

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
JUNE 24, 2019  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2019-0307  
1617-1619 S. 1<sup>ST</sup> STREET**

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**PROPOSAL**

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Demolish a ca. 1925 house and a ca. 1962 commercial building, both within the compound of the old Jovita's Restaurant.

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**ARCHITECTURE**

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The ca. 1925 house has been modified significantly for its inclusion in what became the Jovita's compound, but is a one-story rectangular-plan, front-gabled frame house. The ca. 1962 commercial building is a one-story, rectangular -plan, flat-roofed rock-veneered commercial building with fixed-sash fenestration. Both the commercial building and the old house are encircled on the street by a series of rock walls and arches, creating the internal compound that was a Mexican restaurant and live music venue for 20 years.

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**RESEARCH**

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**House**

Annie Roberts, an apparent divorcee, moved from Fort Bend County into this house around 1925. She did not have an occupation listed in the early city directories, but she later worked as a maid for private families. Her daughter, Myrtle Roberts Hobbs, and Myrtle's husband, David Hobbs, moved from Fort Bend County into this house around 1930. David Hobbs was a carpenter. Around 1932, Annie Roberts married Thomas R. Johnson, who was a nurse at the Confederate Home at the time. They are not listed in the 1935 city directory, but returned to this house and lived here together until their deaths in the mid-1960s. Thomas R. Johnson was listed as a yard man for the State Board of Control; in actuality, he was a gardener at the State Capitol. David and Myrtle Hobbs lived with the Johnsons here through the mid-1930s, then moved out to rural Travis County. After Thomas and Annie Johnson both passed away in the mid-1960s, the house became a rental property with a long-term tenant (Maria Hernandez) who stayed here until around 1990. The house was eventually incorporated into the compound that became Jovita's Mexican restaurant. The doors, windows, and walls of the house were removed and the space became a dining area of the restaurant. The tympanum of the gable of the house remains and is visible behind the rock walls that encircle the compound.

**Commercial Building**

The commercial building was constructed in 1962 by D.L. Perry as his plumbing and heating shop. Perry's shop only lasted for a few years; the building then became a vacuum cleaner repair shop in the late 1960s. Ben and Emma Arizmendez opened Big Ben's Sandwiches in the building in the early 1970s and constructed the patio in the late 1970s. The building was briefly the Bouldin Creek Bar and Grill in the early 1990s, before being purchased by Mayo Pardo as Jovita's Mexican Restaurant. Jovita's also became renowned as one of Austin's best live music venues for many years. The restaurant closed in 2012 after it was discovered that a large heroin ring was operating on the premises.

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**STAFF COMMENTS**

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The house was listed with no priority for research in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984). The commercial building is not listed in any city survey.

Staff has evaluated this house and commercial building for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that these structures do not meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

- a. **Architecture.** The house has suffered large-scale modifications that have obliterated its identity except for the front-facing gable that is visible from the street. The commercial building has some interest because of its rock veneer walls, but is a vernacular construction that may not rise to the level of the architectural significance required to designate the building as a historic landmark.
- b. **Historical association.** The house was associated with one family for over 40 years – Annie Roberts Johnson worked as a maid and her husband worked as a gardener at the State Capitol. The commercial building only has significance from 1992 to 2012, when it was Jovita’s and one of the city’s premier live music venues. Unfortunately, the significance associated with Jovita’s does not fall within the historic period.
- 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 commercial building may have community value, but not within the historic period. The Commission would have to find extraordinary significance to the history of the building as a live music venue in order to designate the building under this criterion.
- e. **Landscape feature.** The property is noteworthy for its rock walls and arches, but these do not appear to date from the historic period.




#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Enable the demolition of the remains of the house but encourage rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of the commercial building. If the Commission votes to release the permit for both the commercial building and the house, then staff recommends 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.

## LOCATION MAP



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 333'

## NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2019-0321

LOCATION: 1617 S 1ST ST (JOVITA'S)



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.

1617 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
ca. 1925



## OCCUPANCY HISTORY

1617 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center  
By City Historic Preservation Office  
May, 2019

1924

The address is not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: Annie Roberts is not listed in the directory.



