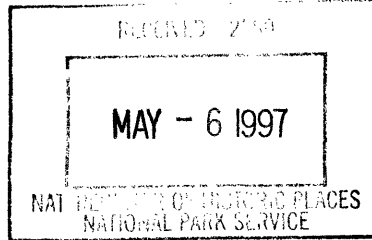


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form**



New Submission  Amended Submission

**A. NAME OF MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING**

Historic and Architectural Resources of Independence Heights, Houston, Texas

**B. ASSOCIATED HISTORIC CONTEXTS**

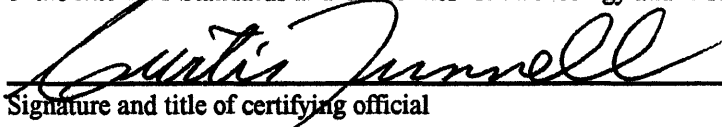
Community Planning and Development of Independence Heights, Texas, c. 1900 - 1947

**C. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: Mrs. Vivian Hubbard Seals with Dwayne Jones, Texas Historical Commission  
Organization: Independence Heights Neighborhood Council Date: April 1997  
Street & Number: 3714 Yosemite Telephone: (713) 747-9989  
City or town: Houston State: TX Zip: 77021

**D. CERTIFICATION**

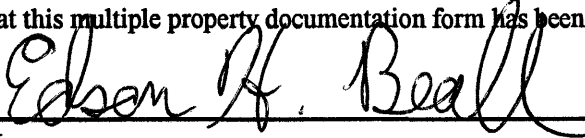
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation for meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature and title of certifying official

4-29-97  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determining eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## Community Planning and Development of Independence Heights, Texas, c. 1900-1947

### Geographical Background

Independence Heights lies approximately six miles from downtown Houston along a major north thoroughfare of Houston Boulevard, now North Main Street. The community as originally platted covers approximately 329.41 acres with lots divided in a north-south and east-west alignment. North Main Street bisects the subdivision in a northwest-southeast direction and is met almost in its center by another diagonal street, Link Road. The Houston Belt and Terminal Railroad further divides the subdivision in a straight east-west direction. Loop 610 separates Independence Heights on the south from Sunset Heights and the Studewood area, both developed in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yale Boulevard separates it from Garden Oaks on the west which was developed in the 1940s. The east-west streets of Independence Heights do not connect directly with those of Garden Oaks.

### Houston Area Development

Houston's political districting was done prior to 1900, when the population was nearing two thousand. First Ward, Second Ward, Third Ward, and Fourth Ward were established in 1840. Fifth Ward was added in 1867 and Sixth Ward in 1897. By the turn of the century, African Americans mostly lived in Fourth Ward or Freedmen's Town (NR 1985), Third Ward, and Fifth Ward. These neighborhoods developed around the central business district with each functioning as a separate small community. Each Ward also had a variety of shops and businesses. For example, Jackson Funeral Home, now known as Jackson Mortuary, Inc., was established in Fourth Ward in 1906.<sup>1</sup>

The commercial center was in town with the city hall occupying a block square, bounded by Travis, Congress, Milam, and Preston Streets. The lower floor had markets and city business was on the upper floor. Farmers would bring their produce and park all the way around the City Market to sell their wares from the sidewalk. Other businesses were operating within a few miles from this block. African Americans owned three buildings in this area, U.B.F. Building, Odd Fellows Building, Lincoln Theater, and Taborian Building, where black professionals had offices, barber shops, restaurants, hat shops, and other businesses.

Since residential segregation was a matter of custom rather than law, there was never absolute separation of the races. Usually the whites who lived in these areas were either poor or immigrants or had a business in the black neighborhoods. Many Germans, Jews, Greeks, and Italians owned shops or stores in these older neighborhoods and often lived next door to or above their stores. As the black population grew, new enclaves developed in the Wards and beyond their boundaries.<sup>2</sup>

During the period in which Houston rose from a muddy town to a city of national importance, the street car was the dominant form of transportation. From the mid 1870s to the late 1920s, Houston had

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streetcars. Virtually every significant land development was located on or near an existing or proposed streetcar line. The early streetcars were mule drawn. Prior to 1883 two companies, the Houston City Railway and the Bayou City Street Railway serviced Houston with streetcars. These two companies were purchased and consolidated by William Sinclair and H.F. MacGregor of Galveston.

