

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

August 19, 2015

Agenda Item No: 6

HDRC CASE NO: 2015-322
ADDRESS: 230 CENTER ST
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 588 BLK 1 LOT 15
ZONING: D H HE
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 2
DISTRICT: St. Paul Square Historic District
LANDMARK: Saint Paul AME Church
APPLICANT: Rene Garcia, Zachry Corporation
OWNER: East Commerce Realty, LLC.
TYPE OF WORK: Install Historical Plaque
REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to install a historical plaque at the former St. Paul Methodist Church. The proposed plaque's dimensions are approximately 2' x 4', constructed in bronze material and will be located on the building's left side entrance looking towards Center Street. The plaque's description speaks to the building's significance as the oldest African American church in San Antonio, established in 1866. A detailed description of the plaque's text has been provided by the applicant.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

Historic Design Guidelines, Chapter 6, Guidelines for Signage

6. Guidelines for Signage

1. General

A. GENERAL

- i. *Number and size*—Each building will be allowed one major and two minor signs. Total requested signage should not exceed 50 square feet.
- ii. *New signs*—Select the type of sign to be used based on evidence of historic signs or sign attachment parts along the building storefront where possible. Design signs to respect and respond to the character and/or period of the area in which they are being placed. Signs should identify the tenant without creating visual clutter or distracting from building features and historic districts.
- iii. *Scale*—Design signage to be in proportion to the facade, respecting the building's size, scale and mass, height, and rhythms and sizes of window and door openings. Scale signage (in terms of its height and width) to be subordinate to the overall building composition.

C. PLACEMENT AND INSTALLATION

- i. *Location*—Place signs where historically located and reuse sign attachment parts where they exist. Do not erect signs above the cornice line or uppermost portion of a facade wall, or where they will disfigure or conceal architectural details, window openings, doors, or other significant details.
- ii. *Obstruction of historic features*—Avoid obscuring historic building features such as cornices, gables, porches, balconies, or other decorative elements with new signs.
- iii. *Damage*—Avoid irreversible damage caused by installing a sign. For example, mount a sign to the mortar rather than the historic masonry.
- iv. *Pedestrian orientation*—Orient signs toward the sidewalk to maintain the pedestrian oriented nature of the historic districts.

D. DESIGN

- i. *Inappropriate materials*—Do not use plastic, fiberglass, highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read, or other synthetic materials not historically used in the district.
- ii. *Appropriate materials*—Construct signs of durable materials used for signs during the period of the building's

construction, such as wood, wrought iron, steel, aluminum, and metal grill work.

iii. *Color*—Limit the number of colors used on a sign to three. Select a dark background with light lettering to make signs more legible.

iv. *Typefaces*—Select letter styles and sizes that complement the overall character of the building façade. Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate styles.

E. LIGHTING

i. *Lighting sources*—Use only indirect or bare-bulb sources that do not produce glare to illuminate signs. All illumination shall be steady and stationary. Internal illumination should not be used.

ii. *Neon lighting*—Incorporate neon lighting as an integral architectural element or artwork appropriate to the site, if used.

FINDINGS:

- a. The applicant proposes to install one historical bronze plaque supported by a metal post and concrete footer. The plaque is to be located on right side of the building viewed from the street. The historical plaque's design is appropriate to St. Paul's Square's character defining features and does not distract from building features or create visual clutter. This is consistent with Guidelines for Signage 1.A.i and 1.A.ii.
- b. The historical plaque's proposed scale is proportional to the building's façade and respects the building's size, scale, mass, height and is overall subordinate to the building's composition. This is consistent with the Guidelines for Signage 1.A.iii.
- c. The proposed placement of historical plaque will avoid obstruction of historic features, damage to existing historical elements and be pedestrian oriented towards the sidewalk. These are consistent with the Guidelines on Signage Placement and Installation 1.C.i., 1.C.ii., 1.C.iii and 1.C.iv.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval based on findings a, b and c.

Staff also recommends the applicant consider locating the plaque on left side of building entrance (viewed from the street) with same proposed distances and dimensions. Locating plaque on building's left side serves to avoid potential visual obstruction from existing No Parking street signage.

