

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
 JANUARY 29, 2018
 DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
 HDP-2017-0747
 1113 W. 31ST STREET

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1954 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One- and two-story irregular-plan frame house, partially cantilevered over the embankment of Shoal Creek; the house evidences some aspects of mid-century Modern design, but has had some modifications and has what appear to be non-historic windows.

RESEARCH

The house was designed by architect William R. O'Connell for his own personal residence in 1954. The O'Connell family still owns the property. William R. O'Connell specialized in the design of hospitals and medical facilities. He was appointed the first architect for the Texas Department of Health, and opened his own firm in 1950 or 1951. His firm, now known as O'Connell-Robertson, is still in existence, and has offices in Austin and San Antonio. The firm designed the Graham General Hospital in 1955, and was hired by Dr. Michael DeBakey in 1963 to design an operating room for open-heart surgery. The firm designed the Clear Lake Hospital, in suburban Houston, in 1972. After he and his wife, Wylma, divorced in 1966, O'Connell continued to reside in this house until his death in 1989.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house is not listed in any city survey to date.

Staff has evaluated the house for designation as a historic landmark under the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code, and has determined that the house fails to meet the threshold for designation:

- a. **Architecture.** The house has an imposing presence from the street, with a large blank wall, that has some elements of mid-century Modern design, but does not exhibit the principal design philosophies of the style, particularly the banks of windows, use of natural materials, and a low, horizontal composition. The house appears to have a number of additions and replacement windows, resulting in a lack of integrity of materials and design.
- b. **Historical association.** The house is associated with William R. O'Connell, an architect whose firm specialized in hospital and medical office design. There is no indication to date that the house was designed by O'Connell, or by Leonard Lundgren, who designed the more typical mid-century Modern house just to the east of this one. There does not appear to be significant historical associations.
- c. **Archaeology.** The house was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d. **Community value.** The house does not possess a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.
- e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.




STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Encourage rehabilitation and adaptive re-use, but release the permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center. The house does not appear to meet the criteria for individual designation as a historic landmark.

LOCATION MAP



1" = 174'

-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2017-0747
LOCATION: 1113 W 31st. Street

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.



1113 W. 31st Street
ca. 1954



View looking west along 31st Street



Front door and front wall of the house



West elevation



East elevation



Rear of the house. Although obscured by trees in this photograph, the rear of the house has some plate glass installed and a metal mansard roof that does not appear to be original or compatible with the style of the rest of the house.

OCCUPANCY HISTORY

1113 W. 31st Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
January, 2018

1992	William R. O'Connell, owner President, O'Connell-Robertson Associates, architects and engineers, 811 Barton Springs Road.
1985-86	William R. O'Connell, owner President, O'Connell, Probst & Grobe, Inc., architects and engineers, 48 East Avenue.
1981	William R. O'Connell, owner Manager, O'Connell, Probst & Grobe, Inc., architects, 48 East Avenue.
1977	William R. O'Connell, owner Manager, O'Connell, Probst, Zelsman & Grobe, architects, 48 East Avenue.
1973	William R. O'Connell, owner President, O'Connell, Probst & Zelsman, architects, 55 N. Interregional Highway.

- 1968 William R. and Wylma O'Connell, owners
Proprietor (with Victor G. Probst), O'Connell & Probst, architects, 504 W. 7th Street.
- 1965 William R. and Wylma O'Connell, owners
Proprietor (with Victor G. Probst), O'Connell & Probst, architects, 504 W. 7th Street
- 1960 William R. and Wylma O'Connell, owners
Proprietor (with Victor G. Probst), O'Connell & Probst, architects, 504 W. 7th Street.
- 1957 William R. and Cass O'Connell, owners
Proprietor (with Victor G. Probst), O'Connell & Probst, architects, 504 W. 7th Street.
- 1955 William R. and Wylma O'Connell, owners
Proprietor (with Victor G. Probst), O'Connell & Probst, architects, 504 W. 7th Street.
- 1954 The address is not listed in the directory.
NOTE: William R. and Wylma O'Connell are listed at 3300 Tom Green Street, Apartment 5; he was the proprietor of O'Connell & Probst, architects, 504 W. 7th Street.
NOTE: O'Connell and Probst had their offices in Room 305 of the Perry-Brooks Building, 121 E. 8th Street, in the 1953 city directory.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

William R. and Wylma O'Connell (ca. 1954 -)

William R. O'Connell appears in the 1940 U.S. Census as the 21-year old son of Nickolas J. and Oma F. O'Connell, who owned their home at 3907 Avenue C in Austin. William R. O'Connell was born in Texas, and was an architect in building construction. His father, Nickolas J. O'Connell, 60, was a native of Illinois, and was a building contractor. His mother, Oma F. O'Connell, 47, had been born in Kentucky, and had no occupation listed. William had a younger brother, Edward Patrick O'Connell, 14, who had been born in Texas and had no occupation listed.

