



# Swiss Avenue Report

Prepared by  
the Dallas Department of Urban Planning,

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Map of District

- I. Introduction
  - II. Setting
  - III. History
    - The Physical Setting
    - The Residents, Past and Present
  - IV. Architecture
  - V. The Designation of the District
  - VI. The Future: Recommendations for Action
- Appendix
- Maps
  - The Swiss Avenue Zoning Ordinance, PD 63H

## I. INTRODUCTION

To traverse Swiss Avenue is to experience a street unique in the City of Dallas. A boulevard of towering trees, verdant landscaping and stately old homes, the traveller is struck by an overall impression of unity on the grand scale. Although varying significantly in individual design, the uniformity of set back, size, proportion and materials, establishes a continuity of time, place and mood.

The value of this district: its beauty and harmony, its immediate and distinctive identity and its importance as a source of community pride; all contribute to its note worthiness as an inner city resource.

It is in these inner city neighborhoods; districts that offer convenience and proximity to downtown, abundant neighborhood services, shopping, entertainment and park space, that the campaign must be directed. Swiss Avenue should serve as a precursor to the revitalization of the larger East Dallas community. Its example can serve an inspirational if not immediate influence on other in-town districts that offer the similar attractions of older, well constructed homes and established, landmark supporting facilities.

Largely descriptive, the first section of this study will detail the unique features of the area. A summary analysis of the setting, the architectural types encountered as well as the historic events and personages associated with the Swiss Avenue Historic District will complete this section of the narrative. A reading of these pages will clearly illustrate the importance of the area in the development of Dallas. It is to be hoped that a careful reading of this material will provide a case history that will enable other neighborhoods to evaluate the historic

merits of their areas. In this manner, the official city historic program will mature and have significant impact on the in-town environment.

The publications final sections will detail the events relating to the historic designation by the city. The early activities of the Planning Department working closely with area residents to develop the historic concept and a workable ordinance and preservation criteria to guide future growth and redevelopment will explained. A section devoted to recommendations for the future will complete the study.

P. S. It should be stated at an early juncture, that this project is a story of people--past but particularly present day residents of Swiss, Bryan, Live Oak and La Vista. Without their assistance, encouragement and active support the initial proposals conceived by the planners could never have been implemented.

## II. SETTING

An analysis of the Swiss Avenue Historic District would be incomplete without a glance at the entire East Dallas area. Although somewhat unique in terms of ethnic composition as well as physical setting, Swiss is so integrally related to its surroundings in terms of real as well as unconscious leadership, that Swiss cannot be considered as an isolated island; a tendency the casual observer might infer.

A recent report of the Dallas Department of Planning, Design Guidelines for Inner City Neighborhoods, accurately describes East Dallas as an area plagued with a general image of deterioration, but blessed with a number of unique environmental resources. Among these, Swiss Avenue itself is certainly the most profound and significant. Despite apparent problems of encroaching development, intruding freeways, structural decay and unemployment, the reversal of negative trends can be effected. Much of the surrounding area near Swiss Avenue can be considered as in a suspended state. Its fate lies with a concerned citizenry and a committed local government. Both are much in evidence in the East Dallas community.

The Swiss Avenue Historic District is flanked on both east and west by shopping districts specializing in neighborhood services. Skillman Center, a district reminiscent of the 50's lies just west. Lakewood Center, currently a shopping district planned for redevelopment (see Lakewood Shopping Center Master Plan, University of Texas, Arlington/ Planning Research and Design Center, City of Dallas Planning Department, June, 1974) terminates the historic area just east off La Vista. Both

centers are of significant value to the surrounding vicinity, particularly if the new design approaches proposed are actually implemented. Lakewood Center is a symbol of major importance to the surrounding areas. Besides its obvious shopping attractions, Lakewood serves as the "common ground and meeting place" for many residents of the East Dallas communities bordering the facility. Lakewood, one of the oldest "suburban" shopping centers in the nation, possesses several buildings, most notably the former library and the movie theater, that all area residents associate with as being especially representative of the locale. While sites such as these may not be eligible for city historic status, they are valuable as local landmarks and serve to provide older neighborhoods with individual distinctiveness. Visual surprises of this type are almost non-existent in newer suburban communities.

Southwest of the historic district, along the route to downtown Dallas, lies a land of mixed uses and uncertain future. Traditionally residential, this locale is experiencing gradual decay with checkerboard pockets of "higher use" development, often industrial in nature. Many individual sites, if faithfully restored, would certainly be worthy of historic citing. An encouraging development in this potpourri of use, the new Swiss Avenue Bank, hopefully will take its place alongside its sister institution, the Lakewood Bank, as sources for local capital to be used for home improvements and mortgages.

