridge.

Van Zandt Cottage is designated as an Historic & Cultural Landmark of the city of Fort Worth, and it is also a state and national landmark. We are hearing of plans to eliminate vehicular access to Van Zandt Cottage with the closing of Crestline Road from University Drive to the Cottage. We hope this is not true because street access by the public is necessary for the success of this important historic resource. The fund-raising plan that generated over $400,000 for the cottage’s restoration included making the kitchen and room-sized hallway available as meeting spaces for the community. It also cited summer camps for children, scheduling living history demonstrations, and other events at the Cottage. All of these are worthy agendas that require street access by food vendors, street access for those with mobility issues, and street access for reasons that will emerge with usage. There must be a way for street access to remain to the Van Zandt Cottage.
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Wedgwood’s California Modern Houses

5716 Winifred Drive: Once owned by Bayard Friedman, FW’s mayor from 1963-65.

5320 Wooten Drive: Designed by late architect William Kneer of Kneer & Hamm for his home with his wife.

Address: Roughly bounded by Granbury Road, South Hulen Street and Altamesa Boulevard
Date Constructed: c.1960
Owner: Many
Nominator: Brandon Wilson
Historic Designations: none known
Listing: First

As a neighborhood developing in the 1960’s and 1970’s with almost every street name starting with W, the winding streets of Wedgwood have been under the radar screen. However, today Wedgwood is being noticed for its well-located, affordable collection of mid-century modern, California-inspired, contemporary homes that are already 50 years old or turning 50. Many are eligible for landmark designation and broader sections of Wedgwood are likely-eligible for an historic district. Work by the Fort Worth Transportation Authority in 2014 to determine any potential impacts from the TEXRail project resulted in an opinion that a National Register Historic District is most-likely supportable for Wedgwood.

The architecture of Kneer and Hamm designed homes in Wedgwood, and the late Mayor Bayard Friedman is reported to have lived in the house at 5716 Winifred Drive. An HFW board member and an advisor have ties to Wedgwood houses.

Wedgwood is threatened by a lack of enlightenment about the inherent design value of mid-century modern buildings, and the perception that Wedgwood is not cool. That can change if the right people show up.