HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION JANUARY 29, 2018 DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS HDP-2017-0705 4605 LESLIE AVENUE

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1951 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, rectangular-plan, side-gabled frame house with a partial-width extended-roof entry porch on ornamental metal posts; single 1:1 and multi-light fenestration.

RESEARCH

The house was built over the winter of 1951 – 1952 in the Cedar Valley subdivision, developed for African-Americans after World War II. Thomas and Jessie Ellison, the first owners of this house, lived here until their deaths almost 60 years later. Thomas Ellison was employed by Braniff Airways as a sky cap and porter until his retirement. His obituary references that he was instrumental in helping African-American GI's obtain financing to purchase homes.

Two children of Thomas and Jessie Ellison, Joan Ellison-Satterwhite and Burt Ellison related the following information to staff:

When Thomas Ellison returned from his service in World War II in 1945, he found that the provisions of the GI Bill that helped returning soldiers purchase homes were not available to African-American servicemen. As both Thomas and Jessie Ellison were very active in Democratic Party politics, they urged and worked with then-Senators Lyndon Johnson and Ralph Yarbrough to extend the benefits of the GI Bill to all servicemen regardless of color.

The subdivision of Cedar Valley was platted in 1948 in the vicinity of land that Ellison's family had owned for generations. He and his family moved into this house on Leslie Avenue as soon as it was completed in 1951. Cedar Valley was in many ways, a model subdivision. All of the homes were owned by their occupants, who took great pride in maintaining their houses and yards. All of the families in the neighborhood were twoparent households. The neighborhood was in a still-semi-rural area; there was a wooded area across the street and a nearby creek that the Ellison children recall playing in. The streets in Cedar Valley were not yet paved, and there was no sewer line in the neighborhood; all the houses depended on septic tanks. Thomas and Jessie Ellison fought hard for street paying, the sewer line (for which Thomas Ellison helped dig the trench), street lighting, and other improvements that were routinely provided for new white residential areas, but not for those areas populated by African-American families. The Ellisons fought for Springdale Road to be paved, and for the construction of Sims Elementary School for the children of the neighborhood. As Joan Ellison recalls, at the time they moved into Cedar Valley, there was a school close by, Pecan Springs Elementary, but it was segregated for white children; the children of Cedar Valley were bused to Rosewood Elementary, several miles away. The construction of Sims Elementary on Springdale Road catered to the children of Cedar Valley and surrounding African-American neighborhoods.

Thomas Ellison served as the patriarch of the neighborhood in many ways. He was the leader of the neighborhood Cub Scout and Boy Scout troops, and Jessie Ellison headed up the neighborhood Girl Scout troop. Joan Ellison recalls that while her father was camping in the back yard with the boy scouts, her mother was in the kitchen teaching the girls how

to cook and sew. Their house on Leslie Avenue was a center of the community – they often welcomed neighbors and children at their table, and provided both financial and emotional support for those in need. Many of the children of the neighborhood referred to Thomas and Jessie Ellison as "Dad" and "Mom." Jessie Ellison continued her role as a nurturer and teacher; she founded the Zion Hill Child Care Center at her church, ran a church summer program for children, and was a member of an African-American ladies' service organization. The Ellisons were also active in the NAACP Youth Group.

From all accounts, Cedar Valley was an exemplary place to grow up. Many of the working parents in the neighborhood were teachers, principals, and others involved in education. Many of the children grew up to professional occupations, and the level of activism during the height of the civil rights movement in Austin was notable. The Ellisons fought against the poll tax, and served as precinct judges to encourage their neighbors to vote. The Ellison children have very fond memories of their childhood in Cedar Valley and their pride in their upbringing in the Cedar Valley community is clear.

The streets of Cedar Valley look very much as they did in the mid-1950s. There have been few tear-downs in the neighborhood, and while the neighborhood no longer enjoys the same rate of home ownership and attendant pride it once did, very few houses have lost their integrity significantly.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house is beyond the bounds of any City survey to date.

