

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Levi-Topletz House

Other Name/Site Number: THC Survey File: Phase IV-South Dallas DAL/DA 9

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 2603 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard

City/Town: Dallas

Not for Publication: N/A

State: TX County: Dallas Code: 113 Zip Code: 75214

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
1	buildings sites structures objects
1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historic & Architectural Resources of East and South Dallas

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State of Federal Agency or Bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is

- entered in the National Register see continuation sheet.
determined eligible for the National Register see continuation sheet.
determined not eligible for the National Register
removed from the National Register
other (explain):

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: Domestic

Sub: Single Dwelling

Current: Domestic

Sub: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals

Late 19th & Early 20th Century American Movements

Other Description

Italian Renaissance

Prairie School

Materials: foundation brick

walls brick

roof tile

other concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

 x See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: ca. 1914

Significant Dates: ca. 1914

Significance Person: N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Overbeck, H. A.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

 x See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Historic Context List of References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone/Easting/Northing Zone/Easting/Northing

A	B
C	D

Verbal Boundary Description

Addition: Edgewood Block: 14/1291 Lot: 10 & west 30' lot 11

Boundary Justification

Property includes area historically associated with structure.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Daniel Hardy, Project Director

Terri Myers, Historian

Organization: Daniel Hardy, Preservation Consultant

Date: July, 1991

Street & Number: 2112 Rio Grande St.

Telephone: 512-478-8014

City or Town: Austin

State: TX Zip: 78705

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 7

Levi-Topletz House

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The Levi-Topletz House is a large 2 1/2-story brick domestic building at 2603 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK). It is an architectural hybrid, displaying elements characteristic of both the Italian Renaissance and Prairie School styles. The house has a modified rectangular plan and a box-like massing with brick exterior walls. The low-pitched hipped roof is covered with red ceramic tiles, and a balconied 1-story portico dominates the facade. The house is in a mixed residential/commercial area that includes a scattering of similarly detailed and scaled residences, along with many post-World War II commercial buildings. The house is on a corner lot that slopes toward MLK. The Levi-Topletz House is in good condition and remains virtually unchanged since its completion about 1914.

The Levi-Topletz House stands at the northeast intersection of MLK and Atlanta Street. The land is elevated above street level and slopes gently toward MLK. The house, according to Sanborn maps, has brick-veneer exterior walls over wood-frame construction. A broad, low-pitched hipped roof with red ceramic tile crowns the structure. The house has a modified rectangular building footprint.

The front faces southeast onto MLK. The first floor has a 1-story portico with massive brick corner piers and red-tile pent roofs on each side. The corner piers are capped with cast-stone coping and concrete planters -- details suggestive of the Prairie School style. First-floor windows are set within flat arches and include groupings of three separate double-hung windows with single-light sashes. The middle windows are broader than those to the side. Fixed transoms cap the windows, and the overall effect creates a horizontal emphasis. The second-floor fenestration echoes that of the ground level. A single door with a fanlight transom opens onto the balcony atop the portico. The roof overhangs have exposed, carved, rafter ends, and paired wood brackets are located at each end of the eaves. Centered above the entrance, a low-pitched hipped dormer with multi-light-sash windows extends from the southeast slope of the main roof. A brick chimney rises from the northwest elevation.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8

Levi-Topletz House

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The Levi-Topletz House, designed by Dallas architect H. A. Overbeck and built around 1914, is a superb example of eclectic architecture from the prestigious Edgewood Addition (1912) in South Dallas. The Edgewood Addition was the last exclusive streetcar suburb developed along the Rapid Transit streetcar line that traversed South Dallas along Forest Avenue (now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard [MLK]). Although MLK no longer retains its original streetscape to any appreciable degree, due to commercial encroachment and insensitive intrusion along the former streetcar route, several of its houses stand out as landmarks, among them the Levi-Topletz House, which is nominated to the National Register under Criterion C.

