

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: German American Ladies College

Other name/site number:

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic Resources of East Austin (1986)

2. Location

Street & number: 1604 E. 11th Street

City or town: Austin

State: Texas

County: Travis

Not for publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐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 ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

 State Historic Preservation Officer
Signature of certifying official Title
Date 6/18/13
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

German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	total

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: EDUCATION/school, DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions: DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification: MID-19TH CENTURY

Principal Exterior Materials: Wood

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-6 through 7-8)

German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
	B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	C	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.
	D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations: N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Education

Period of Significance: 1876, 1877–1937

Significant Dates: 1876, 1903

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked):

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked):

Architect/Builder: Braun, Frederick (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-14)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9-15)

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: Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

Coordinates (either UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 30.267646 Longitude: -97.723867

Verbal Boundary Description: Travis Central Appraisal District online property ID 194968; or .64 acres of Outlot 61, Division B, of the LK Miller subdivision of Travis County, Texas. The property is bound on the south by E. 11th Street, and on all other sides by properties owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Austin.

Boundary Justification: The nomination boundary conforms to the current legal boundaries of the historic German American Ladies College property. When originally constructed, the house sat on approximately 1.5 acres. A subdivision in 1916 created new lots on either side.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Carlyn Hammons, Historian (based upon a preliminary draft by Anna Ingwersen, student, The University of Texas at Austin, School of Architecture)

Organization: Texas Historical Commission

Street & number: PO Box 12276

City or Town: Austin State: Texas Zip Code: 78711

Telephone: 512.463.5853

Date: February 2013

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheet Map-16 through Map-17)

Additional items (see continuation sheets Figure-18 through Figure-24)

German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Photographs

Name of Property: German American Ladies College
City or Vicinity: Austin
County, State: Travis County, Texas
Photographer: Alan Pogue (unless otherwise noted)
Date Photographed: October 23, 2012 (exterior); October 27, 2012 (interior)
Number of Photos: 9

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0001.tif
Primary (south) elevation. Camera facing north and slightly up.

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0002.tif
Southwest oblique as viewed from the garden. Camera facing northeast.

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0003.tif
Southeast oblique as viewed from the driveway. Camera facing northwest.

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0004.tif
Northeast oblique depicting the rear wing additions (1903, 1986). Camera facing southwest.

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0005.tif
Interior, first floor, east room. The front entry sidelight is visible through the door. Camera facing southwest.

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0006.tif
Interior, first floor, west room. The front entry sidelight is visible through the door. Camera facing southeast.

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0007.tif
Interior, first floor, east wing addition (1903). Camera facing southeast.

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0008.tif
Overall setting as viewed from E. 11th Street. German American Ladies College is on right; the dome of the Texas State Capitol can be seen on far left. Camera facing northwest. *Photo by Carlyn Hammons on March 12, 2013.*

TX_Travis County_German American Ladies College_0009.tif
Noncontributing storage shed. Camera facing northwest. *Photo by Carlyn Hammons on May 16, 2013.*

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.

German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Narrative Description¹

The German American Ladies College is a two-story, wood frame, vernacular residence with Greek Revival detailing constructed in 1876, with rear wing additions in 1903 and 1986. An inset, dominant two-story porch is sheltered under the principal, shallow-pitched, hipped roof lined by a wide band of cornice trim. Four square, simple, Doric columns support the porch, which is lined by a simple railing and balusters. Louvered shutters flank the original four-over-four, double-hung windows, and the primary entry is surrounded by rectangular sidelights and transom. The original interior plan placed a single large room on either side of a large entry hall on each floor. A pair of one-story wings was added to the home in 1903; a 1986 rehabilitation project added second stories to these wings. The wings are also sheltered by shallow-pitched hipped roofs and feature clapboard siding, sash windows, and cornice trim similar to that on the original portion of the house. While substantial in size, these additions are not visible from the primary elevation. The 1876 construction is still clearly evident and remarkably intact. The German American Ladies College is one of the oldest frame residences still standing in Austin.

The residential building which once housed the German American Ladies College sits on .64 acres in East Austin, at 1604 E. 11th Street, just north of the Texas State Cemetery and Huston-Tillotson University. The property is located in Robertson Hill, one of Austin's first suburban residential neighborhoods, desirable because of its proximity to and sweeping views of downtown. Development began in earnest after the arrival of the railroad to Austin in 1871 and was fully realized by the turn of the century. Until the 1920s, it was one of Austin's only socially, ethnically, and economically integrated neighborhoods. Urban renewal has left the neighborhood immediately surrounding the house with very few examples of these earliest residences, and the houses lining this stretch of E. 11th Street today are a mix of early twentieth century bungalows and late twentieth century infill.