Live Oak Street and Gaston Avenue parallel Swiss running northeast and southeast, respectively. Both thoroughfares are quite similar in use and appearance. Both carry heavy volumes of commuter traffic (although

Columbia-Abrams has drawn off some of the vehicles) and both streets evidence drab, ill conceived apartment dwellings that replaced in many cases, distinctive period homes of the equal found on Swiss. Had the City of Dallas acted to designate an historic area twenty years ago, it is most probable that Gaston-Live Oak would have formed the boundaries of the district. Their depressing example serves to emphasize the necessity for preservation legislation on the local level.

Flanking the southwest boundary of the district at Fitzhugh stood the venerable Munger Place gate. The monument is gone now, a victim of progress but the message it implied is still in evidence. Passing through the now departed entranceway, one is immediately aware of the stylistic change to the old 1910 development of Mr. Munger. Continuing along Swiss for several blocks, the traveller eventually confronts La Vista running off at an angle (actually Swiss runs off the grid) of east-west. It is here that the district's northern terminus is drawn. La Vista continues, however, taking the path to the Lakewood Center and the old country club beyond.

Within the district, the streets are quiet and leisurely. This bucolic picture is punctuated at times with the intrusions of Munger Boulevard, Collett Avenue and Beacon Street which serve as collectors to Central Expressway to the north. These streets are an asset to the district bringing movement and bustle to this in-town development. Their incursion, providing adequate care is taken by pedestrians, reminds the stroller that one is indeed in an urban environment. The views of downtown buildings to the southwest, rising over the landscaped boulevards and abundant live oaks serve to reinforce and enhance this urban feeling.

Tree plantings in this planned community are also strategically placed and well considered. The aging trees provide abundant shade and screening, but in most cases, permit views of the elegant structures that were directly responsible for their life on this once barren prairie land.

Although conceived by Munger as an exclusive development for the affluent, there was never evidence of restrictions based on religious or racial grounds. Those who could afford the price settled there. Protestants, Catholics, Jews and possibly others called Swiss Avenue their home.

(Although many prominent Jews did choose to live around their synagogues and developed a contemporary sister development to Swiss, South Boulevard,) This, of course, is still the case. This mix is reflected in the larger area surrounding the district where many groups reside in close proximity.

East Dallas is truly a mixed assortment of ethnics. Based on the Census figures of 1970 (changes since that time would reflect some increases in the black and Mexican-American population) the East Dallas picture is as follows:

Tract	Total Population		White		Black		Mex-Am.	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	No.	%
East Dallas	46,657	5.5	32,503	49.7	6,789	14.5	7,365	15.8

These figures indicate an equitable distribution of ethnic groups representative of the Dallas community at-large. If there is an imbalance, it is created by the disproportionate number of elderly homeowners.

Census figures relate that 47.74% of East Dallas homes are owned by persons over 65 years of age as compared to 18.11% for the remainder of the City.



A large number of these owners are white. It is to be hoped that a racial balance can be maintained and stabilized as these elderly owners dispose of their property.

In the short period since landmark designation, Swiss has exceeded most anticipated expectations. A new interest and pride in the East Dallas area is evidenced. Renovation efforts are a common sight along the tree shaded streets. Swiss Avenue's success story has no doubt played a vital role in the area's comeback. Hopefully, this flurry of activity will be continued, but channeled to avoid the maladies of massive displacement and relocation of present occupants. Rising costs could effectively serve to exclude many of these residents who have given so much to create the character that is uniquely East Dallas. Affirmative action programs, initiated by government as well as private institutions are necessary to avoid the frustrations experienced by other renewal efforts nationally.

### III. HISTORY

#### The Physical Setting

The financial, civic, social and cultural leadership of Dallas was formalized by 1905. Leadership in these areas coalesced about such names as Sanger, Aldredge, Padgett, Armstrong, Dealey and Ferris. The majority of these prominent citizens were of the financial elite. Politically, the city was now under the control of prominent public-spirited businessmen who well understood the cultural heritage that was Dallas. What eccentricity, flamboyance and individualism that survived was relegated to the secret hearth of the family. The public image was one of an aggressive, far-sighted, even-headed community whose cultural life was quiet, conservative, well-mannered and gracious. It was the age of the city beautiful. Dallas had shown an increasing maturity in its development. Its cultural maturity had grown less quickly. Between 1895 and 1910 it began to move to correct this error.

