

# LANDMARK, PROTECTED LANDMARK, OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE DESIGNATION APPLICATION FORM



PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT

## PROPOSED DESIGNATION

Landmark\*       Protected Landmark (and Landmark)\*       Archaeological Site

\*Landmarks outside of historic districts are subject to the 90-day waiver. Landmarks within historic districts and all Protected Landmarks are NOT subject to the 90-day waiver. See Sec. 33-250 of the Code of Ordinances, Chapter 33, Article VII - Historic Preservation at <http://www.houstontx.gov/codes/index.html>. Protected Landmarks are also subject to the Demolition by Neglect provisions in Sec. 33-254.

Contact the Historic Preservation Office at 832-393-6556, or email [historicpreservation@houstontx.gov](mailto:historicpreservation@houstontx.gov) for more information.

## SITE INFORMATION

**NOTE:** Site information is required and must accompany the application. Please provide a copy of the deed or other similar document verifying ownership and providing the property legal description.

Site Address <u>2310 Elgin Street (aka 2312 Elgin Street)</u>	Tax Account Number <u>0191650000005</u>
General Description: <u>Eldorado Ballroom</u>	Subdivision <u>Holman Outlot 35</u>
<u>(two-story Streamline Moderne commerical bldg)</u>	Lot <u>5</u> Block <u>6</u>

## APPLICANT INFORMATION

### OWNER

Name Eureka Gilkey

Company Project Row Houses

Mailing Address 2521 Holman Street  
Houston, TX 77004

Phone (713) 526-7662

Email egilkey@projectrowhouses.org

Signature *Eureka Gilkey*

Date 5/25/2021

### APPLICANT (if other than owner)

Name Amanda Barry

Company MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC

Mailing Address 711 Milby Street, Container 5  
Houston, TX 77023

Phone (713) 470-0058

Email abarry@mac-ha.com

Signature *Amanda Barry*

Date 05/20/2021

## DOCUMENTATION MUST BE PROVIDED WITH APPLICATION (WHERE APPLICABLE)

- **IF Site is already designated as a City of Houston Landmark, OR listed individually in the National Register of Historic Place OR designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark OR State Archeological Landmark:**
  - A) Complete copy of the original nomination. If site has received multiple designations, or if there have been any amendments/revisions which provide information necessary to meet designation criteria found in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, please provide this information too.

- B) Statement/description regarding current physical condition and information/dates of previous alterations and renovations since the original nomination(s) was (were) written
  - C) Digital images or color photographs - if a building and its outbuildings (i.e. garage), structure or object, submit images of all sides of the exteriors. If an archaeological site, submit images that depict the condition of the site and any above-ground or surface features and disturbances. (If relevant to the evaluation of significance, submit images that illustrate artifacts that have been removed from the site and where those objects are housed).
- ***IF SITE is designated only as a “contributing” structure in a National Register Historic District, OR IF the building was constructed more than 100 years prior to the completed application date and is NOT designated as a City of Houston Landmark, OR individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places, OR designated as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark OR State Archeological Landmark AND the application is for ONLY “PROTECTED LANDMARK” status, then the application must ALSO include the seeking of Landmark status:***
    - A) Complete description of the Landmark, Protected Landmark OR Archaeological Site including historic name/s; date/s of construction/habitation/alteration/s; architect/s if known; contractor/builder/s if known; general characteristics (means of construction, foundation, building size and shape, building materials, roof form and construction, and style/influences of architecture); geographical setting (orientation on site, site size); brief history of neighborhood/subdivision in which it is located; describe facades (obvious distinctive features); site features and relationship to main building (topography, outbuildings, drives, walks, fences, gates, major trees, general plantings, etc.) and statement of physical condition and each aspect of integrity which may relate to location, setting, workmanship, materials, design, feeling and association. If applicable, provide a determination letter from the Texas Historical Commission that the structure is “contributing” to an Historic District listed in the National Register of Historic Places) (SEE EXAMPLE OF NARRATIVES).
    - B) Images - same as above.
    - C) Documentation that satisfies at least one (1) of the criteria contained in Section 33-224, Houston Code of Ordinances for Landmark or Archaeological Site designation OR Protected Landmark when site was constructed more than 100 years prior to the completed application date, has designation as individually listed or as “contributing” structure of the National Register or if designated as a Recorded Texas Historical Landmark or State Archaeological Site and that satisfies at least three (3) of the criteria contained in Section 33-224, Houston Code of Ordinances for Protected Landmark designation if the building has been designated as a Landmark.

***Criteria for Designation - Section 33-224 – Historic Preservation Ordinance***

1. Possess character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation.
2. Location of a significant local, state or national event.
3. Identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state or nation.
4. Exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city.
5. Best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood.
6. Identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state or nation.
7. Specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present.
8. Has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

## **Eldorado Ballroom – 2310 Elgin Street (aka 2312 Elgin Street) Protected Landmark Application – May 2021**

### ***Statement of Significance***

The Eldorado Ballroom at 2310 Elgin Street is a 50x100-foot two-part commercial block completed in 1939 according to the design of Houston architect Lenard Gabert. Developed by local African-American entrepreneurs Anna and C. A. Dupree in a commercial enclave of the city's Third Ward, the building was designed to contain five ground-floor retail units for black-owned businesses, including a large corner pharmacy and barber shop, and the Eldorado Ballroom, the city's premier events venue during the segregation era, on the second floor. It is constructed of a reinforced concrete frame on a slab with steel roof trusses and masonry and hollow clay tile infill. Exterior walls are clad in stucco with some face brick at the storefront level. The exterior's Streamline Moderne style is exhibited in the rounded northeast corner, the building's overall horizontal emphasis and flat roof, and smooth, unornamented surfaces. The second-floor windows were originally large expanses of operable steel horizontal-light awning sashes that ran across the length of both street-facing facades; they were replaced c. 1957 with smaller, irregularly spaced fixed aluminum-frame plate-glass windows to accommodate HVAC ceiling furr downs inside the ballroom. The current aluminum storefronts date to a 2000s renovation and are set within the historic openings. On the first floor, extant historic interior features include the majority of demising walls between units, support columns, and several remnants of wood trim. The original wood staircase to the second-floor ballroom is intact along with some wood trim, including the original railing and wall cladding. The second-floor ballroom underwent three renovations c. 1949, c. 1953, and c. 1957. Extant historic interior features include the ballroom's open volume with support spaces clustered at the western end, wood floors, plaster walls and ceiling, entrance doors, and bathroom finishes; the stage and bar, which were altered several times during the ballroom's history, have been removed. Overall, the Eldorado Ballroom possesses the necessary integrity to be recognizable as the leading entertainment venue of the mid-twentieth century for Houston's African-American community.

### ***Physical Description***

The Eldorado Ballroom has a simple form and massing with a rectangular footprint measuring 50x100 feet. It is constructed of a reinforced concrete frame with brick masonry and hollow-clay tile infill, steel roof trusses, concrete-slab floors, and a flat roof. Some steel beams were added as reinforcement following a 1941 fire that gutted the second-floor interior. The exterior walls are covered in smooth stucco and some painted face brick at the storefront level. The face brick was historically unpainted and red in color. The exterior was designed in the Streamline Moderne style, a precursor to Modernism that emerged in the 1930s as an architectural embodiment of aerodynamic design. The style is expressed in the building's curved northeast corner, overall horizontal emphasis, flat roof, and smooth, unornamented surfaces. The original brushed-aluminum storefronts, which were removed in the 2000s, added to the building's Moderne style in the horizontal light patterns of the doors and the flat profiles of the frames and muntins. The Eldorado was designed by Houston-based architect Lenard Gabert (1894-1976).

The ground floor is divided into five commercial units: one large corner unit with an angled double-door entrance at the corner of Elgin and Emancipation Avenue; three smaller units along the Elgin Street façade; and one small unit at the south end of the Emancipation Avenue façade that retains its separate entrance but has been incorporated into the corner unit on the interior. At the western end of the Elgin Street façade is the entrance to the second-floor venue. At the southern end of the Emancipation Avenue façade is the fire exit and metal egress stair for the venue. These fenestration and circulation patterns are unchanged from the period of significance.

The flat roof is covered in thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) and bordered by a short stuccoed parapet with a metal coping. There are two outdated HVAC condenser units on the west side of the roof. There is no elevator in the building.

Today, the ground-floor units are leased out and the second-floor venue is used for special events.

### ***National Register of Historic Places***

The owners of the property are pursuing individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Recreation/Culture.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

Historic Name: Eldorado Ballroom  
Other name/site number: Eldorado Building  
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

**2. Location**

Street & number: 2310 Elgin Street  
City or town: Houston State: Texas County: Harris  
Not for publication:  Vicinity:

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:  
 national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
**Signature of certifying official / Title** **Date**  
Texas Historical Commission  
**State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government**

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of commenting or other official** **Date**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government**

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- \_\_\_ entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register.
- \_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of the Keeper** **Date of Action**



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

**Category of Property**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:** RECREATION AND CULTURE: Music facility; COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

**Current Functions:** RECREATION AND CULTURE: Music facility; COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

**Principal Exterior Materials:** CONCRETE, BRICK, GLASS, METAL: Aluminum, OTHER: Synthetic Roofing

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets **XX** through **XX**)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>C</b>	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>D</b>	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:** N/A

**Areas of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage; Recreation/Culture

**Period of Significance:** 1939-1971

**Significant Dates:** 1939 (construction date)

**Significant Person** (only if Criterion B is marked): N/A

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if Criterion D is marked): N/A

**Architect/Builder:** Gabert, Lenard (architect)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets XX through XX)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheets XX)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

### Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

**Historic Resources Survey Number** (if assigned): N/A



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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### **Narrative Description**

The Eldorado Ballroom at 2310 Elgin Street in Houston, Harris County, is a 50x100-foot two-part commercial block completed in 1939 according to the design of Houston architect Lenard Gabert. Developed by local African-American entrepreneurs Anna and C. A. Dupree in a commercial enclave of the city's Third Ward, the building was designed to contain five ground-floor retail units for black-owned businesses, including a large corner pharmacy and barber shop, and the Eldorado Ballroom, the city's premier events venue during the segregation era, on the second floor. It is constructed of a reinforced concrete frame on a slab with steel roof trusses and masonry and hollow clay tile infill. Exterior walls are clad in stucco with some face brick at the storefront level. The exterior's Streamline Moderne style is exhibited in the rounded northeast corner, the building's overall horizontal emphasis and flat roof, and smooth, unornamented surfaces. The second-floor windows were originally large expanses of operable steel horizontal-light awning sashes that ran across the length of both street-facing facades; they were replaced c. 1957 with smaller, irregularly spaced fixed aluminum-frame plate-glass windows to accommodate HVAC ceiling furr downs inside the ballroom. The current aluminum storefronts date to a 2000s renovation and are set within the historic openings. On the first floor, extant historic interior features include the majority of demising walls between units, support columns, and several remnants of wood trim. The original wood staircase to the second-floor ballroom is intact along with some wood trim, including the original railing and wall cladding. The second-floor ballroom underwent three renovations c. 1949, c. 1953, and c. 1957. Extant historic interior features include the ballroom's open volume with support spaces clustered at the western end, wood floors, plaster walls and ceiling, entrance doors, and bathroom finishes; the stage and bar, which were altered several times during the ballroom's history, have been removed. Overall, the Eldorado Ballroom possesses the necessary integrity to be recognizable as the leading entertainment venue of the mid-twentieth century for Houston's African-American community.