The applicant has agreed with staff recommendations for plaque to be located on left side of building entrance.

CASE MANAGER:

Adam Ronan





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Flex Viewer

Powered by ArcGIS Server

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AERIAL



ST. PAUL SQUARE © SUNSET STATION

230 N. Center Street, commonly referred to as “The Spire” today, was built in 1884 and was the first home of St. Paul Colored Methodist Church, as it was called during the Reconstruction era after the Civil War. It is the oldest African American church in San Antonio, established in 1866. Before the Civil War, the Church met in private homes located in an area called “Newcombville” near present day San Pedro Park. San Pedro Park was segregated for many years before and after Reconstruction. The leader of the African American community during Reconstruction was Lafayette Walker. He pressed the idea for making political deals with both political parties if they would provide infrastructural improvements to the black community. Walker lived a few blocks from this location. Also, during this period of history blacks were prevented from attending white churches. In 1922, the church relocated to its present day location a few blocks away at 508 N. Center Street, renaming itself St. Paul Methodist Church. Its present location, east of downtown San Antonio, reflected a movement when many African-Americans moved into what is now called St. Paul Square. This new section of town was referred to as the “Baptist Settlement” due to a large number of Black churches.

The church became active in civil rights for blacks. Ministers and members in the church opposed accommodation to racism and segregation. The fight for civil rights was carried on by Reverend Matthew “Mack” Henson. Henson favored non-partisan political approaches as opposed to doing the bidding of James Newcomb, a Republican leader of the “Lily White” movement. Mack Henson also opposed the idea of going back to Africa, which was being promoted in the late 1800s, because he considered it to be a white supremacist strategy to remove blacks from America.

Like Lafayette Walker, Henson advocated voting independently. This created the non-partisan city elections we have in San Antonio today. Church members attended Juneteenth celebrations marking the end of slavery in San Antonio where Reverend Henson replaced James Newcomb as the key note speaker on June 19, 1884 at a segregated San Pedro Park. Subsequently, Newcomb removed all blacks from the Republican Party in Texas and attempted to remove the famed African American leader Norris Wright Cuney from leadership positions. Norris Wright Cuney died in San Antonio and his daughter, Maude Cuney Hare, lived in this area. According to scholar Kenneth Mason, Reverend Henson provided leadership to the African-American community and said that blacks were oppressed by “the triple sisters of prejudice, superstition, and flattery, with ignorance as their mother.”

St. Paul Colored Methodist Church, Lafayette Walker, and their leader Mack Henson fought the former slave owners and their pro-slavery allies including who would control and lead the Republican Party.

St. Paul United Methodist Church was the main center of black life for many years. The church continues to operate to this day, serving the spiritual needs of a multiracial/ethnic congregation.

Author: Honorable Mario Marcel Salas

PLAQUE LANGUAGE



Google

239 Center St

Image is for 230 N Center Street (St. Paul's Methodist Church)



San Antonio, Texas

Street View - Sep 2014



Image capture: Sep 2014 © 2015 Google



Google

239 Center St

Image is for 230 N Center Street (St. Paul's Methodist Church)



San Antonio, Texas

Street View - Sep 2014



Image capture: Sep 2014 © 2015 Google



Google

241 Center St

Image is for 230 N Center Street (St. Paul's Methodist Church)