The house may meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

- a. **Architecture.** The house is a frame 1950s cottage, a common style; it has no distinction within its architectural style.
- b. **Historical association**. The house was built by Thomas Ellison and his wife, Jessie; according to his obituary, he was influential in helping African-American GI's returning home to purchase homes in segregated subdivisions like Cedar Valley. Staff believes that the association of this house with Thomas and Jessie Ellison, leaders of the Cedar Valley community, may prove to be one of the criteria necessary to qualify the house for landmark designation.
- 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 location of this house within the Cedar Valley Subdivision reflects its importance as a contributing structure to a potential Cedar Valley historic district; the social history of Cedar Valley and its importance in representing a significant chapter in Austin's history, may prove the basis for community value, both as related to the Ellison house and the story of the potential historic district.
- e. **Landscape feature**. The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

f.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends either initiation of a historic zoning case or postponement of this case to February 26, 2018 to evaluate alternatives to demolition and the possibility of recognizing Cedar Valley as a historic district. If the Commission votes to release the demolition permit instead, then staff recommends relocation over demolition, but in any case, the 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.





NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2017-0705 4605 LESLIE AVENUE

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.

1 " = 167 '

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.



4605 Leslie Avenue ca. 1951



OCCUPANCY HISTORY 4605 Leslie Avenue

City Directory Research, Austin History Center By City Historic Preservation Office December, 2017

1992	Thomas and Jessie Ellison, owners Retired
1985-86	Thomas and Jessie Ellison, owners Retired
1981	Thomas and Jessie Ellison, owners Employed by Braniff Airlines
1977	Thomas and Jessie M. Ellison, owners Employed by Braniff Airways
1973	Thomas and Jessie B. Ellison, owners Cargo serviceman, Braniff International Airways
1968	Thomas and Jessie Ellison, owners Cargo serviceman, Braniff International Airways
1964	Thomas and Jessie Ellison, owners Porter, Braniff Airways

1958	Thomas and Jessie Ellison, owners Porter, Braniff Airways
1953	Thomas and Jessie Ellison, owners Employed at the Municipal Airport
1952	The street is not listed in the directory. NOTE: Thomas and Jessie Ellison are listed at 1805 Sanchez Street. He was a porter for the City Airport Division.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES: Thomas and Jessie Ellison (ca. 1952 – ca. 2014)



Jessie Harvey Ellison

Jessie Harvey Ellison was born on April 29, 1925 to Evander and Jessie Harvey. She went to be with her Lord on February 23, 2009. Jessie lived a very full life using her many talents to excel educationally, professionally, socially, recreationally, and most importantly in her Christian journey. She passionately loved her family and they her. She attended school and received a certification as a child-care administrator. With this certification, she founded the Zion Hill Baptist Church Day Care Center and served as its director for many years. She used her business acumen to become the first black unit director for Stanley Home Products in Texas. She used her homemaker abilities to serve as a governess and private home professional.

Jessie's motto was "...there is no excuse for not having an education." She enrolled in and completed continuing education courses at the University of Texas at Austin and later Austin Community College.

Jessie was an avid reader and traveled extensively. She had a wealth of knowledge on many subject and could articulate that knowledge in a manner that held the listener spellbound. Her favorite travel destination was Hawaii. She had a special affinity for the island of Maui and she and her husband returned to the island on many occasions.

Jessie used a strong Christian heart to feed the hungry (both physically and spiritually), administer to the sick and serve humanity. She was a 55-year active member of the Zion Hill Baptist Church. Jessie's church activities included serving as church clerk for over 20 years, Mission II president, Sunday School teacher, Vacation Bible School director and as a deaconess. She was known for her Christian spirit and benevolent heart in all of these capacities. She was the founding president of the Austin Chapter of the PHI-LOS, a sorority and service organization affiliated with Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.

Jessie, along with her husband and family, were some of the first residents of Cedar Valley, a suburb in far east Austin, built specifically for black WWII veterans. Jessie and Thomas were everyone's "mother and father." Jessie always provided an ear, her wisdom and her saviour Jesus Christ to all, and many, many children who grew up in Cedar Valley still visit and express their love for and thanks to her. She established the Girl Scout troop for the community and served as PTA president for many years.

