

Los Angeles Department of City Planning

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

DATE: November 2, 2006
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: City Hall, Room 1010
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

CASE NO.: CHC-2006-9130-HCM

Location: 2801 South Arlington Avenue
Council District: 10
Community Plan Area: West Adams – Baldwin
Hills – Leimert
Area Planning Commission: South Los
Angeles
Neighborhood Council: United Neighborhoods
of the Historic Arlington Heights, West Adams,
and Jefferson Park Communities
Legal Description: Lot 114 of Arlington Fourth
Avenue Tract No. 2

PROJECT: Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the
JOSEPH L. STARR FARMHOUSE

REQUEST: Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument [S]

APPLICANT: West Adams Heritage Association
2263 South Harvard Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90018

OWNER: Iola H. Brown Trust
4035 Denker Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90062

RECOMMENDATION That the Cultural Heritage Commission:

1. **Take the property under consideration** as a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.125 because the application and accompanying photo documentation suggest the submittal may warrant further investigation.
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP
Director of Planning

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Ken Bernstein, Manager
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner
Office of Historic Resources

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Lambert M. Giessinger, Architect
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments: October 23, 2006 Historic-Cultural Monument Application
ZIMAS Report

SUMMARY

Built in 1888 and located in the Jefferson Park area, this one-and-a-half story house exhibits character-defining features of Folk-Vernacular Victorian Farmhouse style architecture. The irregular cross-gabled wood-frame building has a projecting gable on the façade with an off-center entrance. An L-wrapping porch on the east façade and north elevation bisects the façade at mid-level. The building's exterior features wood siding and fish-scale shingle cladding as well as hand-sawn ornamental wood-work at the watercourse level of the building. The windows are double-hung, fixed single pane and fixed transoms and there is a bay window on the east façade. At the southwest section of the building, an early addition to the building incorporates a wood-frame projecting gable section with board-and-batten wood siding. Exterior wood stairs leading to the upper story are located on the south elevation of the building. Adjacent to the house on the east side of the property is a detached garage with storage shed. Significant interior spaces include rooms with deep baseboards and wainscoting on walls, four-panel doors, and built-in cabinetry.

The proposed Joseph L. Starr Farmhouse historic monument was designed by Jasper Newton Preston (1832-1922). Trained as a carpenter, Preston began working as an architect in Texas in the 1870s-1880s as J.N. Preston & Son, designing several homes, hotels, court-houses and public buildings, including the state capital building in Austin, Texas. In 1886, Preston arrived in Los Angeles, having been commissioned to design the Los Angeles County Courthouse, employing the Richardsonian-Romanesque style for the building as he had in several past projects. Preston would go on to design the Los Angeles High School (1890) as well as private residential commissions such as the Bolt House (1893) in Pasadena, CA.

Joseph L. Starr (?-1915) built the house as his residence in 1888 on several acres of farmland used for agricultural production. Starr, also from Texas, contracted Preston to build the home, described as a five-room cottage by the *Los Angeles Times* in 1888. The property and the house served as a dairy farming operation as well as a farm for growing grain crops and hay. Starr had a contract to supply hay to the City of Los Angeles' work horses.

The Joseph L. Starr Farmhouse appears significant as an early surviving example of Preston's work upon arriving in Los Angeles. The home's architectural style echoes the vernacular Victorian farmhouse styles more associated with Texas than Los Angeles. Little of Preston's work remains in Los Angeles, including his public buildings in downtown Los Angeles. The home and property also reflect the agricultural era of Jefferson Park and may be the oldest extant house from this period in the area.

Later additions to the house include a central window to the east façade, exterior stair, some additional entry doors, and iron grilles on windows. The east porch columns also appear to be altered.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style

or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

FINDINGS

Based on the facts set forth in the summary and application, the Commission determines that the application is complete and that the property is significant enough to warrant further investigation as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument.

**HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT
APPLICATION**

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

IDENTIFICATION

1. NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT Joseph L Starr Farmhouse
2. STREET ADDRESS 2801 South Arlington Avenue
- CITY Los Angeles ZIP CODE 90018 COUNCIL DISTRICT 10
3. ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. 5052-010-019
4. COMPLETE LEGAL DESCRIPTION: TRACT Arlington Fourth Avenue Tract No. 2
- BLOCK None LOT(S) 114 ARB. NO. None
5. RANGE OF ADDRESSES ON PROPERTY 2801 South Arlington Avenue and
3110 West Mount Clair Street
6. PRESENT OWNER Iola H. Brown Trust
- STREET ADDRESS 4035 Denker Avenue E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____
- CITY Los Angeles STATE CA ZIP CODE 90062 PHONE (____) _____
- OWNERSHIP: PRIVATE PUBLIC
7. PRESENT USE Residential [vacant] ORIGINAL USE Single Family Residence

DESCRIPTION

8. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE Vernacular Victorian Farmhouse
(SEE STYLE GUIDE)
9. STATE PRESENT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE OR STRUCTURE (SEE OPTIONAL DESCRIPTION WORK SHEET. 1 PAGE MAXIMUM)
- The parcel is fenced and the structures are partially boarded up as a result of abatement action. From brief
and somewhat limited interior access and observation it appears that the structure is basically sound.
- The bones of the farmhouse are relatively intact with reversible alterations. The house is vacant and the parcel is
scheduled to be sold at a conservatorship sale. The upper level of the house, and the interior of the detached
garage with its attached storage wing were not accessible.
- _____
- _____
- _____

**HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT
APPLICATION**

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT Joseph L Starr Farmhouse

10. CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1888 FACTUAL: ESTIMATED:

11. ARCHITECT, DESIGNER, OR ENGINEER Jasper Newton Preston

12. CONTRACTOR OR OTHER BUILDER Not known

13. DATES OF ENCLOSED PHOTOGRAPHS October 2006

(1 8X10 BLACK AND WHITE GLOSSY AND 1 DIGITAL E-MAILED TO CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION@LACITY.ORG)

14. CONDITION: EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR DETERIORATED NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE

15. ALTERATIONS (w/ permit) addition of wainscoting and built-in breakfront to dining room in 1910. Early gable roof addition at southwest corner of original house, later shed form addition to west end of house. Central window of east facade bay and surrounding cladding have been altered. Exterior stairs added along south elevation.

Addition of entry doors at exterior. Probable alteration of east porch columns. Non-original garage doors.

16. THREATS TO SITE: NONE KNOWN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT VANDALISM PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT
 ZONING OTHER Vacant; abatement; scheduled conservatorship sale.

17. IS THE STRUCTURE: ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE MOVED UNKNOWN

SIGNIFICANCE

18. BRIEFLY STATE HISTORICAL AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE; INCLUDE DATES, EVENTS, AND PERSON ASSOCIATED WITH THE SITE (SEE ALSO SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET; 750 WORDS MAXIMUM IF USING ADDITIONAL SHEETS)

Please see accompanying Historical Significance statement. Please see accompanying biography of Joseph L. Starr, first owner and biography of Jasper Newton Preston, architect.