The primary elevation of the house faces south on to E. 11th Street. A short, white picket fence demarcates the southern edge of the yard. A gravel driveway forms the eastern boundary and leads to a gravel parking area to the rear. The property is flanked to by the east by Holy Cross Catholic Church (c. 1940) and a small bungalow (c. 1920) on a small lot to the west. A small, side gabled storage shed (noncontributing resource) sits at the northeast corner of the lot.² The front yard is landscaped with a variety of heirloom and native plants, but does not date from the historic period. There are, however, some historic hardscape elements intact, such as concrete edging for some of the planting beds.

The vernacular two-story frame house exhibits detailing characteristic of the Greek Revival style. In its overall form, the house reflects the classical preference for balance with relatively grand, symmetrical and simple masses, with its two-bay wide front elevation, connected by a large central hall space. Exterior architectural details are relatively restrained and classical in character with fenestration and window configurations maintaining a regular rhythm of evenly spaced openings. Two windows on each bay on the first and second

¹ For a detailed overview of East Austin's historic development and its evolution through the period of significance, refer to the *Historic Resources of East Austin* Multiple Resources cover documentation (1986), on file with the National Park Service.

² Though constructed of reclaimed materials, the storage shed is of new construction and design and does not date from the historic period of significance.

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floors create a strong sense of rectangular massing and unity on each bay. The horizontal clapboards that clad the entire building are narrow in width and slightly beveled, created a sense of texture and continuation with the rectangular sweeping front porch. Windows are treated with original and functioning wooden shutters with narrow slats that mimic the narrow clapboard siding.

The broad two-story front porch sits recessed into the front façade, sheltered by the primary roof. The porch enhances the simplicity of the balanced design with a simple full porch balustrade on the second floor, slightly interrupted on the first floor for entrance into the main front door. Four square Doric columnar supports extend elegantly from the first floor porch to the second floor simple roofline cornice, creating a sweeping elegant line from the ground floor to a wide cornice band beneath the roofline. The unadorned balusters on the porch balustrade mimic the plain rectilinear simplicity of the Doric column porch supports, giving a sense of purity and order to the building.

The vernacular columnar supports are not the only Greek Revival detailing evident in the design. Other elements include the wide band of trim beneath the cornice of the roof and multi-paned sash windows. The centrally placed front doors still serve as the main means of entrance into the building and onto the second floor porch. The unglazed four-paneled doors are surrounded by multi-paned sidelights and transom. The transom windows around the doorway create full transom light for the entrance hallways on the first floor and the hallway leading to the balcony porch on the second floor. A secondary door of simple wood construction leads from the first floor porch directly into the west room of the house.

As originally constructed in 1876, the house was three units wide and one unit deep, with a single large room on either side of a wide entry hall, which contains the staircase. Because of the inset porch, the rooms to the east of the hall are slightly smaller than those on the west. In 1903, two parallel one-story wings were added to the back of the house. The west wing added a kitchen space, while the east wing added additional living space. An exterior porch punctuated the rear of each wing. The additions of 1903 reflect a trend in American homebuilding for adding kitchens to pre-existing domestic structures. The space between the two wings was enclosed in the 1930s for use as a dining room. The wings each received a second story, complete with rear porches, in the late 1980s. If viewed from above, the house would appear as a rear-facing U sheltered by intersecting hipped roofs.

As a result of the various additions, the rear (north) elevation is unusual. Each wing bears an inset two-story porch supported by two simple Doric columns and lined by a simple railing. The second story railing runs the full length of the façade, and the porch spans the back of the two wings. On the first floor, however, there are two distinct porches because the space between the two wings has been enclosed. This clapboard covered wall bears paired multi-paned fixed windows. Otherwise, the porch wall on each level is punctuated by a four-over-four double hung window on both wings, except for the lower west wing, which contains an exterior access door to the kitchen. Entry is provided to the second story porch by a single door that opens off of the central hallway.

The west and east side elevations of the house are simple, with regular fenestration and little detailing other than wide cornice band. Windows in the main block of the house are original with shutters, while those set in the wings are newer and lack shutters.

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The interior of the front half of the house (which dates from 1876) retains a remarkable degree of integrity. The original longleaf pine floors are intact, as are the simple wood baseboards, door surrounds, and quarter-turn stairs. The rooms are laid out very much as they were originally, though some space has been repurposed for use as bathrooms or storage closets. The first floor east wing also retains its historic flooring, beneath which is a stone-lined cistern which presumably collected rainwater from the roof prior to the 1903 addition. The finishes in the first floor west wing are not original as the kitchen recently received extensive upgrades. Finishes on the second floor additions (1980s), which added laundry and restroom facilities, are of modern construction.

Though there have been substantial additions to the rear of the house, the original 1876 construction is still very much evident and, with the exception of the rear wall, largely unaltered from the historic period. It is one of the oldest frame residences still standing in Austin.

