



25TH ANNUAL
PRESERVATION AUSTIN
**BOULDIN
CREEK**
HISTORIC HOMES TOUR
"Bouldin years"

April 29, 2017

10AM - 4PM

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Welcome

On behalf of our board, our volunteers, and our staff, Preservation Austin welcomes you to the 25th Annual Historic Homes Tour! This event is one of our most powerful educational programs, allowing the community to experience Austin's historic neighborhoods firsthand, and a testament to the vision and passion of homeowners who invest in Austin's past to steward it into the future. What better way to show that these homes aren't relics of a bygone era, but meaningful places that inform our lives today?

We've celebrated many incredible neighborhoods over the years but are particularly excited to be in Bouldin Creek for this important anniversary. The neighborhood's diverse heritage is reflected in eclectic streetscapes representing growth from the 1890s through the 1950s. The homes on today's tour were built and occupied by working and middle-class families. They were regular places for regular people, the legacy of generations who shaped South Austin's culture and character. Their contributions are as worthy of preservation as any others.

Bouldin's modesty is part of its beauty but also its peril; as the neighborhood's popularity continues to rise, smaller homes are falling to demolition at an unsettling rate. This community has a fierce sense of identity stemming from its unique history, and in 2015 commissioned an historic resource survey in the hopes of establishing a local historic district or districts to balance new development with preservation. We support such efforts to protect this iconic neighborhood's tangible connections to its past, and hope that after today's tour you'll feel the same way.

Preservation Austin

Preservation Austin has been our city's leading nonprofit voice for historic preservation since 1953. We celebrate our unique cultural and architectural heritage through programming such as our Preservation Merit Awards, sustainability workshops, educational children's events, and self-guided tours including *African American Austin* and *Iconic Music Venues*. Our organization advocates for improved preservation policies to make sure that, as Austin grows, it remains the city that we know and love. To become a member, visit preservationaustin.org.

TOUR INFORMATION

TOUR BASICS:

Five homes, and three buildings on the Texas School of the Deaf (TSD) campus, will be open between 10AM and 4PM. Speakers will be at the Willie Wells House from 11am to 12:30pm. Points of Interest highlighted in this program are not official stops on the tour and may not be open to the public, so please be mindful of owners' property and privacy.

TRANSPORTATION:

Bike racks, courtesy of Bike Austin, are available at all tour locations. Street parking is available, including along West Mary Street and Bouldin Avenue. Parking is also available at TSD. **Note: TSD's South Congress entrance gate closes promptly at 5pm.** If you leave your car here after that time you cannot retrieve it until the following week.

HOUSE RULES:

- No Smoking
- No Food or Drink
- No Strollers
- Do not touch any items in these homes
- Do not use bathrooms in these homes
- Do not leave children unattended

PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY:

Interior photography is not allowed. Exterior photography is welcome using @preservationaustin and #pahomestour!

SHOE POLICY:

We ask that you wear booties provided at each ticket-taking station while inside these homes. Please remove pointy high heels or bike shoes with metal clips altogether. Thank you!

These homes are not ADA accessible. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience.

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Bouldin Community



Construction of the Congress Avenue Bridge in 1910 changed the course of South Austin's development forever. For decades, this largely agricultural community had been home to a handful of plantations and the pastoral campus of the Texas School for the Deaf. The city's 1891 charter absorbed South Austin, but the area was still considered remote by those north of the Colorado River because of its limited access to downtown via a modest 1884 bridge. "Southsiders" knew their own potential, however, and in the 1890s began advocating for a larger bridge to support streetcars that would meaningfully connect them to the city.

Hundreds turned out to see their dreams realized with the inaugural run of the new South Congress streetcar line in 1911. "South Austin... has been straining at the leash, so to speak, and demanding the removal of the handicap to its growth for a long time. All it has asked has been a chance, and now that it has its magnificent bridge and its streetcar facilities, a phenomenal development may be looked for," beamed the *Austin Statesman*.

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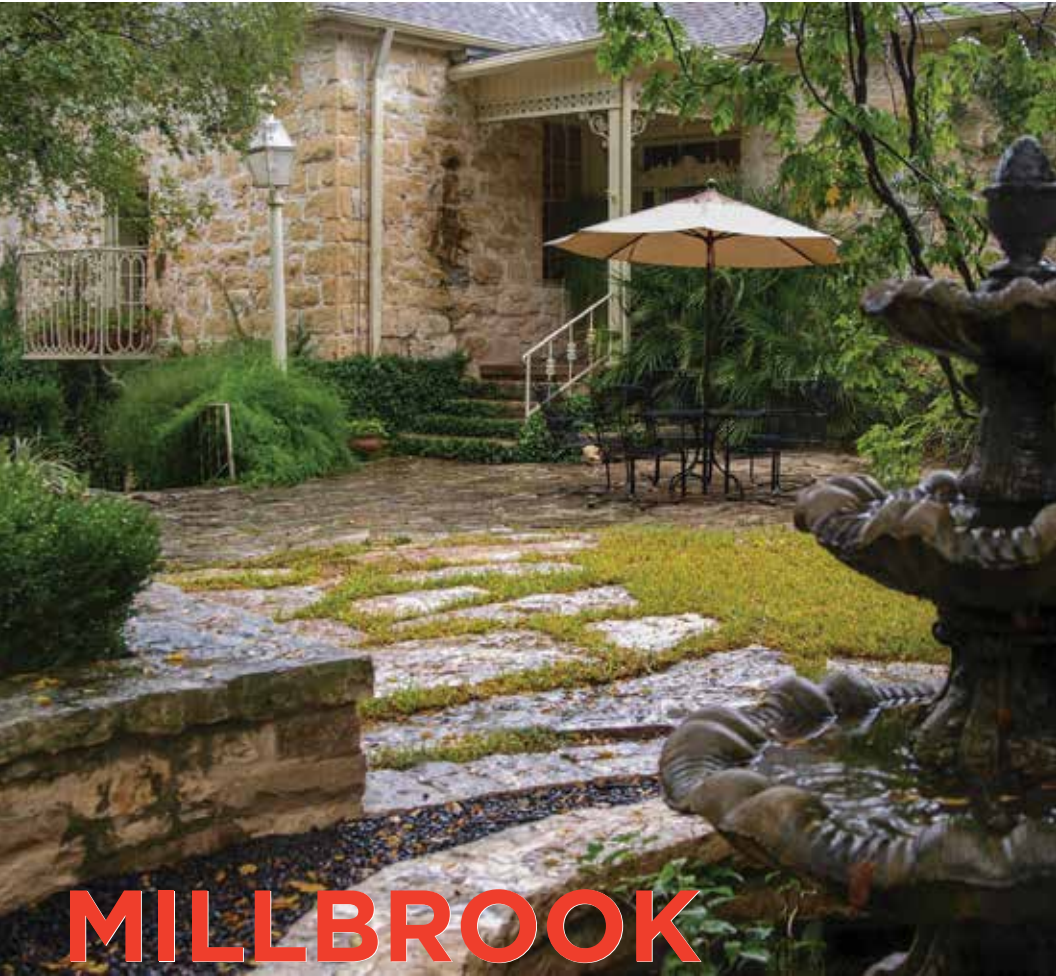
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New residential streets provided affordable homes for Austin's working and middle-classes. The area west of South Congress, in today's Bouldin Creek neighborhood, tended more towards modest cottages and bungalows. Property values there stayed accessible in part because of discriminatory real estate practices. A 1935 redlining map assessing investment "risk" throughout the city declared the entire area "Hazardous," while land east of South Congress was labeled "Still Desirable" and "Best." This may have been because of regular flooding, but also because of Bouldin's strong African American and Mexican American communities. (For perspective, East Austin, home to most of the city's minorities, was labeled "Hazardous" as well). The neighborhood thrived regardless. As Father Patrick Duffy, founder of St. Ignatius Church on West Johanna Street, said in 1939, "Give me Texas, and in Texas I would choose Austin, and in Austin I am a thorough stickler for South Austin. Here we have the cool breeze first, the hills, Zilker Park and, with the new bridge over the river, you will see South Austin come into its own."

