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**APRIL 28<sup>TH</sup>**

Historic Treasures Lost . . .



# Old Judges Hill

A Proposed Local Historic District

**The Homes  
Pictured Above  
Are No Longer Standing**

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. . . and Found



# Old Judges Hill

A Proposed Local Historic District

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Preserve  
Austin's Heritage**

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# THE GHOSTS OF JUDGES HILL A NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

*by Phoebe Allen*

**SATURDAY, APRIL 28**

**11AM, 1PM & 3 PM**

**THE KOZMETSKY HOUSE, 1001 W. 17TH ST.**

**FREE TO TOUR TICKET BUYERS**

**Limited Seating. Doors open 15 minutes prior to lecture.**

Join us and “History Detective” Phoebe Allen, as we stroll back in time through one of Austin’s earliest neighborhoods to reveal stories of powerful residents who fashioned the foundations of our urban development and growth. Ghost Houses, now demolished, sheltered many forgotten but influential Austin families in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Kozmetsky House is open today solely for purposes of the lecture. This mid-century Modern Ranch home was built circa 1955 with Austin common brick by Judge James McClendon and his wife Anne Watt McClendon, probably using architects Page Sutherland Page.

In December of 1966, McClendon sold the home to Ronya and George Kozmetsky (UT Business School Dean 1966-82) In 1985 the Kozmetskys hired Roland Gommel Roessner to renovate the home and add a swimming pool in the back garden, and later to add a library to the house. The library eventually proved pivotal to Austin’s position in the new age of computers. In the 900-square foot wood-paneled room, Dr. Kozmetsky served as mentor to Michael Dell, whose dorm room electronics business had grown rapidly since leaving UT.

By July 2006, the property had deteriorated as a rental/flip when it was purchased by the current owners, Jay Tassin and Brent Danninger, who spent three years restoring the house and grounds. The detached garage/woodshop and adjoining breezeway was added to the rear of the house by the current owners in 2007, using salvaged Austin Common brick. The original oak and teak parquet floors were restored. Restoration of windows and doors is ongoing in the woodshop.

# AN EARLY HISTORY OF JUDGES HILL

1839-1914

*Compiled by Phoebe Allen*

Shoal Creek was the western boundary of Austin when Edwin Waller laid out the city's original one-square-mile grid in 1839. Adjacent to the downtown business district, the homes near West Avenue between 12<sup>th</sup> and MLK, Jr./19<sup>th</sup> Streets are some of the oldest in Austin and are in easy walking distance to the Capitol. Spanning a period from the 1850s through the turn of the century, the structures provide insight into the transitioning architectural styles and building materials of the time.

The Judges Hill neighborhood takes its name from the many judges and attorneys who built homes in the area, the earliest of whom included **E.S.C. Robertson**, who became the Chief Justice of Bell County in 1858; **J. Wesley Robertson**, attorney and Austin mayor from 1884 to '87; and **Alexander S. Walker**. Sr., Second Judicial District Judge (1857-62) as well as a Texas Senator & Representative. The impressive list of names includes seven presidents of the Travis County Bar Association from 1916 to 1934, and at least 17 additional prominent judges and attorneys: Brady, Wilcox, Stedman, Shelley, Graves, Mendell, Brewster, McClendon, Garwood, Greenwood, Krueger, Kone, Morrow, Hickman, Taylor, and even current U.S. District Judge Sam Sparks, who lived in his grandmother's home at 1510 West Avenue during WWII.

Among the earliest purchasers of multiple outlots/blocks in the future Judge's Hill neighborhood was **Dr. Samuel G. Haynie** (1806-1877), a four-time mayor of Austin, who arrived in Austin in 1839 to practice medicine and by 1850 had purchased three outlots. By 1852, **Elijah Sterling Clack Robertson** (1820-1879), son of the Impresario of Robertson Colony, owned five outlots and had built what was likely the first dwelling west of West Avenue, on a ridge overlooking Shoal Creek.

