

# ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

**CASE NUMBER:** C14H-2009-0023

**HLC DATE:**

July 27, 2009

**PC DATE:**

September 22, 2009

**APPLICANTS:** Scott Marks and Lucille Wood, owners

**HISTORIC NAME:** Webster House

**WATERSHED:** Town Lake

**ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE:** 706 Oakland Avenue

**ZONING FROM:** MF-4-NP to MF-4-H-NP

**SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from multi-family residence, neighborhood plan (MF-4-NP) district to multi-family residence, neighborhood plan – Historic Landmark (MF-4-H-NP) combining district zoning.

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION:** Recommended the proposed zoning change from multi-family residence, neighborhood plan (MF-4-NP) district to multi-family residence, neighborhood plan – Historic Landmark (MF-4-H-NP) combining district zoning. Vote: 4-0 (Rosato absent; Myers recused).

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** Recommended the proposed zoning change from multi-family residence, neighborhood plan (MF-4-NP) district to multi-family residence, neighborhood plan – Historic Landmark (MF-4-H-NP) combining district zoning. Vote: 9-0.

**DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:** The house is listed in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984) but without a priority for research.

**CITY COUNCIL DATE:** October 1, 2009

**ACTION:**

**ORDINANCE READINGS:** 1<sup>ST</sup> 2<sup>ND</sup> 3<sup>RD</sup>

**ORDINANCE NUMBER:**

**CASE MANAGER:** Steve Sadowsky

**PHONE:** 974-6454

**NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION:** Old West Austin Neighborhood Association

**BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

The ca. 1917 house is an eclectic Craftsman-style house associated with the Webster sisters, prominent teachers of deaf students.

**Architecture:**

One-story rectangular-plan front-gabled frame house with a two-story front-gabled frame "pop-up" section in the center; single and paired 1:1 windows with 6:1 wood screens.

**Historical Associations:**

The house was built around 1917 as a one-story house with a front porch facing Oakland Avenue. The footprint for the one-story house appears on the 1922 Sanborn map. By 1935, the two-story section had been added to the house and the front porch had been enclosed, giving the house its current appearance. The first owners of the property were Jacob and Louisa Wattinger, who apparently had the house as a rental unit. The Wattingers sold the house in 1919 to Jessie Webster, who had followed her sister Lettie to Austin the year before. Lettie Webster had moved to Austin in 1903 to teach at the Texas School for the Deaf. She first boarded with noted deaf teacher William H. Davis on Newning Avenue; she was listed as a boarder in the home of Will Blocker in Fairview Park in the 1910 U.S. Census. The 1910 census also lists Lettie Webster living in Sherman, Texas at the home of her mother with her three sisters, Jessie, Etta, and Christine. The Sherman census record shows that Lettie was teaching at the "asylum", Jessie was a school teacher, Etta was a clerk at a dry goods store, and Christine was a student. Jessie and Etta Webster moved to Austin in 1918; their mother Emma passed away in Travis County that year. The 1920 U.S. Census shows that Lettie (Lillie in the report) had married William M. Davis and was living at 1601 Brackenridge Street in South Austin. Etta (Ella in the census report) and what appears to be Jessie (although the entry looks like "Leslie") were living at 203 Milton Street as roomers; Etta is listed as teaching at the "state school" and Jessie is listed as a saleslady in a dry goods store, but the occupational entries for the two sisters are likely reversed. In 1930, Lettie was still living on Brackenridge; after her husband died, she moved to 801 Oakland Avenue until her death in January, 1967. Jessie, the sister who purchased this house in December, 1919, is listed in the 1930 U.S. Census as living here with her sister Etta, her sister Christine, and Christine's husband and three children. Jessie is listed as a teacher at the state school for the deaf, Etta is listed as clerk in a store; Christine's husband William Martin worked as an auto body repairman, and Christine had no occupation listed. Jessie Webster moved into this house in 1920, as the census report shows her living on Milton Street, but the city directory for 1920 shows her and the rest of the family living on Oakland.

Jessie Webster taught at the School for the Deaf during an era of great changes in the field of deaf education. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the curriculum at deaf schools throughout the country abandoned sign language in favor of an "oralist" approach which focused on lip reading. More hearing teachers were hired by deaf schools and sign language was virtually banned in deaf education. Students who did not succeed with the oralist approach to deaf education were sent to the "manual" department where they would be taught to spell with their fingers. Jessie Webster and her sisters all taught in the manual department at the Texas School for the Deaf. Jessie Webster had one of the longest tenures in teaching at the Texas School for the Deaf when she died in 1949. The house remained in the Webster family until 1982, when Christine's daughter Betty Janknegt sold it.

**PARCEL NO.:** 01080307040000

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** The north 60 feet of Lot 1, Block D, Outlot 3, Division Z, Terrace Park

**ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT:** \$9,390 (owner-occupied); city portion: \$2,000 (capped).

**APPRAISED VALUE:** \$636,090

**PRESENT USE:** Single-family residence.

**CONDITION:** Excellent

**PRESENT OWNERS:**

Scott A. Marks and Lucille D. Wood  
706 Oakland Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78703

**DATE BUILT:** ca. 1917

**ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS:** The house was leveled and remodeled in 1983. A breezeway and master bathroom are believed to have been added in 2000.

**ORIGINAL OWNER(S):** Jacob and Louisa Wattinger (1917)

**OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS:** None.










**Webster House**  
**706 Oakland Avenue**



 **SUBJECT TRACT**  
 **ZONING BOUNDARY**  
 **PENDING CASE**

**HISTORIC ZONING**

**ZONING CASE#: C14H-2009-0023**  
**ADDRESS: 708 OAKLAND AVE**  
**SUBJECT AREA: 0.000 ACRES**  
**GRID: H23**  
**MANAGER: S. SADOWSKY**



This map has been produced by G.I.S. Services for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.

