

City of San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation
1901 S. Alamo
San Antonio, TX 78204

Date: August 9, 2023
Re: Landmark Application

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Reverend E.J. and Jessie Lee Martin House
228 Odell Street
San Antonio, TX 78212

Architectural Description

The Martin House is a 1935 one-story bungalow single-family residence in the Kenwood neighborhood of north-central San Antonio (Bexar CAD 2023). The house does not exhibit a distinctive architectural style, but does feature some elements of the Craftsman style, such as exposed rafters and its bungalow form. Facing south from Odell Street, the front façade has two bays arranged in an L-Plan with a recessed integrated porch. The porch area on the west end (right side) of the house has a front-gable roof and the bay on the east end (left side) has a side-gable roof. The front door is set within the ell of the integrated porch. A pairing of 1/1 single-hung vinyl windows flank the entrance on the porch volume and the east volume. The east and west elevations have a side-gable roof and are approximately 4.5 bays long. Both side elevations have three 1/1 single-hung vinyl windows spaced throughout the wall area. One of these windows on the east elevation is a small 1/1 single-hung vinyl window in the kitchen area. Towards the south end of the east elevation is a pantry-sized volume that juts outwards from the building. The south (rear) elevation has a front-gable roof with a shed-roof extension in its southeastern corner. A small 1/1 single-hung vinyl window and back door are behind an uncovered nonhistoric-age wooden deck. The front yard is bordered by a historic-age knee-high concrete retaining wall. At the center of the retaining wall, two steps and a concrete walkway join the porch to the sidewalk.

The bungalow has several historic-age additions and modifications. By 1963, the Martins added a rear addition (Nationwide Environmental Title Research 1963). The rear porch was enclosed during this time. In 1969, concrete was poured for the porch and aluminum siding was installed (Bexar County Clerk 1969). Between 1966 and 2019, a garage was present where the driveway currently exists (Bexar County Clerk 1966, Google 2019).

Nonhistoric-age alterations to the historical house include replaced windows, doors, wall cladding, and porch supports. The house has vinyl windows, metal composite doors, and HardiPlank cement board siding. The replaced siding appears to have covered existing wooden siding beneath the cement board siding. Exposed rafters are covered by a fascia board. According to historical images ([Images 9-12](#)) of the house, a secondary door adjacent to the current entrance was set within the ell of the porch (now enclosed). At this time, the windows were 1/1 single-hung wooden sashes, and the porch supports were metal. Now, the supports are rectangular wooden posts and wooden railings have been installed at the porch staircase. Additional changes to the property include a rear deck, as well as an extended nonhistoric-age privacy fence on the east side yard and hog wire front yard fence with two gates. A poured concrete driveway is on the east side of the house.

Property History

The Martin House occupies Lots 12 and 13 in the 1904 Hazelwood subdivision of the Kenwood neighborhood in north-central San Antonio. The earliest known occupants of the house are Reverend Eugene J. (1913–2007) and Jessie Lee Alcorn (1916–2009) Martin and their family who resided at the house for over 60 years. Mr. Martin was reverend at St. John Baptist Church at 119 West Olmos Drive, a Greyhound Bus Station employee, and an armored truck driver at the Federal Reserve Bank (Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary 2007). Mrs. Martin worked for the San Antonio Independent School District and assisted with church and community organizations. In 1942, the Martins and their five children moved to San Antonio from Granger, Texas (Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary 2009). At this time, the family settled in the Odell Street bungalow where they had six more children (Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary 2009). Originally a three-room house with an outdoor privy, the family added onto the home during the 1950s and 1960s (KSAT 12 2023).

Mr. and Mrs. Martin were pivotal in improving Kenwood after the neighborhood experienced decades of disinvestment and discrimination. Kenwood was historically the home to many domestic employees, many of whom were people of color, who worked in the mansions of Monte Vista and Olmos Park (Ayala 2015, KSAT 12 2023). Despite being so close to these wealthy enclaves, Kenwood was ignored for much of its existence, evident through its unpaved roads, substandard housing, and lack of recreational facilities. During the term of Mayor Lila Cockrell (1989–1991), the Martins worked to establish the Kenwood Community Center and the Kenwood Health Facility (Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary 2009). Their activism led to neighborhood-wide revitalization of Kenwood by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary 2009). Throughout their ownership, the house was used for community gatherings, lodging for newcomers to the city, and meetings for the Kenwood Community Club and the Colored Organized Youths (COYS) (Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary 2009; Martin 1959; *San Antonio Register* 1972).

Criteria

The Martin House meets the following criteria based on the City of San Antonio Unified Development Code, Article VI, Division 2 Sec. 35-607. - Designation Criteria for Historic Districts and Landmarks:

- 3. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;
- 10. Its character as an established and geographically definable neighborhood, united by culture, architectural style or physical plan and development, and;
- 11. 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.