South Congress, a country road connecting Austin to San Antonio since 1852, became a dense commercial corridor in the 1920s and 1930s. The street was designated part of the automobile-oriented Meridian Highway stretching from Canada to Mexico in 1911. Subsequent development catered not only to new neighbors, but to travelers, including numerous motor courts and gas stations. Austin's ambitious 1928 bond issue funded infrastructure improvements citywide, including paving and widening South Congress. The project removed the streetcar in favor of bus service, dedicating the avenue to four-wheel traffic to this day.

South First Street developed more slowly and was largely residential until after World War II. From the 1920s to the 1940s numerous homes, and several grocery stores, inhabited by an ethnically-diverse population lined the road. By 1950 it was a proper business district, with several service stations, cleaners, a drug store, café, motor garage, and blacksmith. Construction of the Drake Bridge over Town (now Lady Bird) Lake in 1957 connected South First to Guadalupe Street, solidifying its role as a north-south thoroughfare.

The Bouldin Creek neighborhood now stretches south from Lady Bird Lake to West Oltorf between South Congress and the Union Pacific Railroad. The creek itself is named for Colonel James E. and Molinda Bouldin who established their plantation here in the 1850s. Their children subdivided the Bouldin Addition in 1894, leading to limited development prior to 1910. East-west streets take their names from the neighboring Swisher Addition which straddled South Congress. Colonel John Milton Swisher subdivided the land in 1877. He named streets for family members, including Annie, James, Gibson, Mary, Monroe, Elizabeth, and, of course, Milton. The Bouldin Creek Neighborhood Association, founded in 1971, is one of the oldest such groups in Austin.



MILLBROOK

1803 Evergreen Avenue
1895-1940s

Rancher W. C. Roy (1851-1916) purchased this land in 1894. Construction on his limestone gristmill was well underway when Roy realized the adjacent Bouldin Creek tributary was actually a wet-weather stream too inconsistent to provide power. He converted the building into a two-story home for his family, with a double gallery along the south façade and the main entrance facing Evergreen Avenue (originally part of the Fredericksburg Road, now Lamar Boulevard).

When Ernest (1902-1987) and Maureen (1900-1946) Hardin purchased the property in 1939, it was crumbling and cows roamed freely throughout. Both were highly-educated artists and professionals who taught drama at Southwestern University before Ernest joined the Speech Department at the University of Texas. They rebuilt two- and three-foot-thick limestone walls, arranging the 3,000 square-foot-home into eight rooms with an entrance hall facing the courtyard. They embellished existing buildings with salvaged architectural remnants, including 19th century ironwork and stone flooring, along with elaborate wooden doors, trim, paneling, and railings. Lush tropical plants soon poured over ancient-looking stone walls and pathways along the creek to complete the picturesque composition. The name “Millbrook” comes from a weathervane the Hardins installed on the carriage house. Ernest lived here till his death and was known for lavish parties. Outbuildings, including the “Barn” with studio apartments and a garage, remain from this era though his aviaries and greenhouse are gone.

Millbrook’s current owner has preserved this architectural treasure for nearly twenty-five years. Landscaping improvements to enhance the site plan’s cohesiveness are among the only alterations. One project relocated a Hardin-era fountain to the center of the courtyard and enclosed it with a stone sitting wall. Another added a stone wall along Evergreen Avenue and a central drive. Millbrook became one of Austin’s first Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks in 1967, and one of its first City Landmarks in 1977. The site was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005.

Photograph by Melanie Martinez.

