

# **SONS OF HERMANN HOME**

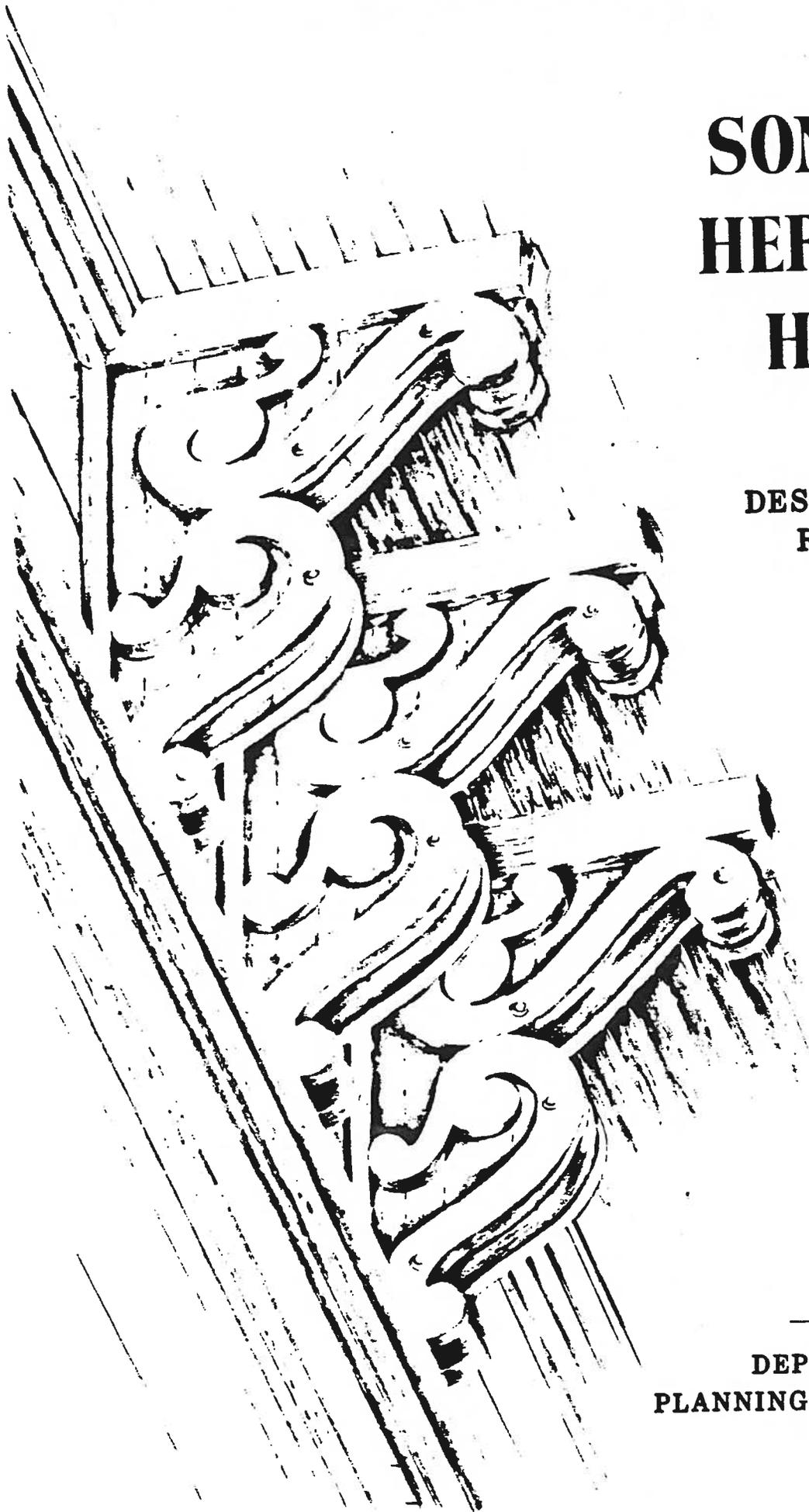


**DESIGNATION  
REPORT**

**CITY OF  
DALLAS**

---

**DEPARTMENT OF  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**



HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION FORM  
CITY OF DALLAS LANDMARK COMMITTEE

1. NAME:

a) Historic name of property Sons of Hermann Home b) Common Name of property: Same

2. LOCATION:

a) City address: 3414 Elm Street d) Land survey name: Gaston Addition, John Grigsby League

b) Location city: Deep Ellum e) Size of tract: Tract One: 10,000.00 sq. ft.  
Tract Two: 1,870.84 sq. ft.

c) Neighborhood name: \_\_\_\_\_ Block, lot, tract: Tract One: Lot 11, Block 832; Tract Two: Portion of Lot 12, Block 832

3. CURRENT ZONING: PD #178

4. CLASSIFICATION (CHECK ALL APPROPRIATE):

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Acquisition	<input type="checkbox"/> Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transp.
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other