By 1890 Houston had become an important commercial center built on cotton, lumber, and railroad. Realizing the potential value of this transit system, a group of investors began to rebuild the system for electric operation. By 1900 the new electric streetcars had routes to meet the needs of the fast growing real estate developments. The Houston Electric Company was the operator of the streetcar system.

In 1912 the Houston Electric Company encountered legal problems with real estate developers concerning streetcar service. As a result the company made major track constructions creating new routes, among which were Third Ward, Fifth Ward, Harrisburg, and Studewood. In 1914 the Studewood route opened to serve largely undeveloped district lying between Woodland Heights and Houston Heights. This included the section originally known as Stude's Woods, then in the process of being subdivided by the Stude family, and a residential development called Sunset Heights.<sup>3</sup> Independence Heights was accessed on the streetcar on the Studewood line which came to 30<sup>th</sup> Street and turned around.

In November of 1914 a jitney service began—a ride in a private care for the same price as a streetcar, a nickel. By early 1915 there were hundreds of cars serving as jitneys darting among the streetcars to pick up waiting passengers. This was blow to the streetcar industry, so the Houston Electric Company persuaded the City to regulate the jitneys and confine them to certain routes. On April 1, 1924, the Houston voters approved the banning of jitneys from the Houston streets. Then the Houston Electric Company began operating motor bus service.

## Establishment of Independence Heights

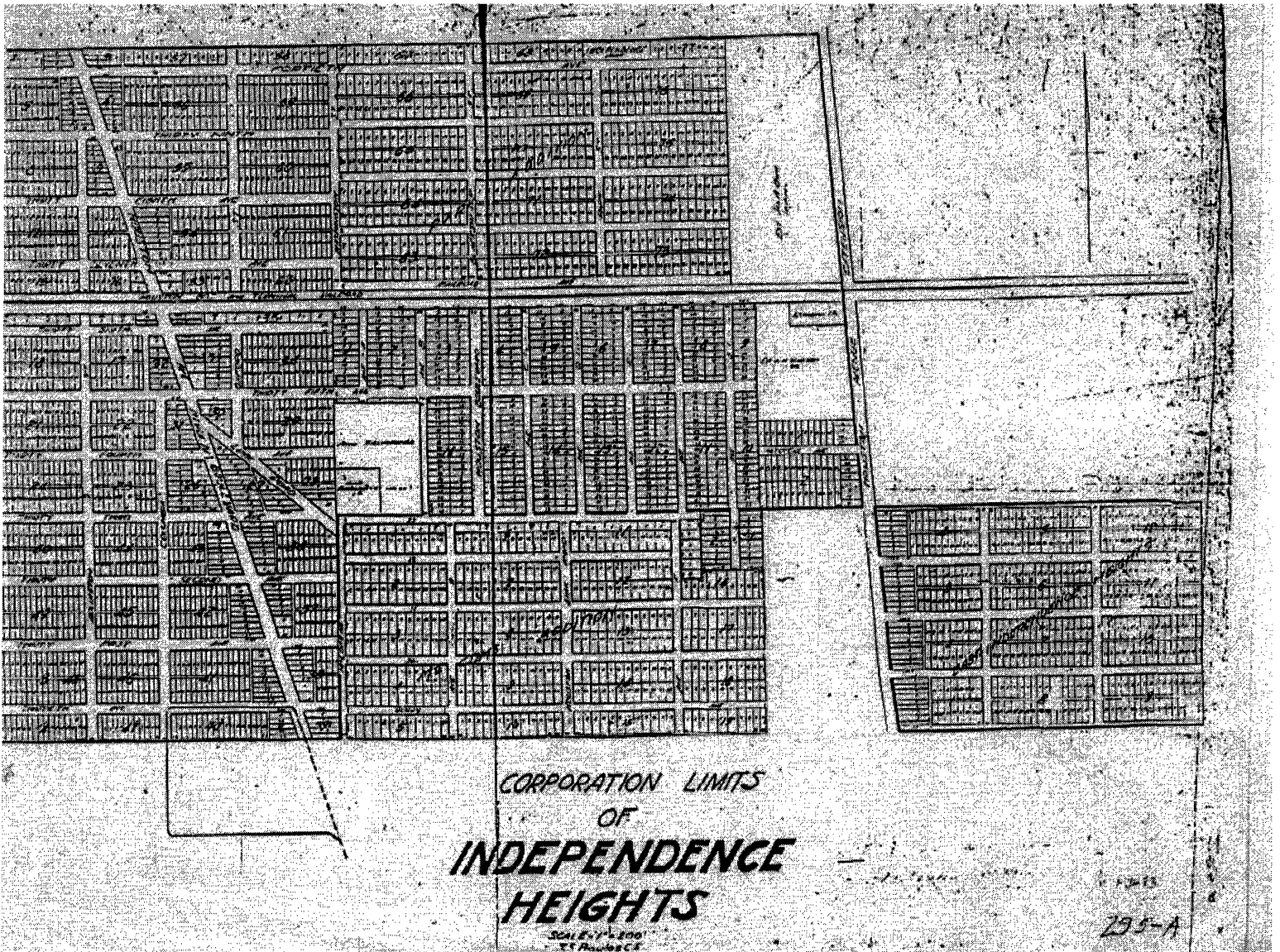
A. A. Wright and his wife came to Houston from Ohio about 1905. They acquired land north of Houston for the purpose of establishing subdivisions. The Wright Land Company, founded by A. A. Wright, was incorporated on August 11, 1910, to offer lots and low interest loans to blacks. The Wrights formed the Wright Loan and Security Company as a parallel business to sell to whites. A.A. Wright was joined in the company by his only son, Raymond L. Wright. The company was originally housed in the Houston Chronicle Building downtown but is now in operation at another Houston location. Independence Heights was the first major addition developed by the Wright Land Company, who named the area and laid out all the dirt streets. It was bound on the south by 30th Avenue, on the north by 40th Avenue, on the west by Yale Street, on the east by McComb Street and Airline Street. It was adjacent to Sunset Heights, Texas. The Wright company later subdivided land farther north of Independence Heights for blacks called Acres Home and Highland Heights.