**Robertson, Nathaniel & Angeline Townsend, George Glasscock, and Mary and Reuben Runner** were the first to build homes on or west of the West Avenue boundary of the city in the 1850s. By 1872, the year the first City Directory was published and the first year after the arrival of the railroad, only a few settlers had ventured beyond this western boundary of the city to establish their homesteads: **Alexander Walker** lived on the southwest corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Rio Grande, **Marmion Bowers'** family was at the southeast corner of 16<sup>th</sup> and West Avenue, **Col. Frederick Chandler** and daughter **Cornelia**

and **Henry Shelley** were on the northeast corner of 17<sup>th</sup> and West in the Runner's old home (Westhill), and **Frank Brown** was at 15<sup>th</sup> and West. In most cases, each family owned an entire block or Outlot as the site of a family farm, usually with separate kitchens, outbuildings and orchards.

Alexander Walker married his partner's widow, Belle Bowers, and built a larger home at 1508 Rio Grande about 1872. In 1880, **J.W. & Sophronia Robertson** built at the southwest corner of 17<sup>th</sup> and Pearl, and the **Kluge** family built on the southwest corner of Pearl and 18<sup>th</sup>.

Changes were gradual through 1900, with new residents that included **Rector Thomson** in the Bowers household, **Anna Townsend Blackburn** and her mother east of Pearl on 17<sup>th</sup>, and **Frank Brown**, whose daughter **Effie Brown Dignan** built a house adjacent to her father in 1889; her sister **Wittie** and **Henry Hutchings**, built and lived in an adjacent house in 1891. **Gardner Ruggles** added a Queen Anne home on the northwest corner of 16<sup>th</sup> and Rio Grande in 1896, and **Daniel Caswell** closed out the 1800s with his grand 1899 home at 1404 West Avenue and two more were built by his sons, one of which was demolished when 15<sup>th</sup> Street was extended from West Avenue to Lamar in 1967.

A number of the earliest homes have been lost, and the Judges Hill neighborhood continues to experience controversial changes with conversion of some residences to professional offices and replacement of historic buildings with new construction – primarily office space, apartments and condominiums. On West Avenue, for example, is a series of three modern apartment and condominium buildings that replaced two exceptional historic homes: the 1868 **Angeline Townsend-Thad Thomson** home at 1802 West Avenue, demolished in 1962, and the 1891 **Edward Mandell House** home at 1704 West Avenue, demolished in 1967 – the premier Shingle Style residence in Texas and arguably one of the most architecturally and historically significant, privately owned residence in Austin.

Many elegant, historic homes still line both sides of West Avenue, including the landmark circa 1855 **Chandler-Shelley House**, also known as **Westhill**, at 1703 West Avenue, a Greek Revival likely designed and built by Abner Cook about the same time he was working on the nearby Governor's Mansion, and the 1870 **Denny-Holliday House** at 1803 West Avenue; both of these homes feature columns facing east rather than West Avenue.

At least eight major homes built before 1914 have been demolished, but more than two dozen built by 1914 yet grace of the era, and 16 of these are historic landmarks. These 19<sup>th</sup> century families remain closely connected, often through their work or marriages, and many had a strong influence on the development of the City of Austin as it moved into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Plans are underway for nominating the area as a local historic district.

Max Bickler House  
901 W. 16th Street



J.C. Schmeil

Max Hermann Bickler was part of a prominent family of German descent in early Austin. His father, Jacob Bickler, founded the German-American Academy on Castle Hill, and was the first Superintendent of Schools in Austin. Max Bickler asked architect Hugo Kuhne (1884-1963), a longtime friend and fraternity brother, to design a house for him on a lot next door to the home of his brother Harry Bickler. Kuhne is credited with design of many iconic Austin structures, including the Austin Public Library which today houses the Austin History Center. The Max Bickler House was built between April and July, 1911, for the sum of \$3,675 by local builder, H. E. Wattinger.