She was preceded in death by her mother and father, five brothers, Oliver Harvey, Jimmie Lee Harvey, Eddie Harvey, Walter Harvey, Slim Harvey, two sisters, Ollie Mae Kennard and Ruth Ross, and one son, Thomas Ellison, Jr.

She leaves to deeply mourn her loss and cherish her memory her husband, Thomas Ellison, Sr.; two sisters, Ethel Swisher and Eunice Henderson (Noah); two daughters, Carol Ellison-King (Les), Joan Ellison-Satterwhite (Bradford); two sons, Burt Ellison (Linda), Kenneth Ellison (Alice), 27 grand-children, 65 great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren, a host of brother and sister in-laws, nieces, nephews, other relatives and many, many friends.

A wake service will be held this evening, 6:00 p.m. at King-Tears Mortuary. Funeral service 12:00 noon Saturday, February 28, 2009 at Zion Hill Baptist Church. Interment Evergreen Cemetery.

Obituary of Jessie Harvey Ellison Austin American-Statesman, January 27, 2009



Thomas Ellison, Sr., 90, of Austin departed this life peacefully on January 16, 2014, surrounded by loving family members. He was born April 5, 1923 to Beatrice and Walter Ellison, Sr. He was married to Jessie Harvey Ellison (deceased) for 66 years.

Thomas was a loyal employee of Braniff International Airlines for 35 years. He started out as a skycap at the old Austin airport (off Airport Boulevard) prior to its move to Mueller (off Manor Road). Thomas ended his career with Braniff as an air freight supervisor, and retired when Braniff was purchased by American Airlines. He received many awards, accolades, and certificates for his hard work and dedication to the company and the traveling public. Many, many travelers knew Thomas by his first name and always stopped to chat because Thomas had such a quiet calm nature, engaging personality, kind listening ear, profound wisdom and knowledge of the world.

In his early adulthood, Thomas served as a scoutmaster, was active in the Sims Elementary PTA, served as an election judge for precinct 129, was active in the NAACP, and various neighborhood organizations.

Thomas, a WWII veteran of the Pacific Theater, sought and received Congressional support for the building of a subdivision for black WWII veterans under the GI Bill. The subdivision, near the current Morris Williams golf course, was a thriving community with manicured lawns and two-parent households.

Thomas loved to travel and he, along with his wife, traveled to Hawaii on several occasions, often vacationed in California, and visited many of the contiguous states and Canada.

In addition to his family, some of his greatest joy came from helping others. Thomas was generous with his treasure and his time. Individuals would come to Thomas for transportation assistance and/or money to tide them over "until payday." He never said "No".

Thomas was described by men as a "man's man" or "the man" because he embodied the strength, character and uprightness described in several verses of Proverbs. "He fears the Lord; He hates what is false; He hates evil; He does what is righteous; He speaks the truth; He is humble, not proud; He has a calm spirit; He is patient; He is concerned about goodwill/peace; He forgives those who wrong him; He is not vindictive."

Thomas was a devoted deacon of the Zion Hill Baptist Church for 62 years. During that time, he also served in various capacities including president of the deacon board and brotherhood. He was a dedicated Christian and walked a Christian path.

Thomas was preceded in death by his wife of 66 years, Jessie, and his son, Thomas, Jr. He leaves to mourn a family who loved him dearly. Four children, Carol Ellison-King, Joan Ellison-Satterwhite, Burt (Linda), and Kenneth (Marsha). A brother, Henry Ellison (Bayless), daughter-in-law Doris Ellison and a host of grandchildren, great-grandchildren, 5 great-great grandchildren and many nieces, nephews, and friends who adored him.

The funeral will be held on Wednesday, January 22, 2014 at the Zion Hill Baptist Church, 1701 Chestnut Avenue, at 11:00 a.m. Interment will follow at Evergreen Cemetery.

Obituary of Thomas Ellison Austin <u>American-Statesman</u>, January 21, 2014

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Water service permit for this address (1952)

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Sewer service permit for this address (1961)



The Cedar Valley subdivision

CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS MADE 3 NEGRO HOUSING ADDITIONS

Progress was in evidence on three sidered during its July 13 meeting, the state's expanded building pro-residential additions for Negroes word from Engineer Julian Mont-in Austin.