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African Americans were attracted to Independence Heights because the Wright Land Company offered them property at reasonable prices and financed almost all of the sales at a time when it was almost impossible for blacks to obtain conventional loans. The interest was lower than going commercial rates and they dealt fairly with people. Some paid \$6 down and \$6 a month for the land and had their homes built. Before the company was incorporated, the Wrights sold property for a house still stands on 32nd that was built in 1908.

Independence Heights offered better living conditions and environment than the typical Ward neighborhoods. Many residents were well educated and in good jobs. This created a middle class suburban community typical of early 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbs.

The community grew at a rapid rate. Most of the houses were built by residents of Independence Heights who were contractors, carpenters, brick layers, and electricians.(see attached list) A number of residents moved from Houston to Independence Heights and others came from various places in Texas. It was a progressive community that took pride in home ownership. The federal Census Bureau gave the 1920 population as 720. This was the only census year that the city existed, since it was incorporated in 1915 and dissolved in 1928.

On November 27, 1914 a petition was filed with Harris County Judge W. E. Ward by W. R. Knox and other residents of Independence Heights asking for incorporation into a city. The Judge set the election for January 16, 1915, and appointed O. L. Hubbard Election Judge. The election was held and George O. Burgess, an attorney was elected Mayor with S. C. Lamothe and Arthur McCullough as Commissioners. According to the Houston Post newspaper this was the first incorporated city in Texas with all black officials, dated January 17, 1915. The City Hall was located in a "shotgun" house at 701 E. 34th.

About 1925 the Phelps Real Estate Company laid out a short street, 31 1/2, that extended from Yale Street to Courtlandt between 30th and 31st Streets. Houses were built and sold. The street was shelled and two blocks long, so it was nicknamed "Short Shell." The city also passed a bond for \$20,000 to pave streets and provide other basic city services.