Bickler served for many years as Clerk of the Texas Supreme Court, where he was keeper of the state's official Sam Houston Bible, used to swear in dozens of governors since at least the 1870s. He had a role in every inaugural from 1915 to the late 1960s and was a friend of top state officials for nearly sixty years. Many of them were regular guests at the house from the 1920s through the 1950s. When the former temporary Texas Capitol burned in 1899, it was Bickler who first saw the smoke and turned in the alarm. Bickler's wife, Mary, was active in supporting the Texas School for the Deaf and hosted students for Sunday afternoon concerts on the east porch for many years. The house remained in the Bickler family through four generations until it was purchased by the present owners in 1989.

A unique feature is found on the underside of the stairway -- Bickler's penciled chronicle of events in Austin's history, from floods to World War II to the death of a family pet. When the house was sold to the present owners in 1989, it was Bickler's daughter Ethel who, with her sister, Jane, made the last entry on the stairwell. Stylistically, this home is a fine example of the Arts and Crafts Bungalow style. Its distinguishing features include dark red English brickwork, a sitting porch with decorative rafter tails, an open patio, shed dormers and plaster gables with half-timbering. The Bicklers added a sleeping porch in the rear of the house in 1916 and ten years later two unfinished bedrooms were completed upstairs. In restoring the house, the owners have adhered to the original interior design, as well as the landscaping pattern, and the home retains many original features. The large oak tree in the front yard grew from an acorn planted by Mr. Bickler in the year his home was built. After he moved into this house, Bickler began a hobby of propagating from seed the slow-growing Texas Mountain Laurel, which were used to landscape the Governor's Mansion during the 1920s and the Capitol during the 1930s. Some laurels he planted are still found at those two locations, grown from seeds taken from this yard. The house was named a City of Austin Landmark in 1991.

*Marty Moulthrop and Mike Ward*

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Ahlgrimm House  
804 W. 17th Street



*J.C. Schmeil*

This cottage was built in the mid-1930s by salesman Erwin Ahlgrimm for his family, including his wife Gussie and son James, a UT student. The house remained in the family into the 1970s. The property was originally part of the estate of Col. Edward M. House, who was an adviser to four Texas governors and later a close confidante to President Woodrow Wilson. In House's day a watering trough for horses was located near the front sidewalk.

This home offers a clear distinction between the historic and the new, both inside and outside. The older portion of the structure is a Tudor cottage with brick cladding. Distinctive features include a steeply pitched roof that flares towards the bottom, small dormer window, asymmetrical design and a round-arched door opening on the front. This European cottage styling possibly appealed to Ahlgrimm, who was born in Germany and married a wife from Texas. The modern carport/garage addition was built in 2005-2006, and, with its metal banding and flat roof, is a strong contrast to the rest of the house. The second level of the addition contains the master suite.

With the help of architect Jay Corder, as well as interior designer Tracey Overbeck Stead and landscape designer Bill Bauer, the modern addition, while not mimicking the details of the existing house, serves the owner's lifestyle and sensibilities. On the interior the designer blended old and new to minimize the potentially jarring visual impact of the modern addition. The original living room retains its shiplap pine paneling and woodwork. Minimalist, modern furniture with clean lines has been mixed with family heirloom pieces to add visual space to the small rooms. Outside Bauer took advantage of the canopy provided by pecan trees in the back yard and created a private space for family entertaining and relaxation. A tall stone wall was built to screen the rear of the house from the neighboring apartment buildings and a sleek pool was added, designed by Dick Lynch. Traditional elements and plants were used, but in a linear and modern way. In the front fluffy shrubs were removed in order to show the house to its full advantage, and visitors are welcomed by low borders of Japanese boxwood planted along newly created gravel paths.

*Marty Moulthrop*

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Herblin-Shoe-Meritt House  
712 W. 16th Street



J.C. Schmeil

William Herblin contracted with a local contractor fortuitously named John Allen Greathouse to build a home for his family at the corner of West Avenue and what was then Cherry Street (now 16th Street), for a price of \$2,500. Herblin was associated with Daniel H. Caswell in the cottonseed oil business and was superintendent of the Austin Oil Manufacturing Company. The Caswell component was conveniently only one block away.