From One Original to Another



The Bouldin Modern, 1951

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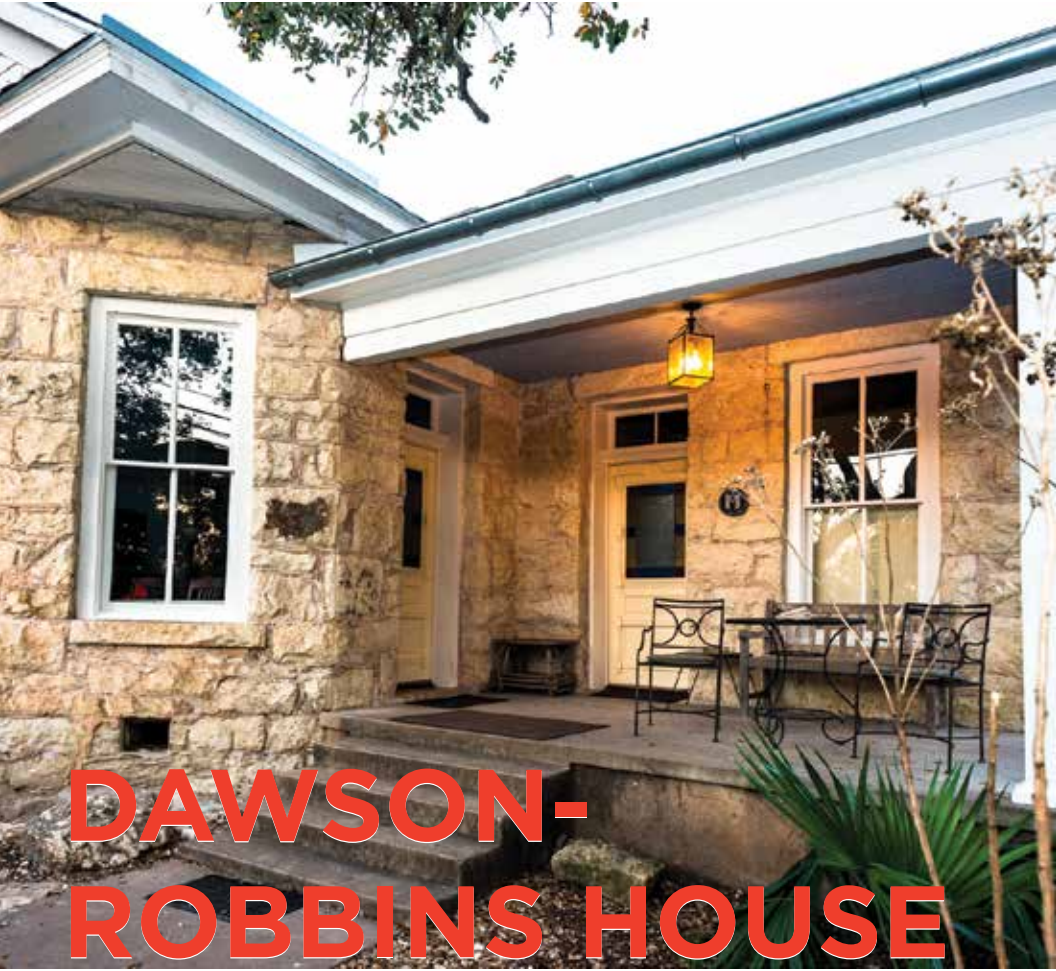
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In the end, our society will
be defined not only by
what we create, but by
what we refuse to destroy.

-John Sawhill, former President
& CEO of The Nature Conservancy



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DAWSON- ROBBINS HOUSE

**1912 South Fifth Street
1899**

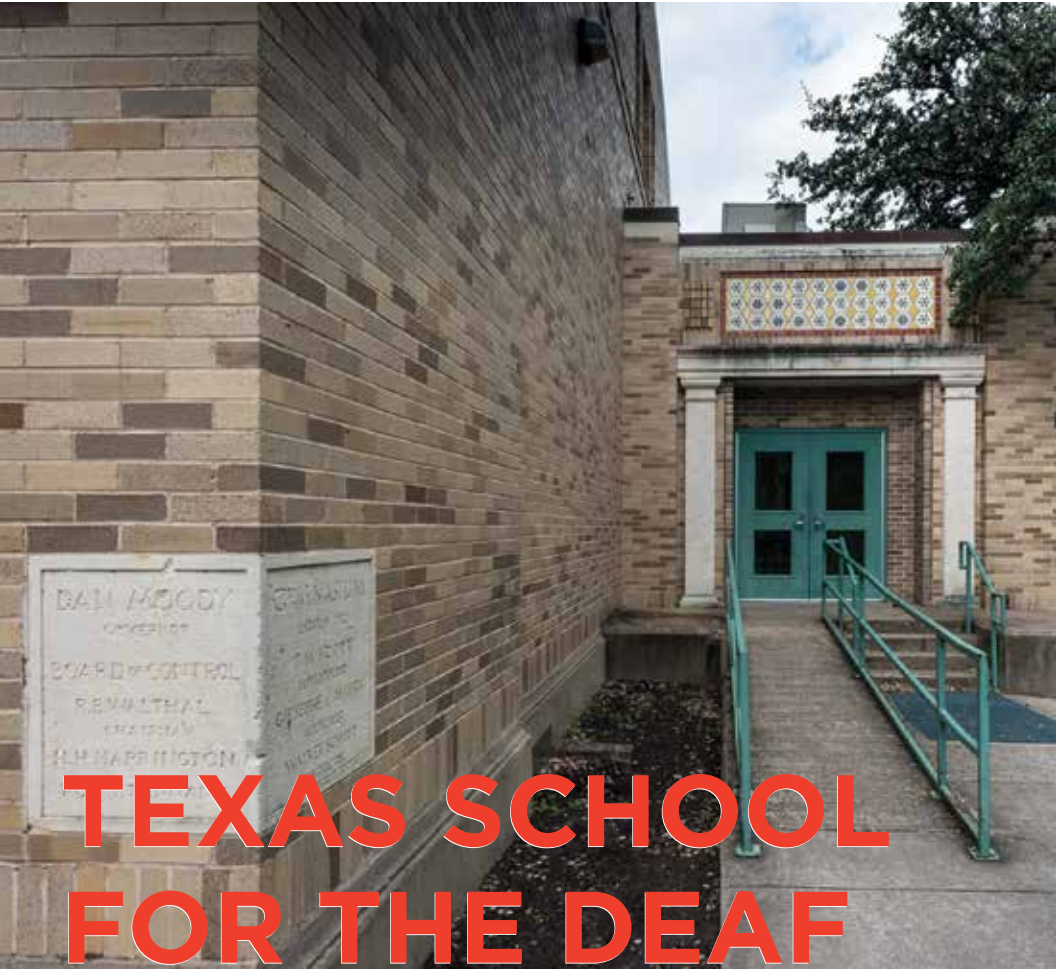
The Dawson siblings, whose parents settled here in 1851, were among South Austin's earliest developers. Nicholas A. Dawson (1864-1939) studied engineering and law, and served in the state legislature, before turning to real estate. He was instrumental in building the South Congress streetcar line and even helmed its first run in 1911. Mollie Dawson (1853-1933) was a highly successful educator and the first female principal in Austin's public schools. They joined sister Nannie in developing distinctive middle-class houses at the turn of the century, characterized by rough-cut limestone, thick lintels and sills, steeply-pitched roofs, and angled projecting bays with narrow windows.

