

**Dallas Landmark Commission  
Landmark Nomination Form**

**1. Name**

historic: Wheatley Place  
and/or common:  
date: October 14, 1999

**2. Location**

address: multiple properties  
location/neighborhood: Bounded by Warren Avenue, McDermott Avenue,  
Meadow Street, and Malcolm X Boulevard

block:                      lot:                      land survey:                      tract size:

**3. Current Zoning**

current zoning: R-5(A), NS (A), CR

**4. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	<u>   </u> museum
<u>  </u> <i>x</i> district	<u>   </u> Public	<u>  </u> <i>x</i> occupied	<u>   </u> agricultural	<u>  </u> <i>x</i> park
<u>   </u> building(s)	<u>   </u> Private	<u>  </u> <i>x</i> unoccupied	<u>  </u> <i>x</i> commercial	<u>  </u> <i>x</i> residence
<u>   </u> structure	<u>  </u> <i>x</i> both	<u>   </u> work in progress	<u>  </u> <i>x</i> educational	<u>   </u> religious
<u>   </u> site	<b>Public</b>	<b>Accessibility</b>	<u>   </u> entertainment	<u>   </u> scientific
<u>   </u> object	<b>Acquisition</b>	<u>   </u> yes:restricted	<u>   </u> government	<u>   </u> transportation
	<u>   </u> in progress	<u>  </u> <i>x</i> yes:unrestricted	<u>   </u> industrial	<u>   </u> other, specify
	<u>   </u> being considered	<u>   </u> no	<u>   </u> military	<u>   </u>

**5. Ownership**

Current Owner: Various  
Contact: Robert Foster, Wheatley Place Neighborhood Association Phone: 214-421-7119  
Address: 2806 Tanner                      City: Dallas    State: TX    Zip: 75215

**6. Form Preparation**

Date: 5/94, 11/96, 11/99  
Name & Title: Mamie McKnight, Black Dallas Remembered, Inc.  
Organization: Designation Task Force  
Contact: Angela Calvin, Department of Planning and Development Phone: 214-670-1497

**7. Representation on Existing Surveys**

Alexander Survey (citywide) local state national X National Register  
H.P.L. Survey (CBD) A B C D Recorded TX Historic Ldmk  
Oak Cliff TX Archaeological Ldmk  
Victorian Survey  
Dallas Historic Resources Survey, Phase IV X high medium low

For Office Use Only

Date Rec'd: Survey Verified: Y N by: Field Check by: Petitions Needed: Y N  
Nomination: Archaeological Site Structure(s) Structure & Site District

**8. Historic Ownership**

original owner: Various  
significant later owner(s):

**9. Construction Dates**

original: 1916-present  
alterations/additions:

**10. Architect**

original construction: Various  
alterations/additions:

**11. Site Features**

natural:  
urban design:

**12. Physical Description**

Condition, check one:

\_\_\_ excellent      \_\_\_ Deteriorated      \_\_\_ unaltered      Check one:  
\_\_\_ x good          \_\_\_ Ruins              \_\_\_ altered          \_\_\_ original site  
\_\_\_ fair              \_\_\_ Unexposed              \_\_\_ moved(date \_\_\_)

Describe present and original (if known) physical appearance. Include style(s) of architecture, current condition and relationship to surrounding fabric (structures, objects, etc). Elaborate on pertinent materials used and style(s) of architectural detailing, embellishments and site details.

[Empty box for physical description details]

Wheatley Place Historic District is an intact neighborhood of early 20<sup>th</sup> century bungalows that is significant as one of the first and most successful residential subdivisions developed specifically for black families in Dallas. Situated in South Dallas, Wheatley Place lies between the Trinity River to the west, the State Fairgrounds to the east, and four blocks south of Martin Luther King,

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Jr. Boulevard (which was the route of the Forest Avenue crosstown streetcar line), and north of Oakland Cemetery. Platted in 1916 by Alex Camp, Wheatley Place was a planned residential community complete with a neighborhood school and park. It became a model for other additions geared to black clientele in South Dallas and enjoyed a status of its own within the black community as an exclusive residential neighborhood similar to those offered to white families in Highland Park and Munger Place (National Register Nominating Report).

Wheatley Place is characterized by a high percentage of historic dwellings that have minor, reversible alterations and many that are unchanged. The District is a L-shaped area, the equivalent of 29 blocks. Wheatley Place's straight streets form a rectangular grid with blocks of varying sizes. In the Wheatley Place Addition, lots are 50 feet wide by 110 feet deep. Other additions in the area have similar lot dimensions. The topography of the area is flat, and indigenous stands of post oak trees are located west and north of the Wheatley Place Addition. Wheatley appears to have been cleared for development with new, private landscaping initiated at the time of development and evolving since. Yards and public areas are carefully maintained. Concrete sidewalks and curbs are found throughout the District, with most public improvements originating in 1930s Works Progress Administration projects. "WPA 1933" is embossed in some curbs in the Wheatley Place Addition. The neighborhood's primary historic institution is the Wheatley Elementary School (a Dallas Landmark).