Actual building was scheduled to actual billioning was scheduled to begin Aug. I in one addition, plats and plans for a second addition were to be submitted to City Planner William Parker by the Thursday 5 p. m. deadline, and final Federal Housing Administration approval was awaited on a third.

W. H. Bullard, investor and home builder, sald actual house construction would begin Aug. 1 on a city-approved subdivision in East Aus-

"Construction will start with 10 or perhaps 20 houses," he said.
Bullard purchased the 26-acre site

for a Negro home development from H. B. Clagett. The subdivision to be known as Cedar Valley, will be situated immediately north of

Downs Field fronting on Spring-dale and Webberville Road, SOME OF THE houses will sell for \$5,000, Bullard said, although most of them will run from \$6,000 to \$8,000. All have received city and county and Veterans Administra-tion approval, he added, and the FHA has given preliminary approv-al. Many of the houses will be sold under 100 per cent GI loans, Bul-

Building of the homes, he said, will be financed through the First Austin Investment Corporation of which Builard is vice president. There are 108 lots, he added, and he expected to complete 30 houses by the end of this year. Plats on a second sub-division to

be considered by the City Plan Commission will make the 5-p. m. deadline Thursday set by the com-mission in order to have them con-

The subdivision, to be built in North Austin, missed a former dead-line on Mny 25. It will be known as the Sam Clark addition.

Mrs. Russell Lombard, whose husband is president of the Crescent. Industries which is planning the new development, said no produc-tion schedule had been set up. She estimated 95 houses would be erected in the first of two sections, with the houses expected to sell for

"They will be constructed in or-der to gain FHA and VA approval for loans," she said.

No actual work has started on

No actual work has started on the site, however.

The Rev. Adam R. Black, pastor of the Rising Star Baptist Church and moderator of the St. John Reg-ular Baptist Association, is heading the large Negro project, Mrs. Lom-bard said. He is expected to make announcement concerning the aņ

entire project soon, she added, A. D. Stenger, architect and builder, is awaiting FHA approval on loans on his sub-division near Holy Cross Hospital.

His sub-division as a whole has received FHA approval, however, Stenger said.

"It has been raised to the high-est rating." Stenger said, "due to its location in regard to business and shopping centers, schools and churches for Negroes, and for its draininge and paved streets."

The heavy volume on the San Antonio FHA office brought about by

gram, has caused the delay, he ex-

PARKER POINTED out the effort

taken by the City Plan Commission to lay out these sub-divisions.
"They have been developed under good, orderly plans." he explained, to provide all the needs of the occupants within their own area.

Developers went beyond usual efforts to set them up."

All shopping, church, playground and school needs are planned within the separate areas, he said, forming complete units.

As an example, the North Austin sub-division, he explained, is bound, by thoroughfare—the Interregional Highway on the east, Anderson: Lane on the north, the thoroughfare connecting Anderson Lane with Airport Boulevard on the west, and Airport Boulevard on the south.



'A" FAIDWAY FOA

Article on the establishment of Cedar Valley Subdivision for African-American residents Austin Statesman, June 29, 1950



ON BERENE STREET—This two-bedroom home of Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Houston is located at 1415 Berene Street, in the Ceder Valley subdivision. It is of ashestos shingle, has a detached garage.

A home in the Cedar Valley Subdivision featured in Austin Homes Beautiful Austin <u>American-Statesman</u>, September 14 1952



1415 Berene Street today (December, 2017)

Street Lights 'Dim' In Cedar Valley

The prospect of street lights for Cedar Vailey, a new subdivision near Downs Field, east of Airport Boulevard, is not bright.

City Manager Walter Scaholm told the City Council that the nearest street light circuit is two miles away and it will be some while before Cedar Valley will have lights.

Article on the provision of street lights for the Cedar Valley Subdivision Austin Statesman, March 20, 1953

10 Russians To Observe

Homes Here

Austin builders will show the American home as it is planned and constructed in subdivisions to the 10-member delegation of Russian builders who will spend two days in Austin Oct. 23-24.