The Dawson sisters sold this South Fifth Street home to the Robbins family in 1899. The four-room house, replete with 18-inch walls and 11-foot ceilings, may have faced West Johanna before its porch was enclosed for a kitchen in the 1920s. The Robbins owned the property until 1961 but rented it out after 1930. Tenants included the Sheffields, whose dog Sandy became "the hero, guardian angel, best all-around boy and top scholar of the third grade" at Becker Elementary. He received his own report card and school photo and, according to the *Austin Statesman*, excelled at naptime.

The home's current owners purchased it in 1998 and have strived to preserve its historic appearance, including 2/2 historic wooden windows and fish-scale shingles. Subtle changes include an oversized lintel between the master bedroom and dining room, hewn from wood salvaged from Galveston's recently-renovated 1927 Hotel Jean LaFitte, and sustainable landscaping with a rainwater-collecting wildlife pool. A 2004 project restored the front and back porches and replaced the kitchen foundation. Stonework repointing was completed in 2016.

The Dawson-Robbins House became a City of Austin Landmark in 2002. Bouldin's other remaining Dawson stone houses are at 1200 South Fifth, 2014 South Third, 1001 West Mary (1894, RTHL), and 1105 South Lamar (1900, RTHL). Mollie Dawson Elementary, Dawson Road, and the Dawson Neighborhood are further evidence of the family's South Austin legacy.

Photograph by Joan Brook Photography.



TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

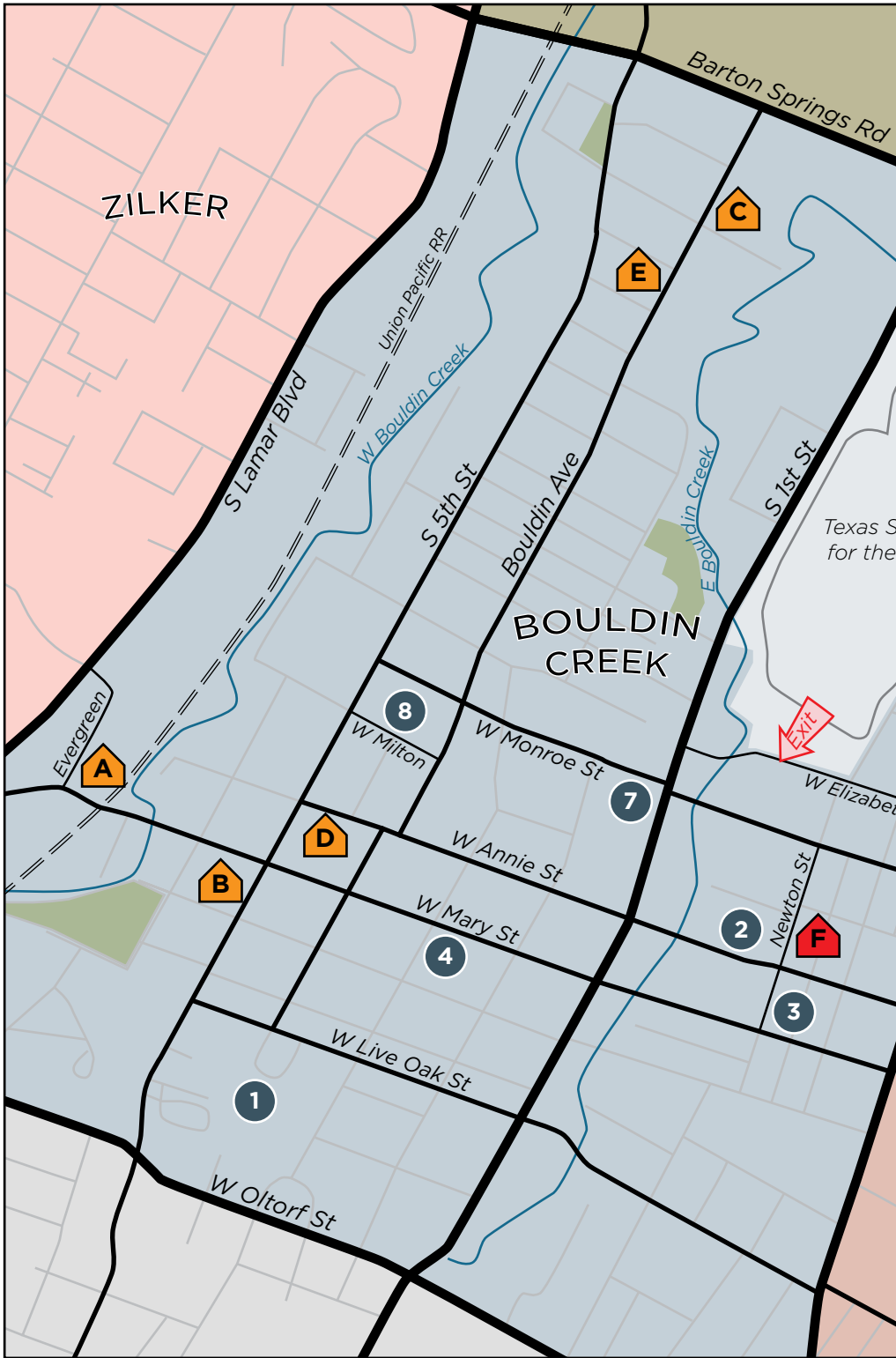
1102 South Congress Avenue
1865

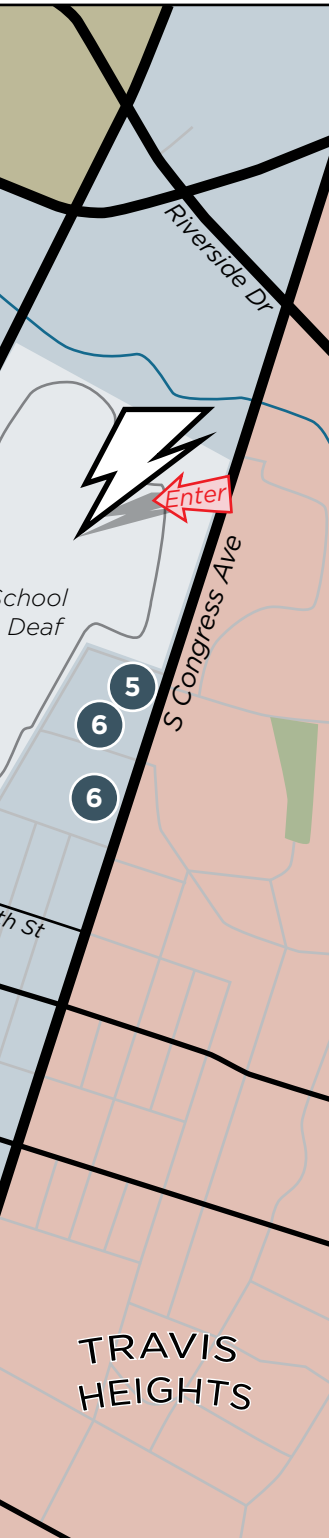
The state legislature established the Texas School for the Deaf (TSD) in 1856, making it South Austin's oldest institution. The nearly 70-acre campus developed slowly at first because of inadequate funding, but by the early 1900s boasted substantial administration, residential, and classroom buildings. The Main Building (1877-1892), known as "Old Mule Ears," was the most iconic, with widely-visible double towers facing north towards the Capitol. Unfortunately, it was demolished along with most of the school's early buildings in 1956 to make way for new facilities designed by Fehr & Granger. Some important pre-war buildings did survive, thankfully, and will be open for the tour:

Designed by Giesecke & Harris, the **Clinger Gymnasium** was completed in 1928 for \$36,000. It was just one of the firm's prominent 1920s commissions which included Norwood Tower and Austin High School. The buff brick building, deemed the "finest gymnasium Austin has ever laid" by the *Austin Statesman*, has a vaulted roof, maple floors, and delicate tile work above its main entrance. The gym was dedicated to beloved TSD student and resident educator Cora Clinger (1890-1979) in 1953. Unfortunately its two-lane basement bowling alley, planned for restoration, is currently off-limits!

Giesecke & Harris designed the **Heritage Center** as well. Completed as a laundry facility in 1925, it now houses a trove of historic images and artifacts documenting TSD's 160-year history. Note the remnants of an 1891 iron fence, which once ran along South Congress Avenue, and two ornamental light posts from the demolished 1915 Primary Building, which stand on the building's south side. The Tudor Revival **Superintendent's Cottage**, now offices for TSD's educational outreach center, was built in 1935. A small cottage next door housed the campus storekeeper. Niggli & Gustavson added four bays to the home's east façade in 1955 during Fehr & Granger's campus overhaul, and their drawings for that project are on display.

Photograph by Joan Brook Photography.





25TH ANNUAL
 PRESERVATION AUSTIN
BOULDIN CREEK
 HISTORIC HOMES TOUR
"Bouldin years"



Texas School for the Deaf, 1102 S Congress
Main ticket station, three featured buildings



Featured Homes *tour in any order

- A. Millbrook, 1803 Evergreen
 - B. Dawson-Robbins House, 1912 S 5th
 - C. Dyer-McNiell House, 611 Bouldin
 - D. Collier House, 907 W Annie
 - E. Blackshear House, 806 Bouldin
 - F. Willie Wells House, 1705 Newton
- Featured 11am-12:30pm only*



Points of Interest

- 1. Green Pastures, 811 W Live Oak
- 2. Brackenridge Community
- 3. Stanley House, 1811 Newton
- 4. San Jose Catholic Church, 715 W Mary
- 5. Eck Dry Goods, 1202 S Congress
- 6. Motels (San Jose & Austin), S Congress
- 7. Moonlight Tower, S 1st & W Monroe
- 8. Becker Elementary, 906 W Milton

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DYER-MCNIEL HOUSE

**611 Bouldin Avenue
1928**

Mail carrier Milas Dyer (1895-1969) built this Craftsman bungalow, one of Bouldin Avenue's first homes, for \$4,800 in 1928. The new road had opened a few years earlier but took years to develop, stalled first by infighting between Nicholas and Mollie Dawson, and later by the city's sluggish efforts to provide sewers instead of cesspools. Dyer, a native Austinite, World War I veteran, and card-carrying member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, lived here with his family until 1954. That year he swapped houses with neighbors Fred and Oleta McNeil, who remained here through the 1980s. Fred A. McNeil (1910-1985) was a longtime, highly-respected chief engineer for the State Parks Board, later the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The bungalow's current owner moved here in the fall of 2011, hiring Architect Stuart Sampley, AIA and builder JGB Custom Homes for a renovation which balanced historic features with modern spaces. The project restored the home's historic 1/1 wooden windows and added period-appropriate 3/1 and 2/1 wooden window screens along the main façade. Extensive woodwork, including built-in bookcases, paneled knee walls, and battered Craftsman-style columns, remains the focal point of the living room. The entrance hallway now serves as gallery space for part of the homeowner's extensive art collection.

Removing a dining room wall allowed for an expanded kitchen connected by French doors to a spacious deck, and a small sitting area made way for an expanded master suite. The attic became a 600-square-foot loft accessed by a spiral staircase, increasing the home's usable space to 2,400 square feet. The loft features extensive built-in bookshelves and a claw foot tub from a downstairs bathroom. Sustainable upgrades include a new standing-seam metal roof and backyard water collection system. The project included renovation of the home's 1949 garage as well; shiplap from the house was repurposed for the garage workroom, and part of its original metal roof now serves as siding in the car area.

Photograph by Joan Brook Photography.

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COLLIER HOUSE

**907 West Annie Street
1935**

American builders have relied on architectural pattern books since the Colonial Era. These widely-distributed publications featured sample plans, elevations, and details. They popularized design movements from the early 1800s' Greek Revival style to Craftsman bungalows a century later. The latter proliferated during the 1910s and 1920s when companies such as Sears, Roebuck & Co. sold not only plans but factory-cut building components. These were shipped and then assembled on-site, making homeownership more affordable for average families.

Calvin J. Collier (1882-1968) and wife Bathsheba (1892-1987) built this small bungalow for just \$1,200 in 1935. The Colliers had farmed land in southwest Travis County for years before moving to Austin during the Great Depression. Calvin is alternately listed as elevator operator, laborer, and janitor at the Travis County Courthouse. The home, likely purchased from a catalogue, is a classic example of the working- and middle-class homes that defined Bouldin during this time.