San Antonio, Texas

Street View - Sep 2014

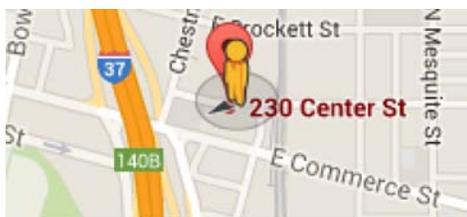


Image capture: Sep 2014 © 2015 Google

230 CENTER STREET – THE SPIRE



BUILDING HIGHLIGHTS

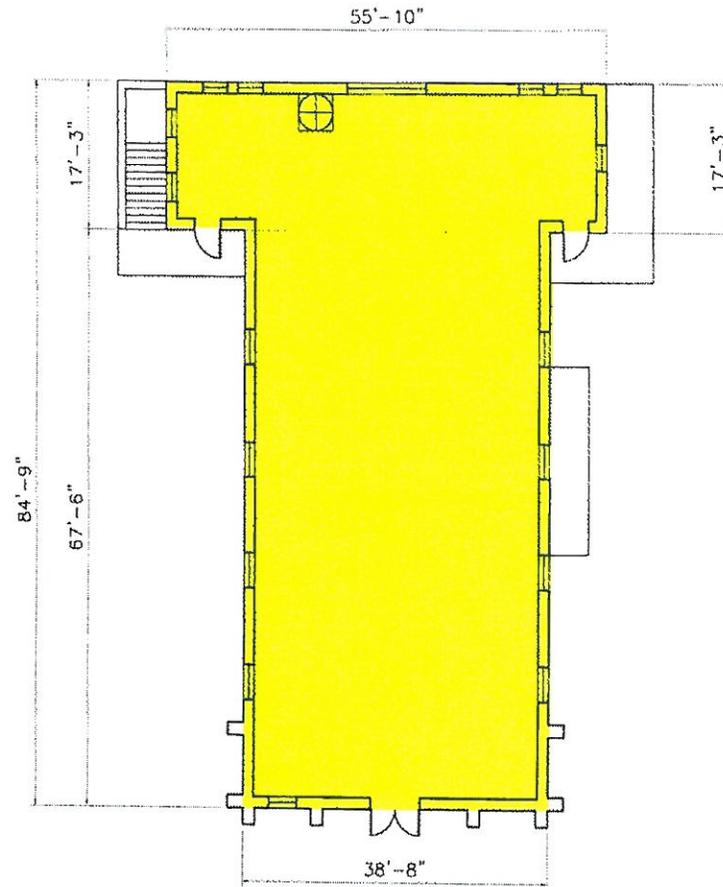
St. Paul Square is named for the former St. Paul Methodist Episcopal Church, which was constructed during the 1880s in the Gothic Revival style. Its congregation had been established in 1866 by the African-American community. The church conducted services until 1922 when a new church was built nearby. No longer a religious institution, today the building is available for lease.

BUILDING SIZE

4,765 SF (approximate)

230 CENTER STREET - THE SPIRE SITE PLAN

STREET LEVEL - 3,590 SF



EXAMPLE PLAQUE

THE BEACON LIGHT LODGE HALL 1918

This two-story structure was the second building at this site to house the activities of the Beacon Light Hall Association, a fraternal organization chartered in 1909 by the Prince Hall Free Masons.

Free Masonry was organized in England as a secret society for men that initiated those chosen for membership into a brotherhood that featured signs, passwords, rituals and a hierarchy of stages or degrees that members attained as they gained greater understanding of the organization's purpose. The membership met regularly in a Lodge Hall.

Because of racial prejudice in the United States, Negroes could not join the white Masonic lodges so they formed their own.