One of 13 American cities to be chosen to display the American way of life in its true setting — the American home — Austin's specific assignment is to show the subdivision aspect of home building.

Frank C. Barron, Austin builder and real estate man, was named by S. R. Sheppard, president of the Austin Home Builders Association, to head a committee planning the Russians' Austin visit.

First Day

The first day of the tour, the Russians will be shown the Delwood Four-Windsor Park-Gaston Park-Manor Hill areas where 2,000 homes have been built or proposed during the last two years. Also, the builders will be shown the Air Conditioned Village and Cedar Valley, residential subdivision for Negroes.

After these tours, the Russians will be guests of the Builders Development Corporation at a barbecue at W. H. Bullard's 2,000-acre Sun Valley Ranch.

On Oct. 24, the Bussians will tour the city and Barton Hills subdivision. Traveling by commercial plane, the Russian entourage will arrive in Austin at 12:08 p. m. Oct. 23 and will leave at 1:57 p. m. Oct. 24 en route to New Orleans.

Serving with Barron on the planning committee are W. H. Bullard, Clyde Copus Jr., Nelson Puett, Ned A. Cole, Walter R. Carrington, S. R. Sheppard and Wayne A. Burns. Charles Granger, president of the Travis County Society of Architects, will represent the architects on the reception committee. Also to participate in greeting the Russian delegation will be Mayor Tom Miller and City Council Members Mrs. Emma Long, Wesley Pearson, Ben White and Lester C.

The Austin hosts plan to have interpreters from the University of Texas on hand to answer the visitors' questions. Also, informational signs, in the Russian language, will be posted along the tour route.

Palmer.

Russians Expected
The Russian delegation will be headed by I. K. Kuzuilia, minister of city and urban construction in the Soviet Union. Other members of the group will be V. Y. Isaev, chief of the heard of construction for Leningrad; A. A. Dubrovin, deputy minister of city and urban construction for the Republic of Russia; P. A. Spyshnov, chief of the division of sanitary technical construction of the state committee of construction of the council of ministers of the Soviet Union.

Also, F. A. Sheveley, senior scientific researcher of the Vodgeo

Also, F. A. Sheveley, senior scientific researcher of the Vodgeo Construction Institute; A. V. Vlasov, president of the Academy of Architecture; L. P. Miasnikov, deputy minister of timber, cellulose and paper production; N. P. Lysenko, chief of the board of construction for Klev; V. N. Galitsky, chief of the board of housing and public construction of the province of Moscow; and V. S. Timofeyev, chief of office, board of construction of Moscow,

Victor Zegal, second secretary of the Soviet embassy in Washington, will accompany the delegation on the tour,

Article on the visit of 10 Russians to Austin to inspect subdivisions, including Cedar Valley Austin American-Statesman, October 9, 1955

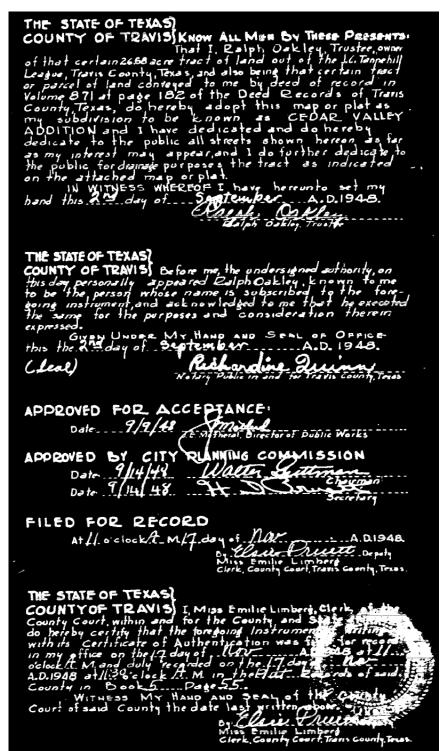
Representative views of the Cedar Valley subdivision (December, 2017)











Plat of Cedar Valley Plat Book 5, page 55 (1948)



A section of the Cedar Valley plat