The current owner moved in in 2014 and embarked on an addition and remodel project with Elizabeth Baird Architecture & Design and JGB Custom Homes. The interior now features exposed shiplap ceilings and walls, along with colorful tile work and built-in bookcases. The newly-built rear master suite takes design cues from the original home, but is set back by a narrow, low-profile connector to distinguish the old from the new. This connector includes the master bath and opens onto an outdoor shower. The light-filled master bedroom has a vaulted ceiling with French doors overlooking the back yard. A partition wall distinguishes the sleeping and sitting areas while preserving the space's openness. The project added just 220 square feet in total.

Design Build Adventure designed the back yard's bluegrass-inspired "pickin' porch" and steel-framed chicken coop for a previous owner. The coop, featured on the 2012 Funky Chicken Coop Tour, consists of two rooms (one for roosting, one for sunning) connected by a central "chicken chute." The back of the lot has a tiny art studio.

Photograph by Andrea Calo.



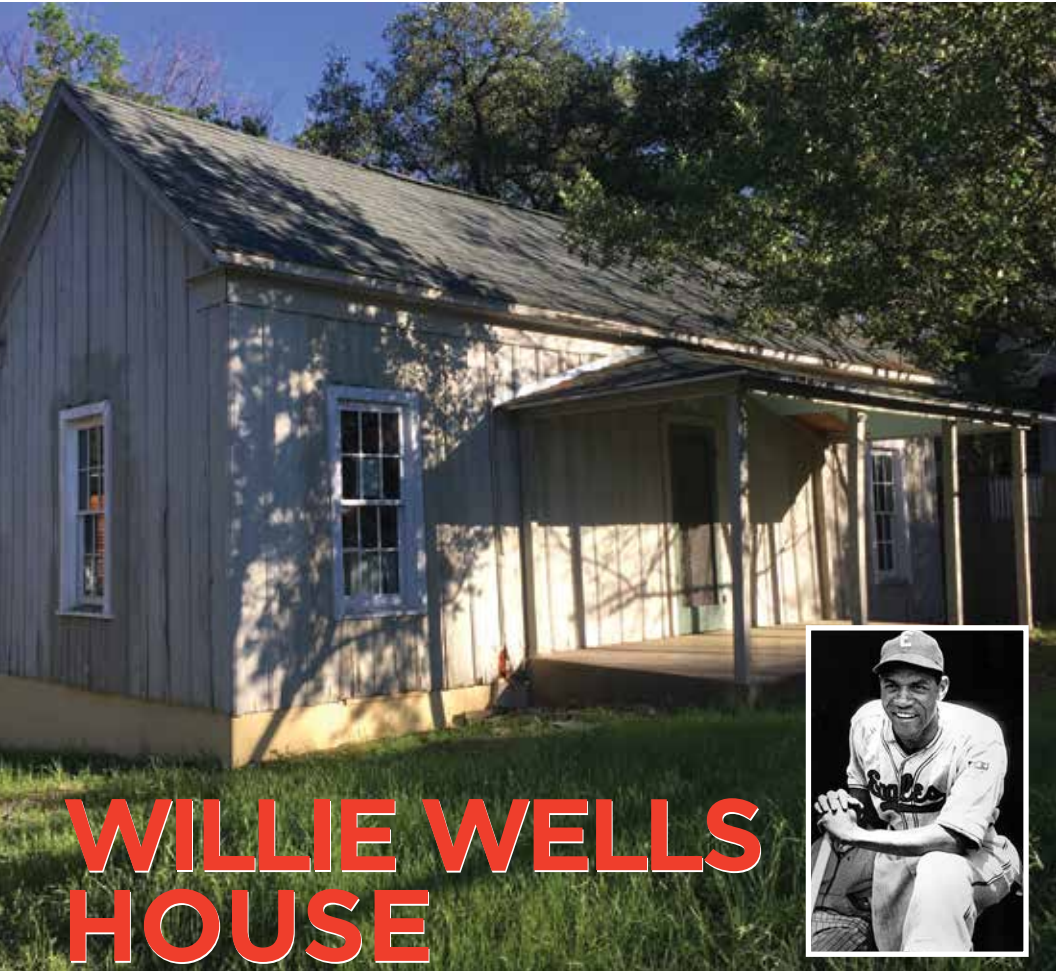
806 Bouldin Avenue
1951

The Blackshear House joins just a handful of other homes, including the Bohn House (1938) and 3805 Red River (1947), that draw on the Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, and International Style movements here in Austin. Its white stucco exterior, steel-framed windows, and flat roof embody the most stylish features of the time.

Wells Simeon Blackshear (1887-1972) had moved from Waco to South Austin in 1940. A minister in the Primitive Baptist Church, he studied bookkeeping at Baylor University and sustained his nine-member family through the Great Depression by farming. Here he worked as a contractor doing residential additions and repairs, drawing on experience building homes in Arkansas (1921) and Waco (1929). Blackshear purchased this lot at Bouldin Avenue and Ebony Street in 1949. At age 62, he set about building a new family home by hand with son Harold, a student at the University of Texas, with limited hired help. According to Harold, his father had an innate sense of scale and proportion, envisioning buildings in his “mind’s eye” and working without drawings of any kind.

The house’s plan evolved during construction. 22-foot pine timbers salvaged from a 19th century cotton gin were used for the building’s balloon-framed structure. Old-growth trees determined its setbacks and roofline. Harold built closets and casework, and other sons installed plumbing and oak floors. The second story became an apartment, accessed by a second-hand fire escape. They completed the original 1,930-square-foot house in 1951, and excavated another 560-square-foot apartment underneath it in 1955. Harold went on to become a successful architect in the United States Air Force. Wells Blackshear lived here until his 1972 death, and wife Hallie moved out in the early 1980s.

Jay Billig, the current owner, moved in in 2014. He designed and contracted renovations including a modern kitchen, enlarged bathrooms, and custom cabinetry. The home’s historic features have been lovingly preserved and maintained.