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Statement of Significance³

Constructed in 1876, the house at 1604 E. 11th Street is significant as an example of a vernacular, wood frame, Greek Revival residence in Austin as well as for its ties to local education. The German American Ladies College, a private all-girls day school, operated here from 1877 until 1881, which is when Austin's public school system began formal operations. Because of the difficulties establishing a public school system in post-Civil War Austin, private schools played a critical and valuable role in producing an educated citizenry. The German American Ladies College's closure coincides with the closure of many private schools across the city, but the building itself continued its important associations with education in Austin as the seat of a prominent and influential family of teachers.

The German American Ladies College was designated a City of Austin Historic Landmark in 1979. It is now nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of education and Criterion C in the area of architecture. The period of significance is 1876, which coincides with the original period of significance, through 1937, which is the terminus of its important educational associations.

Education in Early Austin

The public school system was slow to take hold in Texas, and for much of the nineteenth century the State left educational responsibilities to individual communities. Then, in 1870, following the return of Texas to the Union, the Legislature enacted statutes, one of which was compulsory attendance, in an attempt to formalize a public education system. While in control, the Republicans generally ignored these measures. Following the end of Reconstruction, Democrats gained control and revived efforts to provide a free public education system. Chief among these efforts was the Texas Constitution of 1876 which provided provisions for a perpetual public school fund. With that in place, communities across the state began planning for locally controlled, tax-supported public schools.

Austin tried to establish a formal public school system as early as 1871, but lack of organization and funding, as well as lack of qualified teachers, slowed progress. There was no money for purpose-built buildings and so schools operated out of rented space, and even that was difficult to find. Private schools thrived throughout the city. There were at least 34 private schools, almost a dozen of which were all-girl schools, operating in Austin for all or part of the years 1871–1875. This time period also corresponds to an explosive era of growth in Austin in which the population almost doubled. The fledgling public school system was unreliable at best, and most families chose to send their children to private schools instead. The funding mechanism put in place by the 1876 constitution actually allowed for private schools to apply for state funding based upon the number of students enrolled in the school. More private schools were established in Austin during this time than ever before; more than 48 operated for some or all of the years 1876–1881. The laws of 1876 also allowed for incorporated cities to assume control of public schools and gave them taxing authority to help fund the efforts. Austin finally did

³ For a detailed overview of East Austin's historic development and its evolution through the period of significance, refer to the *Historic Resources of East Austin* Multiple Resources cover documentation (1986), on file with the National Park Service.

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that in 1880 and the public schools began operating under the system in 1881, marking a steady decline in the number of private schools.

The German American Ladies College

One of the private schools in operation during this boom era was the German American Ladies College, under the direction of Alice Nohl and Natalie Von Schenck, German immigrants. The two women began operating the German American Ladies College in 1871 at a rented building at Colorado Street and 14th Street. They hired four additional teachers and enrolled 50 students in the first semester. Natalie taught literature, modern and ancient history, and German. Alice oversaw Spanish, drawing, and elocution. Natalie's sister Antoinette Von Schenck taught vocals and instrumental music, and other teachers covered the subjects of French, geography, mathematics, and ancient languages. Miss Virginia Rossy oversaw the primary department for younger children.

The 1877 city directory carried an advertisement for the school, which outlined the overarching educational philosophy of its proprietors. It reads:

The aim of this institution is to afford young ladies a course of instruction which is in full harmony with the requirements of a modern education [...] One of the rules of the institution obliges the pupils to speak English three days a week and German on the remaining days so that young ladies not acquainted with the former or the latter language have the opportunity to learn it in the shortest time. Much care is taken that the pupils learn to speak both languages correctly and eloquently. Those wishing to qualify themselves as teachers will receive special attention and will be instructed by one of the principals in the science of pedagogy after the Prussian system.⁴

This description gives some insight into the clientele of the school and it can be presumed that at least some of the students came from German families who may have only recently arrived in America but who desired a traditional and formal education for their daughters such as that available in their homeland. The fact that the directors emphasized their willingness to train new teachers was probably influenced by the severe shortage of qualified teachers in Texas at the time, which was one of the largest obstacles to establishing a uniform public school system.

It's not clear why the directors decided to move the school to a new location, but in 1877 they relocated to 1604 E. 11th Street, leasing the two-story house Julius Moreau had contracted with Frederick Braun to build the previous year. The September 6, 1877, edition of the *Austin Daily Statesman* announced the new location and reported that "only a small number of day scholars will be received." City directories indicate that the house also served as primary residence for Alice Nohl, Natalie Von Schenck, and Antoinette Von Schneck.

In 1881, Anna Von Schenck Ritz arrived in Austin to teach alongside her sisters at the German American Ladies College, but by the time of her arrival, the school had closed. Like so many other private schools, the

⁴ *Mooney & Morrison's General Directory of the City of Austin, Texas, For 1877-78*. Compiled and Published by Mooney & Morrison, General Publishers, Houston, Texas. Quotation taken from full page advertisement in Section D.