The house was originally in the Eastlake/Queen Anne style with gable attic, front porch and veneer of locally-made Butler brick. It featured twelve-foot ceilings on the first floor and ten-foot ceilings on the second floor. The high ceilings, along with many transoms, were a boon to air circulation throughout the structure. In 1910 the house was acquired by banker Rufin D. Shofner and his wife Mary, and they undertook a major remodeling project. Reflecting the change in popular taste from Victorian to Neo-Classical, they added a porch on the east side and columns on both the south and east sides, creating a two-tiered wraparound gallery with Giant Order Ionic columns. Seven years later the Shofners sold the house to George and Mildred Clark, who removed the original window shutters and screening in the back porch. It was probably during this time that the brick walls were covered over with stucco and the pine floors painted black.

Mary and William Shoe bought the house in 1927 and removed the black paint from the Bastrop pine floors. The interior back stairway was converted into closets and a passageway was opened between the west and east rooms to provide better circulation. Radiant gas stoves were added to three fireplaces. In the 1950s, the original one-story frame carriage house and stable were demolished after being damaged in a windstorm. The Shoes' daughter, Dr. Lucy Shoe Meritt (1906-

2003), inherited the house after her mother's death in 1969 and with her husband Benjamin, occupied the house for thirty years more. Dr. Lucy Meritt was a professor of archaeology and Greek at Mt. Holyoke College for many years and a leading authority on classical archeology, particularly Greek, Etruscan and Roman architecture. Benjamin was a longtime professor of Greek epigraphy at several eastern universities. Both were later visiting scholars at UT. After they retired and moved into this house on a full-time basis, the Meritts enclosed the back porch as a permanent room and added many bookshelves throughout the house.


The current owners acquired the vacant house in 2008 and began a professional restoration. Scott Field of Galveston served as restoration architect for the whole project and Candace Volz was engaged as historic interiors consultant. A one-story rear addition was demolished and replaced with new two-story wing. Several windows were replaced and the old carport was remodeled to harmonize architecturally with the house. There is a new garage and apartment to the rear styled in the form of a carriage house. The original cook's shed still stands. The house was registered as a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 1987, and a City of Austin Landmark in 2006.

Marty Moulthrop

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St. David's Rectory  
1603 Pearl Street



J.C. Schmeil

James and Annie Watt McClendon built this two-story frame house in 1910 for use as a rental home on part of the property given to Annie by her father, W. T. Watt. The couple had built their own home across the street at 1606 Pearl Street in 1906 on another portion of the lots given to Annie. It is thought that the McClendons lived here while their house was being remodeled in 1911-1912. By 1914 they had sold the property to Walter Bremond and Dudley K. Woodward. Two years later ownership was conveyed to Bishop Kinsolving of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas for St. David's Church (organized in 1851).

St. David's owned the property and used it as a rectory from 1914 to 1975. Rev. Milton R. Worsham and four additional rectors lived here before Rev. and Mrs. Charles A. Sumners moved into the home as newlyweds in 1940. Sumners served as rector of St. David's Church for 36 years and was active in many community projects and instrumental in founding the Austin Ministerial Alliance, Austin Council of Churches, and St. Stephen's and St. Andrew's Schools. When Sumners retired in 1975, the members of St. David's deeded the home as a gift to the couple. After the death of her husband in 1977, Virginia Sumners lived in the house until she died in 2007.

The original architect is unknown, but may have been the Page brothers, who designed the McClendon home across the street. Originally the house probably faced south toward 16th Street, and the orientation was likely changed to face Pearl Street when Judge John Brady built his home at 1601 Pearl about 1915. The house features Colonial Revival, Craftsman and Tudor stylistic influences. Old photos show that originally there was a dormer over the south porch rather than a full room. This upper level library was probably added by St. David's Church for use by their rectors. Note the stacked rock chimney, as well as the decorative brackets supporting the slightly extended second story level.