OK page  
SS  
6-22-09

## A. APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC ZONING

### PROJECT INFORMATION:

DEPARTMENTAL USE ONLY	
APPLICATION DATE: <u>6/29/09</u>	FILE NUMBER(S) <u>C4H-2009-0023</u>
TENTATIVE HLC DATE: _____	
TENTATIVE PC or ZAP DATE: _____	
TENTATIVE CC DATE: _____	
CASE MANAGER <u>Shaw</u>	CITY INITIATED: YES / NO
APPLICATION ACCEPTED BY: <u>Shaw</u>	ROLLBACK: YES/NO

### BASIC PROJECT DATA:

1. OWNER'S NAME:	<u>Scott Marks Lucille Wood</u>
2. PROJECT NAME:	<u>The Webster House</u>
3. PROJECT STREET ADDRESS (or Range):	<u>706 Oakland Avenue</u>
ZIP <u>98103</u>	COUNTY: <u>Franklin</u>
IF PROJECT ADDRESS CANNOT BE DEFINED ABOVE:	
LOCATED _____ FRONTAGE FEET ALONG THE <u>N. S. E. W. (CIRCLE ONE)</u> SIDE OF	
(ROAD NAME PROPERTY FRONTS ONTO), WHICH IS	
APPROXIMATELY _____	DISTANCE FROM ITS
INTERSECTION WITH _____	CROSS STREET.

### AREA TO BE REZONED:

4. ACRES <u>.1000</u>	(OR)	SQ. FT. _____			
5. ZONING AND LAND USE INFORMATION:					
EXISTING ZONING	EXISTING USE	TRACT# (IF MORE THAN 1)	ACRES / SQ. FT.	PROPOSED USE	PROPOSED ZONING
<u>MF4NP</u>			<u>.1000</u>	<u>---</u>	<u>Historic</u>
<u>---</u>					
<u>---</u>					

### RELATED CURRENT CASES:

6. ACTIVE ZONING CASE?	(YES/NO)	FILE NUMBER:
7. RESTRICTIVE COVENANT?	(YES/NO)	FILE NUMBER:
8. SUBDIVISION?	(YES/NO)	FILE NUMBER:
9. SITE PLAN?	(YES/NO)	FILE NUMBER:

Revised June 30, 2002

Washburn Town Lake H23  
Urban



PROPERTY DESCRIPTION (SUBDIVISION REFERENCE OR METES AND BOUNDS):

10a. SUBDIVISION REFERENCE: Name: Terrace Park  
Block(s) D Lot(s) 1 Outlot(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Plat Book: Volume 2 Page North 60°  
Number: 242  
10b. METES AND BOUNDS (Attach two copies of certified field notes if subdivision reference is not available or zoning includes partial lots)

DEED REFERENCE CONVEYING PROPERTY TO PRESENT OWNER AND TAX PARCEL I.D.:

11. VOLUME: \_\_\_\_\_ PAGE: \_\_\_\_\_ TAX PARCEL I.D. NO. \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER PROVISIONS:

↑ Please see attached, property only recently purchased.  
(ex K.)  
12. IS PROPERTY IN A ZONING COMBINING DISTRICT / OVERLAY ZONE? YES/NO  
TYPE OF COMBINING DIST/OVERLAY ZONE (NCCD, NP, etc) Old West Austin NP  
13. LOCATED IN A LOCAL OR NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES/NO West Line  
14. IS A TIA REQUIRED? YES/NO (NOT REQUIRED IF BASE ZONING IS NOT CHANGING)  
TRIPS PER DAY: \_\_\_\_\_  
TRAFFIC SERIAL ZONE(S): \_\_\_\_\_

OWNERSHIP TYPE:

15. SOLE ☒ Community Property ☐ PARTNERSHIP ☐ CORPORATION ☐ TRUST  
If ownership is other than sole or community property, list individuals/partners/principals below or attach separate sheet.

OWNER INFORMATION:

16. OWNER CONTACT INFORMATION  
SIGNATURE: Lucille Wood NAME: Lucille Wood  
FIRM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE NUMBER: 626 2060  
STREET ADDRESS: 726 Oakland Avenue  
CITY: Austin STATE: TX ZIP CODE: 78703  
EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

AGENT INFORMATION (IF APPLICABLE):

17. AGENT CONTACT INFORMATION  
SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRM NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_  
CONTACT PERSON: \_\_\_\_\_ TELEPHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

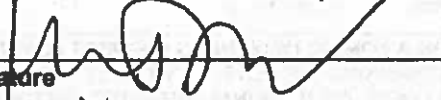
DEPARTMENTAL USE ONLY: \_\_\_\_\_

## D. SUBMITTAL VERIFICATION AND INSPECTION AUTHORIZATION

### SUBMITTAL VERIFICATION

My signature attests to the fact that the attached application package is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that proper City staff review of this application is dependent upon the accuracy of the information provided and that any inaccurate or inadequate information provided by me/my firm/etc., may delay the proper review of this application.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NAME BELOW SIGNATURE AND  
INDICATE FIRM REPRESENTED, IF APPLICABLE.

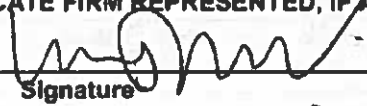
Signature  Date 6/25/09  
Name (Typed or Printed) Lucille Wood

Firm (If applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

### INSPECTION AUTHORIZATION

As owner or authorized agent, my signature authorizes staff to visit and inspect the property for which this application is being submitted.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT NAME BELOW SIGNATURE AND  
INDICATE FIRM REPRESENTED, IF APPLICABLE.

*Seth A. Marino*  
*Seth A. Marino*  
Signature  Date 6/25/09  
Name (Typed or Printed) Lucille D. Wood

Firm (If applicable) \_\_\_\_\_



## E. ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

concerning  
Subdivision Plat Notes, Deed Restrictions,  
Restrictive Covenants  
and / or  
Zoning Conditional Overlays

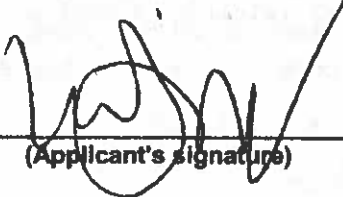
I, Luille Wood have checked for subdivision plat notes, deed restrictions,  
(Print name of applicant)

restrictive covenants and/or zoning conditional overlays prohibiting certain uses and/or requiring certain development restrictions i.e. height, access, screening etc. on this property, located at

706 Oakland Avenue  
(Address or Legal Description)  
Aust TX 78703

If a conflict should result with the request I am submitting to the City of Austin due to subdivision plat notes, deed restrictions, restrictive covenants and/or zoning conditional overlays it will be my responsibility to resolve it. I also acknowledge that I understand the implications of use and/or development restrictions that are a result of a subdivision plat notes, deed restrictions, restrictive covenants and/or zoning conditional overlays.