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German American Ladies College ceased to operate in 1881 as the Austin public school system began formal operations.

City directories from 1881 and 1882 indicate that the house at 1604 E. 11th Street continued to serve as Antoinette Von Schneck's residence, but it is not clear if any additional Von Schenck or Ritz family members lived there with her. All family members are absent from the 1883 and 1884 directories, with the exception of Maria Ritz, who is listed as a teacher at the nearby Stuart Female Seminary but with no residence given. Her father Alfred Ritz (married to one of the Von Schenck sisters, Anna) eventually bought the property from Julius Moreau in 1884. It is commonly believed that the Ritz family leased the house as their residence in the years prior to purchasing it.

The Ritz Family Teachers

Anna Von Schenck Ritz, her husband Alfred Ritz, and their children Maria, Clara, Rudolph, and Helene emigrated from the Westfalen area of Germany where Alfred Ritz had once owned a woolen factory. The family left Germany because of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's persecution of Catholics, particularly those with elite social and economic status like the Ritzes. After losing the family fortune in a failed South American business, the family found themselves in Austin in 1881 seeking a place "where [the] family would not lose caste because of their impoverished condition."⁵ Unfortunately Alfred was the victim of a horrible buggy accident in 1884; he died two years later from the injuries he sustained in that accident.

Like so many other private schools in Austin, the German American Ladies College closed in 1881, but a handful of other private schools continued to thrive. Located just four blocks away, near the corner of Navasota and E. 9th Street stood the Stuart Female Seminary (no longer extant), one of the largest and most prestigious boarding schools for young ladies in Austin. An elite Presbyterian-affiliated private school, the Stuart Female Seminary considered their music department a leading feature of the curriculum and prided themselves on employing only top-notch instructors. Fortuitously, the Ritz family women had studied music and were trained as teachers. The Stuart Female Seminary eagerly accepted them, happy to have such well-cultured women on the faculty, despite their Catholic faith.

Maria Ritz joined the faculty at the Stuart Female Seminary in 1883. She'd obtained a teacher's certificate from a teacher's school in Germany after first attending a boarding school in Holland and a finishing school in Belgium. She was a skilled pianist, but taught French and German at the Seminary until 1893. Her sister Helene Ritz was on the faculty from 1886 to 1890, teaching piano as well as modern languages. Helene had studied music for four years in Berlin, and later for four additional years in Vienna and Paris. Their mother, Anna Von Schenck Ritz, had studied under Robert Pflughaupt, a noted German composer and conductor, and taught at the Stuart Female Seminary from 1890 until it closed in 1899. She also advertised her service as a music teacher in city directories at the time. Author Mabelle Purcell, who compiled an exhaustive history of the Stuart Female Seminary, states that "This mother-daughters team brought great renown to Stuart Seminary, and amply

⁵ Mabelle Purcell, *Two Texas Female Seminaries* (Wichita Falls, TX: Midwestern University Press, 1951), 142.

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justified the broad religious policy of the owners, a policy that was severely criticized at the time.”⁶ The Stuart Female Seminary closed in 1899.

Thus, though the house at 1604 E. 11th Street no longer housed an educational institution, its significance to local education continued through association with its occupants, a prominent family of highly respected teachers committed to nurturing the educational development of young women.

Helene Ritz’s direct association with the house at 1604 E. 11th ended shortly after she ceased teaching at the Stuart Female Seminary. She traveled extensively throughout Europe for additional music training, and eventually settled in Mexico with her first husband, Phillip Hesse. She continued her musical career and when visiting Austin, gave recitals that were widely acclaimed in the local papers. Anna Ritz’s direct connection to the house came to an end shortly after the turn of the century, as well. Maria Ritz, however, continued to live in the house, and she and her family continued to make significant contributions to the education of Austin residents, specifically in the area of music.

The Ritz-Schmidt-Sievers Family and Music Education

Maria Ritz married Victor Schmidt, a gentleman thirty years her senior, in 1884. Schmidt was a draftsman at the General Land Office, and they soon had six children. City directories indicate they lived at 1604 E. 11th with Maria’s parents Anna and Alfred. Alfred died in 1886, and Anna conveyed the property to Maria and Victor in 1890, though she continued to live there for a decade longer. Victor Schmidt died on May 30, 1897, leaving Maria a young widow with six children under the age of thirteen. Maria had stopped teaching at the Stuart Female Seminary three years prior to Victor’s death. It’s unknown if she returned to work as a teacher, but newspaper ads indicate she may have earned some income by leasing out space in her home to a branch office or a representative of the Goggan Brothers Music Store.⁷ Her mother Anna still taught at the Seminary and lived with Maria and her children.

In 1900, Maria married Gustav A. Sievers, a music teacher and concert violinist nearly ten years her junior. For the next 36 years, Maria and Gustav were a very visible presence in Austin’s classical music scene and their home at 1604 E. 11th Street served as a cultural and educational enclave as they trained a generation of new musicians.

