

SAM HOUSTON PARK, 809 ROBIN STREET HOUSE
(Sam Houston Park, 4th Ward Cottage)
(Sam Houston Park, Charles Englehard House)
1100 Bagby Street
Houston
Harris County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3542-B

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Intermountain Regional Office
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SAM HOUSTON PARK, 809 ROBIN STREET HOUSE
(SAM HOUSTON PARK, 4TH WARD COTTAGE)
(SAM HOUSTON PARK, CHARLES ENGLEHARD HOUSE)

HABS NO. TX-3542-B

Location: Sam Houston Park
1100 Bagby Street
Houston, TX

Present Owner: The City of Houston

Present Occupant: The Heritage Society

Present Use: 4th Ward Cottage was moved to Sam Houston Park by the Heritage Society (THS) in 2002 and is currently awaiting restoration. THS plans to restore the structure to house an architectural archaeology exhibit and a flexible classroom space.

Significance: 4th Ward Cottage is a pure example of Cajun/Gulf Coast cottage, a building type that originated in South Louisiana as early as 1710. The cottage is the last remaining example of this building type in Houston, and is among the few remaining "working man's" homes of Houston's 4th Ward. The cottage's side-facing gables, inset porch, and random width clapboards suggest that it is one of the oldest surviving houses from Houston's 4th Ward.¹

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 4th Ward Cottage was originally located on Lot 3, Block 7 of the Castanie Survey, a 31 block parcel first platted on April 12, 1848. The first conveyance of these lots after platting was in 1858 to Charles Englehard. The 1866 Houston City Directory (the first Houston City Directory) indicates Christian Englehard owned lots in Block 7 and lived in a house on Lot 3. This house is now referred to as 4th Ward Cottage. While it is possible that portions of the house were built much earlier, records can only date its construction to 1866. It is speculated that the house is actually a combination of two houses, the front

¹ Stephen Fox, *Houston Architectural Guide, Second Edition* (Houston: The American Institute of Architects/Houston Chapter and Herring Press, 1999), 60.

room of which being an Cajun/Gulf Coast cottage and the back two rooms of which being a second house that was joined to the cottage as an addition.

2. Architect: Unknown

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:

The Englehard family:

Charles Englehard's first appearance in any United States records was in the Deed Records of Harris County in 1858, when he purchased lots 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10, Block 7, of the Castanie Survey. Charles had two daughters, Elizabeth and Caroline, and two sons, Henry and William. Charles' relative (most likely his brother), Christian Englehard arrived at the Port of Galveston on July 8, 1852 aboard the ship *Creole*, which began its journey in Bremen, Germany. Christian was granted citizenship of the United States on April 26, 1858.² It is most likely that during the Englehard's ownership of the house, certain additions were made, including the installation of the interior staircase (currently removed) to access the large attic room upstairs. The interior wall, which created a hall in the original front room of the house, was most likely added during this time as well. The hall had openings at both ends, one being the front door and the second being a rear door which accessed the side porch of the rear building (the current back two rooms). Documentation of the Englehard family in Harris County trails off after 1880. The family never paid taxes on the property, and in 1883, the property and the house were sold at public auction.³

Henry Kasche

Henry Kasche never lived on the property or in 4th Ward cottage, but rented the house to tenants. Kasche was listed in the 1877 Houston City Directory as a machinist. Because the house was rented during his time of ownership, it is unlikely that he made any improvements to the cottage.⁴

Fritz Leverkusn and William Hoop

Fritz Leverkusn was listed in the 1890-91 Houston City Directory as a blacksmith with the H&TC Shops. William F. Hoop, a woodworker and wheelwright, was Leverkusn's son-in-law. William married Lina Leverkusn in November of 1888. Leverkusn and Hoop purchased the lots and houses as investment property, and never lived in them. Rather, they rented the properties to tenants. The pair most likely converted the rear room of the house into a kitchen shortly after purchasing the house in 1891. They were also most likely the ones to have enclosed the side porch on the (current) north side of the rear portion of the house after 1907. This would have involved relocating the windows on the (current) north side of the house and removing the doors which accessed the side porch. The porch is

² Galveston Immigration Database, Galveston Historical Foundation, Galveston, Texas.