WILLIE WELLS HOUSE

1705 Newton Street
1910

Hall of Famer Willie Wells was one of the greatest shortstops in the history of baseball, with an intense approach that earned him the nickname “El Diablo.” Born in Austin in 1905, Wells grew up in this home at the heart of Bouldin’s African American community. He attended Brackenridge Elementary up the road, and East Austin’s Anderson High School where he played both baseball and football. Wells played for Austin’s Black Senators before joining the National Negro League’s St. Louis Stars in 1924. Along with the celebrated Cool Papa Bell, Wells helped win three pennants from 1928 to 1931 and established the club as one of the all-time greats.

He played briefly in Chicago and Newark, and served two stints as player-manager in Mexico, but was still barred from Major League Baseball because of his race. As Wells said in 1944, “One of the main reasons I came back to Mexico is because I’ve found freedom and democracy here, something I never found in the United States. I was branded a Negro in the States and had to act accordingly. They wouldn’t even give me a chance in the big leagues because I was a Negro, yet they accepted every other nationality under the sun.”

Wells trained Jackie Robinson before the younger player’s groundbreaking 1947 debut with the Brooklyn Dodgers. He soon returned to his childhood home in Austin and lived here until his death in 1989. That he never saw his own 1997 induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame is a travesty. Wells’ house is now a City of Austin Landmark. Preservation Austin facilitated a preservation covenant which protects it, and a piece of his legacy, in perpetuity. Wells is further memorialized in a recently-completed mural panel at East Austin’s historic Downs Field, where he first began his legendary career.

From 11am to 12:30pm architectural historian Terri Myers and restoration architect John Volz will be on site to discuss Willie Wells’ legacy, as well as the current rehabilitation of his historic home.

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Green Pastures

811 West Live Oak Street, 1895

Judge Henry Faulk, a prominent socialist who advocated against corruption and racial discrimination, purchased this Victorian estate with his wife Mattie in 1916. Daughter Mary Faulk Koock opened Green Pastures Restaurant on the home's first story in 1946 and became one of Texas' premiere hostesses. Friends with Lyndon B. and Lady Bird Johnson, she hosted international dignitaries but was known for welcoming all patrons regardless of race or religion. Koock wrote the hallmark *Texas Cookbook: From Barbeque to Banquet* in 1965, weaving anecdotes with regional and multicultural recipes. In her words, it portrayed Texas hospitality beyond the "oil gusher debutante parties you read so much about." Brother John Henry Faulk, namesake of downtown's Faulk Library, was a renowned folklorist, humorist, and author. He was blacklisted from radio during the McCarthy Era and became a First Amendment rights activist after winning a landmark libel suit in 1962. Green Pastures reopened this year after an exquisite renovation by Clayton & Little Architects. The new Mattie's restaurant, housed in this local, state, and national landmark, is named for the family matriarch. Its famous peacocks-in-residence remain.

Brackenridge Community

Freedmen's settlements established by newly-freed slaves grew on the outskirts of Austin following the Civil War. From Clarksville and Wheatville in the west, to Gregory Town and Masontown in the east, they soon became knitted into the city's expanding urban fabric. The Bouldins either sold or gave land to their former slaves after Emancipation, giving rise to a thriving African American community south of the Texas School for the Deaf between South Congress and South First.



The South Austin School, now demolished, opened around 1900 in a house at 319 West Elizabeth just across from the TSD entrance. A reluctant Austin School Board, complaining of the cost of maintaining the remote school for African American children, rented the property before John Thomas Brackenridge, a Confederate veteran and First National Bank of Austin president, donated it in 1905. From then on the school, and often the neighborhood, was known as Brackenridge. The district refused to install new playground equipment in 1951 but added portable classrooms a decade later. Brackenridge School closed in 1965 as part of Austin's desegregation efforts.

St. Annie AME Church at Newton and West Annie was founded after 1900. The congregation worshipped in a house, and then a tent, before building its current church with distinctive corner tower in 1915. St. Annie's present-day plans to sell the historic property have put its future in question. Goodwill Baptist moved to Newton and West Milton streets in 1925. The church was badly burned, and replaced with this Gothic Revival structure, in 1954.

Friendly Will Baptist Church formed in 1924 and completed its gabled wooden church with steeple at 414 West Johanna the next year. John Henry Faulk met the church's pastor Reverend R. R. Reese while studying folklore under J. Frank Dobie at the University of Texas. Reese's sermons, known for their incredible delivery, power, and poetry, became part of Faulk's "Ten Negro Sermons" master's thesis, and his 1941 recordings of Reese are archived at the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center. Friendly Will Baptist now worships at St. John Tabernacle while building a new church on Burleson Road.



Stanley House
1811 Newton Street, 1895

African American stonemason and merchant Robert S. Stanley (1863-1941) built this home for his family in 1895. The front-gabled building's unique vernacular design features a 2-foot-thick limestone foundation and rusticated limestone quoins. Its stature reflects Stanley's prominent standing in the Brackenridge community, where he served as one of the first trustees of St. Annie

AME Church. In 1927 he built the stone, one-story storefront around the corner at 200 West Mary (now the Herb Bar) which he and his second wife Jennie operated as a grocery store until a few years before his death. The Stanley family owned the home until 1998. It was designated a City of Austin Landmark in 1993 and a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark in 2001. Preservation Austin holds a protective preservation covenant on the property.

San Jose Catholic Church
715 West Mary Street, 1940

Mexican American Catholics formed San Jose parish in 1939, and completed their tiny church on West Mary the following year. Designed by Arthur Fehr, FAIA, the Mission Revival structure echoed the rustic sensibilities of his recently-completed buildings at Bastrop State Park. Parishioners helped construct the



four-room church using field stone and cedar from a member's ranch west of Barton Springs. Repurposed streetcar poles from Congress Avenue became roof beams, and railroad ties became lintels. An adjoining rectory and outdoor platform for fiestas, carnivals, and other community events followed. San Jose was the first parish to serve Mexican Americans in South Austin, and only the second ethnic parish of its kind citywide (Our Lady of Guadalupe, established downtown in 1907, was the first). The parish outgrew the complex in 1954 and moved to West Oltorf and South First, where it remains today. The 1940 church was home to a number of different faiths for decades. The present owners acquired the property in 2010; subsequent castle-like additions now obscure the original building.