Gustav A. Sievers, born in Missouri to German immigrants, was a master violinist. He received a certificate to teach violin in 1892 from the concertmeister of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Professor Frank Gecks. The exact date of his arrival in Texas is unknown, but he first appeared in the Austin city directory in 1897. His occupation was listed as violin teacher with a studio at 813 Congress Avenue (at Edmund Ludwig’s Austin Music Co.), and he boarded at the Hotel Provident. Evidently he traveled between Austin and Houston, however, because he was a member of the Houston Quartet Club in 1899 and was listed as a violin teacher in the 1900 Houston directory. Newspaper articles from this same time period also chronicle his concert activities

⁶ Mabelle Purcell, *Two Texas Female Seminaries* (Wichita Falls, TX: Midwestern University Press, 1951), 144.

⁷ Founded in Galveston, Goggan’s was the oldest and largest music house in Texas during the nineteenth century with branches in San Antonio, Waco, Dallas, Houston, and Austin.

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in Austin. He and Maria became acquainted, likely through her mother and sister's connections in the music community, and once they'd wed, they made their home together at 1604 E. 11th Street. Maria and Gustav had one child, Adolph, in addition to Maria's six children from her previous marriage.

For the next three decades, Gustav Sievers advertised his services as a music teacher in city directories and other media. A studio address was provided in addition to his residential address. Often these were one and the same, but in some years the studio address was different from that of his residence (which consistently remained 1604 E. 11th Street). The studio locations varied through the years and included at least four different buildings on or very near Congress Avenue at addresses that corresponded to established music stores like Goggan Brothers, Austin Music Company, and Bush & Gerts Piano Company. One undated advertisement presents him as the principal of Sievers Violin School and describes the instruction as follows: "the course of study extends from the first elementary of instruction to the attainment of virtuosity."⁸

In addition, Sievers was a prolific concert violinist with top billing who performed in venues throughout Austin and central Texas until his death. Often he performed as a soloist; other times he played as part of the Sievers Quartet or the Sievers Quintet. Maria often accompanied him in these concerts. Among the Austin venues in which he performed were the Hancock Opera House, Saegerrunde Hall, Turner Hall, Scholz Garden, Board of Trade Hall, Millet's Opera House, and the Driskill Hotel. He also performed in Houston, Galveston, Llano, Bastrop, Smithville, Brenham, New Braunfels, Fredericksburg and San Marcos. The reviews of these concerts met with consistently high praise. One newspaper article referred to Sievers as "one of the best violinists in Texas," while another elaborated by saying, "Professor Sievers is so well known in the musical circles of Austin that it is almost unnecessary to say that his violin selections were listened to with the greatest enjoyment. He is always a favorite." The newspapers are peppered with such admiration for his skills.⁹

Sievers also held concerts at the invitation of some of Austin's most respected institutions including St. Edwards College, the Texas Institute for the Blind (where he may also have been an instructor for a period of time), the University of Texas, the Knights of Pythias, the Knights of Maccabees, the Knights of Columbus, and numerous area churches. He performed alongside the Austin Saengerrunde, the most prominent musical society in Austin, as well as the University of Texas Glee Club. For many years he was the featured performer at the commencement ceremonies of Austin High School, where he'd helped found the High School Violin Club. He played at the festivities surrounding William Jennings Bryan's 1908 campaign stop in Austin and at a benefit concert for Galveston hurricane survivors in 1900. In addition to traditional concerts, Sievers regularly performed at graduations, church services, weddings, and even funerals, making him a highly visible presence in the performing arts and social scenes throughout Austin.

There is little doubt that the home on East 11th Street was a hub of music and educational activity with both Gustav and Maria nurturing a steady pool of young virtuosos. Newspapers consistently refer to the weekly rehearsals that took place at the Sievers' residence. A local pastor from the First Congregational Church even wrote an opinion piece in the paper praising Sievers' artistry at a recent concert at the Texas School for the

⁸ Subject File M9335, Music. Austin History Center, Austin Public Library, Austin, TX.

⁹ See, for example, Gustave A. Sievers, Scrapbooks, 1888-1912, 1935 (Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin) and Subject File M9335 Music – Instruction and Study (Austin History Center, Austin Public Library). Both of these collections hold a large number of clippings (most of which are undated) from area newspapers and similar publications.

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Blind and commenting that he and others greatly enjoyed dropping by the Sievers house on East 11th to observe training and rehearsal sessions. Family recollections support this notion. The large first floor room was, in fact, referred to as the Music Room by generations of family members. Though it's not documented, it is possible that the 1903 additions to the home were prompted by Sievers' need for dedicated studio space. Maria Ritz Schmidt Sievers died in 1936; Gustav followed the following year. Their descendants lived in the house until the early 1980s.