### Fraternal Organizations of Independence Heights

A number of fraternal organizations existed in the community. These groups often served as social as well as necessary function for members. Since many African Americans could not obtain insurance, fraternal groups offered good rates and coverage. Some of the identified organizations include:

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Liberty Lodge No. 119 of Free and Accepted Ancient York Rite Masons  
Rev. S. H. Brogden, Worshipful Master  
Libitha Court of Calanthe No. 354  
The American Woodmen Camp 272, W. Mackey, Commander  
Tent 272, Ella L. Hubbard, Worthy Guardian

Several buildings provided space for meetings and social gatherings. Among the more common places were: Allen's Hall, 3200 Columbia (demolished); Cumming's Hall 3400 Columbia (demolished); and the General Mercantile Store or Burgess Hall, 7300 block of Houston Avenue. Independence Park, at 1000 E. 40th was a land grant from the Wright Land Company. It was the place where families gathered to play. Juneteenth celebrations were held there and people from Houston would often join in. Baseball was the main game. Church picnics were held there. In 1929 the name was changed to James McCullough Park to honor the McCullough family by the Houston Parks and Recreation Department.

### Churches of Independence Heights

The Wright Land Company granted land for three churches: Green Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, St. Paul Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, and New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. Green Chapel was organized in 1911 and built its first building on granted land at 618 E. 35th. New Hope was organized in 1911 and received its land grant in December 1919 at 600 E. 37th where the first building was erected. St. Paul was organized in 1916 and was granted land to build at 700 E. 37th.

Three other churches were organized during this period. They purchased their own property. Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church had its beginning in 1916 and held services in Allen's Hall until the property was purchased on Houston Avenue at the corner of 33rd. Concord Baptist Church was organized 1917, and services were held in the Independence Heights City Hall until the church purchased property on Houston Avenue (North Main) near 35th, where the building was erected. The North Main Church of God in Christ began in 1926 and shortly afterwards bought property and erected a building at 7206 North Main.

All of the churches are still in existence, but have built new buildings.

### Independence Heights School

In 1911, before incorporation, the residents and county officials realized the necessity of a school for the children. Although there was no school building, O. L. Hubbard, a graduate of Prairie View College, was hired as a teacher. He worked with the leaders of the community and county officials to have a two-room building moved from neighboring Sunset Heights to 600 E. 39th. Thus began Independence Heights School and as the community grew, so did the school. More teachers were added through the active years.

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There was no building for school, so through the efforts of the teacher, other community workers, and the county officials, property was secured in the 600 block of 39th Street, and a two-room building was moved from Sunset Heights to the site. Hence, the beginning of Independence Heights School in 1911.

Early principals of the school included O. L. Hubbard, Ella L. Hubbard, Herbert Mitchell, Blanche A. Lilly, and Ecke Chester. Among the early teachers were Mrs. D. M. Burgess, Mrs. Georgia Hall, Mrs. Rebecca Simmons, Mrs. Lillie Austin, and Mrs. Willie King.

Although Independence Heights was an incorporated City from 1915 to 1928, the school became a part of the Houston Independent School District in 1925.

When the school became overcrowded, classes were held in the New Hope Baptist Church Building and in the Mercantile Hall. The school also served students from McComb's Addition and East Independence Heights.

In 1927 P. H. Holden became principal and in 1928 a new building was constructed on 33rd Street. The school was named JAMES D. BURRUS.

The following information lists the leaders of the Independence Heights School and was taken from the Morrison and Fourmy Directory of Houston and Harris County:

1912	Principal-Teacher: Oliphant L. Hubbard
1913 - 1916	Principal: Oliphant L. Hubbard Teacher: Tessie Alexander
1917	Principal: Herbert Mitchell Teacher: Lilly Taylor
1918	Principal: O. P. DeWalt Teacher: Blanche A. Lilly
1919	Principal: J. A. Reid Teacher: Lillian Austin
1920 - 1921	Principal: Ella L. Hubbard Teacher: Blanche A. Lilly
1922 - 1924	Principal: Blanche A. Lilly Teachers: Desdemona Durgess; Lillian Austin
1925	Principal: Blanche A. Lilly Teachers: Lillian T. Austin; Georgia Hall; Rebecca T. Hutchins