I understand that if requested, I must provide copies of any and all subdivision plat notes, deed restrictions, restrictive covenants and/or zoning conditional overlay information which may apply to this property.

  
(Applicant's signature)

6/25/09  
(Date)

TAX CERTIFICATE  
Nelda Wells Spears  
Travis County Tax Assessor-Collector  
P.O. Box 1748  
Austin, Texas 78767  
(512) 854-9473

NO 1041236

ACCOUNT NUMBER: 01-0803-0704-0000

PROPERTY OWNER:

PATTON ROBERT C & SUSAN K  
706 OAKLAND AVE  
AUSTIN, TX 78703-5118

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:

N 60 FT LOT 1 BLK D OLT 3 DIV Z TE  
RRACE PARK

ACRES 0.000 MIN% .00000 TYPE

SITUS INFORMATION: 706 OAKLAND AVE

This is to certify that after a careful check of tax records of this office, the following taxes, delinquent taxes, penalties and interests are due on the described property of the following tax unit(s):

YEAR	ENTITY	TOTAL
2008	AUSTIN ISD	*ALL PAID*
	CITY OF AUSTIN (TRAV)	*ALL PAID*
	TRAVIS COUNTY	*ALL PAID*
	TRAVIS COUNTY HEALTHCARE DISTRICT	*ALL PAID*
	ACC (TRAVIS)	*ALL PAID*

TOTAL SEQUENCE 0

\*ALL PAID\*

TOTAL TAX:  
UNPAID FEES:  
INTEREST ON FEES:  
COMMISSION:  
TOTAL DUE ==>

\*ALL PAID\*  
\* NONE \*  
\* NONE \*  
\* NONE \*  
\*ALL PAID\*

TAXES PAID FOR YEAR 2008 \$9,902.18

ALL TAXES PAID IN FULL PRIOR TO AND INCLUDING THE YEAR 2008 EXCEPT FOR UNPAID YEARS LISTED ABOVE.

The above described property may be subject to special valuation based on its use, and additional rollback taxes may become due. (Section 23.55, State Property Tax Code). Pursuant to Section 31.08 of the State Property Tax Code, there is a fee of \$10.00 for all Tax Certificates.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL OF OFFICE ON THIS DATE OF 06/24/2009

Fee Paid: \$10.00

Nelda Wells Spears  
Tax Assessor-Collector

By:

*[Signature]*

## **F1: Historical Documentation – Deed Chronology**

**Jacob and Louisa Wattinger to Jessie Webster,  
The North 60 Degrees of Lot 1, Block D, Terrace Park  
December 1, 1919  
Vol. 316, p. 36**

**Lettie W. Davis (widow) and Christine W. Martin, and W.H.  
Martin to Etta Webster  
The North 60 Degrees of Lot 1, Block D, Terrace Park  
April 15, 1950  
Vol. 1042, pp. 40-41**

**Christine Martin to Betty Janknegt  
The North 60 Degrees of Lot 1, Block D, Terrace Park  
August 31, 1982  
Vol. 7485, pp. 91-92**

**Betty Janknegt to Richard and Kathryn Petty  
The North 60 Degrees of Lot 1, Block D, Terrace Park  
October 1, 1982  
Vol. 7879, pp. 467-469**

**Bob Allen, Substitute Trustee to RepublicBank Austin  
The North 60 Degrees of Lot 1, Block D, Terrace Park  
February 3, 1987  
Vol. 10087, pp. 445-450**

**First RepublicBank Austin to Leon Mac Hruska  
The North 60 Degrees of Lot 1, Block D, Terrace Park  
December 22, 1987  
Vol. 10542, pp. 0676-677**

**Leon Mac Hruska and Gail Cocke to Susan and Robert Patton**

**The North 60 Degrees of Lot 1, Block D, Terrace Park**  
**June 10, 1987**  
**Vol. 12954, pp. 1978-1979**

**Susan and Robert Patton to Lucille Wood and Scott Marks**  
**The North 60 Degrees of Lot 1, Block D, Terrace Park**  
**April 10, 2009**  
**WD 2009062751**



## **F2: Directory Chronology**

**1899**

**Webster sisters (Lettie, Christine, Etta, Jessie) do not appear in City Directory Miscellaneous Directory as teachers at TSD.**

**1903-04**

**Miss Libbie Webster first appears as h. 604 W 4<sup>th</sup> Street. (This may be Lettie, who used several different names beginning with L.)**

**1905**

**Miss Lillie Webster appears as "teacher" in Deaf and Dumb Institute, City Directory Miscellaneous Directory  
Mills Lettie Webster listed as resident of Fairview Park, teacher at Deaf and Dumb Institute.**

**1906-07**

**Miss Lettie Webster listed as teacher in the manual department of the Deaf and Dumb Institute and as resident of Farview Park.**

**1909-1910**

**Lettie Webster, teacher manual department at school for the deaf, listed as boarding with W.H. Davis. William M. Davis listed as teacher in manual department who resided at the school.**

**1910-1911**

**Lettie Webster listed as teacher at school for the deaf who resided at the school**

**1912-13**

**Mrs. Lettie Davis listed as teacher at school for the deaf  
Davis, William M. listed as resident of Fairview Park**

**1916**

**706 Oakland not listed separately in directory.**

**1918**

**706 Oakland has a listed resident of Breed DE; Sanborn maps reveal this structure would later become known as 710 Oakland.**

**1920**

**706 Oakland lists Quint, who did not own property in deed chain. Christine and Jessie Webster both listed as teachers at the school for the deaf and residents of 203 S. Milton.**

**1922**

**(o) Jessie Webster listed owner of 706 Oakland, teacher at the school for the deaf**

**(r) William H. Martin (assume Christine's residence, women not separately listed and her marriage likely took place between 1920 and 1922) mechanic Woodward Mfg Co.**