R. S. Munger was of the social elite. He was known throughout the Southwest for his pioneer manufacturing of cotton gins. His activities in this field began in the '80's. He prospered and formed the Continental Gin Company, which soon became the largest manufacturer of its kind in the United States. Always interested in real estate, Mr. Munger must have watched with uncommon interest its development in Dallas. Many prominent citizens had been involved in real estate and much money had been made.

Better situated for the manufacture and distribution of machinery, Birmingham, Alabama became the home of Mr. Munger at the turn of

the century. Here he observed restricted real estate developments. Knowing that Dallas was devoid of such a residential community, he devised a plan in 1900 to build such a development. By 1902 he had begun to collect the land, which eventually would total some three hundred acres. In 1905 the plans and land buying completed, he opened the project for public sale. His son, Collette H. Munger, became the general manager.

The choice of location was an astute one, being located upon open farmland at the fringe of the city limits. The trend toward eastward growth had already been established as early as the '80's. This movement had accelerated by 1900 and many fine homes were found along Ross, Gaston and Live Oak. Munger Place stood strategically at the northern edge of these streets.

The development's near proximity to the soon to be built (1913) Lakewood Country Club, which the Mungers and Aldredges were instrumental in founding, added much to the exclusive flavor that the developers wished to portray. Another area feature, the White Rock Reservoir, was developed in 1913. The lake became a popular fishing and picnicking area. The probability of prior knowledge of these community assets is uncertain, but the possibilities of this development must have been in the minds of Dallas leaders for some time.

The physical layout of the streets followed fairly strictly pre-existing street patterns, whether it was Live Oak, Gaston, Swiss or La Vista. There are few surprises here. Swiss Avenue alone broke the traditional pattern.

The divided avenue, fronted by two large rustic gates, descriptively marked the entrance as a place of importance. The gates of Swiss represented far more than picturesque sign posts. Whether one lived on Swiss or not, one was aware of the meaning of the place. The financial, civic and cultural leadership of the city was now fully conscious of its position.

The scale and formality of Swiss and its intersecting streets combined to mark a new stage in Dallas growth. Though the gates were removed in 1969, one can still sense the change in mood upon emerging from the closely-spaced, heavily-foliated Swiss Avenue south of Fitzhugh. As if coming out of a tunnel, one enters a broad, open space described by the large, divided, tree-lined avenue ahead. Once one is above Fitzhugh, within the confines of Munger Place, a character found nowhere else in Dallas is encountered. A sense of formality, quiet dignity, graciousness and unity extends down the long march to La Vista.

It was not only to the rich, however, that this development was aimed. Bryan Parkway suggests this. Its many small homes, by comparison with its back-door neighbors on Swiss Avenue, reflect a more common street scene of the early twentieth century. There is the same order of Swiss, but the scale makes for more intimate, comfortable living. To a degree, the two streets, so close and yet so distinctly different in scale, mirror an earlier, more open Dallas. A social elite had crystallized and was not above showing its position. However, social boundaries did not reflect the fears and strong hierarchial boundaries that the present period has assumed. It appears that Bryan and Swiss point to an age of civic

and social paternalism not yet solidified by physical and social barriers. Munger Place may mark a turning point in the social stratification of Dallas. These homes, these streets -- Swiss, Bryan, La Vista, Live Oak -- mirror as well as any physical object may, the cultural markings characterizing Dallas society in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

## The Residents Past and Present:

When R. S. Munger announced the development of Munger Place in March, 1905, he clearly intended the 140 acre residential area to be "the handsomest, most attractive, and desirable residential district in the entire south."<sup>1</sup>

There were no zoning laws prior to 1927, so Munger attained his dream by placing "certain restrictions as to cost, construction, and architecture, according to location, on the erection and use of all residences and appurtenances which may be built on the property."<sup>2</sup>

In order to provide a uniform architectural texture on Swiss, the Mungers insisted that the homes "shall be full two stories in height, and located not less than .. 60 to 70 ft.. from the front property line"<sup>3</sup> or 10 feet from the side of the lot, and homes on Swiss shall cost a minimum of \$10,000. The residences all had to front in the same direction. Other streets called for slightly different variations.

The Mungers only sold lots. Within the framework they established, individuals built their own homes in the high eclecticism typical of the early 20th century. This allowed for the varied architectural design which is evidenced in the boundaries of the historic district.

The Munger development attracted the financial, political, and cultural elite of Dallas, and they had built by their architects the homes of their designs. The personalities of the individual owners, therefore, are closely tied to the architecture of the homes in Munger Place.