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- 1926 Principal: Blanch A. Lilly  
Teachers: Lillian T. Austin, Alberta Cotton; Rebecca T. Simmons;  
Georgia Hall
- 1926 - 1927 Principal: E. A. Chester
- 1927 - 1928 Principal: P. H. Holden

Mrs. Susie Booker established Booker's Kindergarten in 1910 at the rear of her home at 301 E. 33rd Street (demolished) on the corner of Courtlandt. She was affectionately known as "Aunt Sue Book". The opening date is not known but it was prior to 1917. Most of the children of Independence Heights attended her school and received superior teaching. They were more than ready for public school when that time came. When the writer started to public school she was placed in the second grade. Her students will remember "Brer Rabbit", the switch that kept order in the school. The school is still in operation today under the name of Williams Academy.

## Conclusion

The end of Incorporated Independence Heights, Texas, came in November 1928, with the voting being held at Cummings Hall on Columbia Street. This information was furnished by Mrs. Maggie Johnson Norman with the date fixed in her mind because it was her first time to vote and it was shortly before her first child was born. The records of the city were left in the hands of a person who later died and no one knows what happened to them. According to the old residents, even though Independence Heights had some conveniences, they felt that becoming a part of Houston would afford them more conveniences such as mail delivery, a better water system, better streets, better public transportation, etc. The annexation took place on December 29, 1929. Houston annexed other towns during the 1920s, including Harrisburg, Magnolia Park, and Houston Heights.

The name Independence Heights is still associated with the area, however, it was almost forgotten because it became known as Studewood possibly because the Studewood Street Car served this area, which was followed by the Studewood Bus. In reality Studewood is an area south of Independence Heights, named for a man named Stude. Although maps and deeds show Independence Heights, people still call it Studewood. The name was revived when research was done by Vivian Hubbard Seals assisted by Leona Walls to secure a State Historical Marker for the city. The research was difficult because the Houston Public Library had no information except a clipping from the Houston Chronicle stating that the residents voted to incorporate and a City of Houston record showing the annexation date. At that time historians seldom recorded event and happenings related to Negroes. Neither the State Library nor the Library of Congress had any information. The marker was unveiled on August 27, 1989 on the grounds of Greater New Hope Baptist Church.

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The churches mentioned in this writing that were organized during that era are still in existence, each having another edifice. Many other churches have been organized since the annexation. Most of the churches have joined together in an organization known as Independence Heights Fellowship that meets monthly with various churches hosting the meetings.

In addition to the James McCullough park, which was originally Independence Park, a land grant from the Wright Land Company, The City of Houston opened the Independence Heights Park at 600 E. 35th. It is being renovated at this time.

The original Independence School established in 1911 became Burrus Elementary School in 1928 and is still in operation as a H.I.S.D. Magnet school for music at 701 E. 33rd.

A new building to house the historic Booker T. Washington High School was built in Independence Heights at 701 E. 39th. It is a magnet school for engineering. This school was established in 1893 as Houston Colored High in 4th Ward.

A number of houses built during that era are still in use. The City Hall and Court House at 701 E. 34th were bought by the Hawkins family and demolished about 1960.

After annexation to Houston the streets, Avenue A through Avenue G, were changed to Bacchus, Cornell, Castor, Delhi, Bombay, Europa, Rogers, Omega, and Carnation.

New residents and new businesses continued to come to Independence Heights, in addition to the old ones that continued to operate. There were beauty shops, barber shops, cleaners, service stations, auto mechanics, grocery stores, cafes, shoe repair shops, electrical repairs, fish markets, and other businesses. Pruitt's Mortuary, 7518 North Main, was owned and operated by Earl Pruitt, who was very active in church and community affairs.

In the decades that followed annexation community activities became more numerous. The Independence Heights Civic Club was organized in 1940 by Rev. Edward McCullough, the son of mayor Arthur McCullough. Independence Heights Precinct 195 and Area Council was begun in 1944 with John S. Gray, Judge and Commissioner. Houston Aid for retarded Children (P. T. A.) was organized in 1950 with Leona E. Walls as first president, receiving a 50 year charter from the State of Texas.