Summary of Significance

Historic resource surveys conducted in Austin since the early 1980s document the house at 1604 E. 11th as one of the oldest wood frame residences still standing in the city. It embodies the form, proportions and detailing of the vernacular Greek Revival architectural style as expressed in Texas. It is also noteworthy as a very late example of such style in Austin, as by the late 1870s, larger residences were beginning to exhibit characteristics of the more romantic and lively Victorian styles. It is, therefore, nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of architecture.

The building also holds local significance due to its associations with education in Austin and is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the area of education. Though it functioned as the German American Ladies College but for a few short years, it operated during a critical point in Austin's educational history. It is an example of the successful private schools that assumed responsibility for educating the young citizenry of a rapidly growing, increasingly cosmopolitan city at a time when the city did not yet have the capacity to do so itself. Natalie and Antoinette Von Schenck were instrumental to the success of the school, but even when the school closed, the house at 1604 E. 11th Street became the family seat and continued to hold important association with education. Their sister Anna Von Schenck Ritz and her daughters Helene and Maria taught at the nearby Stuart Female Seminary and were integral to that school's music and language curriculums for over a decade. Maria and her husband Gustav Sievers then continued the educational legacy by training a generation of young musicians. Collectively, these family members had a significant impact on the educational development of the community.

German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

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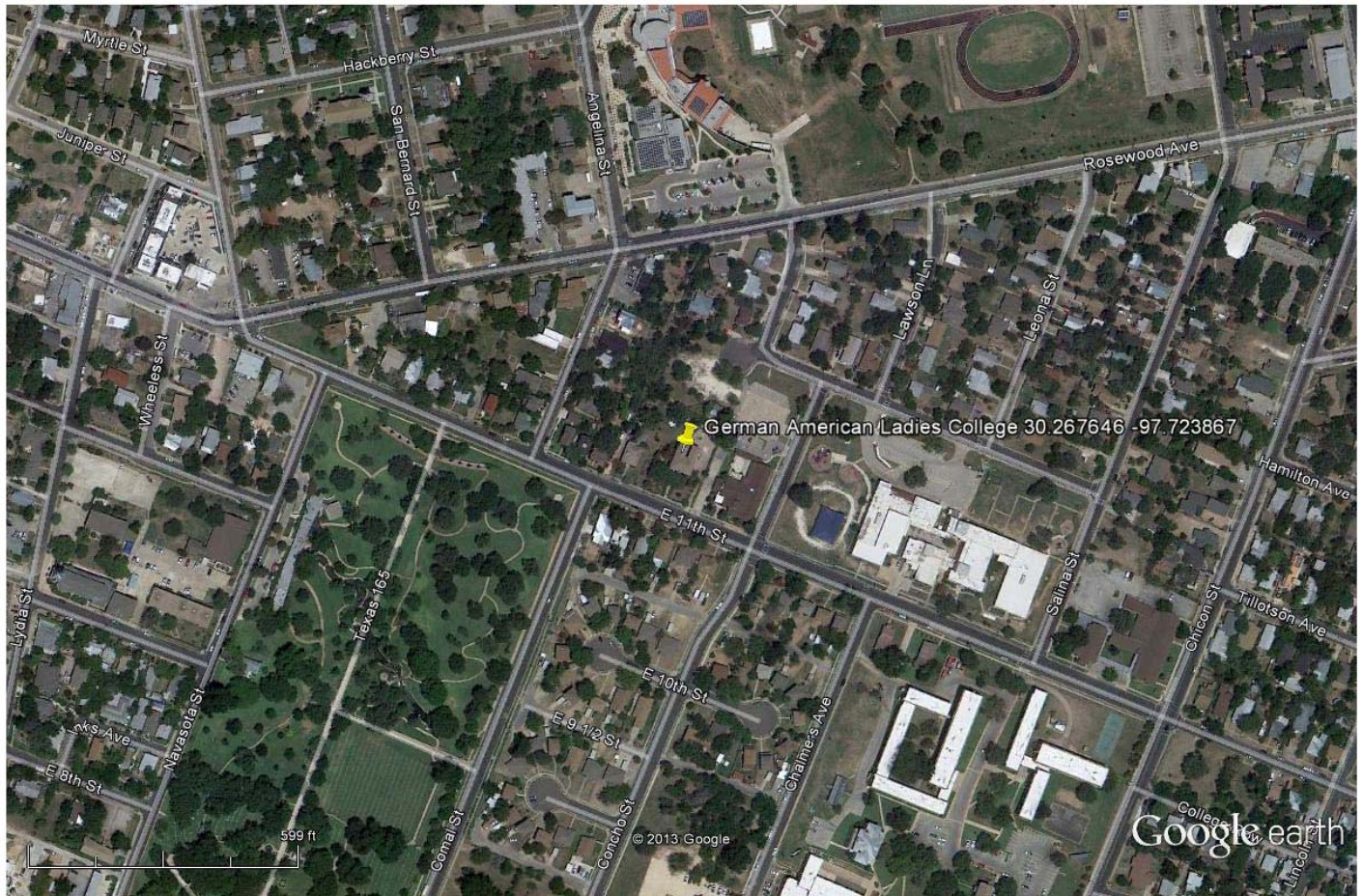
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German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 1: Scaled Google Earth map depicting locational data for the German American Ladies College, 1604 E. 11th Street, Austin, Travis County, TX. (Latitude: 30.267646 / Longitude: -97.723867)