Most of the structures in the Wheatley Place Historic District have Craftsman-inspired detailing and bungalow forms. The historic houses in the neighborhood are of frame construction with either 117 siding or weatherboard siding, although many have been sheathed with asbestos, vinyl, or aluminum siding in recent years. Houses constructed in the 1940s and later often have drop siding or synthetic siding. Brick structural components are almost exclusively limited to foundation supports, porch piers, or chimneys. Tapered, wooden, Craftsman-influenced columns are typical on unaltered dwellings, while wrought-iron or cast-metal supports are commonly found as replacements for original porch supports. Splayed wooden foundation sheathing is a typical design feature. Most houses retain their wood, double hung windows although some have been replaced with modern metal encased windows, and a handful have 1950s-1960s "picture window" alterations. Composition shingle roofing is used almost universally on both gable and hip roof forms, and most houses have a Craftsman-style expression.

The Wheatley Place Historic District has 526 structures of which 513 are dwellings, four are institutional, eight are commercial, and one is a contributing infrastructure element-WPA curbs. Three hundred ninety-six properties, or 75 percent, are categorized as contributing to the significance of the District, and 133 substantially altered and post-1941 structures are considered non-contributing elements (4, p. 132).

### ***13. Historical Significance***

*Statement of historical and cultural significance. Include: cultural influences, special events and important personages, influences on neighborhood, on the city, etc.*

Wheatley Place Historic District is an intact neighborhood of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century bungalows and cottages that is significant as one of the first and most successful residential subdivisions developed specifically for black families in Dallas. Situated in South Dallas and platted in 1916 by Alex Camp, Wheatley Place was a planned residential community complete with a neighborhood school and park. As an exclusive residential neighborhood, it became a model for other additions geared to black clientele in South Dallas. It was an important and unique part of Dallas' suburban development from 1916-1940 (4, p. 134).

The origin and development of the Wheatley Place Historic District is closely associated with two older black communities-The Prairie, a post Civil War black farming community to the north of the District and Queen City, a turn-of-the-century community to the west. The Prairie was near Central downtown Dallas in the area of the present Farmer's Market. Queen City was well outside the city limits and was separated from Dallas by a large tract of undeveloped land belonging to Mrs. W.A. Warren, the widow of Aaron C. Camp, a partner of William H. Gaston in Dallas' first banking enterprise. She later married James Warren, a South Dallas farmer-turned-real estate developer.

When Mrs. Warren's South Dallas lands began to develop, about 1902, the advent of improved city services and streetcar access had an appreciable effect on the adjacent tracts of land in her South Park Addition (1888; replatted 1902) (4, Section 81). In response to increased development in the area, the Myrtle Street carline was drawn into far South Dallas about 1914 making it possible for residents to commute to the city for work. Shortly afterward, in 1916, Alex Camp, Mrs. Warren's son by her first husband, submitted the plat for Wheatley Place to the south of the Warren lands. It was recorded in county records on May 29, 1916 (see attached plat).

Wheatley Place was named for the 18<sup>th</sup> Century black American poet, Phyllis Wheatley. At age seven, Phillis (born 1754) was kidnapped and brought to America from Senegal, in Africa. As a slave to a tailor, John Wheatley and his wife in Boston, the Wheatleys educated her and in less than two years she had mastered English and later Latin and Greek. She published the second book of poetry ever published by a woman in from America. Phillis Wheatley died in 1784 (9, p. 21-22).

Wheatley Place was promoted in the same manner as many other contemporaneous subdivisions: with city services and sidewalks and in close proximity to streetcar service. Building permit information shows that African American contractors constructed many structures in Wheatley Place.

- B.F. Martin, a carpenter, constructed 3715 Dunbar between 1921 and 1922.
- Spenser Gill constructed 3714 Dunbar, owned by M.C. Conley, in 1920 and 3622

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- Hampton, now Havana, owned by Alex Camp (building permit issued on August 27, 1920) (7).
- Noah Penn, a carpenter, constructed 3526 Meyers, owned by Marcus Johnson (permit issued on April 12, 1921), 3516 Hampton (permit issued August 23, 1921, and 3623 Hampton, owned by Tom Daley (permit issued September 30, 1921) (8).

Although Camp continued to be involved in its development through the early 1920s, Wash Russell, a black resident of Wheatley Place, actively promoted the sale of the lots and houses in the subdivision by 1918.