### **Site and Setting**

The Eldorado Ballroom is a 9,952-SF two-part commercial block completed in 1939 at 2310 Elgin Street in Houston's Third Ward, a predominantly African-American neighborhood that developed in the early twentieth century approximately two miles south of downtown.<sup>1</sup> (*Map 1*) The building occupies the southwest corner of the active commercial intersection of Elgin and Emancipation Avenue (formerly Dowling Street). Dowling Street, which runs north-south through the Third Ward, was historically the neighborhood's primary commercial thoroughfare. (*Map 2*) The block is bounded to the south by Stuart Street and Bastrop Street to the west. The building occupies the entirety of its 50x100-foot parcel, and its street-facing elevations sit flush with the public right-of-way. (*Maps 3-4*) The asphalt-paved parking lot to the west of the building, which provides parking for the building's tenants and visitors, consists of two parcels that were not associated with the subject property during the period of significance.

The setting has undergone some changes as the neighborhood experienced disinvestment in the late twentieth century and several buildings, both commercial and residential, were demolished. Nevertheless, key elements of the historic setting are extant, including Emancipation Park, a local City of Houston Protected Landmark occupying the ten-acre city block across Elgin Street from the subject property. The park was established in 1872 by the Colored People's Festival and the Emancipation Park Association to celebrate Juneteenth and was among the first public parks in Texas.<sup>2</sup> Emancipation Avenue still reads as a wide commercial thoroughfare with some mid-twentieth century commercial structures extant to the north of the subject property; to the south is a concentration of new construction consisting of institutional and multi-family residential developments. Emancipation Avenue Main Street (EAMS) was officially inducted into the Texas Main Street Program in early 2020 to help guide reinvestment and preservation of the commercial corridor.<sup>3</sup> To the south and west of

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<sup>1</sup> Ezell Wilson, "Third Ward, Steeped in Tradition of Self-reliance and Achievement," *Houston History* Vol. 8 No. 2 (Spring 2011): 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> City of Houston, Planning and Development Department – Archaeological & Historical Commission, "Protected Landmark Designation Report: Emancipation Park," July 30, 2007, [http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/landmarks/07PL46\\_Emanicipation\\_Park\\_3018\\_Dowling\\_Street.pdf](http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/landmarks/07PL46_Emanicipation_Park_3018_Dowling_Street.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Texas Historical Commission, "Emancipation Avenue," <https://www.thc.texas.gov/blog/emancipation-avenue>.

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the subject property the neighborhood transitions into a modest early twentieth-century middle-class residential neighborhood, with one and two-story Tudor-style American Four Squares intermixed with pockets of shotgun houses, bungalows, and contemporary infill. (*Map 2*)

The address used for this nomination, 2310 Elgin Street, is that of the second-floor venue as it is the building's primary historic space. According to the Harris County Appraisal District, the building's address is 2312 Elgin Street, which corresponds to one of the ground-floor commercial units. The Elgin Street addresses span 2310-2318 Elgin Street. The corner unit is currently 2320 Elgin Street but historically was 3204 Dowling Street, and the small unit facing Emancipation Avenue was 3204 ½ Dowling Street. The name "Eldorado Ballroom" is being used herein because it was, and still is, how the building is known, although "Eldorado Building" was also used. A neon rooftop sign reading "Eldorado Ballroom" was once located at the building's northeast corner facing the intersection. (*Figure 1*)

### **Physical Description**

The Eldorado Ballroom has a simple form and massing with a rectangular footprint measuring 50x100 feet. It is constructed of a reinforced concrete frame with brick masonry and hollow-clay tile infill, steel roof trusses, concrete-slab floors, and a flat roof. Some steel beams were added as reinforcement following a 1941 fire that gutted the second-floor interior.<sup>4</sup> The exterior walls are covered in smooth stucco and some painted face brick at the storefront level. The face brick was historically unpainted and red in color.<sup>5</sup> The exterior was designed in the Streamline Moderne style, a precursor to Modernism that emerged in the 1930s as an architectural embodiment of aerodynamic design. The style is expressed in the building's curved northeast corner, overall horizontal emphasis, flat roof, and smooth, unornamented surfaces. The original brushed-aluminum storefronts, which were removed in the 2000s, added to the building's Moderne style in the horizontal light patterns of the doors and the flat profiles of the frames and muntins. (*Figure 1*) The Eldorado was designed by Houston-based architect Lenard Gabert (1894-1976).

The ground floor is divided into five commercial units: one large corner unit with an angled double-door entrance at the corner of Elgin and Emancipation Avenue; three smaller units along the Elgin Street façade; and one small unit at the south end of the Emancipation Avenue façade that retains its separate entrance but has been incorporated into the corner unit on the interior. At the western end of the Elgin Street façade is the entrance to the second-floor venue. At the southern end of the Emancipation Avenue façade is the fire exit and metal egress stair for the venue. These fenestration and circulation patterns are unchanged from the period of significance.

The flat roof is covered in thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) and bordered by a short stuccoed parapet with a metal coping. There are two outdated HVAC condenser units on the west side of the roof. There is no elevator in the building.

Today, the ground-floor units are leased out and the second-floor venue is used for special events.

### **Exterior**

The Eldorado's primary façade, facing north onto Elgin Street, is 100 feet in length and forms the long side of the rectangular building. It is clad in smooth stucco with a limited amount of painted-brick trim at the storefront bulkheads and at the ballroom entrance at the western end. All of the ground-floor storefronts were replaced in the 2000s with contemporary aluminum-framed doors and display windows set within the historic openings. Each storefront is separated by a stuccoed structural column. The storefront at the far left, 2318 Elgin Street, provides a side entrance to the corner unit. The corner entrance, at 2320 Elgin Street, sits at a 45-degree angle with a pair of replacement aluminum entrance doors and is inset below the curved exterior surface of the floor above. (*Photo 05*) Moving to the west away from the intersection, the storefronts at 2316, 2314, and 2312 Elgin Street each access a separate commercial unit. The ballroom entrance, at 2310

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<sup>4</sup> "Houston's Largest Ballroom Destroyed by Fire; None Hurt," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 15, 1941.

<sup>5</sup> Jhonny Langer/SOURCE, "Eldorado Ballroom Paint Finish and Analysis," September 2020.

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Elgin Street, is differentiated by a shallow setback in the wall plane, a semi-circular fabric canopy, and contemporary hollow-metal door; historically, the entrance contained a pair of aluminum doors with a horizontal light pattern matching the adjacent storefront doors, and the hipped-roof canopy was covered in asphalt shingle. (*Figure 1*) On the second floor are four fixed picture windows that are set within a horizontal stuccoed band that forms a continuous sill and lintel. The picture windows and banding date to c. 1957, when the original operable horizontal-light industrial-type steel windows were removed to accommodate HVAC ceiling furr downs around the perimeter of the ballroom. (*Photos 01-02*) At the rounded northeast corner is a grouping of four fixed windows set within the horizontal banding. Based on physical and photographic evidence, the replacement windows were never a continuous band; the sections of solid wall infill in between were intentional rather than a later modification. The original steel windows were five lights high by five lights across (with one pair of 5x2 windows at the east end and a 5x1 window above the ballroom entrance) to provide large expanses of glazing for both daylight and ventilation. (*Figures 1, 4*) The scars of the former openings are still visible in the current stucco wall finish.

The east façade, facing Emancipation Avenue, forms the short side of the building's rectangular footprint and is similar in appearance to Elgin Street. On the ground floor are two contemporary aluminum-frame storefront windows and a flush metal door set into a resized opening with a painted face-brick surround. One of the storefront windows has a painted-brick bulkhead and the other extends down to grade. On the second floor, the original steel windows were replaced c. 1957 with fixed picture windows and horizontal banding that continue from the Elgin Street façade. At the southern end is a flush-metal egress door opening onto a metal fire escape. (*Photos 01, 03*)

The south (rear) elevation is a blank, stucco-clad expanse that historically contained storefront-level steel-frame transom windows; the transoms are extant and encapsulated by the stucco. (*Photos 04, 07*) The west elevation, which faces the parking lot, is painted brick, CMU, and hollow clay tile. The eight irregularly spaced window openings are covered with bronze-finish metal louvers that conceal windows or provide ventilation. The large, tall, and narrow vertical opening located in the upper middle of the wall is an original steel window corresponding to the interior stairwell. (*Photos 04, 11*)

### Interior

The ground-floor interior is divided into four retail units; an entry vestibule and stairwell on the west end that accesses the second-floor venue; and a mechanical/storage room behind the stair. The area to the east of the stair was historically open to the stair hall but was partitioned in recent years to provide additional storage rooms.

The majority of the historic first-floor demising walls are intact and correspond to structural bays marked by rows of square concrete columns. Pairs of double doors have been added in each demising wall to connect the units. A small fifth retail unit, the only storefront accessed from Emancipation Avenue, was incorporated into the large corner unit at an unknown date. (*Photos 06, 08*)

Interior finishes of the retail units are similar throughout and consist of concrete-slab floors, gypsum-board walls, and suspended acoustical-tile ceilings dating to c. 2000s. Remnants of historic fabric discovered throughout the first floor suggest that the concrete slabs were previously covered with composition tile, and the walls and ceilings were plastered or covered with V-groove wood paneling. Structural columns and beams were finished with ribbed wood trim, sections of which are extant above the suspended ceilings. (*Photo 09*)

The stair hall vestibule at the western end of the first floor served as the entrance point to the second-floor venue. Today, the L-shaped wood stair is encapsulated by non-slip rubber and the diagonal-panel wood railing and matching trim are boxed in and concealed by a layer of textured-finish gypsum board. (*Photos 10-12*)

Following the building's completion in 1939, the second-floor ballroom underwent three renovations during the period of significance (in 1949, c.1953, and c. 1957). The 1949 alterations were made when the Duprees leased the ballroom to the Marshall brothers. The c. 1953 renovation occurred following a fire, and the c. 1957 alterations were made by the Duprees



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to install HVAC. Thus, the present-day appearance is a combination of features and finishes from these various phases in the ballroom's history. Today, the space remains an open volume that allowed for dancing and flexible seating arrangements. The low wood-frame stage at the eastern end of the space dates to c. 2000s. Historically, the stage was centered on the north wall (Elgin Street side). Historic photographs indicate that it was replaced or remodeled at least twice during the period of significance. The bar was centered on the east wall (Emancipation Avenue side) directly opposite the venue's double-door entrance at the top of the stairwell. The stair and support spaces, consisting of restrooms, a concessions area, and storage, remain clustered at the western end. Other extant historic features include wood floors, the c. 1941 wood entrance doors with vision panels, and the c. 1953 plaster walls and ceilings, which replaced previous-generation wood paneling. The ceiling furr downs around the perimeter of the space were installed c. 1957 to conceal HVAC ductwork and necessitated resizing the window openings and replacement of the original steel windows with fixed-pane glazing. (*Photos 13-20*)

Alterations

The Eldorado Ballroom's most notable exterior alteration is the resizing and replacement of the second-floor windows, which occurred c. 1957. Other exterior alterations include the replacement of the first-floor storefronts in the 2000s, the application of paint to the red face brick on the street-facing facades, and the replacement of the ballroom entrance door and canopy. The dates of the last two alterations are unknown.

