



# HISTORIC PRESERVATION

## Historic Assessment

**Property Address:** 1314 East Commerce Street

### 1. Application Details

Applicant: Lawrence J. Magott  
Type: Historic Landmark Designation  
Date Received: 13 July 2024

### 2. Findings

The property at 1314 East Commerce Street is a one-story grocery store located on the East Commerce Street commercial corridor in City Council District 2. Lawrence J. Magott currently own the property.

East Commerce Street was originally an old Spanish route later known as the "Alameda" for the groves of cottonwood trees in the area. Although sparsely developed in the mid-nineteenth century by German, Polish, and African Americans, commercial activity flourished in the late 19th century with the arrival of the railroad in San Antonio in 1877. The streetcar emerged on Commerce Street in 1890, further increasing commercial and residential activity. The corridor had grown into a thriving, mostly African American commercial district by the mid-twentieth century with restaurants, hotels, retail stores, boarding houses, and professional offices. However, the rise in automobile traffic and the construction of IH-37 brought about a decline in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, the area has experienced a rebirth as an entertainment district with the restoration of many of the historic buildings and the bustling dining and entertainment venues of Sunset Station.

The subject property is located on the south side of the East Commerce Street corridor, just south of the boundary of the Dignowity Hill Historic District, two blocks east of Sunset Station in the St. Paul Square Historic District, and on the northern edge of the Denver Heights neighborhood. The current structure was built circa 1948. The address first appeared in the 1891 City Directory as 816 East Commerce Street, and then was listed as 814 East Commerce Street in the 1892 City Directory.

Theodore ("Theo") Magott was born on November 8, 1855, in Wieruszow, Lodz, Poland, to Franciszka and Elzbieta Polak Magott. At the age of 28, Theo arrived at the Port of New York in March 1884 with his uncle Reverend Romuald Andrew Magott, on their way to San Antonio, Texas. In 1885, Theo Magott worked for William Esser, the proprietor of Alamo Brewery and Lone Star Bottling Works, with whom he also boarded. Magott was granted citizenship in Bexar County in October 1890. In 1889, Theo Magott and Paul Wesp opened a bottling company at the intersection of Soledad and Romano Street, Magott and Wesp Mineral Waters, which manufactured soda water, mineral water and ginger ale. The business is listed in the City Directory through 1891.

In February 1887, Theo Magott married Mary Margaret Kindla at St. Stanislaus Church in Bandera, TX. Two of their three daughters, Sophia and Helen, died during childhood, and upon returning from a funeral at St. Joseph Society Cemetery in June 1889, Theo noticed property for sale at 814 East Commerce Street (now 1314 East Commerce Street). He purchased the lots and built Theo Magott Grocery and Beer Saloon, (listed in the 1895 City Directory as "The Farmers' Friend"). The store sold staple and fancy groceries, nails, barbed wire, fencing, harnessing, feed and seed. Adjoining the store

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was a camp yard where many Polish customers loaded their wagons and spent the night before their return trip to Panna Maria and St. Hedwig.

In 1913, Theo Magott founded the Texas Polish News Publishing Company and published *Nowiny Texaskie*, a Polish language newspaper. The newspaper's circulation increased throughout Texas during World War I, as Polish residents desired news about their homeland. Theo Magott served as President of the newspaper until it ceased publication in 1920. Theo Magott was an active parishioner at St. Joseph's and St. Michael's churches. He served as Finance Chairman on the Board of Directors for St. Michael's Church and solicited funds on behalf of his friend Reverend Tom Moczygemba for the construction of a new building at 418 Indiana Street in 1922. 1914 and 1915 issues of the newspaper were placed in the cornerstone of the church, which was demolished for Hemisfair construction in 1968.

Theo Magott's wife Mary Margaret died in June 1897, and then he married Pauline Helene Isner in November 1898. Theo Magott died on August 17, 1936 at his home at 113 Greeley Street, behind the store. He is buried at St. Joseph's Society Cemetery in San Antonio. After his death, Pauline Magott continued to manage the store with her sons Ted and then Al, until Al bought the business in the 1960s.

Alfred Louis ("Al") Magott (also nicknamed "Iggy" after a popular comic strip character), was born January 26, 1911, in the family home on Greeley Street, the youngest child of Theo and Pauline Magott. He married Frances Elizabeth Moss of Refugio, Texas, in May 1946 at St. Joseph's Church. Al Magott died on April 25, 1993, and Frances followed him in death October 29, 2001. They are buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in San Antonio. Their youngest son Lawrence ("Larry") Magott currently owns the property and continues to operate the grocery store at 1314 East Commerce Street.

The subject property is a north-facing commercial structure, situated near the middle of a block bound to the north by East Commerce Street, the east by South Mesquite Street, the south by Shadrach Street, and the west by South Cherry Street. The block includes a three-story hotel (City View Inn & Suites, 1306 East Commerce Street); a one-story Mission Revival style office building, adjacent to the subject property (1310 East Commerce Street); warehouses; and a one-story vernacular home (141 Shadrach).

### 3. Architectural Description

The primary structure on the subject property is a one-story concrete commercial store with a flat roof and a brick-clad façade fronting East Commerce Street. The north façade and sidewalk are covered by a full-width aluminum canopy that is supported by four square brick columns. The front entrance on the left side of the façade features a pair of in-swinging wooden doors with glass upper panels, behind a pair of out-swinging metal screen doors. On the right side of the façade is a single door entrance to a story area, with a pair of fixed square windows to the left of the door.

Between the two central columns is a public art bench created by James Wyatt Hendricks, the first of a series that lines the East Commerce Street corridor. This bench was inspired by Magott's Grocery & Market and features a granite seat on an iron framework. The iron backrest is inlaid with a mosaic of art tiles featuring images of meats, eggs, dairy, bread, fruits, and vegetables.