Among the number of churches organized during the next two decades are Salem Baptist Church, 314 E. 33rd, by Rev. Arthur McCullough, Sr., former mayor, 1934; True Light Baptist Church, 7102 North Main, 1935, by Rev. B. L. Lewis, Rev. A. D. Foster, and Rev. Earl Graves; Studewood Church of Christ, 1939, 301 E. 31st. Independence Heights Fellowship of Interdenominational Churches was organized in 1940 by Rev. E. R. Green, Pastor of Concord Baptist Church.

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## List of Businesses and Professional Offices of Independence Heights, 1915 - 1928

### GROCERY STORES:

George Allen	3200 Columbia
Will Cumming	3300 Columbia
S. A. Brantly	Houston Avenue at 37th
Briggs	Houston Avenue near 30th
Ella Lewis	3400 Courtlandt
A. D. Sterret	3300 Arlington
Will Brown	Houston Avenue at 31st
General Mercantile Company, Inc.	7300 Houston Avenue

### RESTAURANTS:

J. C. Addison	30th St. at Houston Avenue
Jim Bland's Barbeque	Houston Avenue at 30th
Ella Brown	33rd at Houston Avenue
Cook's Café	31st at Columbia

### ICE CREAM PARLORS:

Oscar Lindsay	Allen's Hall and later Houston Ave. at 34th.
Will Preston	31st St. at Columbia
Shaw's	30th at Columbia (on the car line)

### CLEANING AND PRESSING SHOPS:

Kermit Cook	Columbia Street at 31st
John Henry Jordan	Houston Avenue
Canady	Houston Avenue
Oscar Lindsay	Allen's Hall

### BARBER SHOPS:

Oscar Lindsay	Allen's Hall
Hunter's	

### ICE MEN:

Charlie Johnson	35th at Courtlandt
Ed Bailey	35th at Columbia
Joe Neal	Butler

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**ATTORNEY:**

G. O. Burgess    Houston Avenue at 35th

**TAILOR:**

M. Broach    605 E. 35th

**MEAL MILL:**

Little Wonder Meal Mill  
Robert Cloud    37th at Arlington

**WOOD YARDS:**

Milton's    306 35th  
Kelly's

**BLACKSMITH SHOP:**

Aaron Dean    Yale Street

**LUMBER YARD:**

W. M. Cumming

**TYPING, SHORTHAND, MILLINERY**

Mrs. W. H. Chryar    600 E. 38th

**MUSIC TEACHERS:**

Piano:                          Mineola Addison Carroll  
                                        Lillie Horton;  
                                        O. J. Cobb.

                                        Mrs. W. R. Knox  
Violin:                          Mrs. W. H. Chryar

**BAKERY AND SHOE REPAIR:**

Hinton    600 E. 38th

**DRUGSTORE:**

Chryar's    Houston Avenue at 31st

**TAXI LINE:**

John Henry Jordan    Houston Avenue

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### WATCH REPAIRS:

Rev. Stubblefield

34th at Arlington

### ELECTRICIANS:

Mike Jefferson

Tom Patten

### MIDWIVES:

Ella Davis

Julia Logan

McGee

37th Street

33rd Street

### KINDERGARTENS:

Susie Booker

McGee

301 E. 33rd

Houston Avenue

### NEWSPAPERS:

The Houston Press delivered by "Cripple Jim"

The Houston Informer (Official organ of the city)

### CARPENTERS:

Archie Thompson

Richard Thompson

Rev. J. S. Beverly

Stephen Mitchell

W. H. Chryar

### BRICK MASONS:

James and Leroy Bland

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Notes of Vivian Seals, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ethnic Groups of Houston*, edited by Fred R. von der Mehden, Rice University Studies, Houston, Texas.

<sup>3</sup> *The Houston Review*, Vol Xvi, No. 2, "Streetcars and the Growth of Houston," Steven M. Baron, pp. 67-100.