The integrity of the exterior, as well as much of the interior, is largely intact. Original features include "tiger" door hinges and leaded glass-paned windows, as well as longleaf pine floors, tile bathroom floors and cast iron bathtubs. In 2007-2009 an extensive interior renovation was undertaken by the new owners, including converting the library above the porch to a walk-in closet. When the house was leveled with new piers and beams, several windows were too damaged to restore in place, but one was used to replace an existing kitchen window. All mechanical systems have been replaced and/or updated, as well as plumbing fixtures, kitchen cabinets and some woodwork. The handrails on the side and rear porches were rebuilt to replicate the originals. The house was registered as a City of Austin Landmark in 2009, and a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 2011.

Marty Moulthrop

# hsien

Pronounced: "shyuhn"

*noun:* One of a group of benevolent spirits promoting good in the world.

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the Heritage Society of Austin.*

Hornaday Design



McClendon-Price House  
1606 Pearl Street



J.C. Schmeil

This American Foursquare house was built in 1905. Distinguishing features include a hipped roof with wide overhang, symmetry, and a front entry. The one-story entrance porch is clearly subordinated to the main mass, and a verandah extending the length of the house. The land was purchased in 1905 by W. T. Watt of Waco and given to his daughter Annie Hale Watt and her new husband, James Wooten McClendon, to build their new home the following year. The lot originally spanned from 16th to 17th Streets and down to Shoal Creek. The couple spent their honeymoon in this home, and here they entertained many guests on the evening of the Texas Governor's inaugural in January 1907. In 1910-1912, the McClendons upgraded the interior engineering and in 1923 one of two second-story sleeping porches was added by enclosing the area over the southeast gallery. They also built a two-bay carriage house with living quarters above on the west side of the property.

McClendon received his bachelor's and law degrees from UT and served as president of the Travis County Bar Association from 1912-1913. He was appointed by Governor Hobby to the Commission of Appeals and later became a Justice of the State Supreme Court, where he remained until 1949. A friend and attorney to well-known sculptor Elisabet Ney, McClendon established a foundation to support the Elisabet Ney Texas Fine Arts Association. He also served on committees that helped build Gregory Gym, Memorial Stadium, Kirby Hall and University YMCA. The McClendons lived here until 1926.

Judge and Mrs. Thomas B. Greenwood, also a Supreme Court Justice, rented the home from 1926 to 1937, followed by Judge Charles G. Krueger from 1937 to

1942. Dr. Henry and Aldo Blaustone acquired the house in 1944 and remained until 1958. The house was bought in 1960 by Edwin B. and Betty Love Price and today is owned by their daughter, Patricia Monroe, a portrait artist who has filled the home with antiques. Price was a triple letter man at UT and served as head football coach in the early 1950s and later as a Dean. Betty Price was a reading and physical education teacher at Austin High. She wrote the lyrics to the school's fight song, "Loyal Forever" and founded the Red Jackets women's drill team.

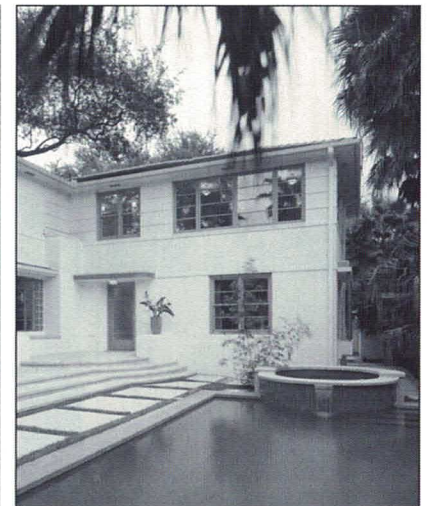
The house was designed with many eclectic architectural references by prominent local architect Charles H. Page, possibly with his brother, Louis Page. The enormous hipped roof and the front and side porches are especially Prairie Style influenced. Beaux-Arts and Mediterranean details are seen in the rusticated porch columns and a cartouche and garlands over the front dormer. The solid brick walls are a foot thick; space shuttle insulation has been added to the roof that breathes, and a (rare) basement kept water and products cool. The current owners have added a wrought iron perimeter fence and courtyard with gazebo and koi pond. The front door has been restored to its original style with crystal glass replicating other leaded windows on the transom and in the dining room. The house was registered as a City of Austin Landmark in 2000.

