



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

October 17, 2012

HIDRC CASE NO: 2012-192

ADDRESS: 602 W. French Pl.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 1890 BLK 10 LOT 6,7 13,14,15,E 11.41 FT OF 5, W 52.4 FT OF 8 & W 43FT OF 16

APPLICANT: Office of Historic Preservation 1901 S. Alamo

OWNER: Dr. David Grant

TYPE OF WORK: Finding of Historic Significance

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Finding of Historic Significance for the property at 602 W. French Pl. This property is known as the Frost Mansion and was built between 1910 and 1911 for T.C. and Lillian B. Frost. This house is one of the few remaining gilded age mansions built by prominent San Antonians in what would later become the Monte Vista and Alta Vista neighborhoods. The house exhibits elements of a number of styles including Prairie, Arts and Crafts, Mission Revival, Classical, and some subtle Art Nouveau stylistic influences.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval as submitted.

This recommendation is consistent with the criteria listed in UDC Section 35-607 Designation for Historic Districts and Landmarks:

COMMISSION ACTION:

Approved as submitted.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Shanon Shea Miller".

Shanon Shea Miller
Historic Preservation Officer

Statement of Significance for 602 W. French Place (Frost Home)
San Antonio, Texas

The house at 602 W. French Place was constructed between 1910 and 1911 for T.C. and Lillian B. Frost. The house first appears on the 1911 Sanborn Map. At that time, the property address was 603 W. San Pedro Place. San Pedro Place was changed to W. Ashby Place by 1915. Later in the 20th century the property address was reoriented to W. French Place.

The Frost family is a prominent banking family in San Antonio. Frost National Bank was established by Colonel T.C. Frost. Following his death in 1903, the bank was continued and grown by his son, Thomas Clayborne Frost, who built the house at 602 W. French Pl. for his family.

The site, affording unobstructed views of downtown San Antonio, was originally divided by Colonel T.C. Frost into home sites for his four surviving children, including Thomas. Two of the Colonel's other children, Joseph and Lucy, also built elegant houses on the block. Thomas Clayborne Frost and his wife, Lillie Clarke Beall, moved into the house at 602 W. French Pl. about 1911.¹

The Frost family occupied the home into the 1950s, with Lillie Beall Frost living in the home at least until 1951, according to the City Directories. Lillie Beall Frost died in 1961. According to the 1955 and 1960 City Directories, the house served as the San Pedro Medical Clinic at that time.

The house at 602 W. French Pl. is one of the few remaining gilded-age mansions built by prominent San Antonians in what would later become the Monte Vista and Alta Vista neighborhoods. These homes lined the elevated ridge overlooking San Pedro Springs Park and the area that would eventually develop into San Antonio College. These homes were largely concentrated along French Pl and designed in Mission Revival, Classical Revival, and Exotic Revival styles. A number of these large homes began to be dismantled in the 1970s, leading to the creation of the Monte Vista Historic District.

The house at 602 W. French Pl. masterfully and seamlessly combines the eclectic styles of this period. The house is a blend of Prairie, Arts and Crafts, Mission Revival, Classical, and some subtle Art Nouveau stylistic influences, which is a representative of the confluence of eclectic styles that was common during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The proportions of the house are large and symmetrical, reflecting the monumentality of the Beaux Arts movement, which was also popular at that time. According to a newspaper article in the *San Antonio Light* on March 26, 1911, the house cost \$75,000 to build and was "...one of the most handsomely appointed residences in the city...the grounds have been terraced and make a pretty site for the elegant house."

¹ Haynes, David. *Character Endures: The Genealogy of Thomas Claiborne Frost*. T.C. Frost, 2002, p.35.

The three-story masonry home, which also contains a basement, is constructed of smooth glazed buff-colored brick with stone accents. It features a wrap around porch and *porte cochere* on the first floor, which are now mostly enclosed. This porch is supported by pillars with unique capitals with distilled Classical detailing. This porch creates a corresponding terrace for the second floor, with a modified Chippendale style railing and subtle detailing reminiscent of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The house contains original double hung wood windows throughout, including some fine examples of stained glass in the Arts and Crafts and Prairie styles. The second and third floors are punctuated by a unique projected central bay and dormer that is finished at the top by a Mission style parapet. The dormer portion contains a large modified Palladian window with Classical ornamentation. The roof is of a unique green tile with very wide eaves, giving the profile of the house a subtle Asian feel. The house also has three prominent existing chimneys. Originally there were four. The chimney at the northwest corner appears to have been dismantled, however the base remains. There is also a smaller chimney at the rear of the house. The property also contains a carriage house constructed of the same materials as the main house.

The high level of integrity, combined with the high level of craftsmanship, quality of materials, location, sophisticated application of style, ornamentation and detailing, along with its association with the Frost family make this home one of San Antonio's most important residential structures.

The property at 602 W. French Place meets the following criteria for local landmark designation:

Its value as a visible or archeological reminder of the cultural heritage of the community, or national event [35-607(b)1]; This house is a visible reminder of the large homes constructed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of San Antonio's economic growth.

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation [35-607(b)3]; This home was built by T.C. Frost, president of the Frost bank.

Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials [35-607(b)5]; This home combines Prairie, Arts and Crafts, Mission Revival, Classical, and some subtle Art Nouveau stylistic influences, which is a representative of the confluence of eclectic styles that was common during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature [35-607(b)7]; This home sits on a very prominent lot atop the ridge above San Pedro Park on the corner of San Pedro and W. French Pl.

Its historical, architectural, or cultural integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship [35-607(b)8]; This high style home is constructed with a high level of craftsmanship and materials on a prominent suburban lot.

It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United States [35-607(b)11]; This home represents the results of the economic expansion of San Antonio during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It is an important example of a particular architectural type or specimen [35-607(b)12]; This is a high integrity example of a large Gilded Age residence.

It represents a resource, whether natural or man-made, which greatly contributes to the character or image of a defined neighborhood or community area [35-607(b)15]; This structure is a definitive example of the large homes in the Alta Vista and Monte Vista area along the elevated ridge above San Pedro Springs Park and San Antonio College.