Interior alterations include the installation of suspended acoustical-tile ceilings throughout the first-floor retail units, the removal of wood trim, and some minor changes to the first-floor layout (e.g., the removal of a partition wall between two units and the addition of partitions in the stair hall). On the second floor, the most notable alterations occurred in the 1950s and include the replacement of wood wall paneling and trim with plaster (c. 1953) and, later, the installation of HVAC ceiling furr downs (c. 1957).

Assessment of Integrity

*Location and Setting:* The property possesses integrity of location and setting. It has not been moved from its original location. The two key elements of the property's historic setting, Emancipation Park and the commercial character of Emancipation Avenue, remain intact despite recent reinvestment and new construction along Emancipation Avenue.

*Design, Materials, and Workmanship:* The property possesses sufficient integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. The building still strongly reads as a Streamline Moderne-style two-part commercial block with a multi-unit ground floor and a second-floor venue. Extant design features include the building's simple rectangular form and massing and its placement in relation to the public right-of-way; flat roof; smooth-finish stucco exterior; rounded northeast corner; first-floor fenestration pattern; circulation components including the stair hall and fire exit; multi-unit first-floor plan; and open-plan second floor. While some design changes were made and some materials have been replaced, the most notable of these occurred during the period of significance (1950s), including the resizing and replacement of the second-floor windows and the replacement of the second-floor wood wall paneling and trim with plaster. The replacement of the first-floor storefronts within the historic openings is a common alteration to commercial buildings that occurred as tenants and stylistic tastes changed, and in this case it does not significantly impact the property's integrity.

*Feeling and Association:* The property possesses integrity of feeling and association. Its integrity of location, setting, and design in particular convey the building's history as a pre-World War II commercial building in the commercial hub of the Third Ward, a historically African-American neighborhood in Houston. Despite the removal of some historic materials and modifications to the second-floor windows, there is no question that a former tenant or patron of the Eldorado Ballroom would recognize the building today.

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### **Statement of Significance**

The Eldorado Ballroom is significant at the local level under Criterion A, in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Recreation and Culture, as Houston's leading entertainment venue for African Americans during the segregation era. Located in the commercial hub of Houston's Third Ward, the building was constructed in 1939 by prominent local African-American entrepreneurs Anna and C. A. Dupree to give black Houstonians a "class" social venue, and for more than three decades, the Eldorado Ballroom was supported primarily by the social clubs to which the black community's most prominent professionals and businesspeople belonged. The Eldorado also provided a vital training ground for local musicians, such as Illinois Jacquet and Arnett Cobb, who went on to gain national recognition. In addition to the venue, the building provided five ground-floor retail units that were leased to a variety of black-owned businesses catering to the local community. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Eldorado joined the "Chitlin' Circuit," hosting major black musical acts such as Chuck Berry, Ray Charles, and James Brown. By the late 1960s, the Eldorado was in decline due to a combination of factors, including desegregation, changing musical tastes, and parking challenges in the neighborhood, and the venue shuttered in 1968. It reopened briefly the following year and then closed permanently in the early 1970s. In addition to being the premier venue for black Houstonians, the Eldorado Ballroom is also the only venue of its kind to survive into the present day, making it a particularly significant remnant from this period in local African-American history. The period of significance begins in 1939, when the building was constructed, and ends in 1971, the fifty-year cut-off.

### **Historical Overview of Houston's African-American Neighborhoods, 1865-1970**

*\*\*This overview is reprinted from Eldorado Ballroom's Official Texas Historical Marker (OTHM) application written in 2010 by Steph McDougal, McDoux Preservation, with the assistance of Bernice Mistrot & Debra Blacklock-Sloan, and is being included here with her permission. The building received an OTHM in 2013. Additions to the text are shown in italics.\*\**

Houston, Texas, in the mid-twentieth century, was the home of one of the largest black communities in the South. After the end of the Civil War, many freed slaves settled in Houston, primarily in the inner-city neighborhoods known as Third Ward, Fourth Ward, and Fifth Ward. These were the older parts of the city, as Houston had nearly doubled in size since its founding in 1836. Houston had no explicit ordinance enforcing segregation, and initially, the wards were relatively diverse; over time, outmigration of white residents to the ever-expanding Houston suburbs resulted in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Wards becoming predominantly African American.<sup>6</sup>

Third Ward was home to both professionals and working-class people. Between 1900 and 1920, a residential building boom fueled the establishment of a bustling commercial district on Dowling Street (*present-day Emancipation Avenue*), the neighborhood's main artery, and Third Ward became a prominent black neighborhood in the city.<sup>7</sup> Its bustling commercial district included restaurants, shops, churches, department stores, professional offices, movie theaters, and nightclubs.<sup>8</sup>

By 1940, then-suburban black neighborhoods such as Acres Homes had been established, and following World War II, more affluent African Americans began moving out of Third Ward. In the 1960s, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 prompted additional migration out of the inner city. Many traditionally black-owned businesses moved or closed, and low population density in these areas resulted in the loss of historic building fabric in the neighborhood. Today, the Eldorado Ballroom is one of the few historic buildings remaining in Third Ward's former commercial district.

### **History of the Eldorado Ballroom**

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<sup>6</sup> Roger Wood, *Down in Houston: Bayou City Blues* (Austin: University of Texas Press), 2003, 73.

<sup>7</sup> "Third Ward citizens Tackle Revitalization of Inner City," *Houston Post*, July 21, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 73.

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Located at 2310 Elgin Street at the corner of Dowling, the Eldorado Ballroom was the center of the African-American commercial district in Houston's Third Ward neighborhood from the 1930s through the 1960s. The ballroom was built in 1939 by C. A. (Clarence Arnold) and Anna Dupree.<sup>9</sup> The Duprees rose from humble beginnings and became successful African-American business owners and real estate investors who would go on to become prominent philanthropists.<sup>10</sup>

The Eldorado Ballroom was built to give black Houstonians a "class" social venue, and for more than three decades, it was supported primarily by the social clubs to which the black community's most prominent professionals and businesspeople belonged. For a few years during the late 1950s, the management of the ballroom changed hands, and formal balls and "society" events gave way to more populist entertainment featuring "name" black musical acts including Chuck Berry, Ray Charles, and James Brown. Subsequent managers in the 1960s unsuccessfully attempted to recapture the high-society audience of the ballroom's heyday, and the Eldorado closed in the early 1970s.

While some have speculated that the ballroom was abandoned because African-Americans gained access to integrated venues following desegregation, primary research has shown that additional factors — the declining importance of social clubs, middle-class migration to suburban housing developments, competition from other venues, the decision to employ a house band rather than booking well-known acts, and a lack of public parking — cumulatively led to the ballroom's demise.

*C. A. and Anna Johnson Dupree*

Anna Johnson Dupree was born on November 27, 1891, in Carthage, Texas.<sup>11</sup> The family later moved to Galveston. Anna went to live with her sister and her husband while attending school.<sup>12</sup> C. A. Dupree was born January 7, 1893 in Plaquemine, Iberville Parish, Louisiana.<sup>13</sup> After being orphaned, he moved to Beaumont, Texas at age seventeen to live with uncles and worked in pressing shops. He later moved to Galveston and found work as a porter at the Tremont Hotel.<sup>14</sup> In 1911, Anna took a job in Houston, but returned to Galveston often to visit her family. There she met C.A. Dupree and they were married in 1914.<sup>15</sup> Two years later the couple moved to the Freedman's Town neighborhood of Houston's Fourth Ward residing in rental property on 917 Ruthven, 1112 Andrews and 830 Arthur Streets.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Dupree worked as a porter at the Bender Hotel in downtown Houston.

C. A. was inducted into the Army on July 30, 1918, serving with the 165th Depot Brigade, which was a holding unit, until Oct. 18, 1918. He was then with Company C of the 815th Pioneer Infantry unit until his discharge on August 8, 1919. He was sent to France only a month before the war ended, and returned to the U.S. nine months later, having served as a cook for most of that time.<sup>17</sup> After the Armistice in November 1918, the 815th Pioneer Infantry assisted in construction of the

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<sup>9</sup> Middle name from World War I Compiled Service Record, courtesy of Lisa Sharik at Texas Military Forces Museum, Camp Mabry, P.O. Box 5218 Austin, TX.

<sup>10</sup> "The Duprees Gave Away Large Sums of Money to Charity." *Forward Times*, 15 June 1963. Pg. 64.

<sup>11</sup> 1900; Census Place: Justice Precinct 1, Panola, Texas; Roll: T623\_1663; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 64.

<sup>12</sup> 1910; Census Place: Galveston Ward 8, Galveston, Texas; Roll: T624\_1554; Page: 9B; Enumeration District: 44; Image: 576.

<sup>13</sup> World War I draft card with his signature, "Clarence A. Dupree, born 7 Jan 1893, Plaquemine, LA."

1900; Census Place: Plaquemine, Iberville, Louisiana; Roll T623\_566; Page 17B; Enumeration District 17, "Clarence Dupay, age 7, born Jan 1893, grandson of Nancy Bright, age 52, born Apr 1848."

<sup>14</sup> "The Duprees."

<sup>15</sup> This date not yet confirmed. He states on his World War I draft card (dated June 5, 1917) that he is married, but Anna does not appear in Houston City Directories until 1920.

<sup>16</sup> 1917- 1926 Houston City Directories.

<sup>17</sup> World War I Compiled Service Record.