**(r) Etta Webster, saleslady TH Williams and Co.**

**1942**

**William H Martin Junior first listed as resident.**

**1944-45**

**William H. Junior listed as resident, listed as USA (WWII service?)**

**1947**

**William H. Junior still resident, becomes a multilith. operator at State Board of Control.**

**Martin Sr. first listed as owner of the property.**

**1949**

**(o) W.H. Martin (Christine)**

**(r) Jessie Webster**

**(r) Etta Webster**

**William H. Junior has moved out and now owns house on Pressler**

**1949**

**Jessie Webster dies and obituary published; Thornberry, Pharr, Stelle attend her funeral**

**1952**

**(o) William H. Martin (Christine)**

**(r) W.H. Martin Jr. (Judy) business machine operator Southern Union Gas**

**(r) Etta Webster**

**(r) Cornelius J. Janknegt (Betty) mechanic Jackson Brothers service station**

**1953**

**(o) William H. Martin (Christine W.)**

**(o) Etta Webster**

**(r) Cornelius J. Janknegt (Betty)**

**(WH Martin Jr. no longer in residence)**

**1954**

**(o) Etta Webster**

**(r) William H. Martin (Christine W.)**

**(r) Cornelius J. Janknegt (Betty)**

**1955**

**Janknegt and wife not listed.**

**1957**

**Janknegt and wife listed again as residents.**

**1958**

**Janknegt and wife again not listed.**

**1959**

**(o) William H. Martin (Christine W.)**

**(h) Etta Webster**

**1966**

**Lettie Davis last listed at 801 Oakland; not listed as residing in Austin in 1968 (suspect death)**

**1970**

**Etta Webster moves to residence on Red River**

**1972**

**(o) Christine, widow of William H. Martin (who dies sometime in 1971-72)**

**1982**

**Property deeded by Christine Martin to Betty Janknegt. From this point on, please see Deed Chronology above.**



***Sisters of the Deaf:  
The Webster House and Early Deaf Education in Texas***

***Early Years at Oklahoma Asylum***

In Grayson, Texas in the late nineteenth century lived a family of sisters whose history would come to be linked to that of deaf Texans. The daughter of German immigrants and born in Missouri, Emma Webster birthed Letetia (known as Lettie) in 1880. Younger sisters Jessie, Etta, and Christine were born in 1883, 1885, and 1896 respectively.<sup>1</sup>

Big sister Lettie taught deaf students at the nearby "asylum" in Sulfur, Oklahoma.<sup>2</sup> Next in line, Jessie also became a teacher first in the public schools in Texas and later of deaf students in Oklahoma.<sup>3</sup> Christine, about a decade later, would follow her sisters into the field of deaf education.<sup>4</sup>

***A First Sister's Journey***

Lettie Webster first journeyed to Austin in 1903, at the age of 23.<sup>5</sup> In 1905 she became a resident of Fairview Park (now Travis Heights) in the historic landmark W.H. Davis home in South Austin. She became a hearing teacher at the "Deaf and Dumb Institute" along with noted deaf colleagues and teachers W.H. Davis<sup>6</sup> and Emily Lewis.<sup>7</sup> She taught alongside W.M. Thornberry, the deaf father of Homer Thornberry, who later served as a U.S. Congressman and Fifth Circuit judge. First employed in the "manual department," Lettie later taught "intermediate and advanced" classes.

Miss Webster was one of a handful of hearing teachers employed in 1905 at the "Deaf and Dumb Institute."<sup>8</sup> She later married a William M. Davis, also a hearing

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census, 1910. The father of the Webster Sisters is thought to have been Spencer Webster, although his name is illegible in the census records. U.S. Census, 1900. Mr. Webster was the son of English immigrants and was no longer living with the family as of 1910.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census, 1910. The "asylum" at which she taught is strongly believed to be the facility in Sulfur, OK, that was later to become the Oklahoma School for the Deaf.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census, 1910. Obituary of Jessie Webster.

<sup>4</sup> Austin City Directories.

<sup>5</sup> Austin City Directory, 1903-4 (listing a Miss Libbie Webster). Letetia was known as well as Lettie (Austin City Directories) and Lillie (U.S. Census).

<sup>6</sup> William H. Davis had recently graduated from school for the deaf in Austin and gone on to receive his degree from Gallaudet University. He had come back to teach at the deaf school in Austin and boarded Ms. Webster at a site where many of the teachers at the school for the deaf once resided. Listed as a "housekeeper" in this house was also Luella Stephens, another early graduate of Gallaudet and the woman who was to become his wife. Gallaudet University Online Alumni Cards.

<sup>7</sup> The first female pupil of TSD, Ms. Lewis had returned to teach.

<sup>8</sup> City directories.

teacher at the school for the deaf.<sup>9</sup> After her husband's death, she moved across the street from the Webster House, into 801 Oakland, where she lived until 1966.

#### *A House Built*

The decline of their mother in 1918<sup>10</sup> may have precipitated the sisters' decision to join Lettie in Austin. In 1920 sisters Christine and Jessie roomed together at 203 South Milton; both were by then teachers at the Texas School for the Deaf. Sister Christine married William Martin, an Austin car mechanic.<sup>11</sup>

Single and likely with money inherited after the recent death of her mother, Jessie Webster bought the property on which the Webster House is now built in 1920 from a Jacob Wattinger.<sup>12</sup> The existing structure on the property had been built in 1916 by Mr. Wattinger and was likely incorporated into a bigger structure built by Miss Webster.<sup>13</sup>

#### *An Outstanding Teacher of Long Tenure*

Miss Webster would go on to teach at the school for the deaf for "one of the longest [tenures] in the history of the deaf school."<sup>14</sup> She taught first in the "manual department" and later in the primary school until her death in 1949.<sup>15</sup> She was upon her death described as an "outstanding teacher" who was "mourned by friends and former students all over Texas."<sup>16</sup> At her funeral were Congressman Homer Thornberry, neighbor Burnet Pharr (composer of the UT fight song and owner of the now-historical landmark home across the street from the Webster House), and Superintendent Roy M. Stelle, among others. She was buried in Oakwood Cemetery in East Austin.