The Martin House is significant under **Criteria #3** and **#11** for its association with the prominent family of Reverend E.J. and Jessie Lee Martin who both contributed to the development of the historically Black Kenwood neighborhood. The house meets **Criteria #10** as one of the last remaining bungalow residences in the Kenwood neighborhood. Although the building has modifications, it retains its location, bungalow design, neighborhood setting and feeling, and domestic association.

Partial Chain of Title

| Grantor | Grantee | Date | Instrument | Volume/Page |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| E. J. and Jessie Lee Martin* | F. Kelly | 3/30/1949 | Lien | 293/202 |
| Sam B. Lifshutz | E. J. and Jessie Lee Martin | 11/10/1952 | Deed | 3251/423 |
| E. J. and Jessie Lee Martin | Richard Gill Investment Co. | 6/15/1966 | Lien | 667/944 |
| E. J. and Jessie Lee Martin | South Presa Lumber Co. | 3/13/1969 | Lien | 723/655 |
| Est. of Jessie Lee Martin | Joe and Debra Iley | 11/29/2017 | Deed | 18869/753 |
| Joe and Debra Iley | Adelante Real Estate | 12/7/2017 | Deed | 18888/564 |
| Adelante Real Estate | Amy Wanka | 9/23/2021 | Deed | 20210270273 |
| Amy Wanka | Mitchell Ford | 8/1/2022 | Deed | 20220188224 |

*The Martin family moved into the house in 1942 but did not own the home until 1952. It is unclear who owned the house before Sam B. Lifshutz.

References

Bexar Central Appraisal District (CAD). 2023. "Property Search." Accessed on July 25, 2023 at https://bexar.trueautomation.com/clientdb/Property.aspx?cid=110&prop_id=392040&year=2023.

Bexar County Clerk.

1949. Mechanic's Lien 293/202. San Antonio, Texas.

1952. Deed 3251/423. San Antonio, Texas.

1966. Mechanic's Lien 667/944. San Antonio, Texas.

1969. Mechanic's Lien 723/655. San Antonio, Texas.

2017. Deed 18869/753. San Antonio, Texas.

2017. Deed 18888/564. San Antonio, Texas.

2021. Deed 20210270273. San Antonio, Texas.

2022. Deed 20210270273. San Antonio, Texas.

Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary.

2007. "Homegoing Celebration for Rev. E. J. Martin."

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth226646/m1/7/zoom/?q=%22e%20j%20martin%22&resolution=2&lat=1476&lon=750>

2009. "Funeral program for Mrs. Jessie Lee Alcorn Martin." Accessed on July 25, 2023, at

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Google Maps

2011. "228 Odell St." Google Street View. Accessed on July 25, 2023, at <https://google.com/maps>.

2016. "228 Odell St." Google Street View. Accessed on July 25, 2023, at <https://google.com/maps>.

2023. "Google Maps." Accessed on July 25, 2023, at <https://google.com/maps>.

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<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth399201/m1/7/?q=%22martin%22%2B%22228+odell%22>