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Argonne Cemetery, which was dedicated on Memorial Day 1919.<sup>18</sup> Many years later, Mrs. Dupree recalled that C. A. “would write letters for boys overseas, loan them money and charge them interest. When he came home, he had many thousands of dollars.”<sup>19</sup>

While her husband was overseas, Mrs. Dupree had established a thriving business as a beautician, first working for salons in River Oaks and Montrose. After Mr. Dupree returned from the war, the couple began to invest in real estate and opened the Pastime Theatre on McKinney Street in 1926.<sup>20</sup> In 1936 Mrs. Dupree opened “Anna’s Institution of Health and Beauty” which offered Turkish baths, trained masseuses, and an electric cabinet sweatbox.<sup>21</sup>

In 1927, the couple hired C. C. Rouse to build their seven-room brick bungalow at 3411 Nalle Street in the Third Ward.<sup>22</sup> The Duprees were generous donors throughout their lives, giving \$20,000 in 1940 to establish the Negro Child Center home for orphans; in 1952, they established the Eliza Johnson Home for Aged Negroes in Highland Heights.<sup>23</sup> A donation (one of the largest) by the Duprees helped to build the first permanent building at Texas Southern University, and supported many charities for children and families.<sup>24</sup>

Mrs. Dupree was honored by the Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce with its 1951 Humanitarian Award and both by Texas Southern University in 1955.<sup>25</sup>

C.A. Dupree died in 1959; by then, the Eldorado Ballroom was under other management, although Anna Dupree continued to own the property until her death in 1977.<sup>26</sup>

*The High Society Years: 1939–1949*

In Third Ward in the late 1930s, a plethora of nightclubs and taverns provided local entertainment options for middle-class patrons. According to the *Houston Informer*, the major black newspaper of the day, “(t)he swanky places of entertainment are located in this section of town.<sup>27</sup> Places where the elite and dainty gather ... Things are really done in a big way. Nice shiny cars and taxis are their means of getting from place to place.”<sup>28</sup>

In August 1939, C. A. and Anna Dupree announced their plans to build a dance hall at the corner of Elgin and Dowling Streets. With a price tag estimated at \$20,000, the building was designed by Houston architect Lenard M. Gebart, a graduate of Rice University’s School of Architecture, and constructed by the B. and M. Construction Company.<sup>29</sup> It was completed

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<sup>18</sup> P. H. Elwood, Jr., “American Soldier Cemeteries In France,” *Landscape Architecture*, Official Organ of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Vol. X, July 1920, No. 4, pp 165-171. (The 815th Pioneer Infantry is mentioned on p. 168). <http://books.google.com/books?id=hPjmAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA167> (accessed November 14, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> “The Duprees,”

<sup>20</sup> 1926-1930 Houston City Directories.

<sup>21</sup> 1936 Houston City Directory. Winegarten, Ruthe, *Black Texas Women: 150 Years of Trial and Triumph*. Austin: University of Texas Press, c1995. pg. 168.

<sup>22</sup> Harris County Deed Records. Contracts- Mechanics Liens. Volume 150, pg. 191.

<sup>23</sup> “Visit to Houston, Texas Shows Problems Spur Progress,” Mary McLeod Bethune, *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967)*; Feb 18, 1950; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The Chicago Defender (1910 - 1975). pg. 6.; and Harris County Deed Records. Volume 844, pg. 684 and Volume 1809, pg. 276.

<sup>24</sup> Texas Couple Give School \$10,000 Gift (2); *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967)*; Mar 8, 1952; ProQuest Historical Newspapers; The Chicago Defender (1910 - 1975) pg. 4; “To Be Honored.” *The Chicago Defender (National edition) (1921-1967)*; May 28, 1955; ProQuest Historical Newspapers; The Chicago Defender (1910 - 1975) pg. 14.

<sup>25</sup> *Houston Informer*, February 17, 1951. ; and “To Be Honored.”

<sup>26</sup> Texas Deaths 1890-1876. “Clarence Dupree.” <https://beta.familysearch.org/>

<sup>27</sup> The word “swanky” denotes luxury, as well as the use of wealth, knowledge, or achievements to impress others.

<sup>28</sup> V.E. Porter, “A Night of Fun in Third Ward”, *Houston Informer*, March 30, 1938.

<sup>29</sup> Harris County Deed Records. Vol. 1088, pg. 91. Contracts- Mechanic Liens. Volume 342, pg. 590.

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that fall, and the ballroom held its grand opening on December 5, 1939.<sup>30</sup> It was named for the Eldorado Social Club, a men's group of which C. A. Dupree was both a member and the treasurer.<sup>31</sup>

Social clubs were the secularized outgrowth of mutual aid societies established in African-American communities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The clubs evolved in the early 1900s to provide insurance to African Americans who could not obtain it elsewhere, and also provided them with the opportunity to take leadership roles in the community, gaining the respect and social dignity that was otherwise denied to them. These organizations, along with religious institutions, formed the basis for many community activities in the 1930s.<sup>32</sup>

The Eldorado Building was described as a "modern type building," and certainly it would have been distinctive in the neighborhood, both for its size (two stories, with a 50' x 100' footprint) and its design. The building contained five retail spaces on the first floor, with the ballroom above. It was designed in the Streamline Moderne style, with a curved façade featuring strong horizontal solids and voids. The storefronts, separated by slender reinforced-concrete pillars, had enframed window walls with display and transom windows that delivered natural light into the interior, creating a translucent base over which the second story of the building seemed to hover. A wall of nearly floor-to-ceiling metal casement windows made up one long side of the second floor, with a window curving around the corner of the building that faced the intersection of Elgin and Dowling Streets. The Duprees set out to make the venue distinctive in other ways: it was to be open nightly for dancing; guests were greeted by doormen and a hostess and served by uniformed waiters; and the live music was provided by local musicians who would go on to achieve national prominence. During its heyday the Eldorado was known as the "South's Finest Colored Nite Club."<sup>33</sup> *According to historic photographs dating to the 1940s, the interior was finished with varnished knotty-pine wall paneling and vertical ribbed wood trim at the perimeter columns. Floors were wood and the ceiling was finished with Celotex tiles.*<sup>34</sup> *The low wood stage was centered on the Elgin Street elevation and the bar was located on the Dowling Street side. The operable metal awning windows were frequently opened for ventilation and supplemented by wall-mounted fans. (Figures 2-3)*

One of the first events held at the ballroom after its opening was a dance sponsored by the Eldorado Social Club, with proceeds going toward one of the club's charitable programs, a Christmas gift basket giveaway for needy children.<sup>35</sup> The club continued to sponsor events and promote the ballroom to other social clubs.<sup>36</sup> The ballroom provided the Eldorado Social Club members, as well as the rest of the African-American elite, a place where they could fulfill their upwardly mobile ambitions.

The *Houston Informer* Society pages from the 1930s and 1940s provide accounts of lavish dinner parties, formal balls and galas, charity functions, and cultural activities that emphasize the exclusivity of the events and their participants. The Eldorado Social Club in particular is noted as hosting "swank parties, picturesque formals, and other affairs to which the elite of sepia Houston always look forward," and the Ballroom was often the setting for those events.<sup>37</sup> According to Houston historian Roger Wood, "[a]lmost from the beginning, 'the 'Rado' [as people sometimes referred to the ballroom] and the large building that housed it became symbols of community pride —Third Ward's most prestigious focal point, especially for musicians."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "C.A. Dupree plans \$20,000 building," *Houston Informer*, August 26, 1939.

<sup>31</sup> "Atmosphere is the big attraction at Eldorado formal," *Houston Informer*, March 4, 1939.

<sup>32</sup> James B. Mitchell, *The Collapse of the National Benefit Life Insurance Company: A Study in High Finance Among Negroes* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University), 1939, 8–11.

<sup>33</sup> 1942 Houston City Directory. Pg. 24.

<sup>34</sup> "New Dowling-Elgin Commercial Building," *Houston Chronicle*, August 13, 1939.

<sup>35</sup> "Charity to get proceeds from El Dorado dance," *Houston Informer*, December 16, 1939.

<sup>36</sup> "Milton Larkin's swingsters to play El Dorado," (advertisement), *Houston Informer*, January 13, 1940.

<sup>37</sup> "Beautiful El Dorado Ballroom is scene of colorful affair," *Houston Informer*, January 29, 1940.

<sup>38</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 75.

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A typical weekend evening's entertainment included a cabaret-style floor show with tap dancers, singers, orators, and comedians, as well as live music by a big band. During the week, the house orchestra was led by Milton Larkin, whose bands specialized in a style of swing that "defined the Texas sound in the 1940s." Larkin also nurtured musicians who would go on to lead their own bands and gain national recognition, including Illinois Jacquet and Arnett Cobb.<sup>39</sup> During the week, the Ruth Johnson School of Dance held classes in the ballroom. Weeknight dances were often hosted by social clubs or other organizations, which could rent out the entire ballroom or simply reserve tables for smaller private parties. Afternoon talent shows and matinee performances were also popular.

The Eldorado Social Club was acknowledged as having the most opulent parties, and society-page reporters lavished adulation on the club's ability to create an atmosphere comparable to those found in the finest nightclubs of New York and Chicago: "Amid a conglomeration of laughter, colorful gowns, well-fitted tuxedos and good music, sepia Houston came to the realization last Tuesday evening at the swank Eldorado Ballroom that this hitherto flat and backward Southern town has definitely broken into the glorious realm of a glamorous and chic society."<sup>40</sup> The ballroom was booked nearly every night by social clubs.

The Duprees had succeeded in creating a "class" venue for black Houstonians. The ability of middle-class blacks to emulate wealthy white society at the Eldorado was stated clearly in the news accounts of the day. "Most people go to the movies and see the way high society people act when they go night-clubbing and inwardly wish for the day when they can do the same thing. Those who know of the Eldorado have already found that they can make their dream come true —without the expenditure of much money. For the same price it would take for an evening at a honky-tonk, playing Victrola records, a couple could spend an evening of gaiety in an atmosphere of extreme delight by going to the Eldorado."<sup>41</sup> The fact that the Eldorado was black-owned and operated reinforced a sense of upward mobility. "One of the most gratifying features of this new ballroom is the fact that one does not see a white man standing near the cash register, puffing on a big cigar and pleasantly reflecting upon the big business he is getting... It is Negro owned, controlled and managed, and in a way that ... does the entire race proud."<sup>42</sup>

The Duprees continued to manage the Eldorado through 1949. During the 1940s, and even through World War II, the social clubs' patronage declined only slightly. The *Houston Informer* reported that, due to the war, some social clubs had reduced or eliminated the number of formal dances they sponsored. In 1941, a squadron of soldiers stopped in Houston for a day. They arrived late afternoon and encamped at Emancipation Park. Clarence Dupree gave a dance for the group who had been given overnight leave. At least two hundred people attended the event.<sup>43</sup>

Russell Jacquet succeeded Milton Larkin on the bandstand beginning in December 1942 and led the house orchestra until February 1944.

Competition in the early 1940s came from other nightclubs, including promoter Don Robey's Bronze Peacock, another upscale establishment for the black elite.<sup>44</sup> The Eldorado, the Club Ebony (*demolished*), Bronze Peacock (*demolished*), and Club Matinee (*demolished*) (the latter two in the Fifth Ward) were "upscale showcases (that) flourished during the most commercially productive era of Houston blues by featuring major black recording artists, popular combos, and big bands in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>40</sup> "El Dorado Club gives swank formal dance", *Houston Informer*, March 9, 1940.

<sup>41</sup> "El Dorado prices make grand time possible for all," *Houston Informer*, March 16, 1940.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> "John H Thompson, "Houston Barely Misses Having Another Riot." *Atlanta Daily World (1932-2003)*; Aug 24, 1941; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Atlanta Daily World: 1931-2003.

<sup>44</sup> Robey would go on to found the Peacock, Duke, and BackBeat recording labels, which recorded and promoted Houston's best blues musicians. Along with promoters R.J. "Skipper" Rausaw and Morris J. Merritt, Robey brought the biggest acts to Houston for the better part of the mid-twentieth century.