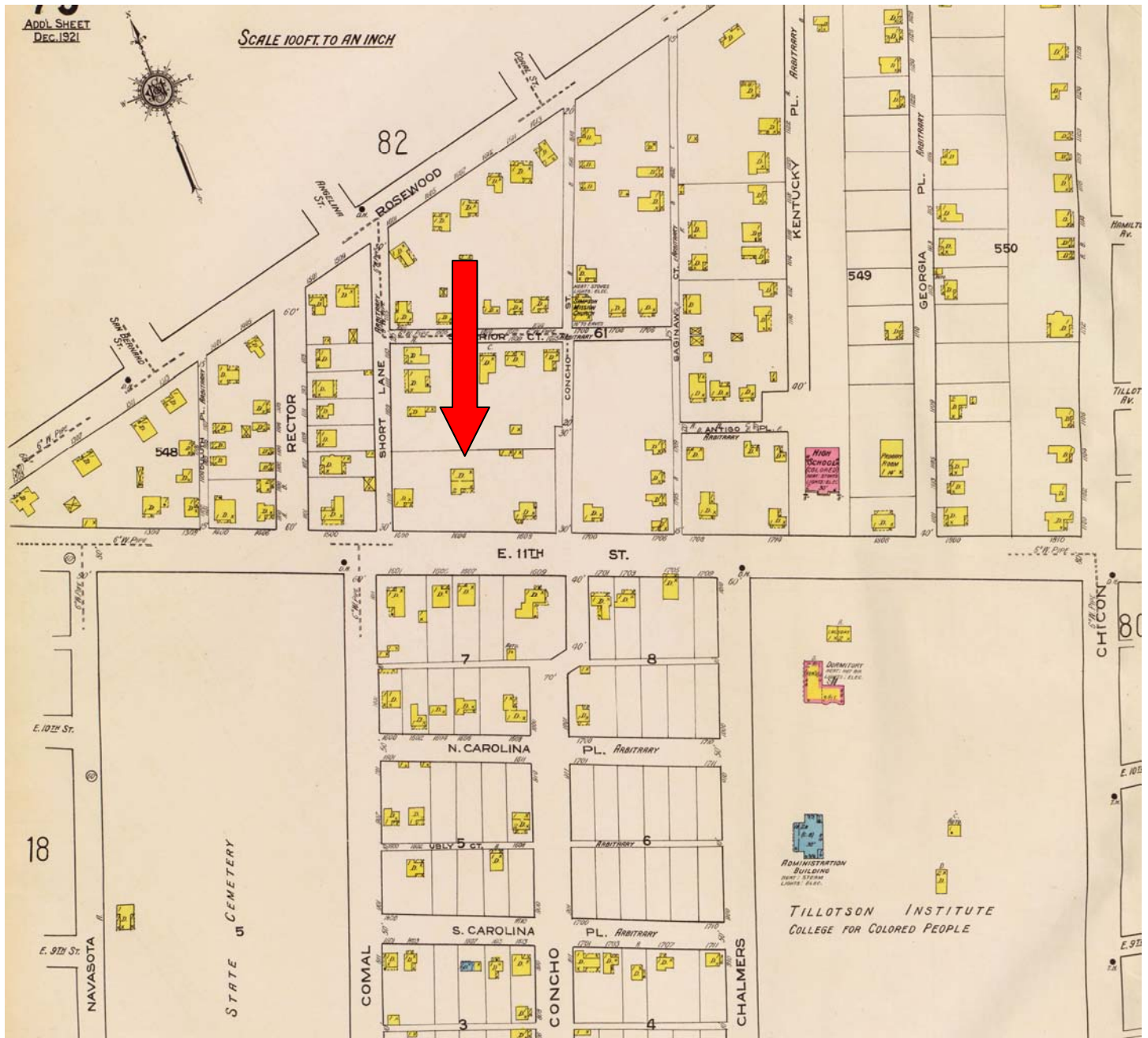
Google earth

feet 1000
meters 400



German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Map 2: 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance map depicting the nominated property (marked with arrow, near center) and surrounding area. This was the first issue of the map series to provide coverage of the neighborhood.