³ Randy Pace, "Historical and Architectural Significance of the Robin Street Houses, December, 2002," 4th Ward Cottage File, File "FWC: Historical and Architectural Significance Report, R. Pace, 2002," The Heritage Society Master Files, Houston, TX.

⁴ Ibid.

apparent in the 1907 Sanborn Insurance Map of Houston, but not in maps published after that date. They also would have laid the current wood flooring over the older floors of the rear portion of the house and newly enclosed porch to make them consistent. When a bathroom was moved into the house circa 1930, the kitchen was partitioned to make room for it. The pair also constructed five shotgun houses, four to the east and one to the west of the original location of 4th Ward Cottage. After the death of Fritz Leverkus and his daughter Lina, William Hoop inherited all interest in 809 Robin and the adjacent properties. He owned the cottage and the other houses on the property until his death in Houston in February of 1954. After his death, the houses, along with other property he owned, passed to his children Marie, Leona, and George. His heirs divided the property in April of 1954, and Marie Hoop Harris was granted deeds to Lots 2 and 3 of Block 7 of the Castanie addition. Marie sold the lots to the Spata family in 1955. The Spata family continued to use the homes as rental units until they sold them to Larry Davis of Urban Lofts III, Ltd., a Houston development company.⁵

Larry Davis

Larry Davis purchased the land on which 4th Ward Cottage and the other row houses stood to construct new town homes. Houston preservationists, realizing the significance of the houses, worked with him to save them from destruction. Historic Houston, Inc. secured ownership of the remaining buildings and worked cooperatively with Project Row House and The Heritage Society to secure sites to which the houses could be relocated. In 2002, the shotgun houses at 803, 805, and 807 Robin were moved to a site in the 2200 block of Berry Street in Houston, owned by Project Row House. 4th Ward Cottage was moved to The Heritage Society in Sam Houston Park. The shotgun house located at 811 Robin had suffered a fire and was used for salvage material for the restoration of the other houses. The final shotgun house, located at 801 Robin, was demolished many years earlier.

Tenants

Members of the Englehard family were the only owners of 4th Ward Cottage that actually lived in the property. Subsequent owners used the cottage for rental property. Houston City Directories from the time of Henry Kasche's ownership of the cottage (1883-1891) indicate that African Americans lived in the cottage. With Leverkus and Hoop's ownership, which lasted from 1891 to 1955, we begin to see names of African Americans appear in the Houston City Directories for the address of 809 Robin Street. In 1912, George G. Gilfred, a florist, is listed. In 1918, Isaac Morrison, a driver, is listed. In 1920, Daniel Cohen, a laborer, and Kate Cohen, a machine operator, are listed. In 1925, Emma White is listed. In 1928, Virginia Thompson is listed. In 1931, Henry Jones, a watchman, is listed. In 1937, Thomas Simmons is listed. After the house and property is sold to the Spata family in 1955, documentation of tenants is lost.

⁵ Pace

A. Beginning at a Cedar stake, in the east-west line of survey dividing the Austin
1846 and Smith tracts in the upper and western part of Houston, south of an old
sunken grave and running 40 rods south and due west along said dividing
line, being 50 acres

Deed July 3, 1846, recorded in Harris County Deed Records, Vol. K, p.
431

Robert C. Campbell

To

Justin Castanie

B. Lots 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, and 10, Block 7, Castanie Survey

1858 Deed October 20, 1858, recorded in Harris County Deed Records, Vol. U,
p. 488

Justin Castanie

To

Charles Englehard

C. Lots 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10, Block 7, Castanie Survey

1883 Deed December 22, 1883, recorded in Harris County Deed Records, Vol.
29, p. 3-7

Ludwig Doekel (guardian of Englehard heirs)