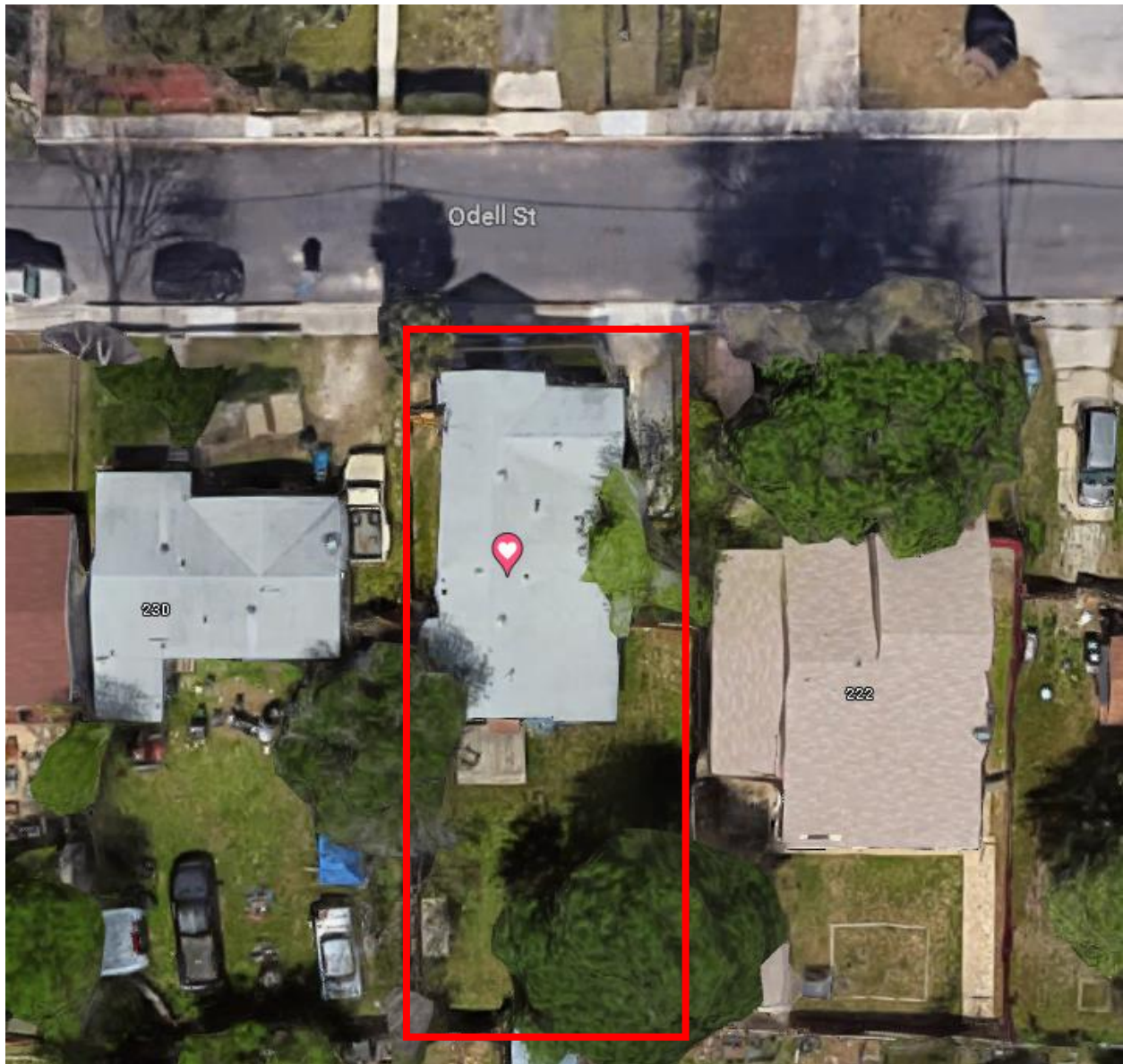
Nationwide Environmental Title Research, LLC. 1963. "Bexar County Aerial Image." Accessed on July 25, 2023, at <https://historicaerials.com/viewer>.

KSAT 12. 2023. "History Untold: A San Antonio neighborhood next to wealthy suburb." Accessed on July 25, 2023, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gHtriFeHiI>.

San Antonio Register. 1972. "COYS." October 6, 1972. Accessed on July 25, 2023, at

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metapth1052369/m1/9/?q=%22martin%22%2B%22228+odell%22>

Map



Google Map of parcel (Google 2023).

Property Images



Image 1. View facing south towards front façade from Odell Street.



Image 2. View facing southwest.



Image 3. View facing south/southwest.



Image 4. View facing south/southeast.



Image 5. View facing southeast.



Image 6. View facing northwest towards rear (south) elevation (left) and east elevation (right).



Image 7. View facing south towards rear (south) elevation.



Image 8. View facing north/northeast towards west elevation (partially obstructed because of lot size/fence).