19. SOURCES (LIST BOOKS, DOCUMENTS, SURVEYS, PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH DATES) Please see Bibliography

20. DATE FORM PREPARED 10/23/2006 PREPARER'S NAME Anna Marie Brooks ~ Laura Meyers

ORGANIZATION West Adams Heritage Association STREET ADDRESS 2263 S. Harvard Blvd.

CITY Los Angeles STATE CA ZIP CODE 90018 PHONE (323) 735-9242

E-MAIL ADDRESS: historichomesla@aol.com ~ lauramink@aol.com

DESCRIPTION WORK SHEET

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

THE Joseph L Starr Farmhouse IS A one and-a-half -STORY,
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT NUMBER OF STORIES

Vernacular Victorian Farmhouse, irregular PLAN residence
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE 8 ABOVE) PLAN SHAPE (Click to See Chart) STRUCTURE USE (RESIDENCE, ETC.)

WITH A simple drop wood siding FINISH AND wood TRIM.
MATERIAL (WOOD SLIDING, WOOD SHINGLES, BRICK, STUCCO, ETC.) MATERIAL (WOOD, METAL, ETC.)

IT'S cross gabled ROOF IS composition, wood frame
ROOF SHAPE (Click to See Chart) MATERIAL (CLAY TILE, ASPHALT OR WOOD SHINGLES, ETC.) WINDOW MATERIAL

double hung, fixed single pane and fixed transom WINDOWS ARE PART OF THE DESIGN.
WINDOW TYPE (DOUBLE-HUNG (SLIDES UP & DOWN), CASEMENT (OPENS OUT), HORIZONTAL SLIDING, ETC.)

THE ENTRY FEATURES A recessed, off-center,
DOOR LOCATION (RECESSED, CENTERED, OFF-CENTER, CORNER, ETC.)

four-panel DOOR. ADDITIONAL CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS
ENTRY DOOR STYLE (Click to See Chart)

OF THE STRUCTURE ARE an L-wrapping porch on the east facade and north elevation, projecting gable, fish scale
IDENTIFY ORIGINAL FEATURES SUCH AS PORCHES (SEE CHART); BALCONIES; NUMBER AND SHAPE OF DORMERS (Click to See Chart)

shingle cladding on gable end, bay window of parlor beneath east facade porch, hand sawn detail at watercourse
NUMBER AND LOCATION OF CHIMNEYS; SHUTTERS; SECONDARY FINISH MATERIALS; PARAPETS; METAL TRIM; DECORATIVE TILE OR CAST STONE; ARCHES;

level at base of east facade bay, watercourse of vertical tongue and groove. Early addition at southwest corner of
ORNAMENTAL WOODWORK; SYMMETRY OR ASYMMETRY; CORNICES; FRIEZES; TOWERS OR TURRETS; BAY WINDOWS; HALFTIMBERING; HORIZONTALLY;

original structure w/ batten-and-board siding, later west shed form addition. Exterior stairs added along south wall.
VERTICALLY; FORMALITY OR INFORMALITY; GARDEN WALLS, ETC.

SECONDARY BUILDINGS CONSIST OF A detached garage with attached storage shed at east side
IDENTIFY GARAGE; GARDEN SHELTER, ETC.

SIGNIFICANT INTERIOR SPACES INCLUDE parlor with east bay, deep base boards, four-panel doors,
IDENTIFY ORIGINAL FEATURES SUCH AS WOOD PANELING; MOLDINGS AND TRIM; SPECIAL GLASS WINDOWS;

dining room with wainscoting, south wall niche of former built-in breakfront, secondary east wall niche with
ORNATE CEILINGS; PLASTER MOLDINGS; LIGHT FIXTURES; PAINTED DECORATION; CERAMIC TILE; STAIR BALUSTRADES; BUILT-IN FURNITURE, ETC.

built-in drawers. (Remaining rooms not available for viewing/documentation)

IMPORTANT LANDSCAPING INCLUDES _____
IDENTIFY NOTABLE MATURE TREES AND SHRUBS

SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

Complete One or Both of the Upper and Lower Portions of This Page

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

THE Joseph L Starr Farmhouse IS AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT
Vernacular Victorian Farmhouse ARCHITECTURE
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE 8)

AND MEETS THE CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE BECAUSE OF THE HIGH QUALITY OF ITS DESIGN AND THE RETENTION OF ITS ORIGINAL FORM, DETAILING AND INTEGRITY.

A N D / O R

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

THE Joseph L Starr Farmhouse WAS BUILT IN 1888
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT YEAR BUILT
Joseph L. Starr and Jasper Newton Preston WAS IMPORTANT TO THE
NAME OF FIRST OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER

DEVELOPMENT OF LOS ANGELES BECAUSE Please see accompanying Historical Significance statement. Please see accompanying biography of Joseph L. Starr, first owner and biography of Jasper Newton Preston, architect.

Historical Significance Joseph L. Starr Farmhouse

The Joseph L. Starr Farmhouse is significant because this parcel with its associated structures, is one of the few remaining links to the agricultural history of Jefferson Park.

At the turn of the 20th century, the area that is now known as Jefferson Park was primarily agricultural land. A quarter century earlier, in 1874, Andrew Joughin, a blacksmith from the Isle of Man, began investing in real estate, acquiring for \$6,000 some 360 acres, constituting a partial subdivision of Rancho Las Cienegas. In 1883, Joughin added to his holdings by purchasing the nearby 305-acre Thomas Gray Ranch, also part of the former Cienega ranchos. By 1886 Joughin had decided to sell the majority of his acres of mustard fields in order to make a “grand tour” of Europe, returning to visit his beloved Isle of Man as rich man.

North of Adams Street (now West Adams Boulevard), an investment consortium established, in 1887, the township of Arlington Heights from a portion of the Joughin holdings. But the fertile fields on the flats at the base of the hill continued in agricultural use. Joseph L. Starr, with “S. A. Williams, G. S. Umpleby, Mrs. A. M. McNamer, Mrs. E. Millard,” acquired a tract of “West Los Angeles” land, in 1886. This acquisition constituted, “20 acres in section 2, township 2S, range 14 W, for a purchase price of \$14,000” (*Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 10, 1887). It is believed that Starr owned additional adjoining acreage.

“When he [Starr] built his present home in 1888 on what is now Arlington Street, there were only a few scattered houses within a radius of four miles,” observed J.M. Guinn, writing in the period. Starr commissioned fellow Texan Jasper Newton Preston, a prominent Austin architect who had also migrated to Los Angeles where he established a successful practice, to design a vernacular Victorian farmhouse “5 room cottage” (*Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 17, 1888) at what is now 2801 South Arlington Avenue, at the present southwest corner of South Arlington Avenue and Mont Clair Street. Starr’s dairy farming operation was based at this location. The 1898 *Los Angeles City Directory* lists, “Starr, Joseph L., prop[rietor], Estrella Dairy, w[est] s[ide] Arlington, 1st h[ouse] S[outh] of W. Adams, r[esidence] same.” Starr also engaged in the growing of grain crops to sustain his dairy herd and to vend as cash crops. Starr at one time had a contract to provide hay to feed the City’s work horses. Starr and his family resided at the farmhouse until his death c. 1915, after which his family remained in residence.