Munger envisioned a "cityman's home, that is closely associated with every phase of city life."<sup>4</sup> City men he got--men involved in every phase of Dallas' booming growth, men outstanding at the national, state, and local levels. Judges, physicians, oilmen, attorneys- financiers, preachers, and politicians inhabited Munger Place; women outstanding in the community, whose children and grandchildren continue to be leaders in Dallas today.

The significance of Munger Place, of which Swiss Avenue and Bryan Parkway are the only remaining intact elements, is not that of a few individuals who have made spectacular contributions but of the overwhelming number of individuals outstanding in their fields who have contributed to all phases of Dallas' growth. Almost every house offers a rich geneology of Dallas' development; cultural, political and financial.

It is difficult to enumerate in a work of this length all the individuals that are worthy of mention. Perhaps the reader will begin to grasp the historic import of the area with a limited sampling from selected fields of endeavor some of the most prominent residents of the Swiss District:

When Pa Ferguson, Texas' governor, was impeached in 1917, the two attorneys for the prosecution were M. M. Crane, the then Attorney General for Texas, and W. R. Harris, the trial attorney. Both were residents of Munger Place.

E. R. Brown was President of the Magnolia Petroleum Company, Vice-President of Standard Oil Company of New York, Vice-President of Investment Securities Company, and the Director of The Federal Mortgage Company and the Trinity Fire Insurance Company. The striking Italianate home which E. R. Brown had built at 5314 Swiss is now occupied by his sister, Mrs. J. M. Michie.

Perhaps the most flamboyant Dallas oilman to live in Munger Place was W. L. Snowden. Dallasites of the 40's remember his much-publicized nativity scene consisting of more than 30 life-size figures and 5,500 lights in the front yard of his residence at 5002 Swiss. It attracted over 20,000 visitors a day and required up to 12 policemen to direct traffic. Shortly after his nativity feat, Snowden was convicted for grand theft and several attempts were made to evict him from his \$100,000 home.

The first house erected in Munger Place at 5303 Swiss was built for Dr. Raleigh William Baird, "considered one of the leading men not only in Texas but in the entire Southwest"<sup>5</sup> in internal medicine. Dr. Joseph Wilbur Bourland, 4902 Swiss, was one of Dallas' first specialists of obstetrics and gynecology. He, along with Dr. Baird, was founder and Director of the Dallas Medical and Surgical Clinic. Perhaps his most famous accomplishment was his invention of the baby incubator, which has saved untold numbers of lives.

Merchants of Dallas included W. A. Green, 5125 Swiss, who founded W. A. Green Company, dry goods. He was also one of the founding members of the Dallas chapter of the Red Cross, along with Dr. Marchman and Ed Titche, other Munger residents. Theodore Marcus of the Theo Marcus & Company and Vice-President of Neiman-Marcus lived at 5731 Swiss. Mrs. Carrie Neiman, one of the founders of Neiman-Marcus, lived at 5803 Swiss. Edward Titche, president of Titche-Goettinger, also lived in the original Munger development.

One of the foremost of the merchants who lived in Munger Place was Rufus W. Higginbotham, 5002 Swiss. Along with his brother, Joseph M.



Higginbotham, Rufus organized Higginbotham-Bailey-Logan, one of the largest wholesale dry goods houses in the South. He and his brother also found time to father six future residents of Swiss Avenue. All the Higginbotham sons have been active in the various Higginbotham businesses. The children and grandchildren of the two Higginbotham brothers are still active and outstanding in almost every phase of Dallas civic and cultural life, as are many of the Munger Place descendants.

The Swiss district also attracted a number of influential citizens who have contributed greatly to the religious community, both past and present. "Among the foremost and highly gifted divines of the Lone Star state stands the Rt. Rev. Joseph Patrick Lynch, Roman Catholic Bishop of Dallas, whose work in North Texas covered the period of 18 years and is characterized by beneficence that has reached even into the physical growth of the community.<sup>6</sup> He resided at 4946 Swiss.

Another nationally recognized clergyman is The Rev. W. A. Criswell, pastor of the largest Baptist Church in the world. Rev. Criswell lives at 5901 Swiss. He has been actively involved in religious and lay decision-making at the international, national, and local levels.

Closely associated with Dr. Criswell's church was Robert H. Coleman, assistant to the Pastor of the First Baptist Church for 40 years. During that time, he compiled 33 song books, distributed them to more than 13 million English-speaking peoples around the world. Coleman lived at 5908 Swiss.

Another prominent Baptist was James Britton Cranfill, who resided at 5619 Swiss. Dr. Cranfill earned his M.D. in 1879 and later became

ordained as Baptist preacher in 1890. He was the founder and editor of the Texas Baptist Standard, and Vice-President of the Baptist Young People's Union of America, and prohibition candidate for vice-president of the United States in 1892. He walked from his Munger Place address to his downtown office every day, rain or shine.