Marty Moulthrop



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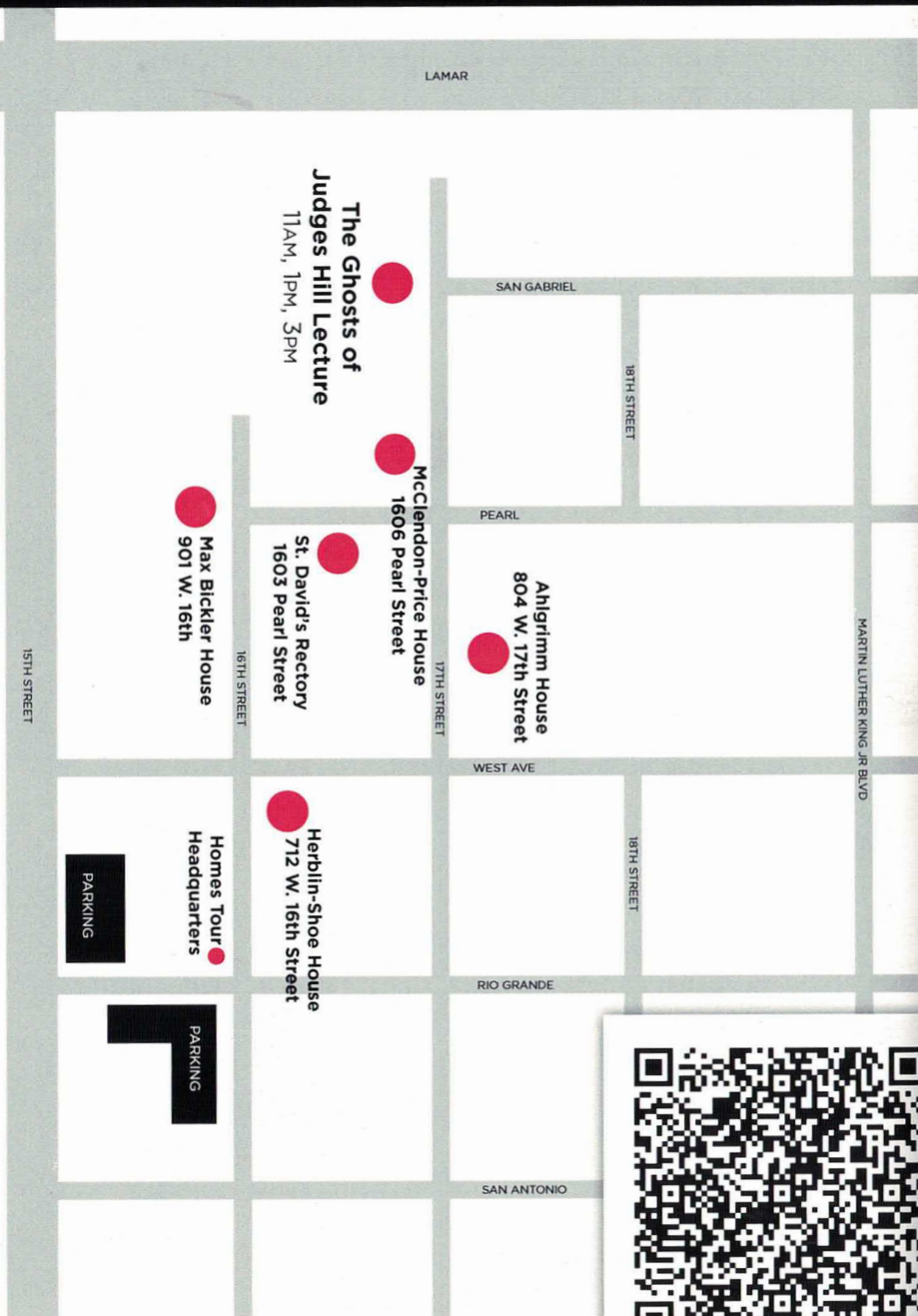
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