

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
JULY 22, 2019
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2019-0339
1504 E. 13TH STREET

PROPOSAL

Partial demolition of a ca. 1904 house to construct additions.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, wing-and-gable plan frame house with single 1:1 fenestration and a partial-width, shed-roofed entry porch on paired wood posts; transom above the front door; metal roof.

RESEARCH

The house appears to have been built around 1904 by Frank J. Robinson, a laborer, who lived here with his wife, Nellie until around 1917, when they apparently divorced. Nellie Robinson is listed as the owner of the house from around 1917 until around 1923, and there is a Frank Robinson who is listed in the 1920 U.S. Census as a divorced man who may be the same man once married to Nellie. In October, 1922, Nellie Robinson married J.H. Morris, who moved into this house with her. J.H. Morris only appears in the 1924 city directory, after that, the sole listing is for Nellie Morris, who is listed through the mid-1950s. Nellie Morris rarely had an occupation listed in the city directory, but when she did, she was a cook for a private family. Nellie Morris passed away in 1955. Since the early 1930s, Willie L. Morris lived in this house as well. There is some confusion as to whether Willie L. Morris was the son or the nephew of Nellie Morris, he is listed as both in census reports, but since she was 54 years older than he was, it seems more likely that he was her nephew. Willie L. Morris married Fannie Bell Toliver in 1946; they remained in this house until their deaths a year apart in the mid-1990s. Willie L. Morris was a laborer and a carpenter who worked for Walter Carrington, a home builder, and later for the Austin public schools.

The family added a rear dwelling unit to this property in the early 1950s; tenants included maids, a porter, a barber, and office workers.

This house is remarkable for the longevity of members of the single family who lived here for over 90 years, from its construction in 1904 until the last of them passed away in the mid-1990s.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house was recommended as a local landmark or individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and as contributing to a local or National Register historic district by the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (2016).

Staff has evaluated this house for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that the house may meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

- a. **Architecture.** The house is a very good example of the National Folk style in its wing-and-gable configuration. The National Folk style describes a vernacular housing type that developed around the turn of the 20th century. Particularly in the South, many of these houses were built in a wing-and-gable configuration that allowed for an ample front porch to both cool the house and provide an outside living area. The wing-and-gable style, while less common than it used to be, is still prevalent in much of East Austin as a housing type.
- b. **Historical association.** The house is remarkable for the longevity of occupancy by members of a single family, who built the house in 1904 and remained here

until the last of them passed away in the mid-1990s. Members of this family had occupations typical of the African-American experience in Austin – the matriarch was a cook for a private family; the men worked as laborers or carpenters. The house may reflect the standard of living and lifeways of a certain demographic in Austin’s history, but it does not appear that any of the members of this family were individually significant.

- 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

The case has come before the Commission because of the partial demolition permit for new additions and the recommendation in the East Austin Historic Resources Survey that the house is eligible for individual designation. The Certificate of Appropriateness Review Committee reviewed the plans for the addition and did not feel that the addition would foreclose the opportunity to landmark the house in the future, but staff believes tht the addition has a significant impact on the historic appearance and context of the house. Having said that, staff does not believe that the case to landmark this house is very strong, so the course of action here should be to preserve the context and appearance of the house to the greatest degree possible for a harmonious composition.

The Committee recommended that the applicant construct a porch that goes across the entire “wing” section of the front elevation in accordance with the norms of the National Folk style; the current porch is most likely nor original and does not comport with the typical configuration of a wing-and-gable house. The Committee further recommended that the proposed addition be designed and built so that the historic house remains the focus of the property, and that all existing door and wall openings on the historic house be maintained.

Staff therefore recommends release of the permit with the direction to the applicant to follow the recommendations of the Committee members, and to complete 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, prior to the release of the permit.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2019-0339
 LOCATION: 1504 E. 13th Street



1" = 168'

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.

1504 E. 13th Street
ca. 1904



OCCUPANCY HISTORY

1504 E. 13th Street

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

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 1903-04 | Unknown
NOTE: Frank J. Robinson is listed at 713 W. 14 th Street. |
| 1905 | Frank J. Robinson (colored)
No occupation listed
NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street. |
| 1906-07 | Frank Robinson (colored)
Employed by the City Water Works
Also listed is Nellie Robinson, a cook at the Millet Mansion
NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street. |
| 1909-10 | Frank J. Robinson (colored)
Barber
Also listed is Nellie Robinson, no occupation shown.
NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street. |

1910-11	Frank Robinson (colored) Laborer NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1912-13	Frank Robinson (colored) Laborer NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1914	Frank Robinson (colored) Laborer NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1916	Frank Robinson (colored) Laborer Also listed are Nellie Robinson, a cook; and Lizzie Clark, a laundress. NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1918	Nellie Robinson (colored), owner Cook Also listed are Monroe B. White (colored), a porter at Griffith Drug Company; Zora White (colored), a cook; and Lucy Clark (colored), a laundress. NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1920	Nellie Robinson (colored), owner Cook, 500 W. 13 th Street. Also listed is Minerva Prot (colored), no occupation shown. NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1922	Nellie Robinson (colored), owner Cook, 710 W. 19 th Street. Also listed are Monroe and Zora White (colored); he was a laborer for B.W. Randolph. NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1924	J.H. and Nellie Morris (colored), owners No occupation listed NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1927	Nellie Morris (colored), owner Cook, 1220 W. 6 th Street. NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1929	Nellie Morris (colored), owner No occupation listed NOTE: The house is listed as 1404 E. 13 th Street.
1932-33	Nellie Morris, owner No occupation listed Also listed is William L. Morris, no occupation shown. NOTE: The house is listed as 1504 E. 13 th Street.
1935	Nellie Morris, owner No occupation listed

Also listed are William L. Morris, a painter; and Samuel and Viola Edwards, neither of whom had an occupation shown.

