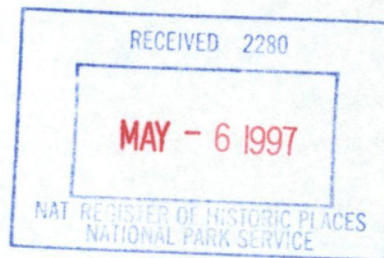


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



OMB No. 10024-0018

543

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Ella Lewis Store and Rental Houses  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 3404-3406-3408 Courtlandt  
CITY OR TOWN: Houston  
STATE: Texas  
CODE: TX  
COUNTY: Harris  
CODE: 201  
ZIP CODE: 77018  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A  
VICINITY: N/A

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets    does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant    nationally    statewide x locally. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Laurie J. Jurell  
Signature of certifying official

4-29-97  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register  
   See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
   See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson A. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6-4-97



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**5. CLASSIFICATION**

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**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Private

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building (s)

<b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTING</b>	<b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b>
	<u>  3  </u>	<u>    </u> <b>BUILDINGS</b>
	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> <b>SITES</b>
	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> <b>STRUCTURES</b>
	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> <b>OBJECTS</b>
	<u>  3  </u>	<u>    </u> <b>TOTAL</b>

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** Historic and Architectural Resources of Independence Heights, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** COMMERCE: Department Store; DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** VACANT: Not in Use; DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** NO STYLE; OTHER: Vernacular Shotgun with Bungalow Features

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION BRICK  
WALLS WOOD: Weatherboard  
ROOF ASPHALT  
OTHER CONCRETE

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Ella Lewis General Store/Rental Houses  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

## Description

The Ella Lewis General Store (c. 1920) and Rental Houses (c. 1920) are a complex of buildings facing west on Courtlandt Street near the center of Independence Heights. The 2-story General Store is the northernmost building and the center of businesses operated by Lewis. It is covered in a large gable roof with horizontal siding and is surrounded by large deciduous and ornamental trees. Two 1-story rental houses are south of the General Store. These are the last of four houses that continued to the intersection of 34<sup>th</sup> and Courtlandt Streets. Each house is noted by a metal gable roof and inset porches in a basic shotgun form with bungalow features. The properties are located in a mostly residential section of the community and are in good condition.

The Ella Lewis General Store (c. 1920) and Rental Houses (c. 1920) are a complex of 1- and 2-story buildings facing west in the residential section of Independence Heights. All of the properties are associated with Ella Lewis and appear to have historically functioned as a small urban enterprise under her direction. The buildings still appear associated and are generally linked by landscaping features and setting.

The General Store is the center of the original complex of five buildings and is set back approximately six feet from the street, slightly less than the rental houses. This 2-story building is in the middle of the block facing west and the northernmost building in the complex. The building is covered by a large gable roof and set on concrete piers and wooden posts. The 2-bay principal (west) facade consists of a single doorway and double window on the first floor and double windows on the second. A shed roof awning extends between the floors and is supported by decorative iron columns. A bay window or small turret with windows extends from the southwest corner of the second floor. Most of the windows are multi-paned and irregularly placed on the elevations. The store is a hybrid of residential and commercial architecture that reflects its historical mix of uses.

Two 1-story rental houses are parallel to the General Store on the south and are the last of four original rental houses. These identical houses follow a basic shotgun form, but reflect a bungalow influence in the porch details and siding. The principal facade of each house is 2-bays wide with a single wooden window and single wooden door. The latter is accessed under an inset porch (southwest corner) supported by a single wooden column and highlighted by a gable roof. A diamond-shaped window opens into the house on the southern elevation from the porch. Vertical siding covers the upper gable and intersects with the horizontal siding on the remainder of the house. A second inset porch is on the rear or southeast corner of the house. All windows are 1/1 wooden frames. The site of the other two original houses remains undeveloped.

The three buildings are the only extant properties facing west on the block. Mature vegetation appears to date from the period of significance. All buildings are in good condition.



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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- ☒ **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.
- ☐ **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 VALUE, 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:** Ethnic Heritage: Black; Commerce

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** c. 1920-1947

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** c. 1920

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Unknown

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-6).

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see context statement).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- ☐ 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*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 6

Ella Lewis General Store/Rental Houses  
Houston, Harris County, Texas

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**Statement of Significance**

The Ella Lewis General Store and Rental Houses are a complex of buildings near the center of Independence Heights. The properties are associated with the primary owner and businesswoman, Ella Lewis. Ms. Lewis is one of a number of independent business owners in the community during the period of significance. This is the only remaining complex consisting of both a general store/restaurant/dressmaking shop/residence and rental houses. The property is eligible under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage (black) and Commerce at the local level of significance.

The Ella Lewis General Store and Rental Houses represents local business development in Independence Heights in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lewis opened the general store about 1920 and operated it as a neighborhood grocery for most of the period of significance. The store offered a variety of grocery and confectionery items marketed to nearby residents. Lewis apparently lived in the 2-story building and is also listed as a dressmaker in the early 1920s. The building also housed Lewis' dressmaking shop and a small restaurant/café. This mix of small businesses appears common in the community and follows the pattern of black-owned businesses of the period.

Lewis also contracted for the construction of the adjacent rental houses about 1920. Each house follows a basic shotgun form but is modified with bungalow features. Such houses were common as rental houses and may actually be standard models available from local builders or lumber companies. Single ownership of rental buildings and an adjacent commercial enterprise is also documented in other African American neighborhoods of Houston.

This complex of buildings is a significant example of independent businesses operated by African Americans in Independence Heights. They are also representative of local commerce and ethnic heritage.



**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
	1	15	268480		3300760	

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** Independence Heights, Block 21, Lots 29, 30, 31, 32

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION** Boundary encompasses all resources historically associated with the nominated property.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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**NAME/TITLE:** Vivian Seals with assistance from Dwayne Jones, Texas Historical Commission

**ORGANIZATION** Independence Heights Neighborhood Council

**DATE:** 1/97

**STREET & NUMBER:** 3714 Yosemite

**TELEPHONE:** (713) 747-9989

**CITY OR TOWN** Houston

**STATE:** TX

**ZIP CODE:** 77021

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** (see USGS map #7)

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS**

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

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**NAME:** Arnell Oliver

**STREET & NUMBER:** 3408 Courtlandt

**TELEPHONE:** N/A

**CITY OR TOWN** Houston

**STATE:** TX

**ZIP CODE:** 77018



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Lewis, Ella, Store and Rental Houses

MULTIPLE NAME: Independence Heights MPS

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Harris

DATE RECEIVED: 5/06/97 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/19/97  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 6/04/97 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/20/97  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 97000543

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 6-4-97 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N







ELLA LEWIS GENERAL STORE &  
RENTAL HOUSES

3404-3406-3408 COURTLANDT (STORE, 3408)

HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

VIVIAN SEALS, PHOTOGRAPHER

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION, NEG.

CAMERA FACING EAST

PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 2







ELLA LEWIS GENERAL STORE &  
RENTAL HOUSES  
3404-3406-3408 COURTLANDT (HOUSES, 3404-3406)  
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO. TEXAS  
YIVIAN SEALS, PHOTOGRAPHER  
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION, NEG.  
CAMERA FACING EAST  
PHOTOGRAPH 2 of 2



Please refer to the map in the  
Multiple Property Cover Sheet  
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64500641