- 1927 Annie Roberts, owner  
No occupation listed  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street.
- 1929 Annie Roberts, owner  
No occupation listed  
NOTE: David J. and Myrtle Hobbs are not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street.
- 1930-31 Annie Roberts, owner  
No occupation listed  
Also listed are David J. and Myrtle Hobbs; he was a carpenter. Myrtle Hobbs was Annie Roberts' daughter.  
NOTE: Thomas Johnson is listed as a nurse at the Confederate Home; he had no separate residential address.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street.
- 1932-33 David J. and Myrtle Hobbs, renters  
Carpenter  
Also listed are Thomas J. and Annie Johnson; he was a nurse at the Confederate Home.  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1611 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street.
- 1935 David J. and Myrtle Hobbs, renters  
Carpenter  
NOTE: Thomas and Annie Johnson are not listed in the directory.
- 1937 Thomas R. and Annie Johnson, renters  
No occupation listed  
Also listed are Ernest and Winnie Hobbs; he was a bus driver.
- 1939 Thomas R. and Annie Johnson, renters  
Laborer
- 1941 Lloyd B. and Corinne Leffingwell, renters  
City firefighter
- 1944-45 Thomas R. and Annie Johnson, renters  
Yardman, State Board of Control
- 1947 J.B. Roberts, renter  
General contractor (office at the house)  
Also listed are Thomas R. and Annie Johnson; he was a yardman for the State Board of Control.
- 1949 Thomas R. and Annie Johnson, renters  
Caretaker
- 1952 Thomas R. and Annie Johnson, renters  
Yardman, State Board of Control

1955	Thomas R. and Annie Johnson, owners No occupation listed
1957	Thomas R. and Annie Johnson, owners No occupation listed
1961	Thomas R. and Annie O. Johnson, owners No occupation listed NOTE: Thomas R. and Annie O. Johnson died in the mid-1960s.
1968	Edward and Lola Jimenez, renters No occupation listed ½: Lon Kelso, renter Retired
1973	Vacant ½: Vacant
1977	Maria Hernandez, renter No occupation listed NOTE: The directory indicates that Maria Hernandez was a new resident at this address. ½: Vacant
1981	Maria Hernandez, renter No occupation listed
1985-86	Maria G. Hernandez, renter Retired
1992	Juana Chavez, renter No occupation listed

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES**

**Annie Roberts (ca. 1925 – ca. 1933); Thomas and Annie Johnson (ca. 1933 – ca. 1965)**

**David J. and Myrtle Hobbs (ca. 1930 – ca. 1936)**

Annie Roberts was the wife of Alonzo Roberts, who appears in the 1920 U.S. Census for Richmond, Fort Bend County, Texas. Alonzo Roberts was a 36-year old Texas-born electrician. Annie Roberts had no occupation listed. Myrtle Roberts was one of their children. She was 16, and married to David Hobbs, 24. Myrtle Roberts Hobbs was born in Texas and had no occupation listed. David J. Hobbs was a Texas-born boiler-maker at the oil mill.

It appears that Annie and Alonzo Roberts divorced at some time before Annie moved to Austin around 1925. Alonzo C. Roberts died in Port Arthur, Texas in 1934, and is listed as married but his wife's name is not noted on his death certificate. He was born in Washington County, Texas, and had no occupation listed on his death certificate.

Annie Roberts appears to have married Thomas R. Johnson around 1932.

D.J. and Myrtle Hobbs appear in the 1930 U.S. Census as the renters of this house, which is listed as 1611 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street. D.J. Hobbs was 33, had been born in Texas, and was a carpenter in building construction. Myrtle Hobbs was 26, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation

listed. They had 3 sons listed with them: Curtis, 9; Vernon, 6; and Alvin, 4. All the boys had been born in Texas. Annie Roberts does not appear in the census report with them.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Thomas R. and Annie Johnson as the owners of this house, which was worth \$2,500. Thomas R. Johnson was 62, had been born in Texas, and was a laborer in building construction. Annie Johnson was 58, had been born in Texas, and was a maid for a private family.

Shown as renters at this address in the 1940 U.S. Census are Lloyd and Corrine Leffingwell, with their daughter Shirley Lee. Lloyd Leffingwell was 24, had been born in Texas, and was a city fireman. Corrine Leffingwell was also 24, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. Shirley Lee Leffingwell was an infant.