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The eastern part of the parcel is an asphalt parking lot, enclosed by six-foot iron rail fencing with a sliding gateway on the Commerce Street side and a pair of swinging gates on the Shadrach Street side.

Behind the grocery store there is a two-story storage warehouse, which has concrete lower walls topped by a metal framework with a shed roof. There is a one-story vernacular residence behind the store and warehouse at 141 Shadrach Street. The original residence features a cross-gabled roof with centered gable on the right wing. The roof is covered by asbestos shingles. A front addition was constructed prior to 1931, according to Sanborn maps.

Character-defining features of 1314 East Commerce Street include:

- One-story grocery store with canopy
- Two-story storage warehouse
- Public art bench

#### 4. Landmark Criteria

The property meets six criteria under UDC 35-607(b):

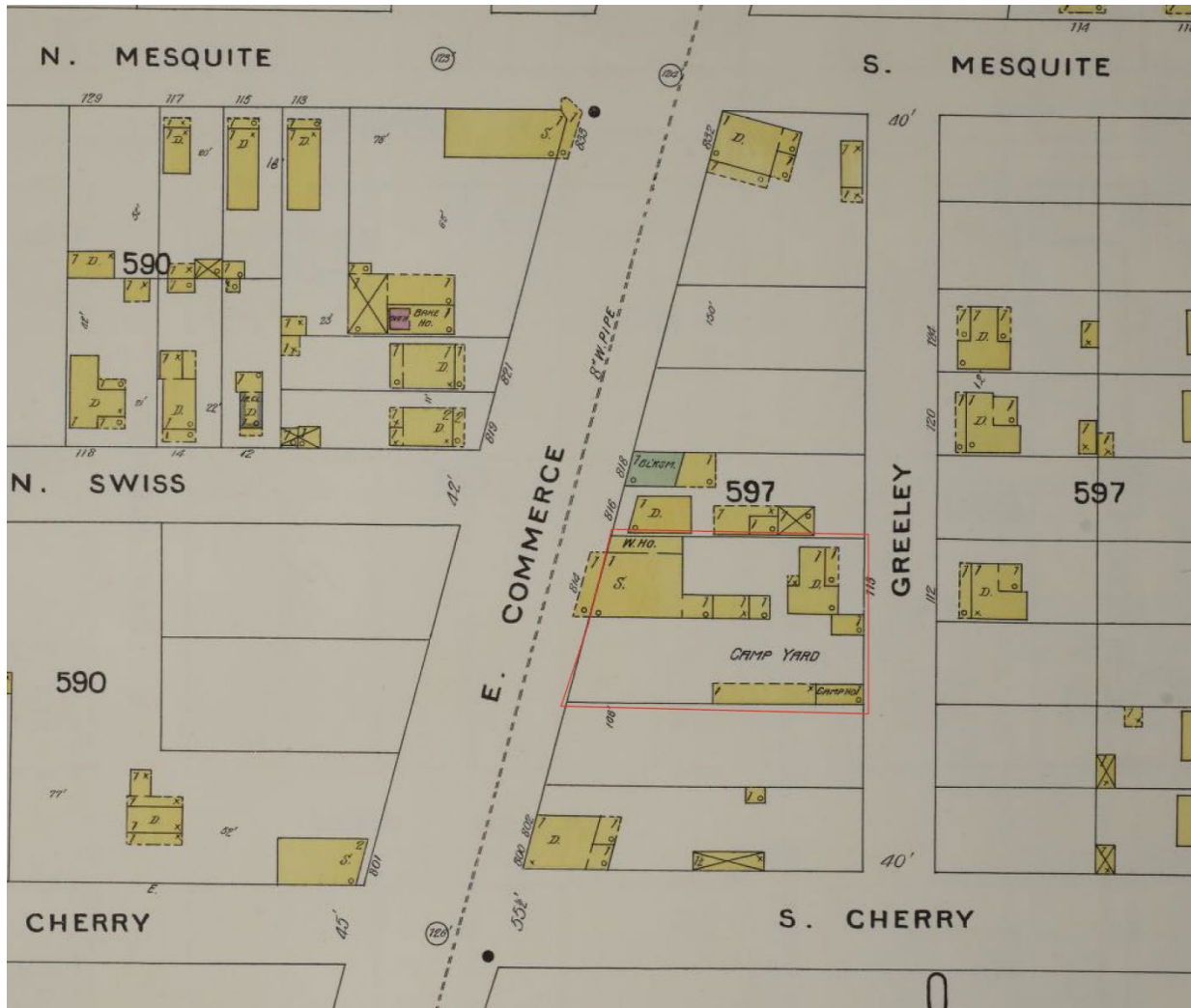
- **3. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;**
- **11. It is distinctive in character, interest or value; strongly exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of San Antonio, Texas or the United States;**
- **13. It bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites, or areas, either as an important collection of properties or architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to the plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif;**

#### 5. Staff Recommendation

A property must meet at least three of the 16 criteria used to evaluate eligibility for landmark designation, and this assessment determines that 1314 East Commerce Street meets this threshold. Further research may reveal additional significance associated with this property.



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1. Sanborn Map (1896), Sheet 73

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THEO. MAGOTT. FRED. WESP.

**Alamo Bottling Works.**

**MAGOTT & WESP, Proprietors.**

**SODA AND MINERAL WATERS, GINGER ALE.**

**SELTZER AND APOLLINARIS WATER, Etc.,**

MANUFACTURED AND DELIVERED TO ALL PARTS OF THE CITY.

**Factory, W. Commerce St., Bet. N. Brazos and San Jacinto.**

Orders for Shipments to the Country Receive Special Attention.

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*2. 1887 City Directory ad*

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