Russell advertised Wheatley Place as the following:

For Colored People. An ideal addition with 33 completed homes and 100 lots sold. All streets at city grade, cement sidewalks, city water and sewerage, complete bath room in every house. Easy monthly payments. I want you to see it.

While the amenities of Wheatley Place were not on par with exclusive Munger Place, neither was it a semi-rural community of farmers. The lifestyle of Wheatley Place afforded its residents was very similar to the suburban ideal promulgated throughout Dallas. Many of the early residents of Wheatley Place were plumbers, porters, and laborers, which reflected the lack of professional and skilled jobs available to blacks in the area. However, as Wheatley Place developed, a number of professionals bought or built homes in the subdivision.

One of the first families to move into the area was the Joe Smith family (3710 Meadow) from the Booker T. Addition north of downtown Dallas. Mrs. Vallie Jo Smith Estell, daughter of the Smith's recalled that "when we first moved to the area we could look from the corner of [the] house to the Oakland Cemetery because there were no houses to block our view." (1, p. 44) By the mid-1930s, Wheatley Place was home to a number of influential black citizens. D.B. Garner, a businessman and dietitian who built the first home in Wheatley Place (3703 Dunbar Street), was one of the charter members of the Negro Chamber of Commerce. John B. Rice (3603 Dunbar Street), a teacher at the Booker T. Washington High School, was editor of the Dallas Express and Executive Director of the Negro Chamber of Commerce. Herbert Newell Gibson was one of Dallas' first black mail carriers (3725 Havana). And Dr. Harold Wendell Lang, Sr., father of Dr. Harold Lang, Jr., and a noted educator, scholar, and historian, resided at 2830 McDermott (6, p. 293).

In the WPA Writer's Project of 1940, Wheatley Place was described as "among the better of the Negro residential areas in Dallas". The Mt. Carmel Baptist Church and the Providence Baptist Church were two of the early churches in the community. Miss McMillian's kindergarten is recalled

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with fondness by many of the children who grew up in the neighborhood during the 1930s and 1940s. It was located in a small Holiness Church next door to the Providence Baptist Church. It was a well-organized kindergarten with many special programs for children in the community (1, p. 44).

Wheatley Elementary School (1929) and adjacent Wheatley Park, originally the playground of the original school (1920) and a part of the long-range plan for Wheatley Place, are integral elements of the district and were attractive amenities. As a result of annexation, the Queen City Colored School became a Dallas Public School in 1920. It was rebuilt as the Phyllis Wheatley School in 1928 on Metropolitan.

Today, Phyllis Wheatley provides education for grades first through eighth until September 1971. In 1971, grades fifth through eighth were moved to James Madison, leaving kindergarten through fourth grade at Wheatley. The 1976 Court Order changed Wheatley to a kindergarten through third grade, with grades fourth, fifth, and sixth going to Alex Sanger; grades seventh and eighth going to Robert T. Hill Middle School. The ninth through twelfth grades returned to the neighborhood high school. Many outstanding students have passed through this fine educational institution. Wheatley's students through the years have made contributions to this city, state, and nation in all professional areas. Traditionally, Phyllis Wheatley has been very high scholastically. This same tradition is reflected in the most recent test scores (5, p. 3).

During the 1920s, the Wheatley Place Social Club had a regular column reporting its activities in the Dallas Express. As homes were built, the area became very popular for social events in the home, including teas, receptions, and weddings. The growth of the black community led to the abandonment of neighborhoods north of Warren by their white occupants. The subdivision pushed the limits of the "color line" drawn roughly along Warren Avenue by members of the South Dallas Improvement League, a white neighborhood organization that tried to contain black development south of the line. Black families moved into those areas during the 1940s and 1950s until all of South Dallas eventually became identified with the black community. Today the Wheatley Place Historic District is a remarkable intact neighborhood of similarly styled bungalows and cottages dating from about 1916 through the mid-1930s. Historically, Wheatley Place remains a symbol of the aspirations and achievements of Dallas' black citizens in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and, as such, is worthy of recognition and preservation.

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*14. Bibliography*

1. Black Dallas Remembered, Inc. African American Families and Settlements of Dallas, Volume II, 1990.
2. Dallas County Records
3. Dallas Dispatch, July 19, 1918.
4. Hardy-Heck-Moore, Historic Resource of Dallas, 1990.
5. Unpublished Document. A Brief History Queen City and Wheatley Place Communities in Conjunction with the Beginning of Wheatley Elementary School. 1989.
6. Works Project Administration. The WPA Dallas Guide and History, Dallas 1936-1942.
7. 1920 City of Dallas Directory
8. 1921 City of Dallas Directory
9. Phyllis Wheatley, by Merle Richmond, published by Chelsea House Publishers, New York, New York, 1988. page 21-22.