Alphonso Ragland was founder and President of the Metropolitan Business College. He resided at 5105 Swiss. A large number of the business and banking leaders of Dallas are proud alumnae of Metropolitan. Included in this group are R. L. Thornton, banker, civic leader, and long-time mayor. Also, W. H. Gaston, Roy Munger, Frank Holland, A. L. Huey, and Olin Godwin, County Judge Lew Sterrett and Dallas County Tax-Collector Ben Gentle.

"Few fellow citizens of Dallas would question that in the crucial years, 1939-47, during America's involvement in the Second World War and in the opening stanzas of its dramatic aftermath--the single most influential Dallas leader was J. Woodall Rodgers."<sup>7</sup> Rodgers accomplished an incredible amount, much too much to elaborate on within this paper. Suffice it to say, he was the first man to hold the office of mayor of Dallas for eight years, he planned the largest bond program in Dallas' history to this point, he expanded Love Field to make it one of the premier airports of the nation, and he initiated the development of eight urban expressways. Rodgers lived at 5750 Swiss.

The youngest mayor in Dallas' recent history was attorney Wallace Savage, of 5703 Swiss. He was the first mayor of a major city to remove rent controls touching off the great economic boom in post-war Dallas. Also he served as the state Democratic Chairman and in that position presided

over the first state convention in the history of the United States to endorse the presidential candidate of the opposite party (causing quite a furor). Savage also contributed 20 years legal counsel to the preservation and development of Swiss Avenue. He is on the Board of the Lakewood Bank, and is President of Dallas Academy.

R. S. Munger, the developer of Munger Place, was "widely known in the commercial and industrial circles as the owner and operator of the Continental Gin Company, a plant which has established a standard in machinery of its kind ... He has done as much as any one man in this city to beautify its residence districts."<sup>8</sup> His son, Collett H. Munger, managed Munger Place and lived at 5400 Swiss. Another son, H. M. Munger, lived at 5405 Swiss and was active in farming and oil.

William W. Caruth lived at 4949 Swiss. His father held the original land grant of 5000 acres of "the famous black, waxy soil of Texas, lying just North of the City of Dallas. Mattie Caruth, William's daughter, and Gen. Harold Byrd, were married in the Caruth home on Swiss.

Dallas leads the Southwest in banking and insurance. Many distinguished men who contributed to the attainment of this position resided in Munger Place. Among these was George W. Aldredge of 5500 Swiss. A college track star and former state amateur golf champion, Aldredge married Miss Rena Munger of Dallas, cousin of the Munger place developers. He began his life's work as a banker with the Old Exchange National Bank which evolved into the present-day First National. Here he progressed from clerk to chairman to the Bank's Executive Committee. In more than a half-century he became associated with such firms as the Texas Company,

where he was a Director for 25 years; Southwestern Life Insurance Company, where he was a Director for many years, and the City National Bank.

J. B. Wilson's widow lived on Swiss at 4919. Wilson was Chairman of the Board of City National Bank, Treasurer of Titche-Goettinger, built and owned the Wilson building, and "wielded one of the most powerful, though silent, influences on the progressive destiny of his city and the Southwest."<sup>9</sup>

A Who's Who of Swiss Avenue personalities would be incomplete if the name Mary Ellen Logan (Mrs. Christian Bendsten) of 4949 Swiss were not included. Miss Logan, long active on the Chautauqua platform, was a leading model of the 1930's. Cited by Life Magazine as "Model of the Year," Miss Logan's likeness can be seen on the statutes at the Esplanade of the State Fair Park for which she posed during her modeling days.

The facts speak eloquently. Few areas of the country can claim, in the short space of several city blocks, so many distinguished individuals. It can accurately be claimed that the appellation "historic district" is justly deserved if only the biographies of the Swiss residents were considered. The distinctive, original condition of the physical setting only serves to enhance and emphasize the label "Historic Swiss".

## Footnotes

1. Munger Place, (introductory brochure) Dallas, Texas (pages not numbered)
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. David, Ellis A. and Grobe, Edwin H. (compilers & editors).  
The Encyclopedia of Texas. Dallas, Texas. Texas development bureau,  
n.d. p. 235.
6. Texans and Their State, a newspaper reference work published by the  
Texas Biographical Association, Chronical Building, Houston, Texas;  
Editors: H.T. Warner, Houston; Hugh Fitzgerald, Ft. Worth; J.C.  
Gouch, Dallas, etc. al. Vol. II p. 90.
7. Dallas Morning News, "series by Sam Acheson" February 16, 1966.
8. Makers-of-Dallas, Dallas Newspaper Artists Association. 1912. Dallas,  
Texas. (pages not numbered)
9. David, p. 49.