5. CURRENT OWNER: Members of Sons of Hermann PHONE: 214/747-4422  
ADDRESS: 3414 Elm Street, Dallas STATE: TX ZIP: 75246

6. FORM PREPARED BY:

a) NAME AND TITLE: Diane Camp

b) ORGANIZATION: Historic Preservation League/Landmark Committee

c) CONTACT PERSON: Same PHONE: 214/328-9251

7. REPRESENTATION ON EXISTING SURVEYS (CHECK ALL APPROPRIATE IF KNOWN):

ALEXANDER SURVEY (CITY WIDE)  LOCAL  STATE  NATIONAL  
 BEASLEY H.P.L. SURVEY (CBD)  A  B  C  D  
 EMRICH SURVEY (CITY WIDE)  STATE MARKER  
 MASON SURVEY (OAK CLIFF)  NATIONAL REGISTER  
 VICTORIAN STRUCTURE SURVEY  
 OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

8. FORM RECEIVED: DATE: 9/23/86 ; SURVEY VERIFIED: Y ; BY: RE

9. FORM FIELD CHECKED: DATE: 9/23/86 ; BY: RE

10. TYPE OF NOMINATION:

ARCHEOLOGICAL  STRUCTURE(S)  DISTRICT  
 SITE ONLY  STRUCTURE AND SITE  PETITIONS NEEDED

11. NAME OF ORIGINAL OWNER OF STRUCTURE(\*): The main structure has always been owned by the Sons of Hermann.

12. DATE(S) OF ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION AND MAJOR ALTERATIONS(\*): Main structure built from 1-14-11 through 4-12-11 (work receipts).

13. NAME OF ARCHITECTS/CONTRACTORS/OTHERS INVOLVED IN BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION(\*):

a) ORIGINAL: Architect - William Martens; Contractor - C.M. McNatt

b) ALTERATIONS: Original siding removed & replaced with asbestos shingles

14. NATURAL/URBAN DESIGN FEATURES OF SITE: \_\_\_\_\_

5. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Condition:

excellent

good

fair

Check one:

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

unaltered

altered

Check one:

original site

moved date \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIBE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE; INCLUDE STYLE(S) OF ARCHITECTURE, CURRENT CONDITION, AND RELATIONSHIP TO SURROUNDING FABRIC (STRUCTURES). PLEASE ELABORATE ON PERTINENT MATERIALS USED AND STYLE(S) OF ARCHITECTURAL DETAILING FOR ROOFS, WALLS, WINDOWS, DOORS, AND ANY OTHER BUILDING OR SITE EMBELLISHMENTS OR DECORATIONS.

Perhaps the last remaining wood-frame commercial building in downtown Dallas, the structure is two-stories, a simple rectangle in plan, with a one-story extension to the rear. The front facade is symmetrical about the entrance, five bays wide with pairs of one-over-one double-hung windows. The paired entry doors are set in a recessed vestibule and topped with a large diamond pattern transom light. The main building has a prominent overhanging eave supported on sets of triple ornate brackets. The original narrow wood siding of the exterior walls was removed in the 1950s and replaced with painted asbestos shingles. The main structure is topped with an original low mansard roof, surfaced with composition shingles and surrounded by a high parapet.

The interior of the building remains relatively intact. Original features worthy of note include: tall beaded wainscoting, imported German bar, double stairway to the second floor, stained beamed and beaded wood ceiling in the ballroom, and Craftsman-style open ceiling brackets in the 1914 bowling alley.

16. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE, INCLUDE: HISTORY, CULTURAL INFLUENCES, SPECIAL EVENTS AND IMPORTANT PERSONAGES, INFLUENCES ON NEIGHBORHOOD, NEIGHBORHOOD'S INFLUENCE ON THE CITY, ETC. (\*)

The Sons of Hermann Home, probably the last remaining wood-frame commercial building in downtown Dallas, has served as the local headquarters and lodge hall for the German fraternal organization whose name it bears since its construction in 1911. The Sons of Hermann long served the German-speaking community of north Texas, providing social, benevolent and educational opportunities to several generations of families seeking to preserve their heritage.

The lot on which the Sons of Hermann Home is located was part of a large tract of land patented from Sam Houston to John Grigsby in 1842. In 1854, this land was conveyed to William B. Miller, a prosperous land owner who is perhaps best known for his antebellum mansion, Millermore, located in old City Park. Eventually the land came to be owned by William H. Gaston and in 1882 Ed Bernier purchased Lot 11 of the Gaston Addition to the City of Dallas. On August 6, 1910, the property was sold to the Home of the Sons of Hermann for \$6,500.00. In 1947, a second tract was purchased, being a portion of Lot 12 contiguous to Lot 11.