**15. Attachments**

*District or Site Map* \_\_\_\_\_ *Additional descriptive material*  
*Site Plan* \_\_\_\_\_ *Footnotes*  
*Photos (historic & current)* \_\_\_\_\_ *Other:* \_\_\_\_\_

**16. Inventory of Structures-Historic District Only (Page \_\_\_ of \_\_\_)**

*Please complete this form for each structure in a proposed historic district*

**a. Location and Name**

**b. Development History**

Original owner:

Architect/builder:

Construction/alteration dates:

**c. Architectural Significance**

Dominant style:

Condition:

Alterations:

**d. Category**

*Contributing* \_\_\_\_\_  
*excellent example of an*  
*architectural style that is typical of*  
*or integral to the district; retaining*  
*essential integrity of design*

*Compatible* \_\_\_\_\_  
*supportive of the district in age,*  
*style and massing but is not*  
*representative of the significant style,*  
*period and detailing, or area of*  
*significance typical of the district*

*Non-contributing* \_\_\_\_\_  
*intrusive; detracts from the character*  
*of the district*

**e. Statement of Significance**

This landmark designation will recognize and honor Wheatley Place as an early African American neighborhood in the City of Dallas.



## 17. Designation Criteria

**History, heritage and culture:**  
Represents the historical development, ethnic heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state, or country.

**Historic event:** Location of or association with the site of a significant historic event.

**Significant persons:** Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city, state, or country.

**Architecture:** Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, landscape design, method of construction, exceptional craftsmanship, architectural innovation, or contains details which represent folk or ethnic art.

**Architect or master builder:**  
Represents the work of an architect, designer or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or country.

**Historic context:** Relationship to other distinctive buildings, sites, or areas which are eligible for preservation based on historic, cultural, or architectural characteristics.

**Unique visual feature:** Unique location of singular physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city that is a source of pride or cultural significance.

**Archeological:** Archeological or paleontological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest.

**National and state recognition:**  
Eligible of or designated as a National Historic Landmark, Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, State Archeological Landmark, American Civil Engineering Landmark, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Historic education:** Represents an era of architectural, social, or economic history that allows an understanding of how the place or area was used by past generations.

3700 OAKLAND AVE: A Brief History

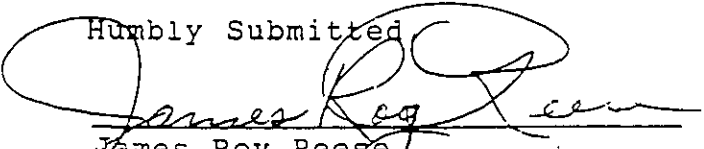
This building(3700-02) Oakland was designed specifically for the negro population of the Phyllis Wheatley Place Addition and other black neighborhoods. This structure, although nothing elaborate, was designed for its obviously difficult futuristic task. The building consists of one large building, divided into two(2) separate parts, therefore it has maintained two(2) separate addresses. This building was constructed around 1945. The building has maintained its original construction integrity from March 1945 to this present day(June 19,2000).

This building was designed and built solely for the purpose of meeting the business and social needs of The City of Dallas negro populace.

Joe Salverno built this building in 1945. It was designed as a cafe & club. The first proprietor for "The Last Word Cafe", as it was called, was Leonard Cooksey. In 1946, Hugo Lambert, became the new owner of The Last Word Cafe. Dave Andres became owner of property at 3700-02 Oakland Ave. in 1963.

This building has had many different business titles, but it serves a vital role in this neighborhood and the entire City of Dallas.

Humbly Submitted



James Roy Reese  
4101 Colonial Ave.  
Dallas, Texas 75215  
(214-565-9240)home  
(214-428-2252)work  
June 19, 2000

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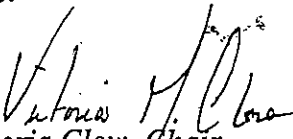
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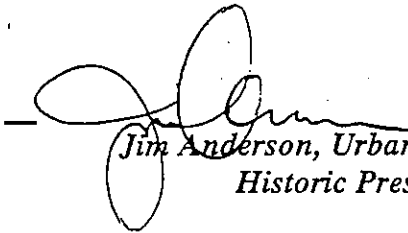
**Recommendation**

*The Designation Task Force requests the Landmark Commission to deem this nominated landmark meritorious of designation as outlined in Chapter 51 and Chapter 51A, Dallas Development Code.*

*Further, the Designation Task Force endorses the Preservation Criteria, policy recommendations and landmark boundary as presented by the Department of Planning and Development.*

*Date:*

  
*Victoria Clow, Chair  
Designation Task Force*

  
*Jim Anderson, Urban Planner  
Historic Preservation*