Record was found of Starr also commissioning the Walker Building Company to construct extant Craftsman bungalows, of later vintage, at 2807 and 2811 South Arlington Avenue. Starr sold the bungalows in 1907, at the same time selling additional lots on the west side of Arlington to W. Walker, the builder. (*Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 29, 1907).

Starr’s vernacular Victorian farmhouse appears to be the last remaining residence in Jefferson Park which reflects its utilitarian agricultural roots and, as such, is most likely the oldest extant house in the neighborhood. Within a decade of the home’s construction, the burgeoning City began moving south and west, into the countryside and into agricultural acreage. J. L. Starr joined the trend, developing and subdividing his

Historical Significance: Joseph L. Starr Farmhouse—page 2

holdings, as his dairy continued to provide fresh products for the City's new and established residents. Joseph L. Starr thus became one of scores of Southern California farmers who, over the intervening decades, would subdivide their agricultural holdings to facilitate the expansion of the Los Angeles metro, becoming in the process, suburban dwellers. Unlike most of his fellow farmers, whose homes were cleared to make way for the growing metro, Joseph L. Starr's farmhouse remains, a testament to Jefferson Park's agricultural heritage.

Joseph L. Starr Biography

Joseph L. Starr, a native Texan, became a leader among late 19th and early 20th century Southern California dairymen.

J. L. Starr was born in Austin, Texas, July 31, 1851. Starr's father Solomon was the son of a Revolutionary War soldier. His mother, Margaret (Austin) Starr, included in her Austin family line a great-uncle who founded the town of Austin, Texas. Starr was educated in Texas and Missouri and became a Texas cattleman.

Starr married Mary Esther Geary, a native of New York State, in 1873. The following year the couple journeyed to Ventura County, California, where Starr continued his career as a cattleman. The young couple began their family which eventually numbered seven children: Helen, Stanley, Stella, Walter, Laura B., Jennie L, and Joseph Howard.

After a decade-plus as a stockman in Ventura County, Starr, in 1886, moved his family closer to the rapidly-developing city of Los Angeles. Starr purchased rich agricultural lands southwest of the City in the area at present-day South Arlington Avenue and Mont Clair Street. In 1888 Starr commissioned fellow Texas migrant and well-known architect, Jasper Newton Preston, to design a farmhouse for the Starrs. Preston designed a vernacular Victorian farmhouse described in the *Los Angeles Times* as a "five room cottage." It was sited at what is now the southwest corner of South Arlington Avenue and Mont Clair Street. The location was then noted, in the 1898 Los Angeles City Directory as, "w[est] s[ide] Arlington, 1st h[ouse] S[outh] of W. Adams."

The Starrs raised dairy cattle, grains including hay crops and millet for their own farm use and, on contract, provided hay for the City's fire department horses. Starr established a dairy to provide milk and other dairy products to the consumers of Los Angeles. The dairy is referred to, alternately, as the J. L. Starr Dairy and as the Estrella Dairy. Starr worked relentlessly to organize other dairy farmers and dairies with the goal of increasing milk prices. He was a founding member and officer of the Dairymen's Association of Southern California, which was associated with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.

Ironically, Starr was once cited for failing to obtain a health permit for his dairy operation. Somewhere along the way he transitioned to the position of assistant State dairy inspector for the Southern California territory and later became State dairy inspector for that territory. In this position Starr inspected dairy farms, dairies and food establishments which sold and served milk and dairy products for quality of products and cleanliness of the operations. He instructed milk producers and handlers in the potential improvement of their products and operations. Starr became a leader in all facets of the dairy industry.

Just as Starr had followed changing and ever-enhancing opportunities in the cattle and dairy industry from Texas to Ventura County to the environs of rapidly expanding Los Angeles, Starr envisioned the next step in the progression and began subdividing and commissioning the building of homes on prime parcels of his land. All the while he continued to operate his dairy and to provide its products to the City's burgeoning population of consumers.

No obituary or death record has yet been located for Joseph L. Starr. However, he is listed in the 1915 Los Angeles City Directory, but is absent from the 1916 edition, while his wife Mary is listed, in 1916, as living at 2801 South Arlington, the family's farm home in the midst of the developing Los Angeles suburb now referred to as the Jefferson Park neighborhood.

In addition to his life of service to fellow dairymen, Starr was also a Mason of the Royal Arch degree, a member of the Junior Order of United American Merchants, a director of the Boys' and Girls' Aid Society. A very active Republican, Starr was a member and officer of the Flambeau Club, a Republican organization.

James Miller Guinn saluted the Starrs in writing:

Both Mr. and Mrs. Starr have many friends and acquaintances in Los Angeles, and are highly esteemed wherever they are known, They have contributed their full share toward the development and upbuilding of the city and community, and their faith in the future of Los Angeles city and county has been unfaltering at all times.

Jasper Newton Preston Biography

Jasper Newton Preston (1832-1922) is one of many 19th century designers and architects whose stories had been lost to time until recently, as the field of local history has gained momentum and scholars are beginning to delve deeper into the foundations of local culture.

Preston's own story reaches from coast to coast, from a childhood in New York and Michigan, and a professional career in the building industries in Michigan, Texas, Los Angeles, Washington, and Arizona, where he contributed significantly to the built environment. He had a foot in each century, with early buildings designed with Romanesque and gloriously-ornate Victorian vocabulary and, later, created structures in the more subdued Mission Revival, Swiss, Transitional and Craftsman modes. He contributed to the development of architecture as a profession in both Texas and Southern California, he served as a mentor to the young architects of his day, and, according to his biographers, "his work also helped to broaden the scope of public perceptions of architectural design."

During a 60-year career, Preston designed numerous public buildings, elaborate mansions, hotels and commercial structures. However, few of his Los Angeles buildings survive today. Preston and his son, Samuel Preston, designed this relatively modest vernacular Victorian farmhouse cottage, originally five rooms and built at a cost of \$2,000, in 1888, soon after their arrival in Los Angeles, where they had received a commission to design the County Courthouse. Though small, it reflects many of the idiomatic Texas-style Victorian elements which had garnered Preston fame before he moved to Los Angeles at a time when this City's development was burgeoning.

It was in Texas that Preston "left behind a legacy of landmark structures that grace the cultural landscape to this day," write historians Bob Brinkman and Dan Utley, respectively chairman of the Williamson County Historical Commission and chief historian of the Texas Historical Commission. According to Utley and Brinkman, Preston's "largest collection of extant buildings remains in Texas, where he practiced for eleven years, from 1875 to 1886. Eight of his buildings carry landmark designation, with six now listed in the National Register of Historic Places and five designated as Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks."

The family tree of architect Jasper Newton Preston has deep American roots. His ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, and served as elected state assemblymen in New York. His own parents, Samuel and Rebecca Preston, were of pioneering spirit: they gathered their young family in the winter of 1834-35 and became part of America's great Western migration. They moved first to eastern Michigan from the town of Ira, New York, and soon thereafter migrated further into Michigan's wilderness, to the Oneida Township, where they became the second settlers. Samuel worked as a farmer, and by 1850 Jasper "J.N." Preston was listed as a farmer, too.