#### IV. ARCHITECTURE

The majority of the homes along Swiss and Bryan were built from 1910 to the late '20's. At least sixteen distinct styles of architecture can be described. Only a few homes can be considered as purely one style, and of these, fewer can be thought of as excellent examples of their genre. This smorgasbord effect reflects the general American attitude towards individuality. The variety of ornament and detail is amazing, but even more amazing is how little this intrudes on the overall sense of harmony.

Among the homes representing a specific style are the Aldredge home at 5500 Swiss, built by Hal Thompson in the French Renaissance motif, the Refus Higginbotham home, built by Lang and Witchell at 5502 Swiss in the Prairie style; the Lang home at 5640 Swiss, built by Lang in 1925 in the Spanish Colonial style; the home at 6243 Swiss at the northwest side of La Vista and Swiss, Tudor in style; and the home at 5420 Swiss, a classically McKim, Mead and White Georgian Colonial style. A number of unpretentious bungalow-type homes found along Bryan fit the classic mold. Among these is the one at 6111 Bryan.

On the national scale, none of these homes stand out as individually significant, the majority being some ten to fifteen years behind the first known examples. Nevertheless, as types, the attention to detail, scale and massing, reflects a sophisticated design at the local level. But for the Higginbotham home and possibly those at 4949 Swiss and 5611 Swiss (Prairie style with a Mission flavor quite common to

turn-of-the-century Dallas, but now few in number), homes similar in style to those on Swiss and Bryan can be found elsewhere in the city. But few are older and finer. Additionally, Dallas' major residential architects of the early twentieth century display some of their finest talents in these homes, which are conveniently located for easy viewing. Hal Thompson, Lang and Witchell, and Bertram Hill are each represented more than once.

The contrast between Bertram Hill and Otto Henry Lang is particularly evident with regard to the two broad stylistic trends evident along Swiss: the formal, historic style of Hill and the somewhat ahistoric Prairie style represented by Lang.

The historic motif is perhaps best characterized locally by the work of C. D. Hill, the Municipal Building (1912) on Main and Harwood. This building is so significant that many people considered it to be the only true "architectural" building existing in Dallas. Another extremely significant specimen of this classic influence was the Adolphus Busch Hotel (1912). This building's highly styled Ecole des Beaux Artes design was created by the St. Louis firm of Barnett and Bartlett. The on-site architect, however, was none other than Bertram Hill of Swiss Avenue fame.

The trend toward historicism and formality, so characteristic of the Hill style is often seen on Swiss Avenue. The Aldredge house at 5500 Swiss reflects a high regard for the historical formulae of the past. An exact copy of a historical house was seldom the intent; it was the mood and flavor that was sought. Many of the homes that hark back to

the past exhibit mere trappings from the architectural grabbag of details. It is formality, the scale, the simplicity, and an overall sense of balance which unites them as a common type. The whimsical and romantic flavor, taken singly, is negated in these homes. Even in a fine Tudor mansion such as that at 6243 Swiss - conjuring up thoughts of medieval pageantry - the massing and detail are so finely drawn and studied as to effectively defeat romantic imagery. The romantic ~~assymetry~~ asymmetry and irregularity common to the Tudor style is rendered static. Effects of common setback, orientation, height restriction, and material intensify this feeling.

As with the historical styles, the Prairie style - the house type developing out of the teachings of Louis Sullivan - is well represented along Swiss. There are few other examples in the city and none achieved the success of the better Prairie homes along this street.

The most direct example of this form is at 5002 Swiss, the old home of Rufus Higginbotham. It reflects the stylistic lines of Wright's Robie House (1909). The strong horizontal lines, light stone bands accentuating the horizontal, low-slung hipped roof with large overhanging eaves, low flat planters, broad chimney and second story windows that jut right up into the roof line - all are features of the classic Prairie School. The vast majority of the homes in this style are of the second phase of the School's history, being flatter, more symmetrical and formal. Besides the Higginbotham example, the homes at 5611 Swiss, 5703 Swiss, 4949 Swiss, 4933 Swiss and 5714 Swiss reflect to varying degrees the Prairie School influence.

The style had the advantage of being more responsive to the climate. It's



usual long low porch offered a cooling respite from the hot heavy summer sun. The broad windows and open floor plans provided cooling ventilation, while the overhanging roofs gave additional relief. Horizontal lines also blended easily into the long formal path that was Swiss.