To

Henry Kasche

D. Lots 1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10, Block 7, Castanie Survey

1891 Deed November 28, 1891, recorded in Harris County Deed Records, Vol.
59, p. 43

Henry Kasche

To

Fritz Leverkusuhn and William Hoop

E. Lots 2 and 3, Block 7, Castanie Survey

1954 Deed April 1, 1954, recorded in Harris County Deed Records, Vol. 2750,
p. 701

George Hoop and Lena Hoop

To

Marie Hoop Harris

F. Lot 2 and 3 Block 7, Castanie Survey

1955 Marie Hoop Harris, heir of William Hoop

To

Spata Family

G. Lot 2 and 3, Block 7, Castanie Survey

2002 Frank Spata

To
Larry Davis

4. Original plans and construction: The cottage is believed to be a combination of two structures: a Cajun/Gulf Coast cottage and a two room house. The combined structure has undergone multiple additions and alterations over the years, but when it was originally occupied by the Englehard family, the house was a three room dwelling with a front gallery and a side porch along the (current) north side of the rear portion of the house.

5. Alterations and additions: Christian Englehard, who was employed as a bricklayer according to the 1866 Houston City Directory, was most likely responsible for adding a brick cistern and a brick root cellar under the house in the late 1860s. He also constructed the interior staircase and added the paneled ceilings to the front room. It is likely that Leverkusuhn and Hoop made the next addition to the house, an interior kitchen, in the late 1890s, since no kitchen structure is apparent behind the house on the 1896 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Houston. Leverkusuhn and Hoop also replaced some of the brick foundation piers with ashlar block piers and laid the current wood flooring over the older floors of the house. They also enclosed the side porch of the house, relocating the windows to the (current) north façade of the house and removing the doors that accessed the side porch.

B. Historical Context:

1. The Acadian Cottage: The Acadian cottage was first built in Louisiana by French refugees from Acadia (now Nova Scotia), Canada, in the eighteenth century. They first constructed small, wooden houses that were later referred to as Cajun (an adaptation of the word Acadian) cottages. The building type combined French and Canadian traditions with one room across the front, a full gallery inset under a sharply pitched, side gabled roof, and the entire structure was raised a few feet off the ground. The most distinctive feature of the Cajun cottage throughout the nineteenth century was the gallery staircase, a set of stairs located on the front gallery which led to a trap door in the porch ceiling that allowed access to the attic, which was used for sleeping and working.⁶

4th Ward Cottage has a trap door on the ceiling of the front gallery and evidence of a staircase that once led to the attic. The additional two rooms on the back of the house, which give the cottage its shotgun plan, may have been a later addition.

2. Freedmen's Town Historic District:

Houston's Freedmen's Town Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 17, 1985 and is located in Houston's 4th Ward. The district is roughly bounded by Genesse, West Dallas, Arthur and West Gray

⁶ Pace

Streets. Freedmen's Town has been a major hub for black education, business and culture from emancipation until the present day.

3. The Heritage Society: The Heritage Society formed in 1954 as a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Houston's built heritage. The organization formed to save Kellum-Noble House, which was constructed in 1847. Kellum-Noble House is in its original location and is part of what is now known as Sam Houston Park. Over the years, The Heritage Society has moved eight structures to the park: Nichols-Rice-Cherry House, constructed in 1850 and moved to the park in 1959; San Felipe Cottage, constructed in 1868 and moved to the park in 1962; Pillot House, constructed in 1868 and moved to the park in 1965; St. John Church, constructed in 1891 and moved to the park in 1968; Old Place, constructed in 1823 and moved to the park in 1970; Staiti House, constructed in 1915 and moved to the park in 1986; Yates House, constructed in 1870 and moved to the park in 1994; and 4th Ward Cottage, constructed as early as 1866 and moved to the park in 2002. The Heritage Society manages these nine historic structures, which are open to the public for tours Tuesday through Sunday.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General statement:

1. Architectural character: 4th Ward Cottage is an example of an Cajun/Gulf Coast cottage with a two room addition on the rear. It is a three room house which rests on a brick pier foundation. A front gallery spans the width of the front (west) façade. The cottage is vernacular in its materials and form.
2. Condition of fabric: The condition of the fabric is fair. When the cottage was moved to Sam Houston Park in 2002, sheetrock, kitchen and bathroom equipment, and other modern additions were removed from the house. What exists now is the outer shell of the structure and the interior walls inside. All materials on the interior are unfinished.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The cottage is approximately 16 feet by 51 feet, including the front gallery.
2. Foundations: The cottage rests on a brick pier foundation.
3. Walls: The exterior walls of the cottage are covered in clapboard siding with reveals that vary from 4" to 6".
4. Structural system, framing: The cottage is a simple wood frame structure.
5. Porches, stoops: The cottage has a gallery which spans the entire width of the front (west) façade and is supported by 4"x4" posts.