However, J.N. Preston during the 1850s, received some training in architecture and began working as a "carpenter," a title that at the time signaled a broad array of skills, including designer and building contractor. As the 1860s and early 1870s passed, Preston's occupation in Michigan evolved from being described as carpenter to, in an 1875 business directory, "architect."

The profession of architecture was in its infancy when Preston commenced his practice. According to Brinkman and Utley, “Preston's personal evolution from builder to designer in the 1870s reflected a national trend then developing in the eastern and midwestern states, but not yet prevalent further west. Without a nationally recognized professional certification program, individuals within the building trades were free to adopt a variety of titles, most commonly builder or master builder, carpenter, or mechanic. Over time, some [like Preston] would come to call themselves designers or architects.”

Brinkman and Utley further write, “The 1870s and 1880s were decades of dramatic American economic growth. . . . The arrival of railroads, the influx of immigrants, and increased investment from out-of-state sources drove new development, which in turn increased the need for more specialized professionalism in the architectural and building trade fields. Competition between burgeoning cities and states heralded a new era of architecture that would be viewed later as a golden age of design. Within this era, public architecture played a major role in the redefinition of the associated professions. Impressive new capitols, courthouses, city halls, universities, and other public elements of the built environment were increasingly reflective of a progressive society's desire for stability, permanence, and even ostentation. It was in this milieu of change and foresight that Preston came of age as a master designer, bridging the schism then developing between amateurs and professionals to become an architect.”

Preston left Michigan and arrived in Austin, Texas, in 1875, a fact briefly noted in Austin's *Daily Democratic Statesman*: “J. N. Preston, architect, has settled here.” The architect “rode the crest of a rapidly developing Texas,” not to mention a growing capital city, and by the time his eleven years in the Lone Star state came to an end, Preston had established himself as one of the preeminent architects in the state, credited with at least a dozen county courthouses and four state-run asylums serving various clientele. Preston had been the supervising architect on the state capital building in Austin, and he was the designer of the grand Hotel Driskill, a four-story structure built in the Romanesque Revival style made popular nationally by Henry Hobson Richardson.

“As the Driskill project neared completion, Jasper Newton Preston made plans to move his practice to California. By the time of the dedication on December 20, 1886, Preston, his son Samuel, and their families had already left the state,” write Brinkman and Utley. “The exact reasons for his seemingly abrupt departure from Texas remain unknown, although a California newspaper article indicated he landed an important commission--the design of the Los Angeles County Courthouse--only four months after his arrival. The timing implies that work was under way several months previous. In the late nineteenth century, the city of Los Angeles was experiencing the same type of rapid growth that had marked Austin earlier, albeit in a more dramatic fashion.”

In 1887, shortly after they journeyed west and established J.N. Preston & Son, the Los Angeles *Daily Herald* wrote of Jasper and Samuel: “Los Angeles, with its rapid improvement and the erection of numerous platial [sic] residences, large store houses and costly public buildings, presents a splendid field for talented architects. Messrs. Preston & Son realize this fact and a short time ago left Austin, Texas, where they stood at the

head of the architectural profession and came to this city where the field is so much broader."

The Prestons immediately went to work on the design of the new Los Angeles County Courthouse. "Similar in many respects to Austin's *Driskill Hotel*, the massive Romanesque Revival structure reflected the Prestons' influence in its exuberant use of ornate detailing, such as spires, roof gables, arched windows, turrets, and a grand central clock tower," write Brinkman and Utley. "Prominently sited on a rise that added verticality to the overall massing, the building was a landmark in a rapidly growing urban center, lending dramatic public definition to an increasingly cosmopolitan and commercial city. Preston's use of high-style architecture showed that he was, by then, even more comfortable with incorporating such elements into his natural design process. The courthouse showed a relatively uninhibited use of ornate detailing, especially in the upper floors and roofline, which dominated the appearance."

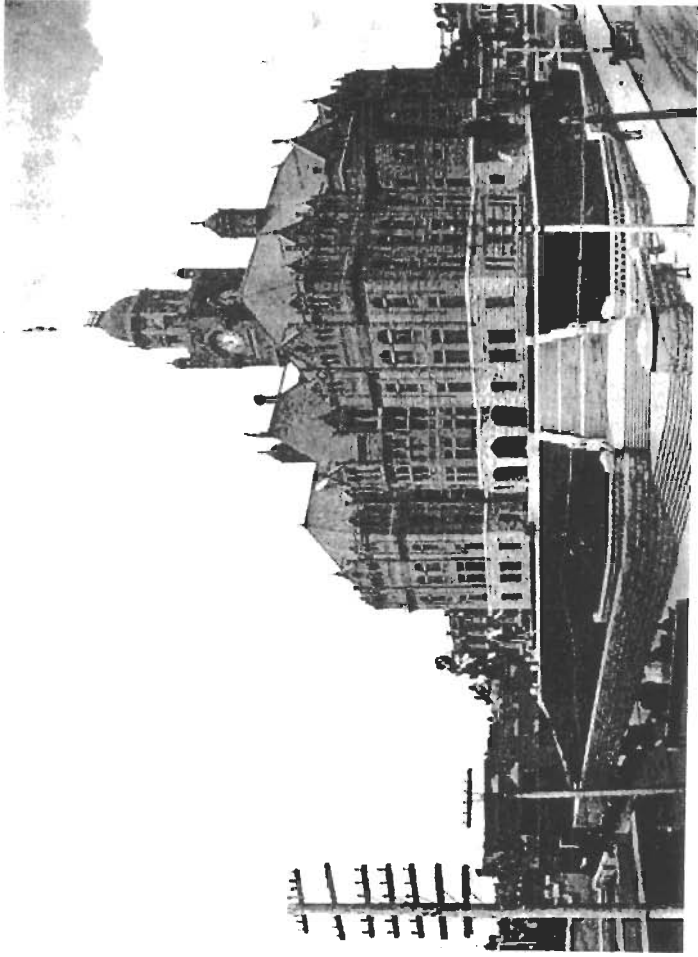
In Los Angeles, though much has not survived, Preston's projects included notable commercial structures (including the Burdick Building in Downtown), courthouses, other public buildings, and residences, including homes for Andrew Glassell and Edward Dunn. By 1890, he has also designed the new Los Angeles High School, a \$70,000 structure which stood high on a hill above Downtown. The high school, which "featured Romanesque and Renaissance Revival details in a substantial edifice that more closely resembled a courthouse, with its dominant campanile, than the standard school structure of the day," according to Brinkman and Utley. It was considered the finest public high school in the state of its time. Preston also worked throughout Southern California and in Arizona, where his 1894 Coconino County Courthouse still stands in Flagstaff.