The Order of the Sons of Hermann is a German fraternal organization sponsoring social and benevolent activities that helped preserve German traditions while easing the transition of the German immigrant into American Society. In the late 1800's there was an influx of German immigrants to the State of Texas. They settled in Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Galveston, and Dallas. Especially in Dallas and Austin these immigrants, because of their educational background and sense of organization, tended to exert an influence on local life greater than their percentage of the population might have warranted.<sup>1</sup> Several prominent Germans can be found as some of the early members and officers of the Sons of Hermann. Charles F. Altermann was an early newspaper publisher of the "Texas Volksblatt" and the "Nord Texas Presse."<sup>2</sup> Besides being known as a prosperous businessman, Simon Mayer opened a beer garden on Elm Street which housed the first zoo of sorts in Dallas, open to the public, free of charge.<sup>3</sup>

The Order of the Sons of Hermann is headquartered in San Antonio where the Grand Lodge was established in 1890.<sup>4</sup> In Dallas, the local lodges did not have their own meeting hall until July 25, 1910, when a Charter was filed in the Office of the Secretary of State declaring that:

members [of the Sons of Hermann] desirous of possessing a home for the local lodges of our Order in the City of Dallas, hereby associate ourselves into a private corporation under the name and style "Hermannsoehne-Heimat in Dallas, Texas" meaning in English "Sons of Hermann's Home of Dallas, Texas". The purpose of the corporation is to acquire a suitable building site within the city limits of Dallas and the erection thereon of a building adapted to the proper work of the Order, providing therein meeting rooms for the meetings of the local lodges and accessories.

As mentioned above the original land was purchased in 1910 and the hall was constructed in 1911. Four lodges met in the new hall: Uhland Lodge No. 22, Columbia No. 66, Fortuna No. 119, and Germania No. 5.

Besides the lodge meetings social activities included dances, fall festivals, playing bunco (a betting game involving dice), Christmas parties for the children, and bowling. A bowling alley was added to the building in 1914-1915. A popular sport in America as well as Germany, the lanes at the Sons of Hermann accommodated 10 pins (American) as well as nine pins (German). Ninepins is still played in Germany today. The pins are put in a diamond formation, the object being to knock down all the pins except the center one.<sup>5</sup> Even though the bowling alley has been remodeled into a meeting room there is a back room where one can still see the exposed ends of the lanes showing the indentations for the pins. Many of the members recall the days when they had to serve their time as "pin boy." The difficulty of obtaining pin boys and the availability of commercial bowling alleys with unlimited lanes (Sons of Hermann had only three lanes) eventually led to the abandonment of the bowling alley.

At least since 1937, the building has been the weekly rehearsal hall for the Frohsinn Singing Society, a men's chorus, and the Schuhplattenns, a dancing group. In existence since 1877 the Frohsinn Singing Society brought Germans together to express their happiness and sorrows through music and song which offered these transplanted citizens relief from loneliness and homesickness.<sup>6</sup>

The benevolent and educational aspects of the organization include providing life insurance for its members, fund-raising activities, and the housing of a summer school during the early years. It is thought that the policy of providing insurance came about as a result of concerned members contributing to the aid of a widow amongst their group, either monetarily or emotionally. From the mid-1920s to the early forties summer school was held for the members' children to learn German. It was feared that the younger generation growing up and being educated in English would lose touch with their heritage.

Around 1943 the Sons of Hermann stopped speaking German at their meetings and persons of other European lineage have since become members. Today the lodge is headquarters for the Columbia Lodge No. 66 and Dallas Lodge No. 22. The hall is available for rent for meetings, weddings, and parties, the barroom features an enormous authentic mirrored bar which is as old as the building. In its May 1986 issue, D Magazine declared it one of "The Ten True Neighborhood Bars Left in Dallas." The hall has served as the setting for numerous films and television programs, including: "Dallas: The Early Years", "The Jesse Owens Story", "Backstreet" and "RoboCop". KNON Radio holds its fund-raising parties there the first Saturday night of every month. Sunday mornings the hall is rented for non-denominational church services. The public is also welcome to attend Songwriter's Sanctuary each Friday evening. At these events poets, singers, and artists are given 15 minutes of free microphone time to present their original compositions before a live audience.

17. ATTACHMENTS (CHECK ALL APPROPRIATE):

DISTRICT OR SITE MAP  
 SITE PLAN  
 ANNOTATIONS(\*)

SLIDES, PHOTOS, ETC. (EACH FACADE)  
 ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTIVE MATERIAL  
 BIBLIOGRAPHY

# PRESERVATION MERIT

- A. Character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Dallas, State of Texas, or the United States.
- B. Location as the site of a significant historical event.
- C. Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city.
- D. Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, or historical heritage of the city.
- E. Portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.
- F. Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.
- G. Identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city.
- H. Embodiments of elements of architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation.
- I. Relationship to other distinctive buildings, sites, or areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on historic, cultural, or architectural motif.
- J. Unique location of singular physical characteristics representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the city.
- K. Archeological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric value.
- L. Value as an aspect of community sentiment or public pride.

# RECOMMENDATION

The Designation Task Force respectfully requests the City of Dallas Landmark Committee to deem this proposed landmark meritorious of historic recognition as outlined in City Ordinance 51-4.501.

Further, this task force endorses the preservation criteria, policy recommendations and landmark boundary as presented by the Department of Planning and Development staff.

Date: October 1, 1986

Ron Emrich  
Ron. Emrich  
Senior Planner, Historic Preservation

Bob Canavan  
Bob Canavan, Chairman  
Designation Task Force