

SAMPSON-NALLE HOUSE
1003 Rio Grande Street
Austin
Travis County
Texas

HABS TX-3546
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
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1849 C Street NW
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ADDENDUM TO:
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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SAMPSON-NALLE HOUSE

HABS No. TX-3546

Location: 1003 Rio Grande Street, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Significance: The Sampson-Nalle House is located in one of Austin's oldest residential neighborhoods. The Italianate-style residence was constructed between 1875 and 1877 for former Confederate captain and local business entrepreneur George Washington Sampson. The house was built shortly after Sampson's marriage to Mary Goodwin Hall, niece of Texas governor E. J. Davis. Sampson and Hall's daughter Georgia married Ernest Nalle, a prominent local developer and son of Joseph Nalle, the former mayor of Austin and founder of Nalle Lumber. Their son George, founder of Nalle Plastics, married Ouida Ferguson, the daughter of James and Miriam Ferguson, who collectively served four terms as governor. The Sampson and Nalle families have been continuously involved in Austin development and politics, and continue to own the house.

The two-story limestone house is characterized by its simple form, asymmetrical plan, and Italianate stylistic details, including segmental arch openings with stone quoins and bracketed eaves. Major additions during the early 1900s included a porte-cochere and an L-shaped two-story Classical Revival sleeping porch with Corinthian columns that replaced a one-story veranda. The house is considered to be the first residence in Austin with complete indoor plumbing supplied by a cistern that stored rainwater.

The Sampson-Nalle House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and designated a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark and a City of Austin Historic Landmark. It remains a distinct form in Austin's ever-changing downtown residential neighborhoods.

Description: The Sampson-Nalle House was completed in 1877, and is approximately 5,550 square feet set on a site of approximately 15,800 square feet. The two-story masonry house is characterized by its simple form, asymmetrical plan, and Italianate stylistic details, including segmental arch openings with stone hoods, stone quoins, and bracketed eaves. The foundation is composed of concrete and stone. As a result of the downward slope of the property, stone piers covered with wood lattice panels support the eastern half of the house's foundation. The structural system is load-bearing masonry, and the walls of the house are buff, regular, coursed ashlar limestone. The limestone was quarried at nearby Bull Creek, brought in via wagon, and hand cut on site. The original roof of the house was a flat, standing-seam metal roof; the current roof is a low-pitched, multi-hip roof extending across the structure with slight overhangs. The roof has bracketed eaves characteristic of Victorian Italianate design. A two-story porch features

Corinthian columns and wraps around the house from the south-facing façade to the east-facing façade. Both stories of the porch are screened.

The main entry is beneath the carriage entrance on the west façade; here there is a two leaf main door entered from the porte-cochere with a decorative arched-stone window hood with a central keystone. The number "1003" reads above the wooden doors, under the window hood. Prior to the 1920s additions, the main entrance was located on the south-facing façade leading into the living area by way of a single leaf wood door. This door has the same decorative arched-stone window hood and features etched glass. There is a rear entrance to the house from the kitchen that has a similar door leading onto the small porch.

The doors on the first floor leading onto the sleeping porch are seven-foot tall French doors with beveled glass and segmental arch fanlight transoms. The porch doors on the second floor leading onto the sleeping porch are nine-foot tall French doors. These doors also exhibit the decorative, arched stone window hood.

The windows are double-hung. Like the doors, the fenestration pattern of the house is characterized by decorative, arched stone window hoods with large central keystones that stand out against the simple masonry walls. Some of the windows, particularly on the north-facing façade, have wooden shutters.

The floor plan is asymmetrical. The rooms on the south side of the building are predominantly larger spaces for entertaining and family living, with service functions and storage in the rooms on the north. There is a central staircase on the northern side of the main hallway upon entering the home through the carriage entrance on the west side. The stairway is long and narrow at three feet wide. There is an ornate newel post at the base of the staircase. There is a service stairway in the back of the house that connects the kitchen to storage areas on the north side of the second floor. The kitchen on the first floor exhibits a small, one story porch with chamfered columns that opens onto the east lawn.