In an architectural analysis such as this, it must be agreed that the true significance of Swiss lies not with any one or two individual homes, but in the harmony of the entire setting. It is an area intact, no intrusions nor non-conformities. Mr. Munger's original deed restrictions deserve primary acclaim and the area's historic designation was created to insure its perpetuity. Conscious of the district scale, the planners carefully analyzed the existing physical fabric in determining the preservation criteria for the ordinance. While drafting the twelve preservation criteria for the new district, the planners studied carefully Munger's original concepts as well as the many positive features that developed through time. The open expanse of front lawn, for example, would be a primary factor in the area's preservation.

Stylistically the homes along Swiss are, when passing at auto speed, subject to visual blending and overlap. This due to at least four specific factors: equal setbacks, sitting, common height, and the almost complete use of brick as a building material.

A sense of order and stability, perhaps a visual extension of the unconscious thoughts of the original builders--pillars of society all - further characterize Swiss. A regular and rhythmic occurrence of openings and spaces prevails. Internally this regularity is experienced in the balancing of openings - doors, windows, stone work and detailings on the individual

homes. Viewed as a series, the structures allow for even spacing between buildings. The criteria extends further to a consideration of roof forms, their number and pitch. A common feature of the area, the multiplicity of roofs (usually a minimum of three angles and shapes) would be maintained in new construction. This provision would greatly aide a new structure in blending with its antecedants.

Horizontal projections, the ratios between the facade area of the building and the additions such as wings, carports and greenhouses, also received criteria consideration. Many of the homes, particularly the traditional styles that assumed regular boxy shapes, have expansions to the main structure. This provision would require that new additions would follow standard ratios and encourages new construction to consider this distinctively Swiss trait. Additional criteria consider height-width ratios, building material (primarily stone or masonry) and color, porch and entrance definitions, general detailing and embellishment work.

Applicants requiring Certificate of Appropriateness from the Planning Commission for work on Swiss are advised to consider carefully the twelve preservation criteria (The Swiss Zoning Ordinance, PD63-H follows this report. See section 4, Preservation Criteria). The Historic Landmark Committee carefully considers each case and recommends approved action based on these stated criteria.

## V. THE DESIGNATION OF THE DISTRICT

The designation of Swiss Avenue was, not by any means, a foregone conclusion. The picture of Swiss as it entered into the 1970's was one of unsettlement. The original deed covenants placed by Munger were coming due. The area was zoned for high-rise residential. Boarding houses and a transient population were commonly in evidence throughout the area.

The Design Division, Department of Urban Planning, acting at the request of the City Council, the Planning Commission and the residents themselves, conducted a study and attitudinal survey (see Swiss Avenue Survey Report of the Urban Design Division, Dallas, Department of Planning and Urban Development, 1972). The report demonstrated a community desire for historic preservation. Advice in preservation techniques, a new field for Dallas, was obtained through members of the Architecture Department of the University of Texas, The Texas Historical Commission and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This provided a helpful start, but much of the final product was unique, developed especially for Swiss Avenue. Meeting with area residents, who organized to form The Historic Preservation League, the Design staff developed the necessary machinery to halt the further decline of the neighborhood. The district became reality on July 9, 1973 with City Council adoption of PD63-H -The Swiss Avenue Historic District. Generally there was widespread support from the citizenry, both within the area as well as the larger community. There were, however, dissenters. Several objected to the new zoning ordinance and its preservation criteria, stating this constituted a "taking of property." One case, "a landmark for landmarks" reached the Texas Supreme Court on July 10, 1974. Here an appeals court decision was upheld ruling that the City of Dallas

could exercise through its use of the police power a rezoning of neighborhoods. The litigant argued unsuccessfully that a building permit had been withheld prior to the downzoning preventing construction of a proposed high-rise apartment complex.

A second example involving a citizen testing the historic district concept was reviewed by the City Council. The preservation criteria as developed in the Swiss Ordinance served as the Council basis for the rejection of a Certificate of Appropriateness application. The work adjudged to be in violation had been previously denied by the Planning Commission on the recommendation of the Historic Committee.

The Landmark Committee has reviewed . . . numerous applications for Certificates of Appropriateness since the historic designation was approved by the City Council. The pattern of review has been extremely successful in obtaining expert advice prior to actual construction. The Landmark Committee considers this review one of its major responsibilities under the enabling legislation. Under the Committee's sponsorship, architects, landscape designers, planners and other professionals offer suggestions and direction that conform to historic-architectural precedents yet satisfy the applicants needs and requirements.

Residents are encouraged to consult with the Landmark Committee prior to considering any major undertaking.