In 1920 the Webster home was occupied by Jessie Webster, sister Etta (a saleslady at TH Williams and Co.), sister Christine (teacher of the deaf who also would remain in the house until 1982), and her husband William Martin. Three children born to the Martins would also come to reside within its walls.<sup>17</sup> Across the street at the

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<sup>9</sup> U.S. Census 1920, 1930.

<sup>10</sup> Emma Webster is listed as having died in 1918 in Travis County. It is not known for certain, but is likely, that the girls brought their ailing mother with them in seeking their new life in Austin. Texas Death Records.

<sup>11</sup> The union took place between the move to Austin and 1922, at which time she is no longer listed in the Directories under Webster.

<sup>12</sup> Deeds, Exhibit K.

<sup>13</sup> Please see discussion of architecture below.

<sup>14</sup> Ex. E.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> The couple had Virginia in 1922, William (Billie) in 1934, and Betty Jean in 1937. Billie later fought in WWII. Virginia may have become a student at UT. Betty Jean worked for the State Health Department as a verifying punch operator in the 1940s. These siblings disappear in the Austin directories in 1949.

historic landmark Blondie Pharr House would be home to Gladys Pharr, who also taught at TSD.<sup>18</sup>

***Deaf Education During the Sisters Webster Tenure***

The history of the migration of young hearing professionals into deaf education in the early twentieth century is a vital and complicated part of the history of deaf cultural, political and educational history.

Today the Americans with Disabilities Act specifically provides for the interpretation of English into American Sign Language (ASL) where necessary for effective communication between deaf persons and employees of governmental entities.<sup>19</sup> The language is absolutely central to the identity of the deaf persons who use it; proficiency in ASL is now required of teachers at TSD.

In the period in which the Webster Sisters and their hearing colleagues were recruited, however, ASL was not the language used predominantly in deaf education. Laurent Clerc and Thomas Gallaudet had introduced ASL to the educational establishment when they set up the American School for the Deaf in Hartford in 1817. While there had been no organized, state-sponsored deaf education in Texas at the time of the establishment of ASD,<sup>20</sup> Lettie's colleagues at the school, several of whom were deaf themselves, were well-acquainted with the methods introduced to the U.S. by Gallaudet and Clerc.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, however, just before Lettie's arrival, another movement in deaf education was gaining hold in the U.S. Based on English and German methods, this "oralist" movement held that ASL was not a true language, and its use by deaf children was severely punished.<sup>21</sup> The first International Conference on Deaf Education upheld the oralist position, and at the second such conference in 1880 in Milan, it was resolved that manual communication (by sign) was harmful to the speech, lipreading, language, and thinking of deaf persons.<sup>22</sup>

In response, deaf teachers in the US were fired, hearing teachers heavily recruited, and the use of signs was strictly prohibited in many schools.<sup>23</sup> Whereas nearly half

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<sup>18</sup> The small street spans just the block between Oakland and Highland north of Sixth Street and south of Ninth.

<sup>19</sup> For more information about the ADA, please see . Complex state and federal education laws (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Texas Education Code) also speak to the education of deaf children in signed languages.

<sup>20</sup> The Texas Deaf and Dumb School was opened in 1857. A list of early pupils, including Emily Lewis, who would one day teach alongside Lettie Webster, appears at Ex. L. In those days, children with cognitive disability, deemed "idiotic," were sent home. Exhibit L.

<sup>21</sup> McCay Vernon and Jean F. Andrews, *The Psychology of Deafness*, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

of all American teachers of deaf students had been deaf themselves, by the turn of the century only a handful were.<sup>24</sup> Strong emphasis was placed on the simulation of speech and articulation among young deaf students. According to one source, there had been in 1867 twenty-six institutions of deaf education, each of which taught through ASL; in 1907 there were 139 such schools, but none allowed the language.<sup>25</sup>

It was in this climate that the Webster sisters and their hearing colleagues were first swept into the schools for the deaf, first in Oklahoma and later in Texas.<sup>26</sup> The oralist movement took hold just as the minimal access to education enjoyed by deaf Texans was dramatically expanded. Hiring of staff and the growth of the population and capacity at TSD took place rapidly during the years the Webster sisters taught. Vocational components were added in quick succession during their tenure at TSD and came to include use of the press, mechanics, carpentry, shoemaking, dressmaking, and art.<sup>27</sup> By 1935, the midpoint of the Webster combined tenure, the school had become the second largest such school in the world.<sup>28</sup>

Early materials reveal that the educational approach that the sisters were required to employ at TSD as late as 1935 still strictly forbade the use of signs in the classroom. A handbook from the period proclaimed: "*We do not teach signs, nor do we teach by means of signs. It is the policy of this School to teach English and to make it the medium of communication.*"<sup>29</sup>

The school employed a two-tiered program in which the children who failed the mainstream oralist instruction and did not develop speech or reading skills, after a

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<sup>24</sup> Harlan Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence*, page 116.

<sup>25</sup> Harlan Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence*, page 113.

<sup>26</sup> The oral department at TSD was established in 1893. Ex. I, article appearing February 15, 1976.

<sup>27</sup> These vocational subjects had been brought in during the late 1890s. Ex. H, Handbook, page 13. By 1923, house painting, baking, type-writing and bookkeeping (later dropped), cooking, millinery, and cabinet-making were added to trades taught. *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> Ex. H, Handbook, page 14.