6. Chimneys: A chimney base was added to the cottage in the early 20th century. The base no longer exists, but a metal flue was found in the (current) east wall of the front room of the house.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The cottage has two exterior doors, one on the front (west) façade and one on the back (east) façade. The front door is not original, but is a four recessed panel door. The back door is unoriginal and is a four recessed panel door as well. The frames are trimmed with simple 1/2"x4" trim boards.

b. Windows and shutters: The windows of the front portion of the house are six over six single hung windows. The sills and frames are simple, with no decorative detailing. There is one such window on the front (west) façade, one window on the north façade, and one window on the south façade. The north façade of the rear portion of the house has two one over one single hung windows and one six over three single hung window. The second one over one window, located at the northeast corner of the house, was most likely added with the rest room in the 1930s. The south façade of the rear portion of the house has one six over three single hung window and one six over six single hung window. The sills and frames of the rear portion of the house are the same of those on the front of the house.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The front portion of the cottage has a single pitched, end gabled roof. This roof meets the front gabled roof of the rear portion of the house along its back (east) eave. The roof is covered in a temporary bitumen roofing material.

b. Cornice, eaves: The cottage has no cornice. The west eave of the front portion of the cottage extends to cover the front gallery. The rear portion's eaves extend very slightly over the exterior walls, approximately four inches.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. First Floor: The first floor of the cottage has three rooms. The framing and doorway of the rest room in the rear room of the house are still standing.

b. Attic: A large open attic was accessed through the trap door in the ceiling of the front gallery originally, then through the interior staircase once it was installed. This room was used for sleeping and working.

2. Stairways: A stairway once existed which led to the trap door of the front gallery, but it has been removed. The ghost of an interior staircase is apparent in the front room of the house.
3. Flooring: The flooring of the cottage is three inch pine boards that run from north to south. This flooring was installed by Leverkusn and Hoop when they enclosed the side porch in the late 1890s. The new flooring was laid to create consistency between the original rooms and the newly enclosed porch.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All wall and ceiling finishes have been removed, but remains of an early German newspaper and pieces of early tacked wallpaper were found in the house when it was investigated in 2002.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: A doorway framed with 1/2"x4" trim leads from the front room to the middle room. The door has been removed. The doorway from the middle room to the back room is unframed and has a four recessed panel door. The doorway to the rest room is framed by 1/2"x4" trim boards. The door has been removed.
 - b. Windows: The trim around the windows, like the doorways, is simple. The sills protrude slightly.
6. Decorative features and trim: All decorative features and trim, if any existed, were removed from the house.
7. Hardware: Most of the hardware of the cottage has been replaced.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The cottage is currently awaiting restoration and has no mechanical equipment.
8. Site:
 - a. Historic landscape design: Unknown
 - b. Outbuildings: A brick cistern was uncovered at the original location of the cottage, 809 Robin Street.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings: From The Heritage Society Collection

*Drawings produced in 2002 of 4th Ward Cottage's conditions at that time

B. Early views: From The Heritage Society Photograph Collection

*Photographs of 4th Ward Cottage before it was moved to Sam Houston Park, May 2002

*Photographs of 4th Ward Cottage after it was moved to Sam Houston Park, August 2003

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary Sources:

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Harris County Deed Records, Vol. U, p. 488. Recorded October 20, 1858
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The Heritage Society Docent Training Materials

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was funded by a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The project was initiated by Kimberly Wolfe, Buildings Curator for The Heritage Society. Tina Munoz, preservation consultant, provided the field measurements, and Paul Homeyer of Gensler provided the final measured drawings. Photography was done by Michael Fry, photographer. The project historian and coordinator was Kimberly Wolfe, who conducted research necessary for completing the historical narrative portion of the project and oversaw the entirety of the project. The project began in October of 2009 and was completed in the fall of 2010.