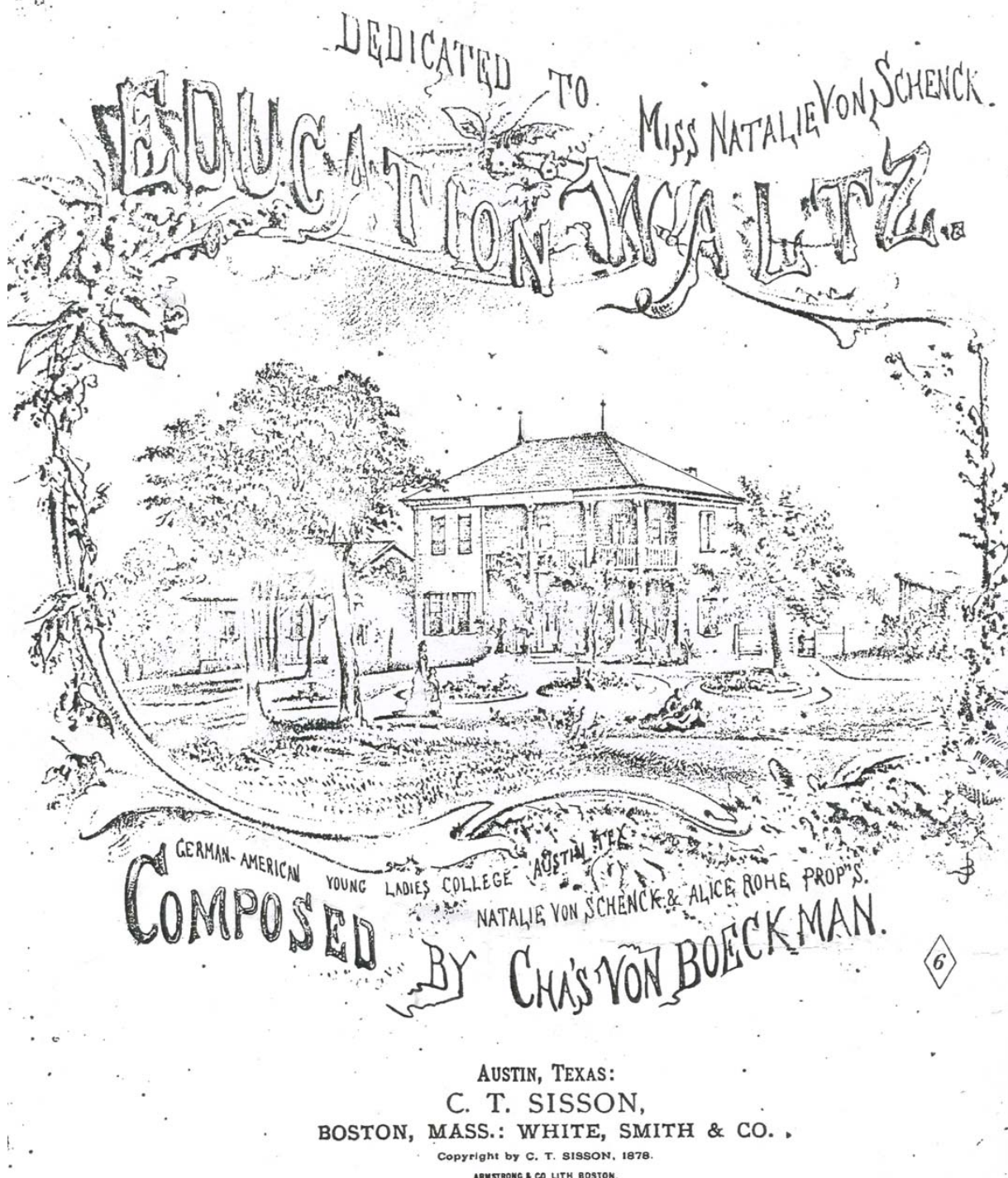
German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 1: Certificate of Merit issued by the German American Ladies School, 1877, signed by Natalie Von Schenck and Alice Nohl, principals. From the Austin History Center collections.



German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 2: Austin composer Charles Von Boeckman wrote "Education Waltz" (copyrighted in 1878) and dedicated it to Miss Natalie Von Schenck. This sketch of the German American Ladies College appeared on the cover of the sheet music. From the collection of Ms. Dorothy Ann Johnson.



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Figure 3: Undated historic photo, southeast oblique. The lack of rear addition dates this photo to pre-1903. From the Austin History Center collections.



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Figure 4: Undated historic photo, primary (south) elevation. From the Austin History Center collections.



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Figure 5: The one-story east wing, added in 1903, is clearly visible in this c. 1980 photo. Note how it is slightly offset from the original house. From the Texas Historical Commission survey files.



German American Ladies College, Austin, Travis County, Texas

Figure 6: The Schmidt family, c. 1894. From the Austin History Center collections.



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Figures 7 (top) and 8 (bottom): This undated photo is believed to depict Maria and Gustav (far right) in the first floor, west room of the house at 1604 E. 11th, which is advertised as his studio in the undated business card. From the Ausitn History Center collections.