David and Myrtle Hobbs had moved to a house worth \$500 in Precinct 5 of Travis County by the time of the 1940 U.S. Census. David J. Hobbs was 44, had been born in Texas, and was a carpenter in building construction. Myrtle Hobbs was 36, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 2 sons listed with them: Alvin, 14; and Gilbert, 4. Both boys had been born in Texas. The family lived in Austin in 1935.

The Hobbs family eventually moved to Azle, Texas. Myrtle Hobbs had a short death notice in the Austin newspaper; David J. Hobbs had no obituary in the Austin newspapers.

Annie Ophelia Johnson died in 1965. This house was her last address. She was born in 1882 in Caldwell, Texas and was a housewife. Thomas Roderick Johnson's last address was this house; he died in 1966. He was born in Hays County, Texas in 1878 and was a retired gardener at the State Capitol. He was a widower.

Thomas Roderick Johnson's 1918 World War I draft registration card shows that he was living at 4523 Avenue G in Austin. He was born in 1878 and was a laborer at Seton Infirmary. He was tall and slender and had dark brown hair and blue eyes.

**MRS. ANNIE O. JOHNSON**

Mrs. Annie Ophelia Johnson, 83, of 1617 South 1st St., died in a local hospital Sunday. She was a member of the Bouldin Avenue Church of Christ and a resident of Austin since 1920. She is survived by her husband; two daughters, Mrs. Allene Ragland, Austin and Mrs. Myrtle Hobbs, Azel; two sons, J. B. "Bullets" Roberts, Bahama Island and Robert E. Lee Roberts Sr., San Diego, Calif.; sister, Mrs. Jerry O'Neal, Grand Prairie; 12 grandchildren, 29 great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

Funeral will be Monday at 4:30 p.m. from Cook Funeral Home with Geo. H. Hoker Jr. and Melvin Fleming officiating. Burial will be in Capital Memorial Gardens.

Pallbearers will be William G. Jones, Curtis Hobbs, Vernon Hobbs, Alvin Hobbs, Gilbert Hobbs and John Roberts.

Obituary of Annie Roberts Johnson  
Austin American, March 22, 1965



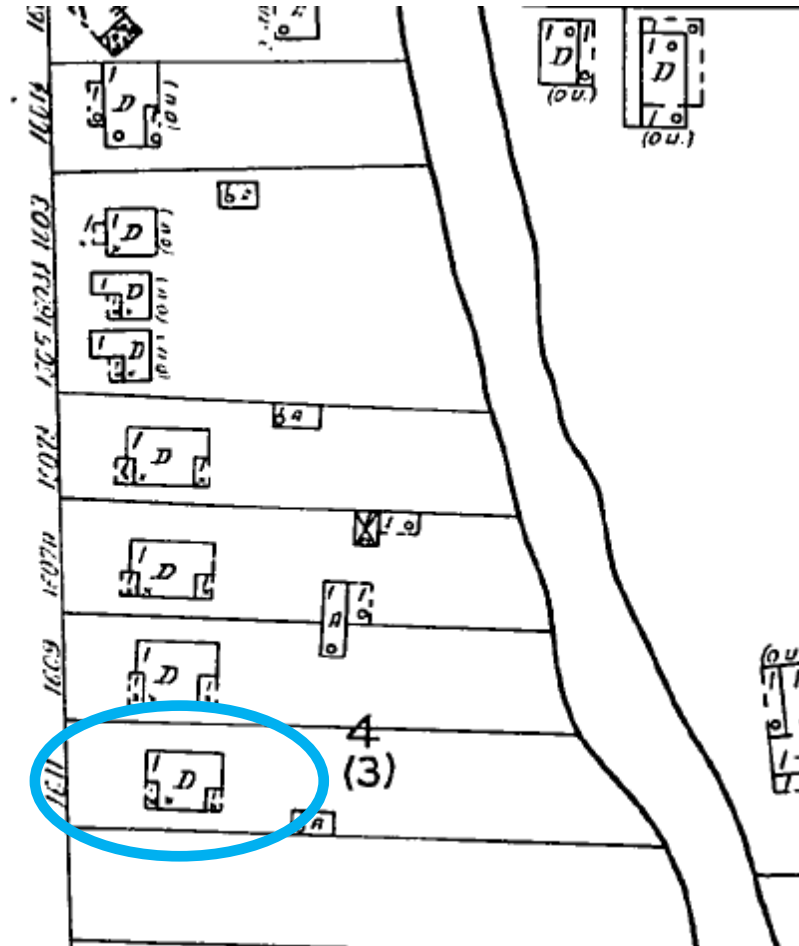
**THOMAS R. JOHNSON**

Thomas R. Johnson, 88 of 1617 South First St., died in a local hospital Tuesday. He was a member of Bouldin Avenue Church of Christ.