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finely tailored suits. Collectively, they nurtured the black community's taste for what the writer Albert Murray described as 'the fully orchestrated blues statement.'<sup>45</sup>

*The Transitional Decade: 1949–1959*

In the summer of 1949, the Duprees ended their active management of the ballroom, although they retained ownership of the property. Brothers Fred and Emmett "Stokes" Marshall assumed control with Sammy Harris' Eldorado Express as the house band, taking over from I. H. Smalley's orchestra. After a rocky start, by January 1950 the ballroom was open nightly with parties for a variety of social clubs. However, competition was heating up, particularly the Bronze Peacock and Louis Dickerson's Club Matinee in Fifth Ward, which would go on to be one of the most influential venues for blues musicians in the fifties and sixties.<sup>46</sup> *The Marshall brothers updated the ballroom's interior by adding tufted wall upholstery at the bar and stage areas, replacing the stage, and installing painted-mural solar shades in the upper halves of all windows. The wood floors, wood wall paneling, and Celotex ceilings remained. (Figures 4-5) Following a fire c. 1952, the Duprees updated the interior with new plaster walls and ceilings.*<sup>47</sup> (Figure 6)

Nineteen-fifties Houston was a hot spot for African-American entertainers; the Crystal Hotel, next to Club Matinee, provided the most stylish accommodations available in the still-segregated Bayou City. The high-style big-band swing heard at the Eldorado was not the only—or even the most popular—music, however. A gritty, down-home style of blues, nurtured in small "joints" by self-taught working-class African-Americans, was emerging as a significant force in both Texas and American music. "(E)ven in its most prosperous years, Dowling was also home for small dives and beer joints that catered to a relatively impoverished clientele quite different from those who frequented the upscale clubs."<sup>48</sup> Such class distinctions between the middle-class patrons of the Eldorado and the working-class folk who frequented Third Ward blues-and-beer spots, such as Shady's Playhouse, were not lost on the musicians of the day.

Guitarist Joe Hughes explained, "I didn't like the Eldorado. You were welcome, but I'm just a down to earth guy. I'm not going to look down at no guy from down at the garbage dump because I'm 'up here' at the Eldorado. And that was the attitude that these people had! And I didn't like that. I didn't feel comfortable there."<sup>49</sup>

While Hughes was a self-taught musician who chafed at the reception he got from at the upscale ballroom, Henry Hayes was a formally trained multi-instrumentalist who experienced a similar reaction, but in reverse. "I was sometimes criticized by the better musicians," Hayes said. "They'd say, 'Man, you're supposed to be up here with us. You don't need to be down there at Shady's. You got more going on for yourself.'"<sup>50</sup>

According to Calvin Owens, who played at the Eldorado starting in the 1940s and went on to become the bandleader for blues legend B. B. King, "All of the blues musicians hung out at Shady's, and around in that area ... Now I was on the other side of the track—how would you say it—with the musicians that played the shows, could read the music, that kind of a thing ... Because even in high school I was playing in eighteen-piece bands, six nights a week! ... So I never really hung out in that bluesiest part of town."<sup>51</sup>

Historian Roger Wood reads a richness of meaning into Owens' words. "(His) perceptions about different tastes, different levels of class among black musicians playing in the same neighborhood at the same time (and his implications of musical, or at least educational, superiority) pivot on that gap between the more simplistic, deep blues that he dismisses and the more

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<sup>45</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 86.

<sup>46</sup> "TSU Band, Lester Williams Combo, Norman Granz, Louis Jordan ring bell in past year," *Houston Informer*, January 7, 1950.

<sup>47</sup> Harris County Building Assessment, February 22, 1954; and Wood, *Down in Houston*, 76.

<sup>48</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 85.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 90.



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polished, studied big-band jazz-flavored blues that he respects. This dichotomy also seems to be based on the size of the performing unit, which carries economic implications, since each musician had to be paid. Hence, his reference to ‘eighteen-piece bands’ suggests not just musical and educational but also financial superiority to players who worked at Shady’s Playhouse.”<sup>52</sup>

As Texas blues music became increasingly popular in the 1950s, musical tastes were changing. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the rise of working-class music and the celebration of impoverished blues musicians like “Lightnin’” Sam Hopkins signaled a major shift in the cultural values of the community. Furthermore, Houston’s prominence on the national music scene began to have a noticeable effect on musicians appearing at the Eldorado. The ballroom soon became a fixture on the “Chitlin Circuit,” a string of entertainment venues throughout the eastern and southern United States where African-American performers played to African-American audiences before desegregation.

*The Duprees installed central air-conditioning in the ballroom c. 1956, with ductwork concealed in large ceiling furr downs around the perimeter of the space. The steel windows were removed and the openings infilled to fit smaller, fixed-pane windows. The stage was replaced or substantially altered at this time to be taller and wider than its predecessor. The bar was replaced and a mural installed in place of the tufting. (Figures 7-8)*

In 1957, R. J. “Skipper” Rausaw and Morris John Merritt assumed the management of the ballroom. Rausaw and Merritt were top Houston promoters both during and after their stint at the Eldorado. They began booking big-name bands and an increasing number of blues and Rhythm & Blues artists instead of relying heavily on house orchestras playing jazz music. As a result, business in 1958-1959 was strong, mainly due to the prestige of the artists appearing there, including Charles Brown and his orchestra, Big Maybelle, Little Willie John, Guitar Slim, B.B. King, Big Joe Turner, Gatemouth Brown, Johnny (Guitar) Watson, Dinah Washington, Al Hibbler and his orchestra, Jackie Wilson, Etta James, Ray Charles, Stan Kenton and his orchestra, Ruth Brown with Paul Williams’ orchestra, T-Bone Walker, Jimmie (T-99) Nelson and his orchestra, and many more of the highest-caliber artists of the time.<sup>53</sup>

The big-name shows were held on weekends as well as weeknights, and Rausaw and Merritt also hosted record hops and private club dances, but the ballroom was no longer open nightly for dancing. While a few social clubs still hosted dances at the Eldorado and other venues, sponsors were more likely to be “King Bee” Smith’s record shop or radio station KYOK.

The Eldorado was nationally known among the touring bands of the day. Playing at the ballroom was a rite of passage for aspiring Houston musicians. According to bandleader and trumpet player Calvin Owens, “Playing at the Eldorado Ballroom — I mean that’s like saying: Okay, I’ve *made* it.” A young musician’s ability to play with the top professionals in the local area, often backing nationally known artists, would prepare him for a spot on the national stage.<sup>54</sup> The late 1950s were the apex of the Eldorado’s history, musically, but this was not to last.

*Inside Houston’s* January 4, 1959, issue mentioned that Rausaw and Merritt would end their lease of the Eldorado in June “unless the ante is lowered to allow them to show a better profit picture.” Rausaw and Merritt were already promoting events at other venues months before their lease expired at the ballroom. Competition was fierce between nightclubs (especially Club Matinee, Club Ebony, Club DeLisa, King Bee’s Jet Club, and Club Cadillac), which booked many of the same blues and rock ‘n’ roll bands presented at the Eldorado, and Don Robey threw huge dance parties with nationally known acts at the City Auditorium. These “big name package shows” featured as many as ten or twelve artists performing in a variety show-style format.<sup>55</sup> Black Houstonians had many ways to spend their money on entertainment, and the Eldorado’s foray into the burgeoning rock and blues genres was drawing to a close.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>53</sup> *Inside Houston*, multiple editions, 1958–1959.

<sup>54</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 75.

<sup>55</sup> *Inside Houston*, January 4, 1959.

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*Decade of Change: The 1960s*

The announcement of the end of Rausaw and Merritt's tenure was followed by months of speculation about who would take over the venue. After a bidding war that included tenor saxophonist and bandleader Arnett Cobb, who got his start at the Eldorado with the Milt Larkin Orchestra in the 1940s and stopped touring nationally to return to Houston with the intention of managing the ballroom, Mr. and Mrs. William Curtis and Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Robinson took over as operators and reopened the Eldorado on July 31, 1959.

The fall of 1959 began a time of transition and struggle for the ballroom. C.A. Dupree was diagnosed with cancer and died in October, although Anna Dupree retained ownership of the property. Speculation in the trade estimated that the new managers may have had to invest as much as \$6,000 just to re-open the doors of the ballroom. Based on advertising, it seems that the Robinsons and Curtises were trying to appeal to the social clubs while bringing in some better-known acts as Rausaw and Merritt had. Since neither couple had much experience in the entertainment industry (Mr. Curtis was a telephone company employee and Mr. Robinson was a postal employee), they continued practices that had been successful in the past.<sup>56</sup>

While advertisements indicate that social clubs still patronized the Eldorado two or three nights a week, they were becoming less prominent in African-American society, and members-only nightclubs offered (to anyone who could pay the membership fee) the exclusivity that social clubs had once provided. The Eldorado also faced competition for "society" business from other upscale venues; when the ballroom booked live music shows on Fridays and Saturdays, the social clubs took their business to nightclubs like Club DeLisa (*3317 Bennington Street; extant but modified*) and Club Ebony (*4423 Dowling Street; demolished*).

By December 1959, the Robinsons started to book bigger name bands following a weekend during which local favorite Big Joe Turner and his orchestra brought in an "unusually large and enthusiastic crowd."<sup>57</sup> A month later, in January 1960, *Inside Houston* reported that "(t)he Eldorado for last several weekends has been jumping like it did in its heyday. All of which is evidence of the hard work and winning personalities of present operators."<sup>58</sup>

As summer 1960 drew to a close, the ballroom was faced with increased competition from three-piece combos playing at bars where no admission fee was charged. According to *Inside Houston* on August 1, nearly every "joint" offered live music. In October 1960, two serious blows were dealt the Eldorado. First, shows by Bo Diddley and "Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters" were poorly received for two weeks in a row, with light attendance; the ballroom temporarily stopped bringing in name bands. In addition, several bowling alleys were converted into large ballrooms, with the Southmore Lanes becoming the Pladium Ballroom (*extant*) and Monarch Lanes reborn as the Monarch Ballroom (*demolished*). The Pladium in particular competed directly with the Eldorado, and soon it had replaced the Eldorado as the major mid-sized venue in Houston for touring performers.

In the meantime, Houston—like other southern cities—was struggling with increasing pressures to integrate. Desegregation during the 1950s and 1960s was accompanied by a large influx of African Americans into Houston and the ongoing creation of new black subdivisions to house them. The continued migration of black residents away from the black business districts made it less convenient for people to "Buy Black," and many African-American businesses lost customers in increasing numbers to both white competitors and the shopping malls then being built in the newly-created suburbs.<sup>59</sup>

Although some have suggested that desegregation was the primary cause, a confluence of many factors seems to have been responsible for the Eldorado's decline and eventual demise. By January 1968, *Inside Houston* was reporting that the

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<sup>56</sup> *Inside Houston*, numerous editions, 1959.

<sup>57</sup> *Inside Houston*, December 17, 1959.

<sup>58</sup> *Inside Houston*, January 24, 1960.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 165, 219.