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**Associated Property Types**

The properties in Independence Heights date from 1908 through the 1940s, with the heaviest concentration dating from 1910 through the 1920s. As is typical of this period, the buildings range from traditional or vernacular forms to those influenced by larger national building trends. The properties of Independence Heights also reflect a variety of uses (domestic, commercial, institutional) sometimes with overlapping uses (e.g., a house served as a business or church). The latter is characteristic of small African American communities and is largely the reason for the vibrant social and economic life experienced in them. In general, however, the properties indicate a middle-class population that selected buildings for value, form, and function without regard for traditional ethnic influences. Thus, Independence Heights largely appears as a typical suburban community of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations and additions.

Property types are divided into three general categories in order to reflect the breadth of uses and activities in Independence Heights during its incorporation.

**PROPERTY TYPE: DOMESTIC BUILDINGS**

Description

Domestic buildings in Independence Heights are subdivided by form beginning with the earliest extant examples. Shotgun: The shotgun form is recognized as a traditional ethnic form for African Americans. Characterized by linear arrangement of rooms, usually one room deep and wide, the shotgun requires minimal land and street frontage. Early examples of the form are further defined by roof types like the most common gable-front and occasional hipped. Both roof types exist in Independence Heights. L-plan: The L-plan form is a traditional building pattern with a footprint shaped as the letter "L." L-plan houses may be covered with a hipped or gable roof and are common in Anglo American as well as African American communities. Modified L-plan: The modified version of the L-plan is usually noted with a large hipped roof covering the basic "L" shape but often with a rear element. Center-passage: The center-passage is less common in Independence Heights than the L-plan or modified L-plan but several notable examples exist. The form is noted by the presence of a center entry with flanking rooms. In some cases, the only two rooms actually form the footprint, but for these purposes all domestic buildings following the general form are classified as center-passage. Such buildings may be covered with a hipped or side-gable roof. Pyramidal-roofed: This category includes all domestic buildings noted more by a large pyramidal shaped roof than traditional room arrangement. These houses may rise to a center point or be truncated with a broad roof cap. Such buildings often are of box frame construction relying on the exterior wall rather than interior framing. Bungalow: The last and most prevalent domestic property type is the bungalow. These domestic buildings became popular in the years before World War I as a modest and readily available form of housing. Most bungalows are similar in the division of interior space and used front porches as a transition from interior to exterior space.

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Bungalows may have front or side gable roofs and a variety of modest decorative features some with period revival influences.

The domestic buildings of Independence Heights are almost universally 1-story wood frame construction most with horizontal siding varying from a 4 to 6-inch width to the common No.117 drop siding. A few domestic buildings have brick piers or porch columns used in combination of brick and wood. Some porches have decorative iron supports common in the by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. All identified buildings have asphalt shingles for roof material and are set on either concrete or brick piers or wooden posts.

### Significance

The domestic buildings of Independence Heights are part of the broad pattern of development in the community in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and thus may be nominated under Criteria A, B, or C. Those recognized under Criterion C may be part of a collection of related properties but not be individually distinguished, or strong elements reflective of significant architectural trends.

### Registration Requirements

Domestic buildings may be eligible for listing if no more than three architectural elements are removed or altered. Typical changes to consider in this evaluation include window or door replacements with inappropriate materials, extensive porch alterations or enclosures, or application of synthetic siding outside the period of significance. Domestic buildings in Independence Heights often have changes and alterations that reflect income levels and cultural preferences. These should not be considered as a reason for denial of listing if other factors are present and support registration. For example, many domestic buildings have concrete porch foundations making this element more the rule than exception. Without extensive documentation including historic photographs, it is difficult to know if these were original or changed outside the period of significance. This type of alteration should not be considered in the evaluation for registration. Furthermore, if a property reflects ethnic heritage (black) or an overlapping use with its primarily domestic use, it should be considered eligible if other integrity factors are present. Integrity should be evaluated in the following descending order of importance: location, association, setting, feeling, design, workmanship, and materials.