He became the first architect for the Texas Department of Health in 1947, and in 1950 or 1951, he formed his own firm, which is still in business today with offices in Austin and San Antonio. The firm designed the Graham General Hospital in 1955, and the Clear Lake Hospital in 1972. O'Connell also designed an operating room for Dr. Michael DeBakey's open-heart surgeries in 1963.



William R. O'Connell

William R. O'Connell, 70, of Austin, died Tuesday in a local hospital.

Mr. O'Connell was born in Temple to Nicholas J. and Oma Frances Love O'Connell.

He was an active member of St. Austin's Catholic Church, the Knights of Columbus, and the CERRA Club.

He attended public schools in Temple and in Austin. He graduated in 1935 from Austin High School, where he played basketball. He performed as an amateur magician at children's parties, and played for a semi-professional basketball team from 1939 to 1941.

He graduated in 1941 from the University of Texas with a bachelor of architecture degree, and was a member of the Sphinx Club. He served in the Army Air Corps during World War II as an aviation mechanic.

He served as the first architectural consultant for the Texas Department of Health when the Hill-Burton Program began in 1947. He formed O'Connell and Probst Architects, currently O'Connell, Robertson and Associates, in 1951. He specialized in the design of health care facilities, and was involved in numerous public and private projects, including more than 400 projects in Texas, such as Spohn Hospital in Corpus Christi, St. John's Hospital in San Angelo, Clear Lake Hospital in Webster, and the Olin E. Teague Veterans' Hospital Domiciliary in Temple.

He served as president of the Austin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1964, and as chairman of the Hospital Architecture Committee of the Texas Society of Architects from 1959 to 1963. He also was a member of the Texas Hospital Association, American Hospital Association, the American Society for Testing Materials, and the National Fire Protection Association.

A Christian wake and rosary will be said at 7:30 PM, Thursday at Cook-Walden Funeral Home, Lamar location, in Austin. Mass will be celebrated at 10:00 AM, Friday at St. Austin's Catholic Church. Burial will be in Assumption Cemetery.

Survivors are two daughters, Mary Ann O'Connell and Ann Clare O'Connell, both of Austin; four sons, William R. O'Connell II of Wilmington, North Carolina, Daniel Plus O'Connell of Syracuse, New York, Casey John O'Connell of Austin, and Joseph M. O'Connell of Temple; two brothers, Nicholas J. O'Connell of Arlington, Edward Patrick O'Connell of Austin; and a number of nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by a brother, Joseph T. O'Connell, in 1986.

Palibearers will be Robert Zelsman, E.J. Pfluger, Tom Powell, Dr. G.R. Beiter, Jim Polkinghorn, Judson Marsters, Noel Robertson, and Jim Pfluger.

Arrangements by Cook-Walden Funeral Home, Lamar location.

Obituary of William R. O'Connell
Austin American-Statesman, March 9, 1989

WYLMA LOUISE CASTLEBERRY O'CONNELL "CASSIE" RUELKE

Wylma Louise "Cassie" Castleberry O'Connell Ruelke



Wylma Louise "Cassie" Castleberry O'Connell Ruelke died Sunday, Nov. 16, peacefully at her Austin home. She was born April 10, 1927, in Oak Grove, Louisiana, the only child of Lucille Agnes Scarborough and William Thomas Castleberry, a pair of restless school dropouts who accounted for a combined dozen marriages in their lifetimes. Cassie was raised primarily in Houston, but also lived in Florida, Ohio and different parts of Texas as her mother and a string of stepfathers sought work. As a child, she was told by a handwriting analyst that she was most likely to see life's glass as half full, and this optimistic philosophy steered her through a dirt-poor and often abusive childhood toward a life that might have seemed beyond

her reach. She never dated in high school and never entered a restaurant until she was in her 20s. Three things changed her life: the opening of a public library branch in the basement of her Houston elementary school that introduced her to a love of novels, in particular a series of mysteries involving a globetrotting archeologist; her friendship with elementary school classmates Barbara Tierney and Shirley Jones who convinced her to join them in a pact to one day become nurses; and a high school job at the Piggly Wiggly deli counter that introduced her to such exotic fare as camembert cheese and herring roll mops. Despite her mother's best efforts to stop her, including bribing her with promises of an automobile, Cassie went to nursing school to earn her associate's degree, working at Hermann Hospital and in Galveston, where she aided the injured during the 1947 Texas City disaster that killed 581 people and so strained