Residents of the Edgewood Addition included a number of Jewish merchants and businessmen who followed Temple Emanu-El (razed) from The Cedars, an earlier exclusive neighborhood. Although the Edgewood Addition was part of an earlier addition (South Park) platted by Martha Camp Warren in 1889, it was never developed until she replatted the 2300-2700 blocks of South Boulevard, Park Row and Forest Avenue (now MLK), as Edgewood Addition in 1912. Of the three parallel streets, South Boulevard and Park Row experienced little change through the years and were listed in the National Register in 1979. MLK (formerly Forest Avenue), which carried the main east-west streetcar line, however, was subject to intensive re-development consisting of commercial buildings and multi-family apartment buildings, beginning as early as the 1920s. The lack of any restrictive covenants or zoning regulations served to further erode the original architectural fabric of the street. In addition to the deteriorating streetscape, which by the 1940s and 1950s was substantial, white residents of the area abandoned the neighborhood for North Dallas suburbs when the black community to the south began expanding northward into the traditionally white neighborhoods. Today, only a handful of the original grand houses survive on the street, among them the Levi-Topletz House, which retains its original architectural fabric to a remarkable degree.

Jewish businessman, Leo S. Levi, who commissioned the plans for the Levi-Topletz House in 1914, was typical of Edgewood's prosperous residents in many respects, but in a larger sense, he and his brother Marcus were also responsible for much of the development and character of the addition.

Around 1914, the year Leo Levi moved into his new house, he and Marcus, together with L. F. Munzesheimer, were partners in both the Levi Insurance Agency and Builder's Investment Company. By 1915, Builder's Investment Company had been active in South Dallas real estate development for a number of years and was responsible for some of the medium-priced housing in the Colonial Hill and South Park additions, immediately west and south of Edgewood (city building permits 1905-1915). When the northern section of the South Park Addition was replatted as the Edgewood Addition in 1912, Builders Investment Company seized the opportunity to expand their business into the new addition, and it built more elaborate and expensive houses than it had previously done. Over the course of their involvement in the addition, Builder's Investment Company was responsible for at least 15 residences in Edgewood, including at least five designed by Dallas architect H. A. Overbeck (Watson, 1981: 21). The Levi brothers built homes in the addition, lived in them temporarily, and later moved into newly constructed ones. Leo Levi built his house at 2603 Forest Avenue. It was one of the first houses in the addition, and it was one of the first to front Forest Avenue, the streetcar line. In 1919, Leo Levi moved to 1901 South Blvd. and that same year, Marcus sold his house at 2709 South Blvd. and moved next door to 2707 South Blvd., where he remained for many years. The Marcus Levi House at 2707 South Blvd. to be the premier house in Edgewood Addition. Leo moved again, to 2412 South Blvd., in the 1920s.

Dr. S. M. Freedman lived in the house vacated by Leo S. Levi from 1919 until Solomon Topletz and his wife Rebecca purchased the house in 1922. Topletz was a partner in the real estate loan and investment firm of Topletz and Topletz, and Bracey's plat maps of 1937 show him as one of the largest property owners in far South Dallas. Topletz, his wife, and sons Jack and Harold, lived in the house from 1925 through the mid-1940s. In 1940, however, just east of Topletz' house, between Oakland and Jeffries streets, there were six commercial buildings and three large apartment complexes. As early as 1915 when the first houses were being built in prestigious Edgewood, apartment buildings were constructed along the streetcar line, and by the 1940s, gracious single-family dwellings along the street were being broken up for boarding houses or replaced by new construction. The gradual erosion of Forest Avenue's single-family residential composition led to the near-complete disintegration of its architectural fabric.

Today, although many of the finest homes in the Edgewood Addition were sited on the north side of MLK, only a few remain that retain their architectural integrity. Along with the Levi-Moses House, at 2433 MLK, the Levi-Topletz House is among the very finest houses in the Edgewood addition, which was the last exclusive development in South Dallas. The Levi-Topletz House, designed by local architect H.A. Overbeck, is an outstanding local

example of an early 20th-century domestic building with Italian Renaissance and Prairie School-style detailing, and it retains its historic integrity to a remarkable degree.