Jasper's son and business partner, Samuel, died unexpectedly in 1889. Subsequently, Jasper Preston entered into a series of professional partnerships, among them (as noted in Los Angeles city directories) Seymour Locke (1893-1894), Don MacKenzie (1896), Norman F. Marsh (1900-1901) and Ira H. Seehorn (1902-1907).

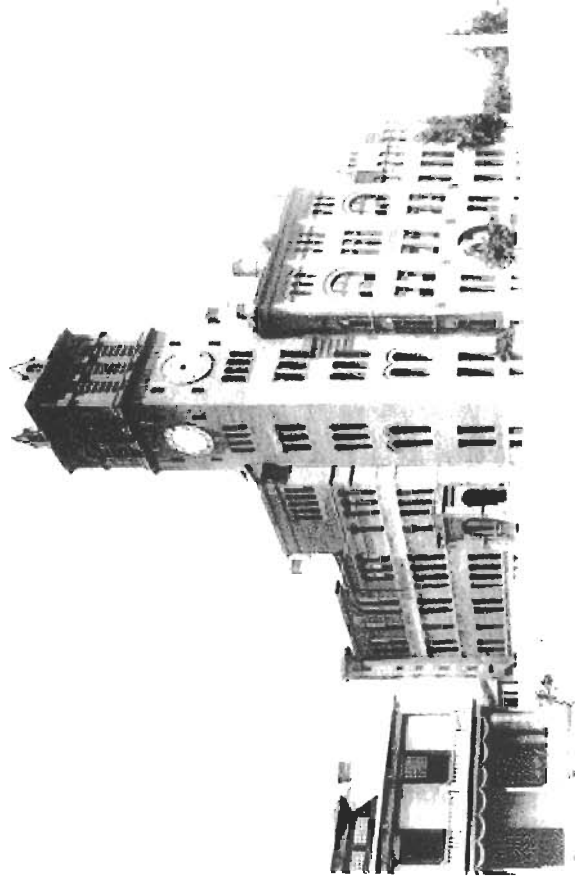
In 1907, at the end of his alliance with Seehorn, Preston received a high honor for his many years of architectural work in California. The *Architect and Engineer of California* reported that "a motion was made and passed unanimously that J. N. Preston, one of the oldest members of the [Southern California] chapter, now seventy six years of age, be made a life member of the local organization [American Institute of Architects]." Indeed, Preston -- one of the charter members of the Western Association of Architects, which later consolidated with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) -- had served as president of AIA's Southern California chapter for many years.

Along with independent research, **much** of this essay is derived from "A **Name on the Cornerstone: The Landmark Texas Architecture of Jasper Newton Preston,**" by **Bob Brinkman** and Dan K. Utley (*Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, University of Texas Press; July, 2006). Bob Brinkman is a historian at the Texas Historical Commission. He

is chairman of the Williamson County Historical Commission and president of the Texas Old Missions and Forts Restoration Association (TOMFRA). Dan K. Utley is Chief Historian with the Texas Historical Commission. A past chairman of the National Register State Board of Review for Texas and past president of the Texas Oral History Association, he currently serves as first vice president of the East Texas Historical Association.



Los Angeles County Courthouse (1891), J.N. Preston Source: Los Angeles Public Library



Los Angeles High School (1890), J.N. Preston Source: Los Angeles Unified School District

Bibliography
Joseph L. Starr Farmhouse

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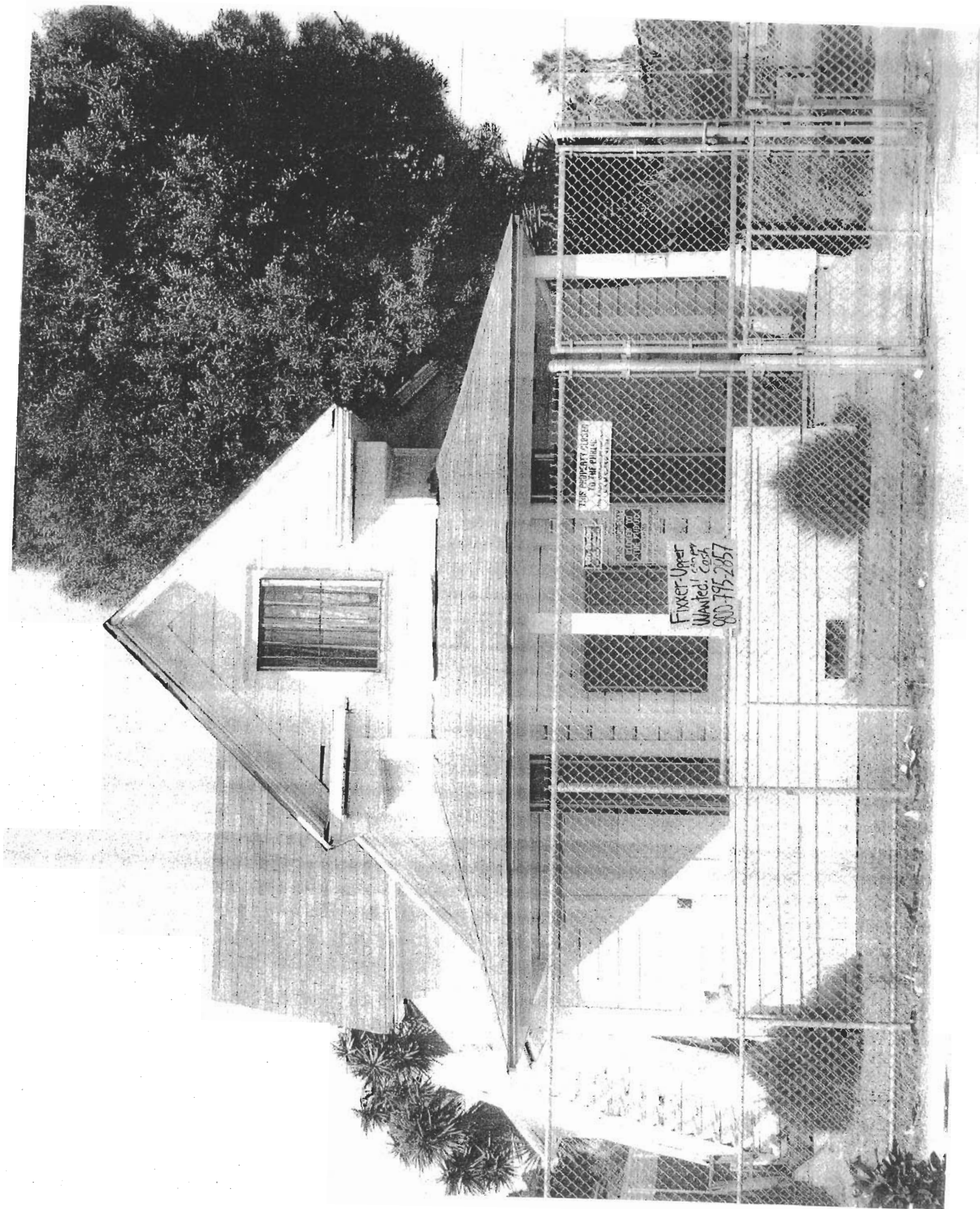
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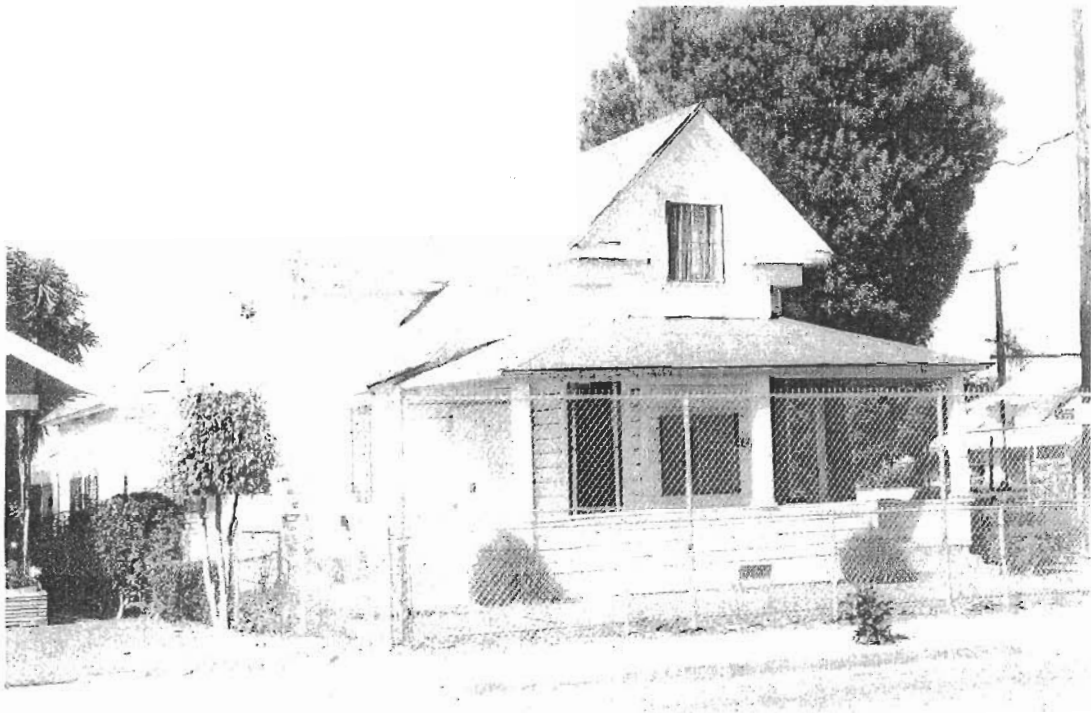
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South elevation and east façade, viewed to northwest from South Arlington Avenue