<sup>29</sup> Ex. H, Handbook, page 16 (emphasis in the original). For more information about the specific educational methods employed during this period by the Webster sisters, please see page 16 (discussion of speechreading) and Edith Fitzgerald, "Straight Language for the Deaf." *Id.* at 17-19. Students were required to use a "key" that was to assist them in placing grammatical words in English order until the "key" would be abandoned.<sup>29</sup> English word order often contradicts the order of appearance of signs and concepts in ASL. For a basic and practical introduction into the difference in the grammars of these two languages, please see <http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/grammar.htm>.



period of several years, were sent to the "manual department."<sup>30</sup> The sisters worked in this department, where finger spelling (minimal use of the hands to spell words in the alphabet, but not the language of signs) was permitted. Strong emphasis was placed on the attempted production of speech-sounds as a substitute for the use of signs as a means of expression, and signed language at TSD was at that time permitted only occasionally, in chapel and after school.<sup>31</sup>

The Webster sisters thus witnessed and were participants in a period of significant change<sup>32</sup> in deaf education, in which the means and language of instruction (ASL or English) was globally debated and soon thereafter the subject of intense political struggle. During this period, subtle and steady shifts in the way deaf persons were viewed and viewed themselves were taking place: early during their tenure, the school went from being known as the "Texas Deaf and Dumb Asylum" to the "Deaf and Dumb Institute."<sup>33</sup> By the mid-thirties, the teachers at TSD publicized the fact that they had come to resent the "thoughtless references" to their pupils as "dummies."<sup>34</sup> By the time the last Webster sister retired from the school, it had

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<sup>30</sup> The decision to direct all children first to the oral department was put in place in 1895 by Superintendent A. T. Rose. By 1898, roughly one third of students were in this department and the remaining two thirds in the manual department. Ex. I, article appearing February 15, 1976.

<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, even during the height of oralism nationally, the teachers at TSD were apparently required to have a certificate in sign language that was obtained by attending summer classes at TSD. Ex. I, article appearing February 15, 1976. Similar summer classes are available today for parents and others. It is very likely that each of the three Webster sisters took this test, although the level of sign proficiency required was quite likely minimal. In 1915, soon after Lettie arrived and just before Christine and Jessie were hired, the University of Texas first offered training courses in deaf education, and fourteen of the TSD teachers enrolled. Ex. I, article appearing May 1, 1976.

<sup>32</sup> The impact of the oralist pronouncement in Milan has been called "devastating" and "the single most important cause of the limited educational achievements of modern deaf men and women." Harlan Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence*, page 113. Lane reported in 1992 that 35 percent of American deaf leaving high school could not read at a second-grade level. *Id.* at 113. However, not all scholars, educators, or deaf persons agree with this thinking. Oralism continues to be the primary means of education for some deaf children, and private oral campuses persist. For more information on this complicated subject, please see <http://www.oraldeafed.org/info/agbell.html>.

<sup>33</sup> There is evidence that this change happened much earlier on campus and among the deaf and deaf educators themselves. In 1887, the sign, "Deaf and Dumb Asylum," at the front walk of the Main Building was torn down and "School for the Deaf" was raised. The early terms persisted only in state business. Ex. I, article appearing February 1, 1976.

<sup>34</sup> Ex. H, Handbook, page 5.

been formally renamed the "Texas School for the Deaf."<sup>35</sup> Soon after the end of the Webster sisters' careers at the school would come the beginning of the resurgence of signed languages in instruction and the inception of the strong deaf ("capital D") movement.<sup>36</sup> During this movement, some deaf students of hearing teachers would recount with poignancy the pain inflicted, and opportunity lost, during the absence of ASL from the classroom.

The questions surrounding English and ASL and their respective places in deaf education and communication remain at the center of deaf politics, particularly as the growth of new surgical options (including cochlear implantation) have caused some deaf increased access to English while leading others to label surgical correction as cultural and linguistic genocide.<sup>37</sup>

The twin concepts of identity and assimilation will no doubt continue to inform all those with a stake in deaf education. The experiences of, and reactions to, the methods of early hearing deaf educators will remain educationally, politically, and culturally relevant in the eyes of the deaf and the hearing who work with them for many years to come.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON STURCTURE**

### *Date of Construction*

TCAD lists the current structure at 706 Oakland as having been built in 1920. The West Line national historic registry application lists the same year. The structure appearing at the site of current 706 Oakland is named "710 Oakland" on the 1921 Sanborn map and may have initially been built by landowner Jacob Wattinger, whose taxes went up from 200 dollars to 1150 dollars in 1917, indicating the likely

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<sup>35</sup> Some advocates push to this day for the replacement of "for" with "of" to remove the suggestion that the education of persons with disability is mere charity, and to emphasize that deaf persons are agents in, and not merely recipients of, their educations.

<sup>36</sup> Deaf leaders decried the absence of deaf teachers and ASL in their educations. The Deaf President Now movement in 1988 at Gallaudet marked the pinnacle of this movement, which was accompanied by legal advances in the federal civil rights of the deaf from 1973 through 1990.

<sup>37</sup> The documentary *Sound and Fury*, directed by Josh Aronson, portrays a Deaf family and their frustration with the cochlear implant debate and its impact on their relationship. An article in response to the film states that, "[the family] asserts that Deafness is both natural and cultural; it is not a medical condition, and therefore, they argue, medical interventions are not miraculous cures but acts of genocide." See discussion by Kirstin Shaffer at

(citing Edwards, R. A. R. "Sound and Fury; or, Much Ado about Nothing? Cochlear Implants in Historical Perspective." *Journal of American History* 92.3 (2005): 892-920. Academic Search Premier. 2 April 2007. <<http://search.ebscohost.com>>.)

completion of a home.<sup>38</sup> A significant improvement may have occurred in 1918, when his taxes rose again to 1600 dollars. It is not known whether or not his structure was partially or fully incorporated by Ms. Webster in 1920, if indeed the 1920 date is correct.

The structure in the 1921 Sanborn map resembles the footprint found in the 1935 map, although by that date a second floor had been added and what had initially been a small porch was greatly expanded and made a large gabled room.<sup>39</sup> The appearance of the structure in later Sanborn revisions to the 1935 map does not differ from this 1935 footprint.<sup>40</sup> The current footprint differs slightly in that two very small decks and a tiny porch have been added, and a master bathroom has been added to the left side of the first floor.<sup>41</sup> Although records are not available, it is believed that this alteration (the master bathroom) was performed in 1988 (the date listed by the City for the permitting of an added bathroom and breezeway); the bathroom may have been tweaked again in 2000, a date reported by the seller to the current owner.<sup>42</sup> Two tiny side sheds (one to hold two trashcans, the other for outside gardening gear) were also believed to have been added in 2003 by the Pattons, who owned the property just prior to the current owner.