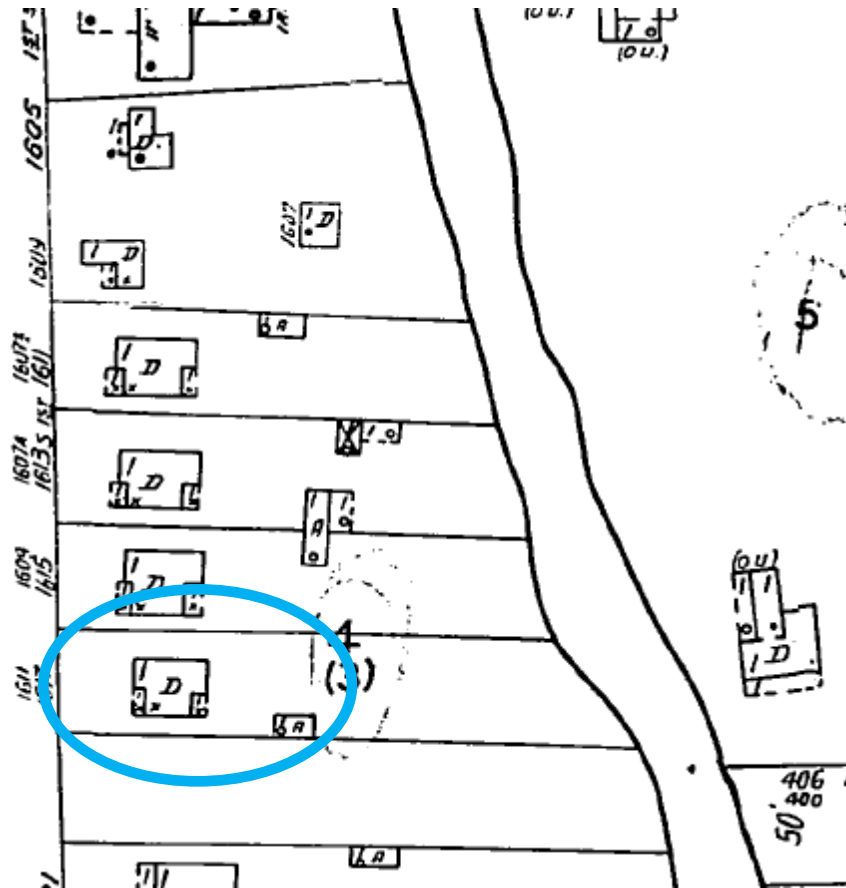
He is survived by daughters, Mrs. Myrtle Hobbs, Azel, Tex., and Mrs. Allene Ragland, Austin; sons, J. B. Roberts, Bahama Islands, and R. F. L. Roberts, San Diego, Calif.; sister, Mrs. W. C. Pannell, Austin; brothers, W. A. Johnson, Dallas and D. E. Johnson, Sunset, Tex.; and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Funeral will be 10 a.m. Wednesday from Cook Funeral Home with Melvin Flemming officiating. Burial will be in Capital Memorial Gardens.

Obituary of Thomas R. Johnson  
Austin American, November 16, 1966



The house appears on the 1935 Sanborn map with its former address of 1611 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street.  
 This area of S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street does not appear on the 1922 map.



The 1962 Sanborn map shows the house with its former and current addresses.