Of course, the many accomplishments effected on and around Swiss would not have been possible without the support of the area residents. Originally conceived as a block association, The Historic Preservation League has turned its attentions from Swiss itself, to an action program for the revitalization of the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, much

valuable assistance has been tendered the preservation movement by the League throughout Dallas and the North Texas area.

## VI. THE FUTURE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Predicting future growth and development patterns is perhaps as difficult as restoring an ancient wood frame house. One need not further proceed without first having obtained a solid foundation. This firm underpinning, despite recent successes, is still in the developmental stages. Insured by the Preservation Ordinance and the rezoning, residents have begun to demonstrate their confidence by reinvesting in the improvement of their homes. It is estimated that since designation over one million dollars of local capital has been generated. Residents are secure in the knowledge that their area will retain its present use and appearance. Boarding houses, once so numerous, are now steadily declining in numbers. Of the 97 houses located on Swiss itself (within the designated area) 41 have or are in the process of undergoing total restoration. Another thirteen more houses have had interior or exterior painting. It is estimated that property values have doubled, in some cases, tripled. All this within the period of city designation. A similar resurgence has occurred in all other parts of the designated area including Bryan, La Vista, Live Oak. Much, however, remains to be done.

The future success of this and other similar inner city projects is closely tied to the availability of capita. Money for mortgages as well as home improvements must be readily accessible. At present, especially during this turbulent period of economic uncertainty, money through private institutions is difficult to obtain. Planning for tomorrow must consider fiscal alternatives. The Design Division is currently studying the feasibility of a City revolving fund for preservation of historic

sites and districts. Perhaps with the additional funds created by revenue sharing, this plan can be realized.

Further incentives in the form of tax abatements and concessions should be available to owners of property within an historic area. Many states have this provision, Texas does not, but the recently abortive Constitutional Convention has indicated a strong sentiment in favor of preserving historic resources through special inducements and considerations. Private banks and lending institutions should be strongly encouraged to actively participate in inner city conservation, preservation and revitalization. Incentive plans should be offered by government to further encourage and insure private investments. Local lending institutions should be educated to appreciate their civic responsibilities in this area.

Virtually surrounded by multi-family zoning, the Swiss Historic District has been defined as an area of single family and duplex residences. It is to be hoped and strongly recommended that this use will remain and future variances, if granted, will respect the low density residential nature of the area. Primary attention should be directed toward encouraging residential use. If not economically feasible, however, adaptive recycling of these mansions for such activities as museums, art galleries, libraries, religious or fraternal organizations might be considered appropriate, provided these activities are not clustered (only one variance of this type each block is legally permissible) and adequate thought is given toward preserving the predominately residential character. Uses that will attract large crowds, concentrated parking and traffic difficulties; excessive noise and/or odoriferous materials and other

annoyances that will detract from the setting, should be discouraged.

Lower Munger Place, the predecessor of Swiss as the original enclave of fine homes in the area, can similarly be saved. Presently zoned (multiple family MF-2) for the most part, a down-zoning to single family and duplex would be desirable to prevent further intrusions of apartment developments. City code enforcement should be strictly observed. City services including sanitation, streets and roads, park maintenance and a modernizing of the existing educational facilities must be done.

Many of the fine homes in the area that would have been eligible for landmark consideration have either been demolished, irretrievably altered or in an advanced state of deterioration. Area-wide designation, therefore, is really not practical at this stage. However, certain selected sites and blocks of exceptional historic character, could be designated historic landmarks and thus, preserved for future generations. Perhaps the future of the area rests with a conservation district zoning. This classification implies all the qualities of preservation with the absence of the strict adherence to historic authenticity. The predetermined design criteria would serve as the basis for the zoning. This concept has been successfully employed in several states as well as abroad, with dramatic results. At present, conservation zoning has no precedent in the state. Dallas could become the pioneer city. Certainly if enacted, areas of East Dallas could qualify as deserving of early attentions.

Swiss Avenue exists today as a symptom--a positive sign that inner city living can be both pleasant as well as economically feasible. Hopefully, an entire area resurgence can be effected with the Swiss District serving



as the necessary initial impetus.

This, then, is Swiss Avenue. The individual homes attractive, comfortable, pleasing--but not a Blenheim Palace, Monticello, Taliesin among them.

Swiss is precisely what it purports to have been--a planned development for wealthy scions of Dallas. Citizens who often lived active public lives and to whom privacy on the urban scale was appreciated. If one hopes to see distant vistas, homes hidden by far off hills and landscaping, Swiss will be a major disappointment. Its beauty lies in its urbanity, integrity and harmony. These are the qualities that will be preserved for future generations to study and enjoy.