#### ***Notable Architectural Features***

The house has retained its integrity due to the lack of change to the overall house structure and the owners' careful preservation of its Craftsman features. The house has the following features:

- Craftsman-era windows and accompanying window surrounds
- Triple window rows and accompanying screens
- Glass accents (sideline, upper stairwell window) with patterning similar to those developed by Frank Lloyd Wright
- Double French doors (exterior) with detailed wood trimming matching back door and interior china cabinet doors
- Exposed beams of ceiling of front gable, and interior door/window surrounds throughout home
- Longleaf pine floors
- Multiple additional built-ins and cabinets distinctive of Craftsman era
- Interesting/unusual Art Deco accents (sconces, chandeliers) and Colonial Revival-style mantle and fireplace (dentils on cornice)

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<sup>38</sup> Lot Registries, Austin History Center.

<sup>39</sup> Exhibits B, C.

<sup>40</sup> Ex. D.

<sup>41</sup> Ex. A.

<sup>42</sup> Another remodel appears in city records in 1983, but no further information is available. It appears to have cost 8000 dollars. Small-scale "finish out" activities appear to have taken place in 1992. Air condition had been added in 1984.

## **DISCUSSION OF APPLICABLE CRITERIA**

**1.Character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Austin, State of Texas, or the United States.** The story of the oralist movement in deaf education during the first half of the twentieth century is central to the understanding of the political and cultural history of deaf persons. The migration of hearing teachers into residential deaf campuses, and the banishing of signed language, preceded one of the most important political movements in deaf history.

**2.Recognition as a Recorded Texas historic Landmark, a National Historic Landmark, or entered into the National Register of Historic Places.** The property at 706 Oakland is within West Line and its front gable and auxiliary section have been deemed "contributory" to the nationally-registered neighborhood in which it is located.

**3.Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.** The architecture of the house is primarily Craftsman with Art Deco embellishment. Please see above discussion of distinguishing architectural features.

**5.Embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation.** The exterior of the home is a unique in that second-story construction of that sort (built to house the Webster sisters and their families) was unusual during that era. The glass parlor doors (exterior) were also unusual for the period.

**6.Relationship to other distinctive buildings sites, or areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on architectural, historic, or cultural motif.** The history of the Webster House and hearing teachers at TSD is linked to the following historical sites: Texas School for the Deaf, W.H. Davis House (Newning Ave., where Lettie resided upon moving to Austin), Texas Deaf Blind and Orphan School.

**9.Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, ethnic, or historical heritage of the City, State, or the United States.** The story of the Webster sisters exemplifies the cultural and economic history of the hearing individuals brought into deaf education during the oralist movement of the early twentieth century. This is also part of the deaf community's cultural and historic heritage.

**11.Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, State or US.** The house is connected to the Webster family and more largely the migration of hearing persons brought in to teach deaf students during the early growth years of TSD.

**12. A building or structure that, because of its location, has become of value to a neighborhood, community area, or the city.** The structure is valued by residents of the West Line and Old West Austin areas. The neighborhood is home to a number of



historic sites, and will be benefited by additional preservation and careful protection.

**13. Value as an aspect of community sentiment or public pride.** Enormous pride is evident among members of the deaf community in discussing the history of TSD and particularly of the changes that have taken place since the oralist period. Many discussions of pride in ASL begin with recalling the years when the language was prohibited. We hope to bring some of these sentiments into our (hearing) community by educating hearing persons - who may not have yet toured TSD - about the history of deaf education.

**Death Taken**  
**Deaf School**

Miss Annie Mae Webster, a teacher at the deaf school for the Deaf for 22 years, died in an Austin hospital Thursday night.

Her tenure was one of the longest in the history of the deaf school. Miss Webster, who taught in Oklahoma public schools before coming to Austin, made her home at 100 Oaklawn Avenue.

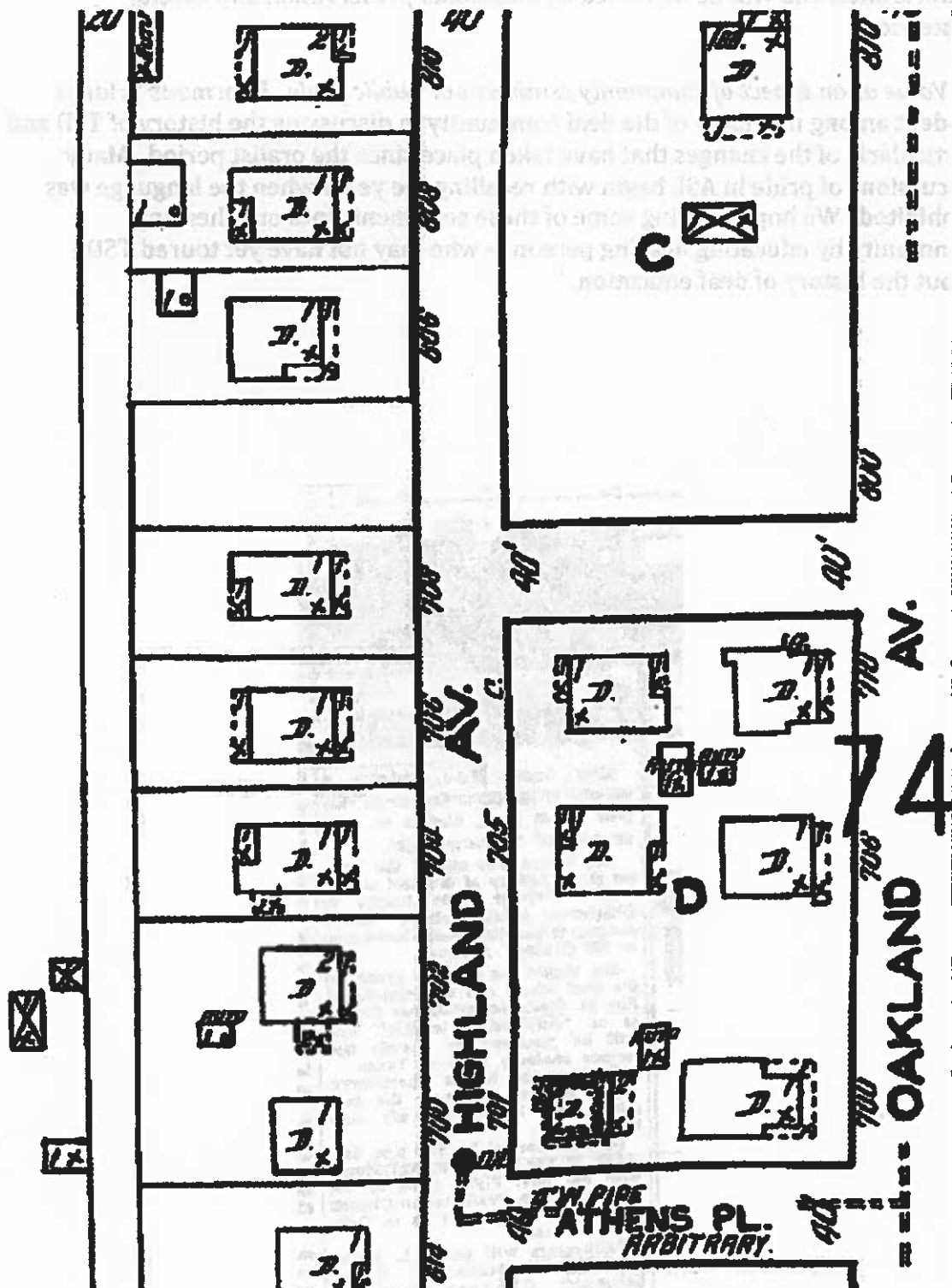
She taught the primary grades at the deaf school and Superintendent Roy M. Stalle described her Friday as an "outstanding teacher" who will be mourned by friends and former students all over Texas.