North elevation, viewed to south across Mont Clair Street.

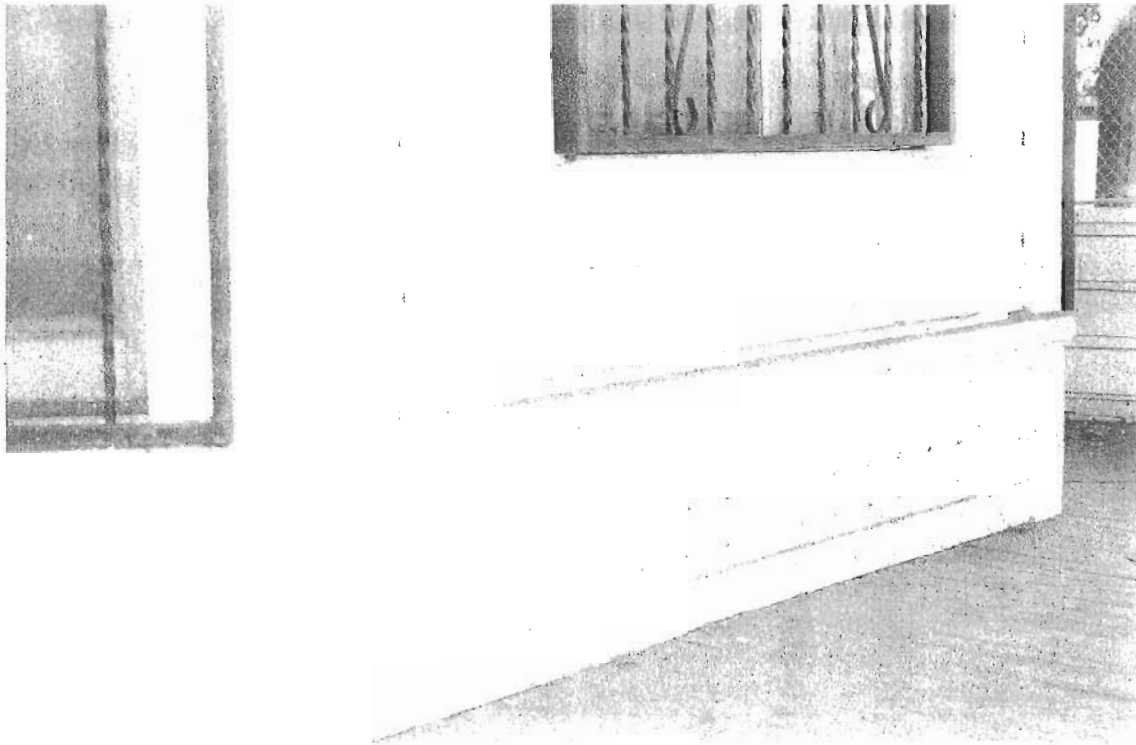
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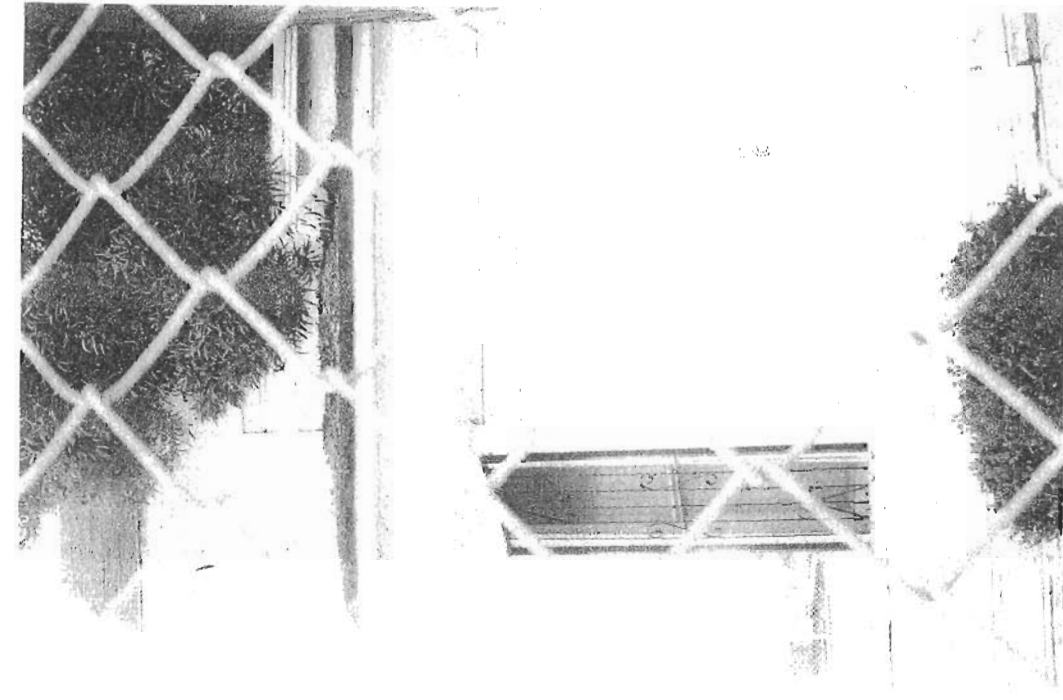
East façade gable end and gable projection with fish scale shingle detail.