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Robinsons, “long plagued by dwindling [attendance] and absence of parking space, are considering surrendering their lease unless the landlady makes some provision for parking by their hundreds of weekly customers.” A week later, the ballroom closed its doors.<sup>60</sup>

Former ballroom manager John Green explained that the lack of parking was exacerbated by an increase in crime around the Eldorado. “(B)ack when the Eldorado was jumping, people used to ride the bus and get off right on the corner. But then after the Korean War and everybody started getting cars, there was nowhere to park. They used to park on Elgin, on both sides, and around the corner. And those schoolkids would go and jack the cars up, take the tires off, and strip ‘em! So that went on and helped kill the Eldorado.”<sup>61</sup> In addition, the location of a Black Panther Party office on Dowling Street, just a block away from the ballroom, “became the focal point for increasing tensions and showdowns with the Houston Police Department, prompting some former Eldorado Ballroom clientele to begin avoiding the whole area, especially at night.”

It is also possible that revenues, which would have declined along with the ballroom’s clientele, were not sufficient to keep up with increasing monthly rents. Although the monthly amount charged for the ballroom is not available, Rausaw and Merritt had alluded to a high-priced lease, and Anna Dupree reportedly exacted “a stiff rent” from other tenants.

Regardless of the reason for its closure in 1968, the Eldorado was not—as some have conjectured — abandoned by its clientele in favor of suburban venues or integrated facilities. The bands and patrons who had frequented the Eldorado simply moved to another ballroom, half a mile away. In April 1968, the *Houston Defender/Inside Houston* reported that the “Castle Palace [Ballroom, at the corner of Live Oak and Truxillo; c. 1965, extant] has become the new unofficial headquarters for all of the old Eldorado Ballroom and Club Ebony bunch since Arnett Cobb, The Mobb, and Cedric Hayward et al have transferred their center of operations, wailing and gigging there.” By July of the same year, the newspaper concluded that “The Castle Palace with a varied program ... is now the recognized regular weekend dancing ‘In’ place in Third Ward since the Eldorado Ballroom is no longer with us.”

The Eldorado was shuttered for more than a year before its last managers, Mr. and Mrs. James Henry Williams reopened the hall for business once again in February 1969. They booked name acts including James Brown and the Temptations, but soon, the ballroom was open only for special occasions, and in the early 1970s, the “Home of Happy Feet” was silent once again.<sup>62</sup>

*Death and Rebirth: Early 1970s–Present*

Over the next 20 years, the ballroom was periodically occupied; at one point in the 1970s, it was converted to office space with partition walls. Anna Dupree’s health declined and she eventually moved into the Eliza Johnson Home, where she died on February 19, 1977. Her body was donated to medical research.<sup>63</sup> Her estate retained ownership of the ballroom until it was purchased in 1984 by Herbert S. “Hub” Finkelstein, who had gone on to become a successful oilman. Although the ballroom space on the second floor was vacant for most of the 1980s and 1990s, in November 1999, Finkelstein donated the entire block on which the Eldorado Ballroom sits to Project Row Houses, a non-profit arts and community organization.<sup>64</sup> Today, the Ballroom is used for special events, performances, and neighborhood activities. The street level spaces are devoted to artistic and creative projects.

\*\*(This marks the end of McDougal’s reprinted text from the 2010 Eldorado Ballroom Official Texas Historical Marker (OTHM) application.)\*\*

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<sup>60</sup> *Inside Houston*, January 22, 1968; January 29, 1968.

<sup>61</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 79.

<sup>62</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 79.

<sup>63</sup> “Anna Dupree.” *The Handbook of Texas*. <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fdu39>

<sup>64</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 75.

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### **Lenard Gabert Sr.**

Born in Navasota, Texas, architect Lenard Gabert (1894-1976) moved to Houston to study architecture in Rice University's inaugural class, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1916. From the 1920s until his death in 1976, Gabert's firm, Lenard Gabert & Associates, designed numerous residential and commercial buildings throughout Houston, including the Eldorado Ballroom.<sup>65</sup> He is perhaps best known for his designs of synagogues, including the 1930 Congregation K'Neseth Israel Synagogue in Baytown (Recorded Texas Historic Landmark (RTHL), 1991) and the 1949 Temple Emanu El (with MacKie & Kamrath), and the 1962 Beth Yeshurun Synagogue (RTHL 2019, both in Houston). Other notable projects include the 1924-25 Peacock and Plaza Court Apartments (City of Houston Landmark, 2016) and the 1940 Art Deco-style Brochsteins Inc. woodworking plant (with I. S. Brochstein). The firm continued under the leadership of Gabert's son, Lenard Gabert Jr., a civil engineer, until Gabert Jr.'s death in 2019.

### **Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage and Recreation/Culture**

The Eldorado Ballroom is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Recreation and Culture. For more than three decades, from 1939 through the 1960s, the Eldorado was a leading entertainment venue for Houston's African-American community, for both the elite social set and for musicians. Even in its earliest years it had gained widespread recognition; in 1941, the *Pittsburgh Courier* described the Eldorado as "one of the finest negro dance halls in the South."<sup>66</sup> In a 1952 article about the accomplishments of founder C. A. Dupree, the *Tampa Bay Times* distilled the importance of the "famed" Eldorado: "This ballroom was built in 1939 and all the city's social, civic and fraternal groups immediately began to use its facilities. It is a ballroom in the fullest sense and is rated among the best in the nation for Negroes."<sup>67</sup>

During segregation and the Civil Rights movement, the Eldorado offered a haven for African Americans to gather and celebrate, to see and be seen. It was the backdrop for countless dances, charity events, and dinner parties, and live music was an essential part of the scene, whether it was the house band or touring acts. For musicians, gigs at the prestigious Eldorado gave aspiring talents the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities and meet established musicians. Several notable Houston musicians and bandleaders got their start at the Eldorado, including Illinois Jacquet and Arnett Cobb. As Houston historian Roger Wood notes in his 2003 book *Down in Houston: Bayou City Blues*, "[a]lmost from the beginning, 'the 'Rado' and the large building that housed it became symbols of community pride — Third Ward's most prestigious focal point, especially for musicians."<sup>68</sup> The fact that it was a black-owned club, established and operated by entrepreneurs and philanthropists Anna and C. A. Dupree, added to that sense of pride and inclusivity that made the Eldorado such a success.

In 1957, as social clubs waned in popularity and competition from other local venues increased, new managers R. J. "Skipper" Rausaw and Morris John Merritt introduced national acts to the Eldorado. The duo booked major R&B and rock n' roll performers touring on the "Chitlin' Circuit," including Ray Charles, Etta James, and B. B. King. Private parties continued as well, but nightly dancing was discontinued in favor of special events. Nevertheless, the Eldorado continued to be a significant gig for local musicians, both young and established, who were frequently hired to back the national acts but also gained recognition in their own right. Rausaw and Merritt's era of management was brief; in 1959, the Curtis and Robinson families took over the venue and continued to book some big-name acts, with limited success, and also reintegrated social club events.

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<sup>65</sup> Woodsen Research Center, Rice University, "Guide to the Lenard Gabert, Sr. Architectural Records, 1930-2002," <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/ricewrc/00937/rice-00937.html>; and "Local Deaths: Gabert, Lenard," *Houston Chronicle*, September 13, 1976.

<sup>66</sup> "Houston's Largest Ballroom Destroyed by Fire; None Hurt," *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 15, 1941.

<sup>67</sup> "Dr. Theodore Lawless, Famous Dermatologist, Man of Humbleness," *Tampa Bay Times*, May 29, 1952.

<sup>68</sup> Wood, *Down in Houston*, 75.

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Thus, the Eldorado Ballroom played an important role as a gathering place for Houston's African-American elite, as a training ground and status symbol among local musicians, and as a leading venue for black performers in Texas during segregation. Adding to this historic significance is the Eldorado's status as the only surviving venue of its kind in Houston, i.e., a purpose-built entertainment venue built by and for the African-American community during segregation. Houston was once home to at least sixteen black-owned music venues during the period of significance, according to city directories, period accounts, and 1940s and 1950s editions of the *Negro Motorist Green Book*.<sup>69</sup> These ranged from upscale venues like the Eldorado to ramshackle honkytonks, differing in building type, clientele, and genres of entertainment, but all were black owned and catered to the black community, and all had a live-music focus.

The clubs most similar to the Eldorado were the Bronze Peacock (built 1946; 5300 Liberty Road, demolished); Club Matinee (built 1952; 3224 Lyons Avenue demolished); Club Ebony (built c. 1950; 4423 Dowling Street; demolished); and Club DeLisa (built c. 1953; 3317 Bennington Street; extant but modified). The Bronze Peacock and Club Matinee were located in Fifth Ward, an African-American neighborhood north of downtown and Buffalo Bayou, and Club Ebony was a few blocks north of the Eldorado. Club DeLisa, which opened in the early 1950s north of Fifth Ward, is extant but has been extensively modified on the exterior with the erection of a stepped-parapet façade and two front additions.

In the 1960s, as the more democratic nightclubs overtook society-focused venues in popularity, the Eldorado's primary competitors were Castle Palace (c. 1965; 3815 Live Oak Drive; extant) and the Pladium Ballroom (built c.1930/1962, 3145 Southmore Boulevard; extant), which tended to book the same live acts as the Eldorado. Both buildings are extant but are not directly comparable to the Eldorado. The Castle Palace was constructed after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and thus is more closely associated with the desegregation period in Houston. The Pladium Ballroom was formerly a bowling alley and, prior to that, a Piggly Wiggly, and thus was not a purpose-built venue like the Eldorado.<sup>70</sup>

Another famous Third Ward venue that survives is the second location of Shady's Playhouse at 3117 Ennis Street (formerly the Swan Hotel).<sup>71</sup> Shady's Playhouse, a no-frills blues club, moved into the two-story, 1932 S. Lopetri Building in 1958 from its original location on Simmons Street (demolished). Considered by some at the time to have an "unschooled and raw" vibe compared to the big-band music played at the Eldorado, Shady's differed from the subject property in type of entertainment and in the fact that the surviving location is neither the original location nor purpose-built as a music venue.<sup>72</sup>

## Conclusion

The Eldorado Ballroom is locally significant under Criterion A, in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Recreation and Culture, as a leading entertainment venue for African-American Houstonians during the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras. For more than three decades, it provided an upscale venue for local social clubs and society events and, just as importantly, was a training ground for local musicians in a variety of musical genres, including jazz, swing/big band, and rock n' roll. Five ground-floor retail units provided space for a variety of black-owned businesses catering to the surrounding Third Ward neighborhood, including a pharmacy and barber shop. In addition to these meaningful roles within the community during segregation, the Eldorado is also the only venue of its kind to survive into the present day, making it a particularly significant remnant from this period in local African American history.

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<sup>69</sup> Editions of the *Negro Motorist Green Book* from the late 1930s through the 1960s are available digitally via the New York Public Library: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/the-green-book/#/?tab=about>.