Congressman Homer Thornberry, whose parents taught at the deaf school, will be an honorary pallbearer.

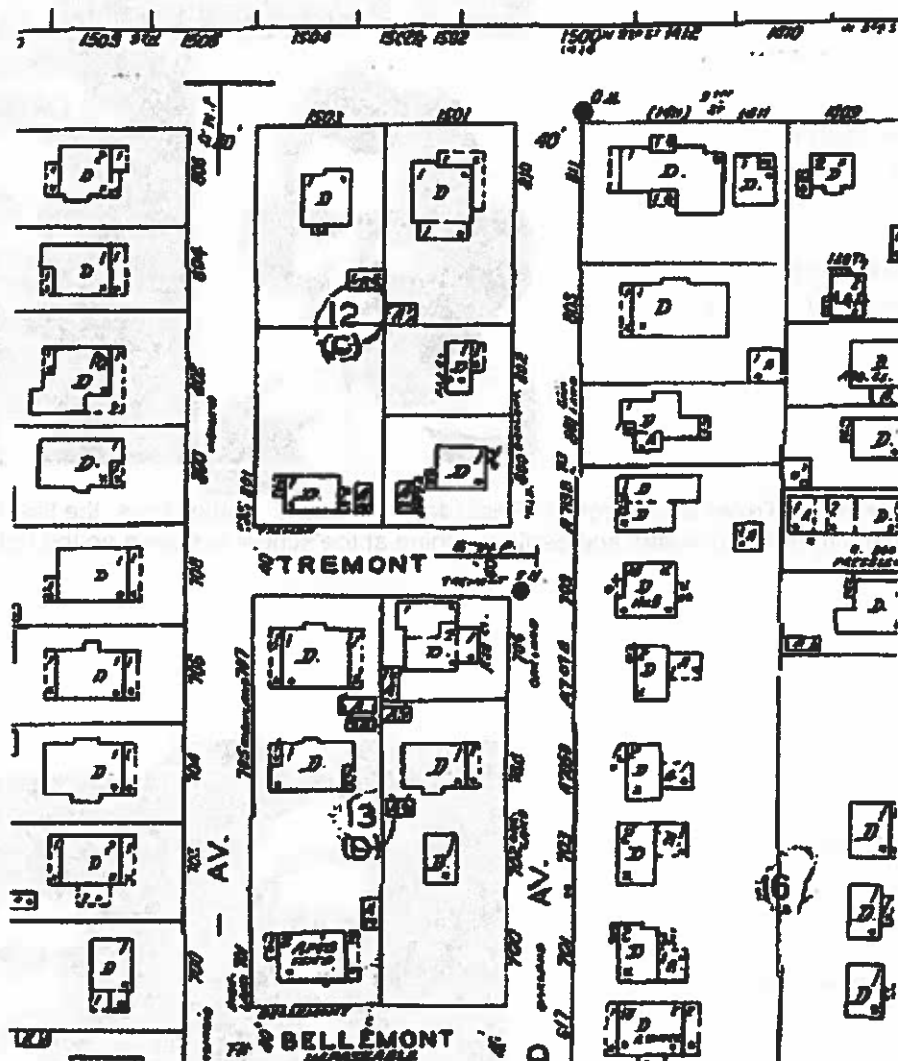
Services are set for 3:30 p.m. Saturday at the Cook Funeral Home with the Rev. Pym Long of the First Southern Presbyterian Church officiating. Burial will be in Oakwood Cemetery.

Pallbearers will be O. L. McIntire, Charles Austin Jr., Hugo Schunkoff, Charles Weyerman, Roger Small and Stalle.

Honorary pallbearers will be Jim Hornsby, Glenn Cook, C. B. Eaton, Susan Pham, Lucile Dean and Thornberry.



The 1922 Sanborn map shows the house as one story with a front porch facing Oakland Avenue. The house is listed as 710 Oakland Avenue, just south of the unnamed street (now Tremont).



The 1935 Sanborn map shows the house with an enclosed front porch and a two-story section; this footprint corresponds to the configuration of the house today.

CLAIRE CROCKETT

*Primary*

MRS. LETTIE DAVIS

*Intermediate and Advanced*



Faculty yearbook of the Texas School for the Deaf (date unknown). Lettie Davis, the first of the Webster sisters to move to Austin and begin teaching at the school is shown on the right.

JESSIE WEBSTER

*Primary*

LUCILLE WILLIAMS

*Food*



Jessie Webster, from the same yearbook.