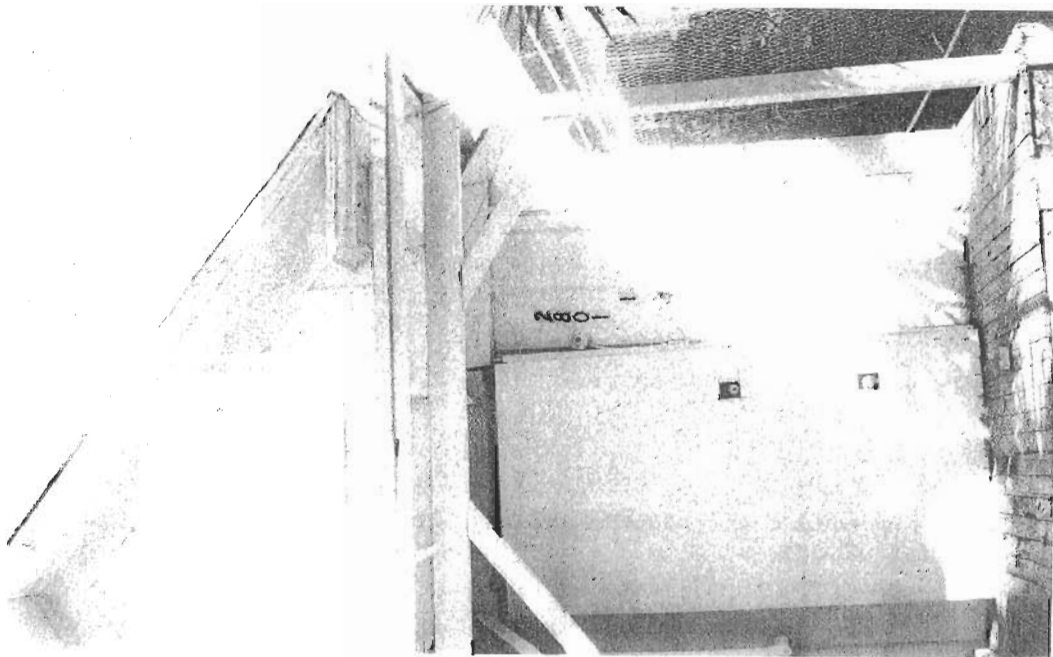
Porch with parlor bay detail: Hand sawn detail. Note alteration of central window of bay.

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North side of east facade bay with fish scale shingle detail above, and north elevation, viewed to south.

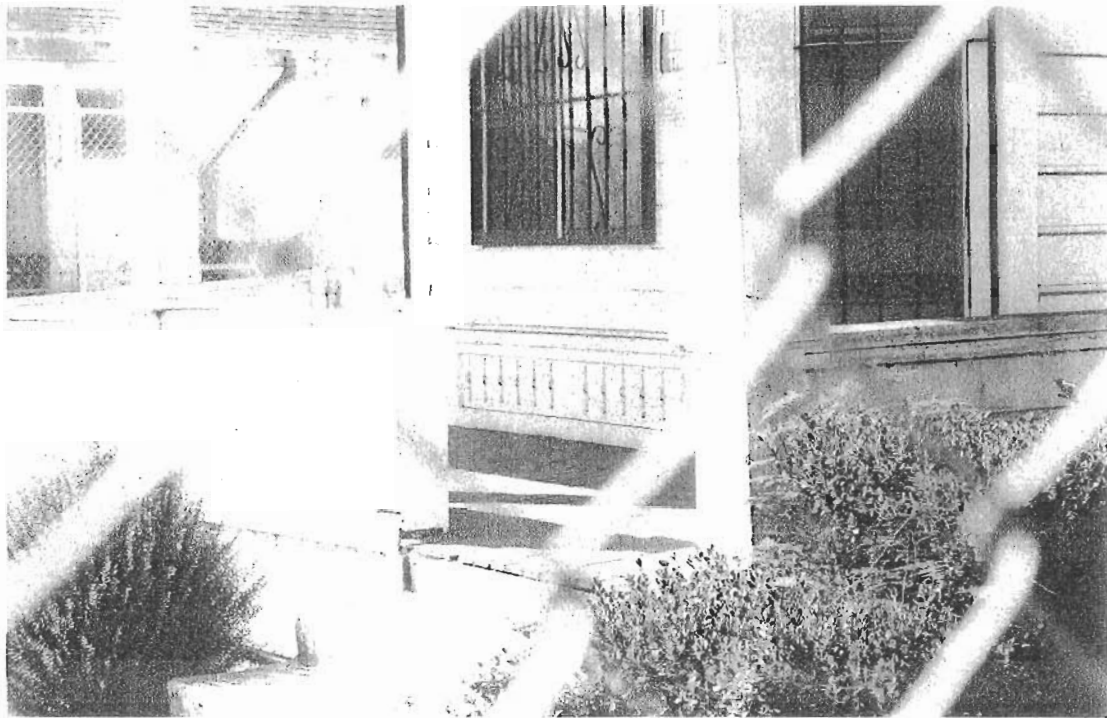


Early addition at southwest of original structure: West elevation, viewed to east.