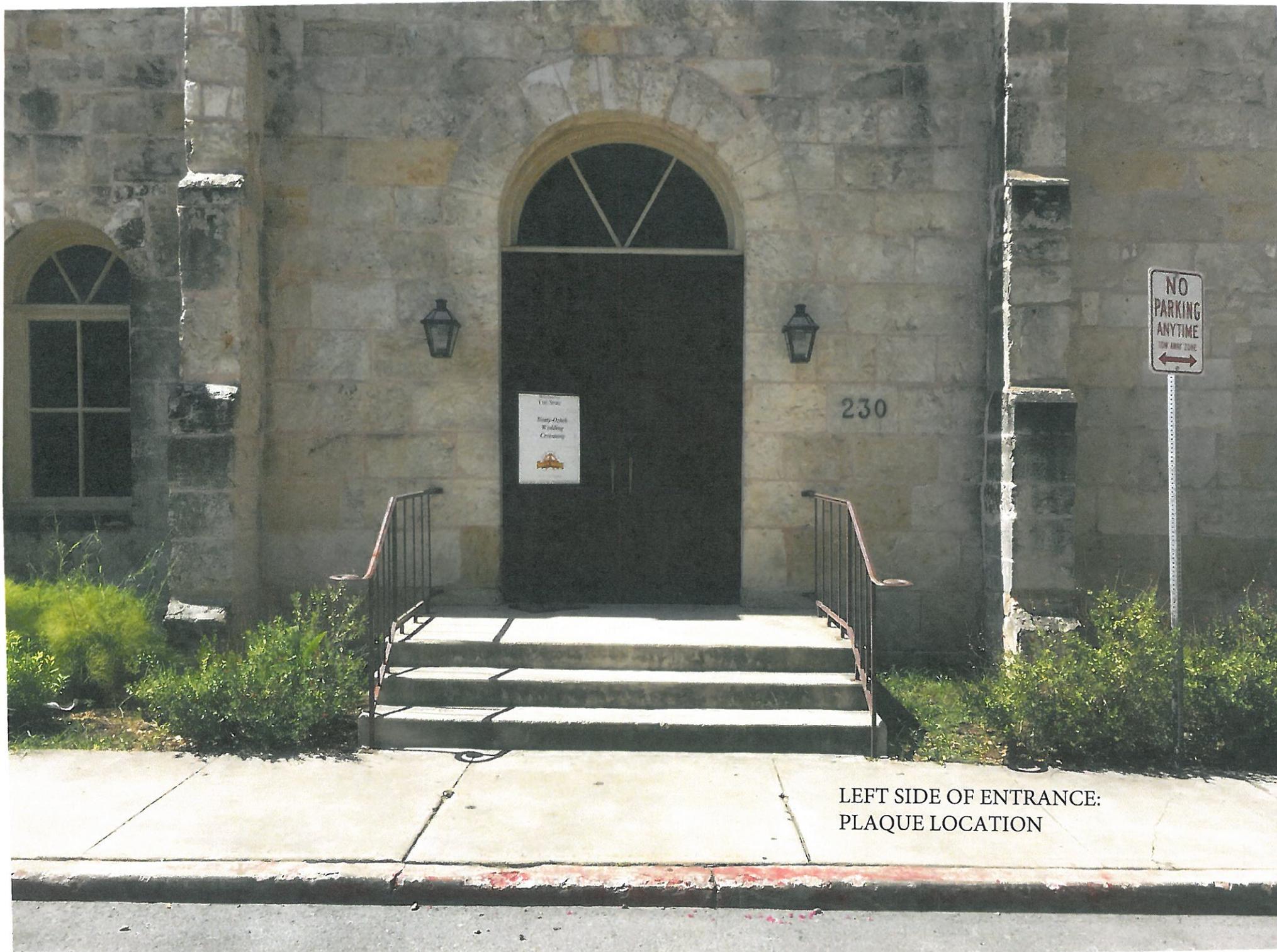
The primary function of the brotherhood was to minister to the needs of members and their families; in particular, to assure that at death brothers in good standing received an appropriate funeral and burial.

The Lodge served other important functions in the community; it offered fellowship and benevolence in a socially and economically segregated community; it provided a sheltered environment where leadership and organizational skills could develop; it helped build bonds of unity.

Lodge meetings were held on the second floor of the building. From 1918-1922, a series of mortuaries owned by Williamson, and Carter & Sutton occupied the first floor. Over the years, a number of businesses occupied the downstairs level of the building, among them a tailor shop, a barber shop and a beauty parlor.

In 1989, the building was remodeled, with grey stucco applied to the wood frame siding.

2003



LEFT SIDE OF ENTRANCE:
PLAQUE LOCATION

RIGHT SIDE OF ENTRANCE



A photograph showing the left side of an entrance. On the left, a concrete staircase with a dark metal railing is visible. The railing has a decorative scrollwork design. To the right of the stairs is a concrete walkway. A large, dark shadow is cast across the walkway and the wall. The wall is made of light-colored stone or concrete and has a significant section of peeling material, possibly plaster or paint, revealing a lighter surface underneath. In the foreground, there is a patch of green grass and some small plants. To the right, there is a large, dense green bush with small red flowers. The overall scene is outdoors, and the lighting suggests it is daytime.

LEFT SIDE OF ENTRANCE:
PLAQUE LOCATION