Supplemental Images

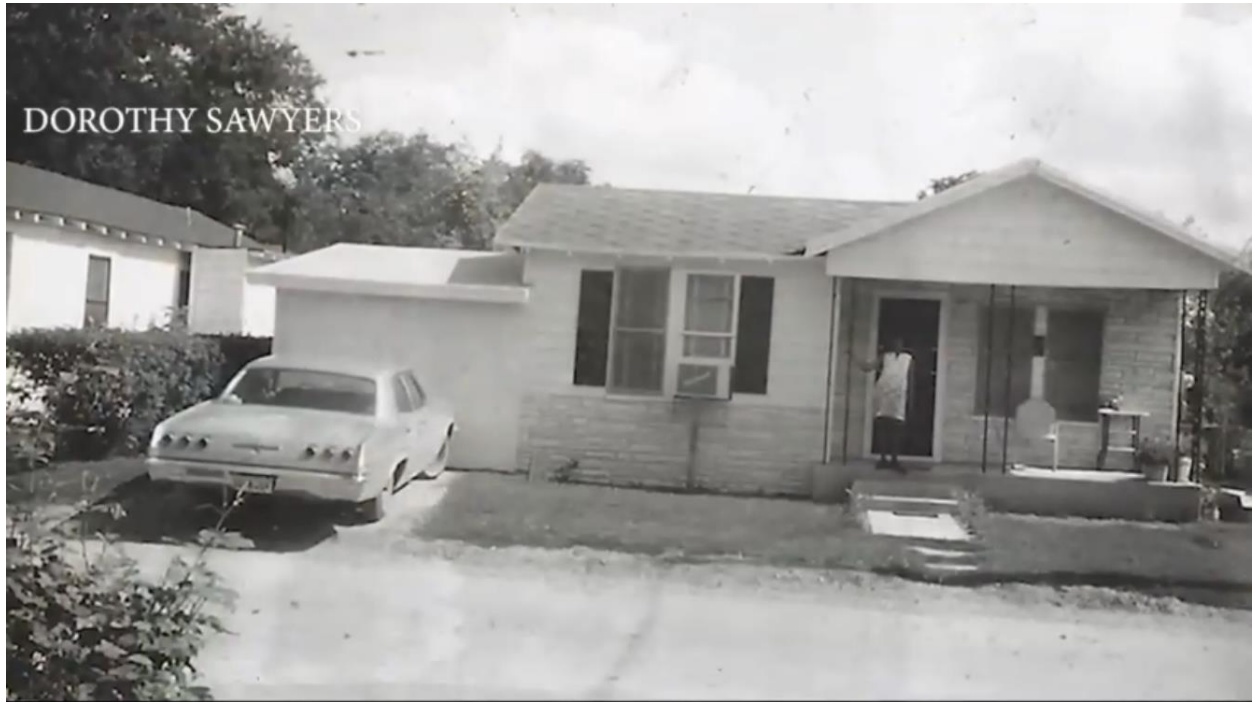


Image 9. Front façade with garage addition (date unknown). Source: Dorothy Sawyers (KSAT12 2023).



Image 10. Detail of front façade (date unknown). Source: Dorothy Sawyers (KSAT12 2023).



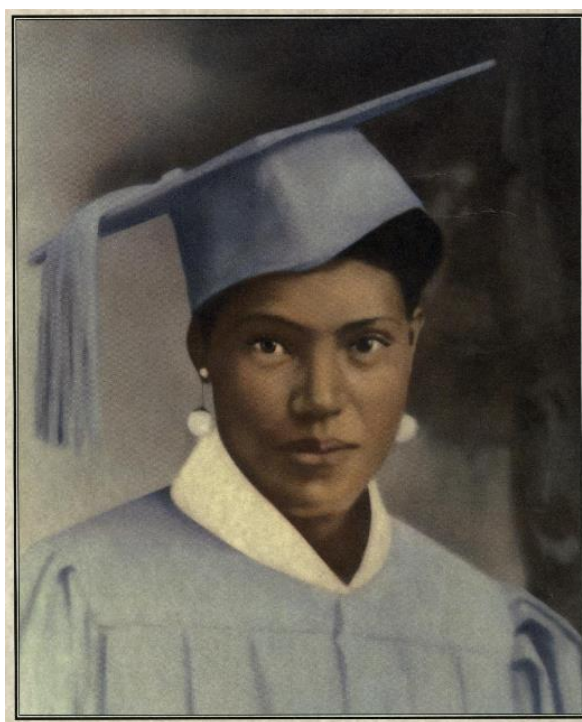
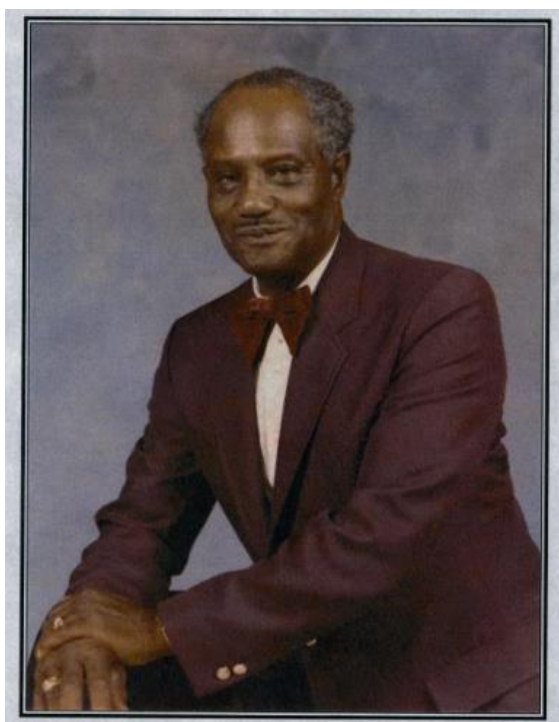
Image 11. View facing southeast in 2016. Note the two doors within the ell (Google Street View 2016).



Image 12. View facing southwest in 2011 (Google Street View 2011).



Images 13-14. Mr. and Mrs. Martin pictured in front of the 228 Odell Street home (dates unknown) (Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary 2009).



Images 15-16. Portraits of Mr. (left) and Mrs. (right) Martin (dates unknown) (Carter-Taylor-Williams Mortuary 2007; 2009).