<sup>70</sup> Advertisement, "Pladium Ballroom," *Houston Chronicle*, August 5, 1962; and advertisement, "Piggly Wiggly," *Houston Chronicle*, August 7, 1947.

<sup>71</sup> Maryellen Russo Ficker, "Shady's Playhouse," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/shadys-playhouse>; and "Mo City man tells tails of the blues on his guitar," *Houston Chronicle*, October 4, 2001.

<sup>72</sup> Ficker, "Shady's Playhouse."

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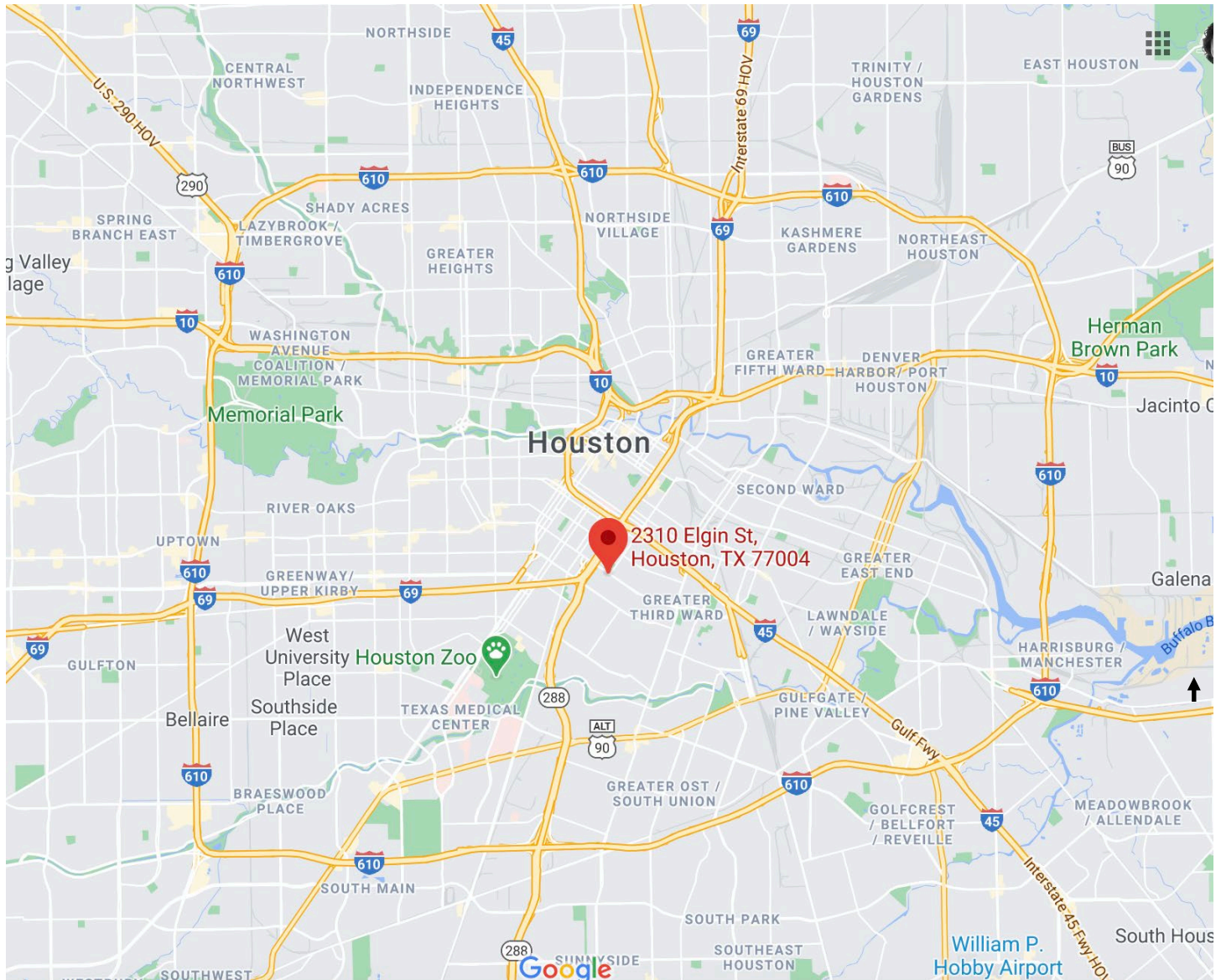
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<https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/ricewrc/00937/rice-00937.html>.



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Map 1.**

Location of nominated property in Houston, Harris County, Texas. Source: Google Maps, accessed February 2021.





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Map 2.**

Aerial photograph showing the location of the Eldorado Ballroom in relation to Emancipation Park. Source: Google Earth, accessed February 2021.





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Map 3.**

Aerial photograph showing the location of the Eldorado Ballroom within the context of the block. Source: Google Earth, accessed February 2021.



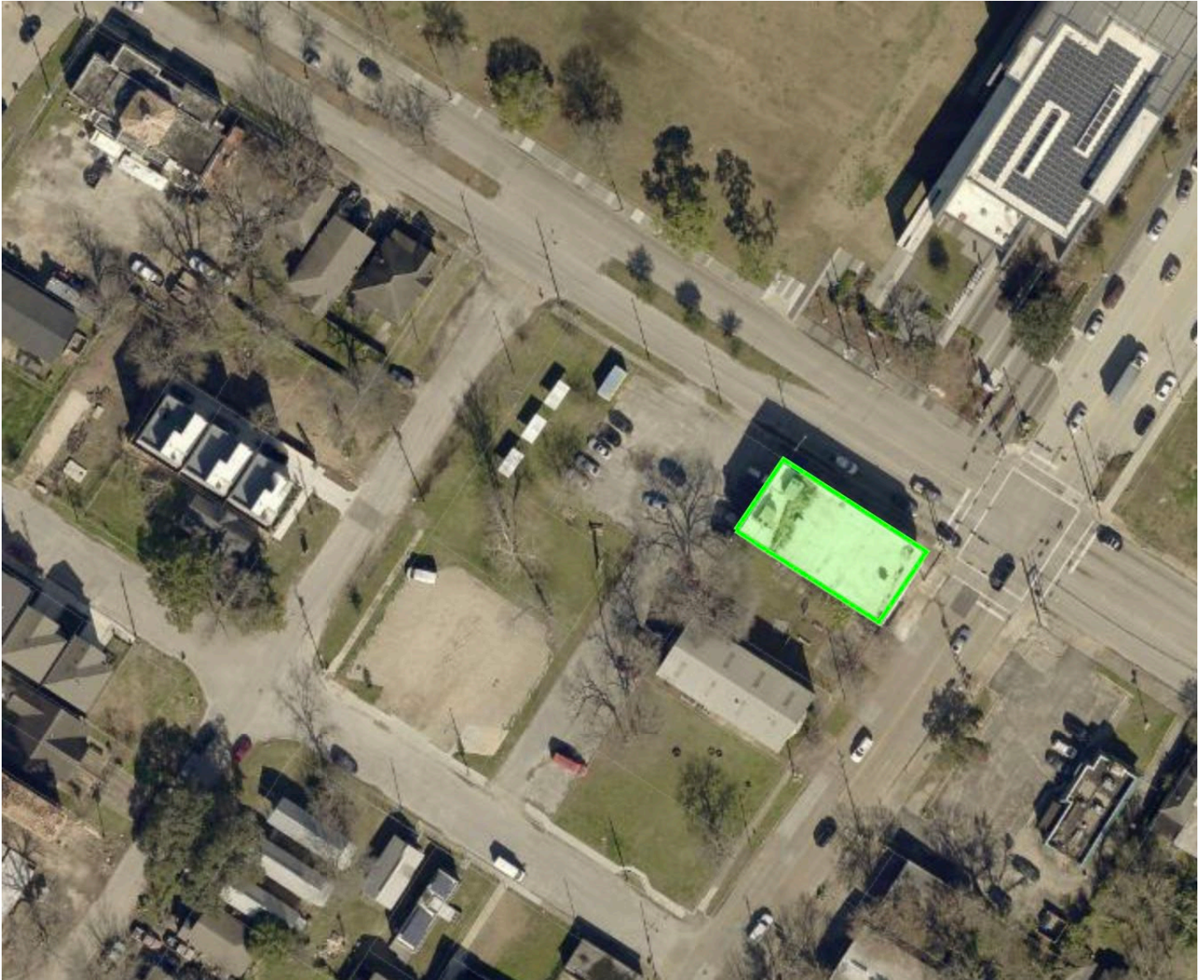


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**Map 4.**

The legal boundary (in green) corresponds to the proposed National Register boundary. Source: Harris County Appraisal District, accessed February 4, 2021.





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**Map 5.**

Aerial photograph showing the Eldorado Ballroom's north and east facades. Source: Google Earth, accessed February 5, 2021.



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Map 6.**

Aerial photograph showing the Eldorado Ballroom's west and south elevations. Source: Google Earth, accessed February 5, 2021.

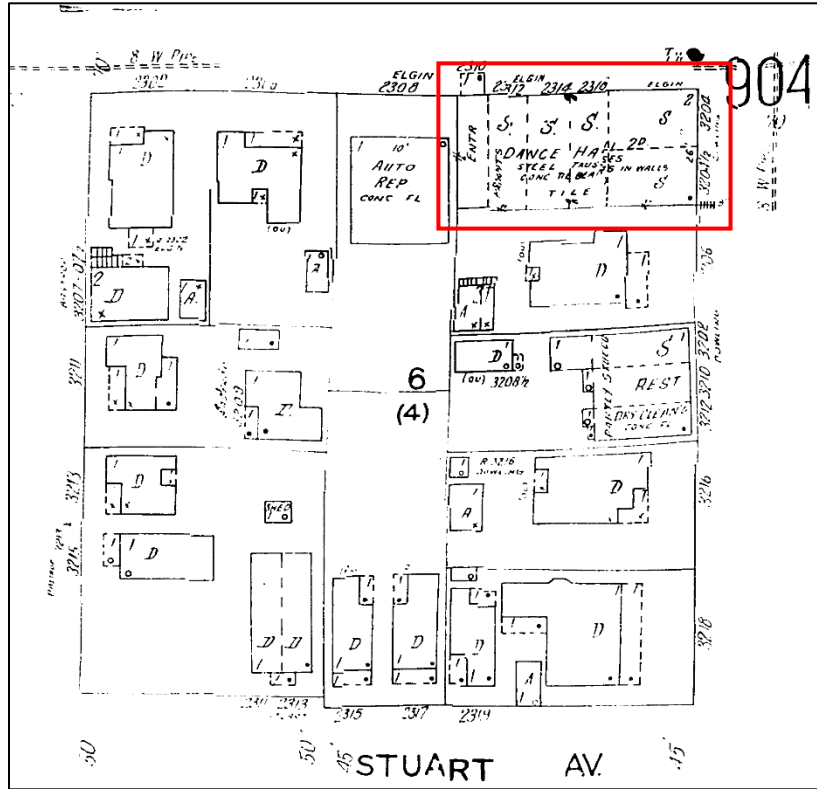




Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Map 7.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1924-51 series (Vol. 9, Sheet 920). Source: ProQuest



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Figure 1.**

Eldorado Ballroom, c. 1950. Source: Milton Larkin Collection, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Figure 2.**

Eldorado Ballroom, second floor, Elgin Street (north) elevation at stage, c. 1948. Source: Stephanie McDougal/Janean Armstead



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**Figure 3.**

Eldorado Ballroom, second floor, Dowling Street (east) elevation at bar, c. 1948. Source: Stephanie McDougal/Janean Armstead



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**Figure 4.**

Eldorado Ballroom, second floor, Elgin Street (north) elevation at stage, c. 1952. Source: Stephanie McDougal/Frieda Allen





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Figure 5.**

Eldorado Ballroom, second floor, Dowling Street (east) elevation at bar, 1953. Source: Stephanie McDougal/Frieda Allen



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**Figure 6.**

Eldorado Ballroom, second floor, west elevation, c. 1954. The plaster walls are in place but the HVAC soffits have not been installed. Source: Houston Public Library/African American Library at the Gregory School



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Figure 7.**

Eldorado Ballroom, second floor, Elgin Street (north) elevation at stage, c. 1957. Note the HVAC soffit above the musicians. Source: Houston Public Library/African American Library at the Gregory School.