Eck Dry Goods

1202 South Congress Avenue, 1889

German-born Leonard Eck (1844-1925) operated a pawn shop at Congress Avenue and Brazos Street before relocating to South Austin in the 1880s. According to his family, he was close with Ben Thompson before the renowned gunfighter and gambler's death. Eck built this two-story country store in 1889, selling clothing, groceries, feed, glassware, and more. It was among the earliest buildings on South Congress, and one of few to survive the road's transition into a modern thoroughfare. Upon his death Eck's daughter Jennie and her husband E. C. Stewart inherited this entire block between Nellie and James streets. By the mid-1930s it was densely populated with businesses such as a drug store, bakery, and photography studio. The streetscape bore little resemblance to the South Congress Avenue of just twenty years before.



Motor Courts

Lawyer George F. Zimmerman opened the “ultra-modern” San Jose Court at 1316 South Congress in 1936. Designed by Edwin C. Kreisle and R. Max Brooks, FAIA, the Spanish Eclectic motor hotel included two-story offices flanked by one-story rooms and garages to the north and south. The finely-appointed complex included colorful furnishings and landscaping, and was billed as “the last word in architectural beauty and efficient arrangement.” Zimmerman was later sentenced, at age 69, to two years in federal prison for defrauding investors. Decades later his dream motel had fallen on extremely hard times, known more for seediness than refinement. Liz Lambert purchased the property in 1995 and transformed it into the stunning Hotel San Jose with Lake/Flato Architects. This was the hotelier's first project, home to the free South By San Jose festival during SXSW since 1998.

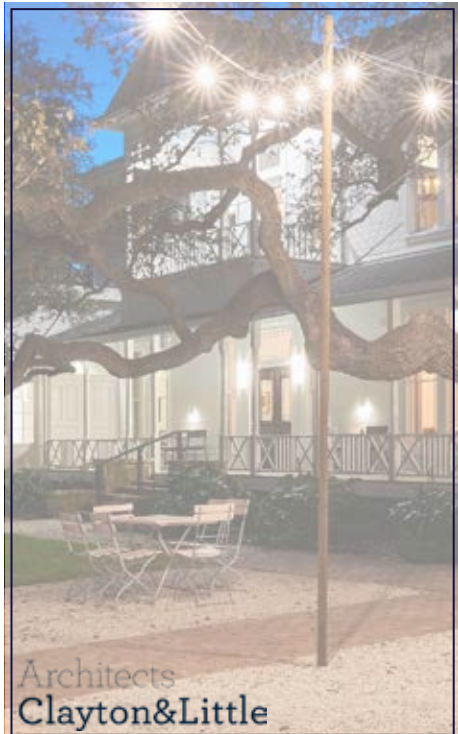


E. C. and Jennie Eck Stewart built the Austin Motel at 1220 South Congress, near her father's old store, in 1938. The \$12,000 Pueblo Revival style “tourist camp” included twenty-four units and nineteen garages, along with its iconic (and notorious) sign. The Stewarts revamped the motel with a \$200,000 renovation by Niggli & Gustavson in 1954. The project added stylish midcentury facades along with a new café, main office, swimming pool, and twenty new units. Dottie Dean inherited the property from her parents in 1993. She preserved the motel's postwar features but redecorated its 41 rooms in different themes ranging from whimsical to flamboyant. The Deans sold the landmark in 2016, sending ripples of fear throughout town. The Austin Motel reopened during SXSW 2017 under Liz Lambert's management; “So Close Yet So Far Out” will watch over us for the foreseeable future.



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Becker Elementary
906 West Milton Street, 1936

For years Fulmore School, opened in the 1880s, was South Austin's only public school for white students. Families west of South Congress Avenue began advocating for their own school starting in 1919, arguing that 50-60 children had to walk five miles or more to attend classes. This number only increased as the area's population grew, and the Austin School Board finally opened Becker Elementary on donated land at West Milton Street and Bouldin Avenue in 1936. The one-story Art Deco school designed by Giesecke & Harris stood on the former site of the Bouldin family mansion. Its construction was funded by the same PWA grant as East Austin's Blackshear Elementary for African Americans and Zavala Elementary for Mexican Americans. A two-story addition facing West Milton opened in 1939 to accommodate 350 children, and Bouldin's explosive growth required another four additions by 1984. Now a Two-Way Dual Language school, Becker celebrated its 80th anniversary last year.

Moonlight Tower
South First and West Monroe Streets, 1895

Moonlight Towers are as essential to Austin's identity as bats and live music. The Fort Wayne Electric Company manufactured these triangular, 165-foot-tall structures during the 1880s. Austin purchased thirty-one towers from Detroit in 1894 and installed them throughout town. Six carbon arc lamps, accessed by a central hand-operated elevator, shed light across whole neighborhoods. Awed residents wondered how their crops and chickens would be affected (both were fine). Bouldin's Moonlight Tower is one of only two that are original to South Austin, along with one in Travis Heights. Austin's seventeen remaining towers are the only ones intact, and in operation, nationwide. The popular belief that they were a public safety response to the Servant Girl Annihilator murders remains unsubstantiated. These beloved structures have been designated historic at every level of government, and a three-year citywide Moonlight Tower maintenance project is now underway.



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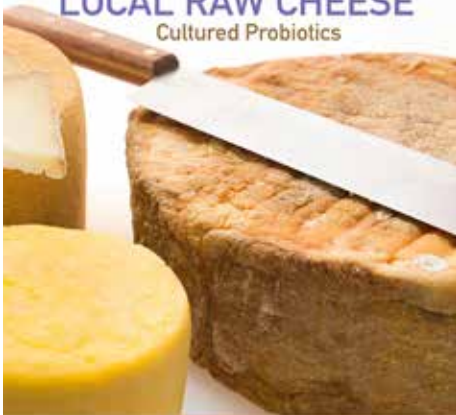
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Map by Jon Hagar, Volunteer-By-Marriage

Preservation Austin extends our sincerest thanks to this year's homeowners for sharing their beautiful homes with our community. Their dedication to preserving Austin's heritage is incredible, and we're honored to have them participate in this event.

We are indebted to the Texas School for the Deaf and Texas School for the Deaf Foundation for opening their historic campus for this year's tour. Preservation Austin is so grateful for their staff's generosity of time, resources, and enthusiasm throughout the planning process.

This organization is only as strong as its volunteers. Thank you to the 120+ docents and ticket takers, along with our House Captains and amazing Homes Tour Committee, for making our 25th Annual Historic Homes Tour a success.

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