PROPERTY TYPE: COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

### Description

Commercial buildings in Independence Heights cannot be divided by form or style. These buildings are 1- or 2-story in height and are constructed of wood with horizontal siding. Large gable roofs, sometimes with a low pitch, are typical. In some cases, commercial buildings appear similar to domestic buildings in design or



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workmanship. The most notable differences are generally in the type of windows and number of entries, especially on the first floor. Commercial buildings often have large windows suitable for display and several doors or entryways. Almost all appear to be covered with asphalt shingles; most are set on concrete piers or wooden posts.

## Significance

Commercial buildings are significant in Independence Heights as representatives of the varied and rich uses in the community. These properties typically served several functions, but are best remembered and recorded for commercial ones. In some cases, commercial buildings segregated space giving a portion to domestic use and others to institutional and business uses. Likewise, the large number of small business owners in Independence Heights, many who worked several jobs, makes the association with significant individuals probable. Thus, these buildings may be eligible under Criteria A, B, or C.

## Registration Requirements

Evaluation of these properties should take into consideration rarity and give a broad interpretation to association within Independence Heights. Alterations to windows and doors are typical and should not be a negative factor in evaluating integrity. If the property reflects its role in local commerce or indicates trends of ethnic heritage (black), it may be eligible. Integrity should be evaluated in the following descending order of importance: location, association, setting, feeling, design, workmanship, materials.

PROPERTY TYPE: PUBLIC PARK

## Description

This property type is developed for open space set aside by a developer or community to be used as a public park. Like the other property types, the public park is based on function rather than landscaping influences, style, or broad trends for open space. These spaces generally have few buildings or structures on the site. The major characteristics are open land with some trees, grass, or shrubbery.

## Significance

Public park spaces derive primary significance in Independence Park for their association with ethnic heritage (black) or place in the planning or development of the community. For these reasons, this property type is typically eligible under Criterion A for its place in the larger community history.

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## Registration Requirements

Public park spaces may be eligible if they reflect the original use and are retain strong associative values in the community. The addition of modern park equipment or elements should not be a negative consideration for these are part of the natural course of community development and are in keeping with the original use. Integrity should be evaluated in the following descending order of importance: location, association, setting, feeling, design, workmanship, materials.

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**National Park Service**

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### **Geographical Data**

The geographical area includes the original 329.41 acres platted and later incorporated as Independence Heights from 1915 through 1928.

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### Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The multiple property listing for the Historic and Architectural Resources of Independence Heights, Houston, Texas, is based on the identification and evaluation of properties listed in the 1923-24 *Houston City Directory* for the City of Independence Heights. This is the first and only directory listing for Independence Heights during its incorporation. The principal investigator checked the directory with existing properties located in the original 329.41- acre platted subdivision of Independence Heights. The investigator drove each street and identified 59 extant properties which were recorded by street address and original property owner.

Although a part of the City of Houston since 1929, no comprehensive historic and architectural survey has ever been conducted in Independence Heights. Houston is the largest urban area in Texas without a comprehensive survey. In September 1980, the Southwest Center for Urban Research released the Houston Architectural Survey in six volumes. The survey covered major downtown properties and neighborhoods within close proximity to the downtown. Few African American historic and architectural resources were addressed. No financial resources were available to conduct a more exhaustive survey of Independence Heights. The principal investigator completed these tasks as a volunteer working with the support of the Independence Heights Neighborhood Council. The Council is a non-profit incorporation of local residents and ministers working for the revitalization and stabilization of Independence Heights.

The nominated properties are associated with one historic context: **Community Planning and Development of Independence Heights, Texas, c. 1900-1947**. The property types are divided by use and subdivided by form or other physical features.

The principal investigator and staff of the Texas Historical Commission evaluated properties using the following criteria: existence during the period of incorporation of 1915-1928, association with an individual or family living in Independence Heights during incorporation, rarity of the property type, and whether or not the property reflected the range and scope of human activity in an incorporated municipality of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Integrity was evaluated in the following descending order of importance: location, association, setting, feeling, design, workmanship, and materials. The nominated properties include a small number of possible candidates; subsequent properties may be added.

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*Houston City Directories:* 1918, 1919, 1920-21, 1922 (mention of Independence Heights)

*Houston City Directory:* 1923-24 (first full listing of streets in Independence Heights)