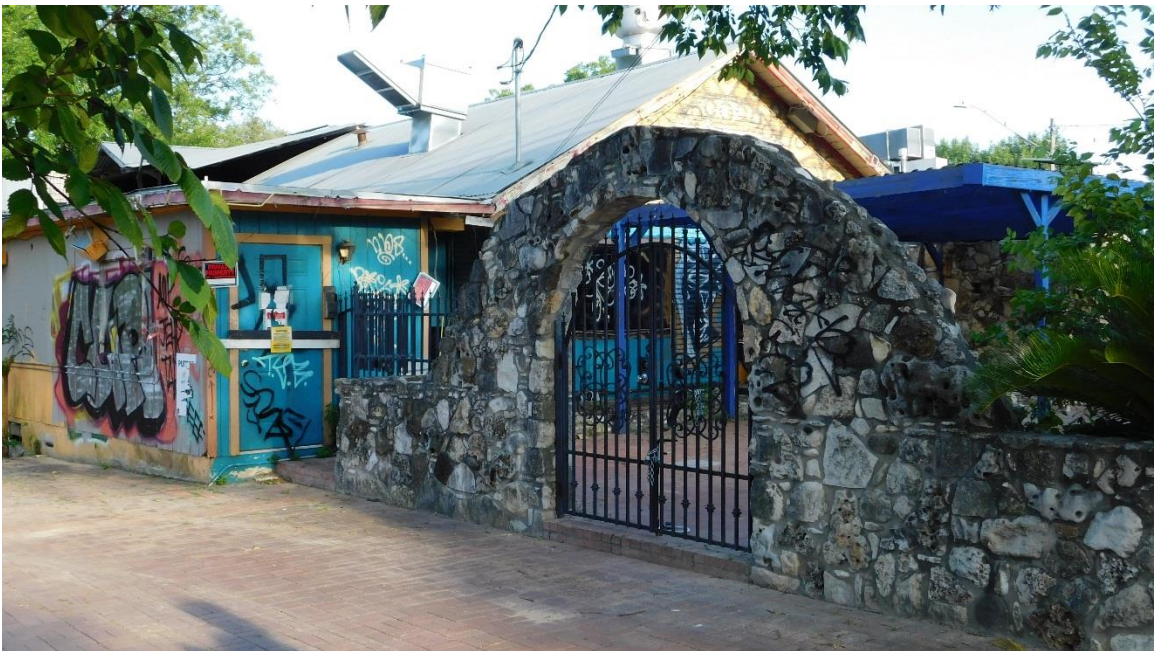
1619 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
ca. 1962













1962	The address is not listed in the directory. NOTE: City building permit records indicate that this building was constructed in 1962 by D.L. Perry.
1963	D.L. Perry Plumbing and Heating
1968	O.T. Bergstrom Hoover Service Vacuum cleaner repair
1973	Big Ben's Sandwiches Emma Arizmendez, manager
1977	Big Ben's Sandwiches Emma Arizmendez, manager
1981	No return
1985-86	Big Ben Sandwiches Emma R. Arizmendez, proprietor
1992	Bouldin Creek Bar and Grill Fred Botello and Ed Lora, proprietors

4/2/62 1619  
~~1617~~ South 1st. St.  
122 9 3  
D. W. Bouldin  
Masonry Commercial Building  
82879 2-19-62 1250.00  
Owner 3  
w E30134 s 37099

Building permit to D.L. Perry for the construction of this building as his plumbing shop (1962)

OWNER Felix Grizwin ADDRESS 1619 South 1st.  
 PLAT 122 LOT 9 BLK 3  
 SUBDIVISION D. W. Bouldin  
 OCCUPANCY Restaurant  
 BLD PERMIT # 111156 DATE 1-20-69 OWNERS ESTIMATE \$200.00  
 CONTRACTOR Antonio Lucio NO. OF FIXTURES yes  
 WATER TAP REC # Exist SEWER TAP REC #  
Remodel comm bldg and addn  
50 Sq. Ft.  
6-25-75-150374-Ben Arsimendez contr. remodel comm  
bldg. \$300.00

Building permit to remodel the commercial building (1969) and to Ben Arismendez (Big Ben's Sandwiches) (1975)

OWNER Ben Arizmendez ADDRESS 1619 So. 1st St.  
 PLAT 122 LOT 9 BLK 3  
 SUBDIVISION D.W. Bouldin  
 OCCUPANCY covered patio addn to restaurant  
 BLDG. PERMIT # 166092 DATE 7-22-77 OWNERS ESTIMATE \$500.00  
 CONTRACTOR owner NO. OF FIXTURES  
 WATER TAP REC# SEWER TAP REC#  
patio addn to exist wood frm comm lbdg

Building permit to Ben Arizmendez to construct a patio addition (1977)