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Figure 8.**

Eldorado Ballroom, second floor, Dowling Street (east) elevation at bar and curved northeast corner. Source: Stephanie McDougal/ Janean Armstead.



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 01**

Exterior, north and east facades viewed from the intersection of Elgin Street and Emancipation Avenue, camera facing SW (December 2020)





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 02**

Exterior, Elgin Street/north façade, camera facing south (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 03**

Exterior, Emancipation Avenue/east facade, camera facing west (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 04**

Exterior, west elevation, camera facing northeast (December 2020)





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 05**

Exterior, corner unit storefront entrance (2320 Elgin Street), camera facing southwest (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 06**

Interior, corner commercial unit (2320 Elgin Street), typ., camera facing south (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 07**

Interior, historic rear transoms above suspended ceiling, camera facing southwest (December 2020)





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 08**

Interior, commercial unit (2316 Elgin Street), camera facing south (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 09**

Interior, historic wood paneling above suspended ceiling in bathroom of 2312 Elgin Street, camera facing northeast (December 2020)



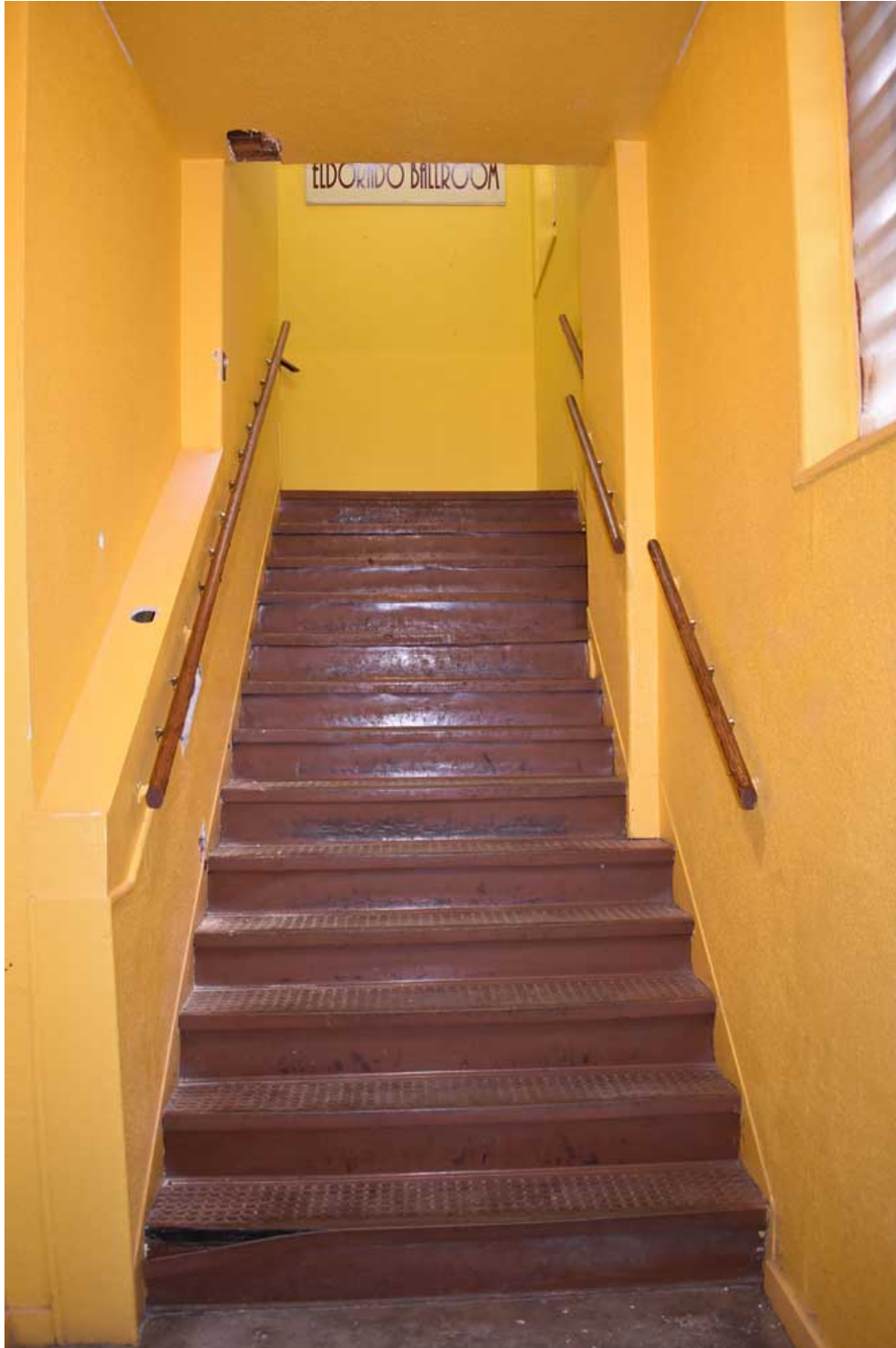


Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 10**

Interior, stairwell to second-floor ballroom, camera facing south (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 11**

Interior, historic steel window in stairwell, camera facing west (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 12**

Historic wood railing in stairwell, camera facing southeast (February 2021)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 13**

Interior, second-floor ballroom, camera facing east (December 2020)





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 14**

Interior, second-floor ballroom, camera facing west (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 15**

Interior, second-floor ballroom, camera facing south (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 16**

Interior, second-floor ballroom, camera facing north (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 17**

Interior, second-floor ballroom, curved corner windows, camera facing northeast (December 2020)





Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 18**

Interior, second-floor ballroom, coat-check window, camera facing east (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Photo 19**

Interior, second-floor ballroom, women's bathroom, camera facing southwest (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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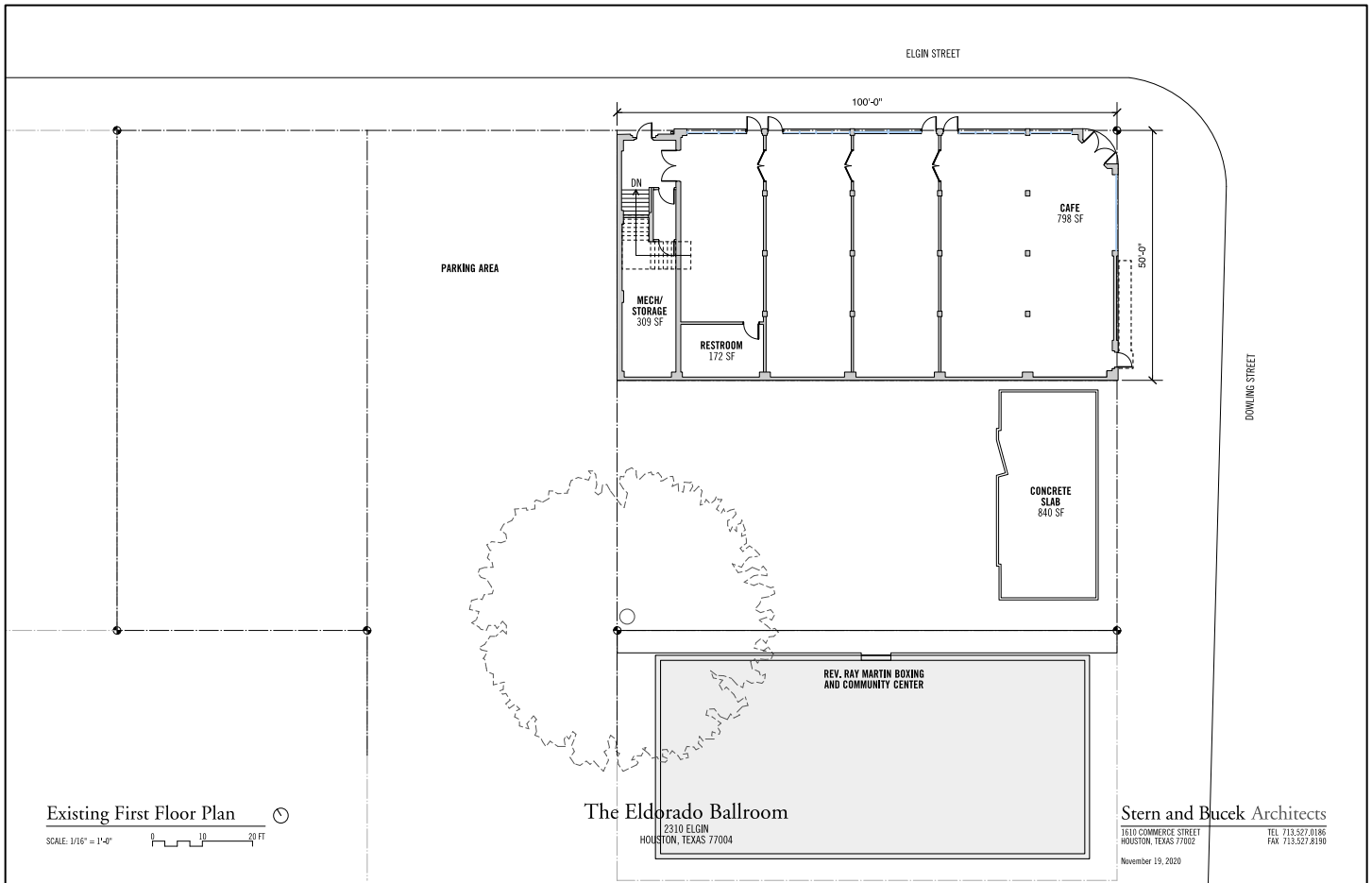
**Photo 20**

Interior, second-floor ballroom, men's bathroom, camera facing west (December 2020)



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

**Drawing 01.** First-floor plan, December 2020. Source: Stern and Bucek Architects



Eldorado Ballroom, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Drawing 02. Second-floor plan, December 2020. Source: Stern and Bucek Architects