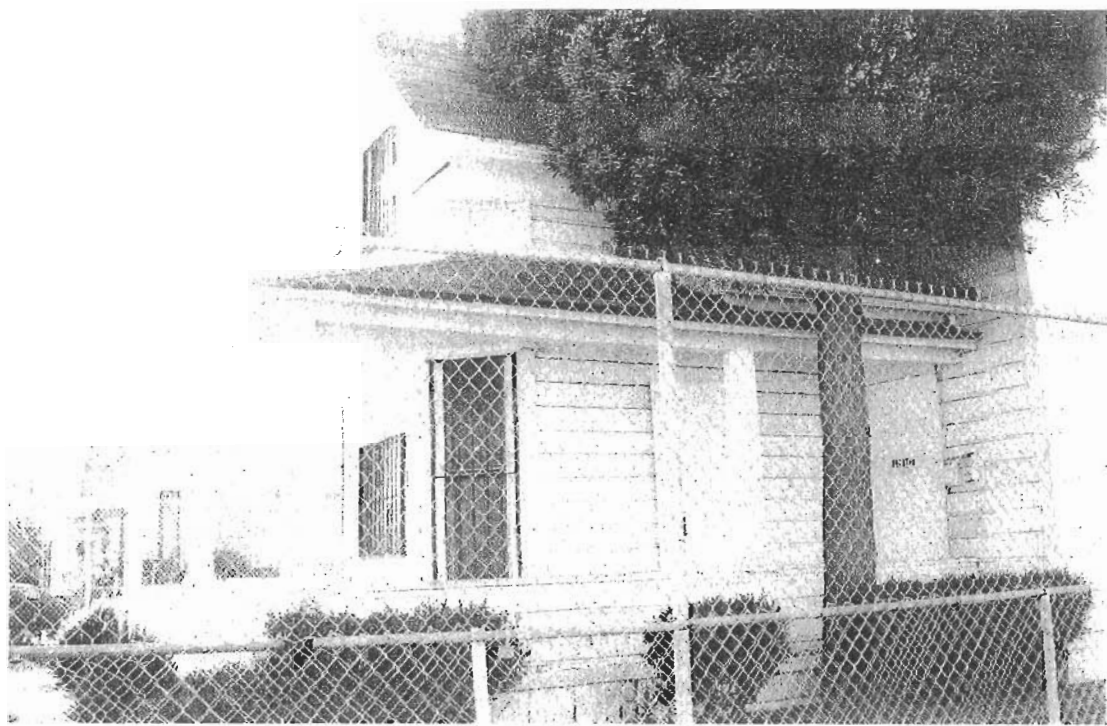
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East façade porch detail: East façade and north elevation, viewed to southwest.

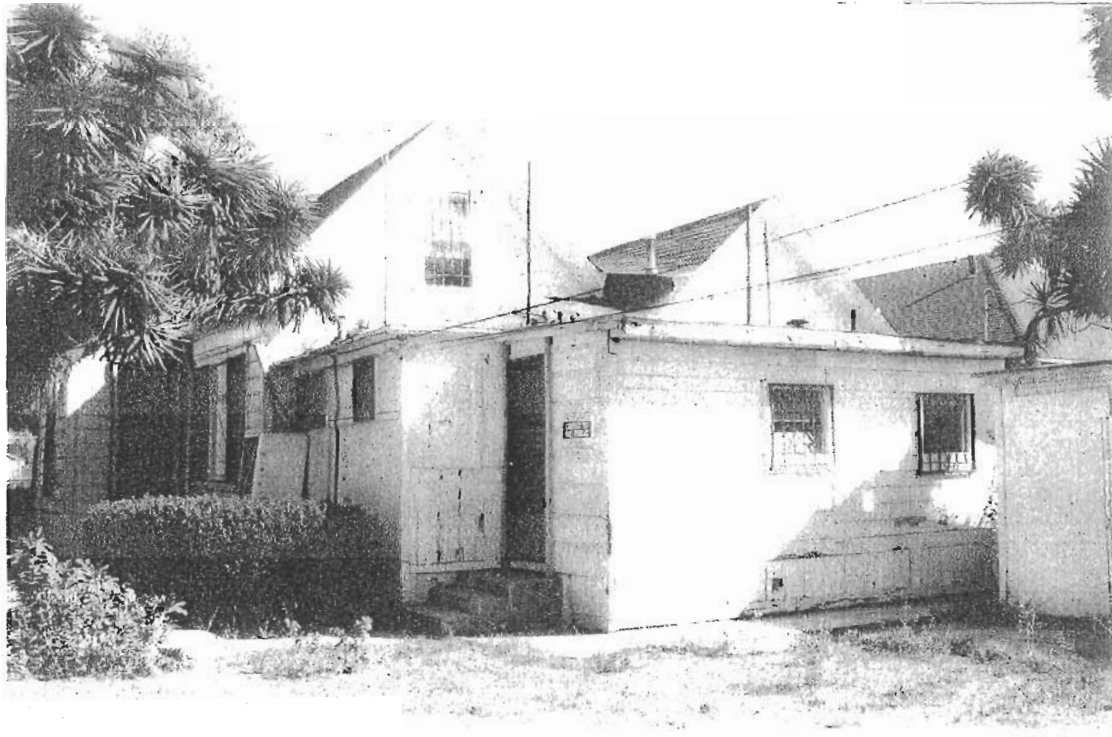


East façade and north elevation: Bay window of parlor, viewed to southwest.

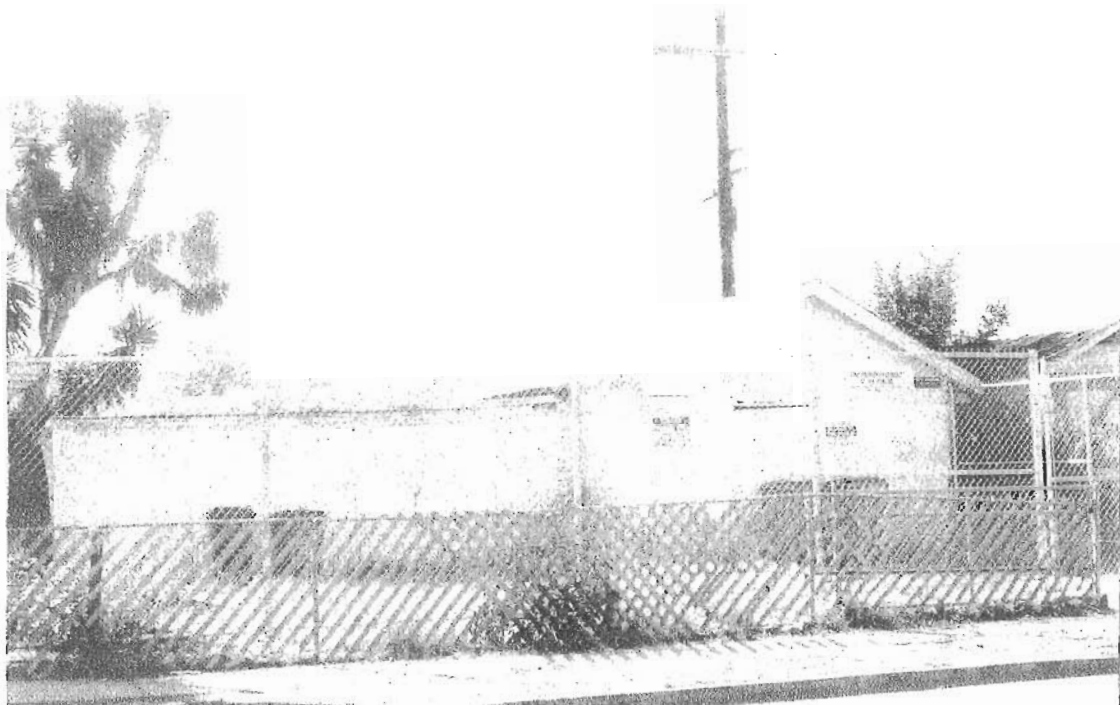
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West shed form addition: North and west elevations, viewed to southeast.



Detached garage with attached storage: North façade, viewed to south from
Mont Clair Street.