The house is believed to be the first home in Austin to have a complete interior bathroom. The bathroom is located on the second floor and has a ceiling roughly five feet lower than the rest of the house. Above the ceiling was a copper tank and water was pumped every morning from the cistern to the tank, which allowed the bath, sink, and toilet to have water via gravity flow. The tank was removed during World War I donated to the war effort.

There is extensive ironwork on the west-façade entrance and port cochere possibly by Fortunat Weigl, who worked as a cabinetmaker for Nalle Lumber until 1922. There are fireplaces in the main entertaining rooms and upstairs bedrooms. Coal fireplaces originally heated the house. Later gas was used for heating and central steam heat was added in the 1920s. An early two-blade reversible Hunter fan ceiling in the west room of the second floor was installed about 1896. Window units for air conditioning have been added.

During the 1920s a two-story porte-cochere was added to the west façade that features semicircular arches on each side that frame the main entrance. The materials, detailing, and proportions are similar to original structure. The second story of the porte-cochere is an enclosed room. A two-story tower was added to the north-facing façade near the porte-cochere. Two bathrooms were added at this time on the second floor. An L-shaped two-story screened sleeping porch featuring Corinthian columns was added onto the south and west elevations during the early 1900s and replaced a one-story veranda.

There are two additional buildings on the site. There is a two-story carriage house with large wooden doors on the southeastern section of the site that once featured three horse stables. It is composed of random-coursed ashlar limestone and features a standing-seam metal gable roof. Originally, hay was kept in half of the second story and the other half was used as the coachman's quarters. The second building is a small one-story, double servants' quarters on the northeast corner of the site. It is also of load-bearing limestone construction.

History:

The residence was constructed between 1875 and 1877 for George Washington Sampson and his wife, Mary Goodwin Hall. Born in South Carolina in 1825, Sampson served as captain in the Confederate army. He later became a successful merchant and business partner of Sampson-Henricks in Austin. Located at 620 Congress Avenue, the Sampson-Henricks building was designed by Abner Cook and is one of the oldest buildings on Congress Avenue, built in 1859. It is a three-story, ashlar-and-rubble limestone building in the Italianate style. Following the arrival of the railroad in 1871, Austin became the mercantile and shipping center for Central Texas, which led to a rapid population and construction boom.

Sampson met Mary Goodwin Hall, niece of Texas Governor E.J. Davis, at the governor's mansion when she was visiting. After a brief courtship, they were married in 1872, and the two-year construction on their house soon began in one of Austin's oldest residential neighborhoods. The architect of the house is unknown. P. C. Taylor supplied the plaster, lime, rock, and cut stone. James Murphy contracted with P. W. McDonald and Pat Mullen for the rock work.

Upon Sampson's death in 1888, Mary Goodwin Hall and their two daughters, Georgia and Frances, continued to occupy the house. Georgia married Ernest Nalle, the son of the former mayor of Austin, and they lived in the house until 1903. Georgia's only son, George, moved back into the Sampson house in 1910 upon the death of his mother. In 1918 George married Ouida Ferguson, the daughter of James and Miriam Ferguson, both of whom had served as Governor of Texas. George Nalle inherited the Sampson House in 1934 and his descendents continued to own and occupy the house. The house has been unoccupied since the late 1980s and is currently owned by George Nalle III. The Sampson-Nalle House remains a distinct form in Austin's ever-changing downtown residential neighborhoods.

Sources: City of Austin aerial maps from 1940s; Austin History Center Sampson-Nalle House file; George Nalle III, interview with author; family photo albums.

Historian: Meg X. Frisbie, graduate student in Historic Preservation, The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture, March 2010.

Project

Information: Architectural documentation of the house was prepared by the University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture in fall 2009. Project director was Dr. Monica Penick, Lecturer in the School of Architecture. The graduate school team consisted of Amanda K. Carpenter, Grace A. Cynkar, Meg X. Frisbie, Hannah Nebb Meyer, Nathaniel W. Muhler, and Jessica Aurora Ugarte. Special thanks to George Nalle III and family for support and access to the house. Additional thanks to the University of Texas at Austin and the Historic Preservation Program for providing studio space and supplies.