hospital resources that the Hotel Galvez had to send over its beds that soon filled the hospital hallways. It was later in the lobby of the Hotel Galvez that she would meet her first husband, William Robert O'Connell, who was in town for an architecture convention. Cassie was on a date with another architect, but was soon joining O'Connell for dinner in the swanky Balinese Room. After she moved to Austin to complete her R.N. degree at the University of Texas, they married in 1952 (on a date scheduled around Texas Longhorn football games), but not before she extracted the promise that they have a dozen children. He reneged on the promise after six kids. They divorced in 1966 and she subsequently moved her children to Colorado and married Hans Ruelke, who died two years later in a car crash. The family moved back to Austin, where she raised her kids, earned a master's degree at the University of Texas and served as administrator of the Austin State Hospital's Deaf Unit. A deep spiritual longing was alive in her from a young age. She thought she might drown when at age 11 she was dunked three times in water and became a Baptist. In her 20s she converted to Catholicism. While in graduate school, she took philosophy classes from famed Indian novelist Raja Rao, which led her to travel to India in search of truth. For more than two decades she split her time between India and with her family in Austin. Survivors include sons, William Robert O'Connell II of North Carolina, Daniel Pius O'Connell and wife Tarla of India, Casey John O'Connell and wife Magali of India, and Joseph Matthew O'Connell and wife Tiffany of Taylor; daughters, Mary Ann O'Connell Harvey and Ann Clare O'Connell, both of Austin; and grandchildren, Russell Tipp Harvey, William Wesley Harvey, Shanthi O'Connell and Nicholas Drake O'Connell. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Sri Atmananda Memorial School of Austin. Cassie's ashes will be scattered in India's Pampa River. An Austin celebration of her life is being planned by her family.

Obituary of Wylma O'Connell Ruelke
Austin American-Statesman, November 19, 2008

Wm R. O'Connell 1113 W 31st
62 1-2
M L Brown
brk ven res
58146 9-21-54 12000/
W T Walker & Son
7

Building permit to William R. O'Connell for the construction of this house (1954)

WATER SERVICE PERMIT

E No 1812

Austin, Texas

Received of W. J. O'CONNELL Date 9-22-54Address 1113 W. 31stAmount THIRTY \$ 30.00Plumber MIDDLETON Size of Tap 1"Date of Connection 9-29-54Size of Tap Made 1"Size Service Made 1"Size Main Tapped 1 1/4"From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock 7.5'From E - Prop. Line to Curb Cock 30'Location of Meter CURBType of Box LOCWDepth of Main in St. 3'Depth of Service Line 2'From Curb Cock to Tap on Main 1'Checked by Engr. Dept. 10-5-54

No. Fittings	Size
1 Curb Cock	1"
1 Elbow	1 1/4"
1 St-Elbow	1 1/4"
1 Bushing	
1 Reducer	1 1/4"
1 Pipe	1 1/4"
1 Lead Comp.	
1 Nipples	1 1/4"
1 Union	1 1/4"
1 Plug	
1 Tee	
1 Stop	
1 Box	LOCW
1 Lid	
Valves	
Job No.	2323502
Req. No.	27000

Water service permit to William O'Connell for this address (1954)

SANITARY SEWER SERVICE PERMIT

No. 33676

Austin, Texas

Received of Middleton Date 9/30/1954Address 1113 W. 31st.Amount W. R. O'Connell \$ Builder or Owner Plumber Lot 1-2 Block Subdivision Plat No. 62

Date of Connection	<u>11/17/1954</u>
By City	<u>42' W/E. PL</u>
By Plumber	<u></u>
Checked By	<u>Searcy</u>
Size Main	<u>2"</u> Depth <u>3'</u>
Main Assign.	<u>in Creek</u>
Stub Depth	<u></u> Prop. Line <u>1'</u>
Stub Location	<u></u>
Book No.	<u>A-1154</u>
Paving Cut	<u></u> No. <u></u>

No. Fittings	Size	Price
15' Pipe	6" con	3.30
pipe		
Wyes		
Bends		.75
Reducers		
Plugs		
Sand		
Gravel		
Remix		
Stoppers		
Castings		
1 Other	tap	.75
truck		.50
Labor:	36 hrs	36.00
	36 hrs	36.00

Sewer service permit for this address (1954)

W. R. O'Connell

1113 W. 31st St.

62 1 and 2

M. L. Brown

Frame addition west side of residence.

73219

6/22/59

5000.00

W.R. Walker

3 added

4 BEDROOMS AND 1 BATH

Building permit to William R. O'Connell for a frame addition (1959)