1939	Nellie Morris, owner No occupation listed
1941	Nellie Morris, owner No occupation listed Also listed is William L. Morris, a laborer.
1944-45	Nellie Morris, renter Maid
1947	William L. and Fannie B. Morris, owners No occupation listed Also listed is Nellie Morris, no occupation shown.
1949	William L and Fannie B. Morris, owners Student
1952	Nellie Morris, owner No occupation listed Also listed as William L. and Fannie B. Morris; he was a student. At the rear was Milton M. and Addie M. Pettaway; he was a porter at Scarbrough's department store, 6 th Street and Congress Avenue.
1955	Willis L. and Fannie B. Morris, owners Carpenter, Walter Carrington
1959	Willie L. and Fannie B. Morris, owners Carpenter Rear: Mrs. Georgie Williams renter Domestic worker
1962	Willie L. and Fannie B. Morris, owners Carpenter Rear: Herman Beane, renter No occupation listed
1965	Willie L. and Fannie B. Morris, owners Carpenter, public schools Rear: Herman Beane, renter Barber, Jones Barber Shop
1968	Willie L. and Fannie B. Morris, owners Driver, public schools Rear: Mrs. Lenora Blackman, renter Key punch operator, IBM
1973	Louis D. Morris, owner No occupation listed Also listed is Viola C. James, no occupation shown. B: Lattrell Sterling, renter No occupation listed

- C: John Black, renter
No occupation listed
- 1977 W.L. and Fannie Morris, owners
Custodian
Rear: Estella G. Nicholson, renter
Maid, Scarbrough's, department store, 6th Street and Congress Avenue.
NOTE: The directory indicates that Estella G. Nicholson was a new resident at this address.
- 1981 Willie L. and Fannie B. Morris, owners
Custodian, public schools
A: Albert Davis, renter
Retired
B: Louis Morris, renter
No occupation listed
- 1985-86 Willie L. and Fannie B. Morris, owners
Retired
Rear: Vacant
- 1992 W.L. and Fannie Morris, owners
Retired
C: No return

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

Nellie Robinson/Nellie Morris; Willie and Fannie Morris (ca. 1904 – ca. 1997)

Nellie Prout (later Nellie Robinson, later Nellie Morris) is listed in the 1900 U.S. Census as a servant in the home of Louisa Warner [?] at 1609 Lavaca Street in Austin. Nellie Prout was born in May, 1863 in Texas, and is listed as a cook. Her employer, Louisa Warner, was a 79-year old Tennessee-born widow who is listed as a landowner. The household also included Louisa Warner's niece, Emma H. Barton, who was born in 1862 in Alabama, and is also listed as a landowner.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Nellie Prout as the owner of this house, which is addressed at 1404 E. 13th Street. Nellie Prout was 59, had been born in Texas to Alabama-born parents, and was a cook for a private family. With her lived her mother, Minerva Prout, 95, who had been born in Alabama and had no occupation listed. In a separate listing under this same address was Monroe and Zora White, and Zora's son, Wilber Washington. Monroe White was 28, had been born in Texas, and was a porter in a drug store. Zora White was 29, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. Wilber Washington is listed as Monroe White's step-son; he was 13, and had been born in Texas. The family also had a lodger, Rachel Jones, a 79-year old Alabama-born widow with no occupation listed.

Little is known of Nellie Prout's first husband, Frank Robinson. Frank B. And Lillie [sic] Robinson appear in the 1910 U.S. Census at this house, which is address as 1404 E. 13th Street. Frank B. Robinson was a 43-year old mulatto who had been born in Texas and was a porter in a hardware store. His mother was born in South Carolina; his was his second marriage. Lillie [sic] Robinson was 47, had been born in Texas, and was a cook for a private family. Her father had been born in Alabama. This was her first marriage. They had no children listed with them. The 1920 U.S. Census also shows a Frank Robinson, who may be the same man once married to Nellie Prout Robinson. He is listed as a servant in the home of Robert and Katherine Vinson on 27th Street in Austin. He was 48 and divorced; he was born in Texas.

Nellie Robinson married J.H. Morris in Travis County on October 31, 1922.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows Nellie Morris as the owner of this house, which is addressed as 1404 E. 13th Street; the house was worth \$3,000. Nellie Morris was a 70-year old Texas-born widow who worked as a cook for a private family. Her father had been born in Tennessee; her mother born in Alabama. Willie Morris is listed as her 16-year old son, who had been born in Texas and had no occupation listed. Nellie Morris had 4 lodgers: Booker T. Earle, 24, a Texas-born chauffeur for a private family; Vergie M. Earle, 20 who had no occupation listed, Booker T. Earle, Jr., 1; and Ella McCullough, 19, a Texas-born laundress at home.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Nellie Morris as the owner of this house (addressed as 1504 E. 13th Street); the house was worth \$1,000. Nellie Morris was a 76-year old widow who had been born in Texas and had no occupation listed. With her lived Willie Morris, who is listed here as her nephew (the 1930 U.S. Census listed him as Nellie Morris' son). Willie L. Morris was 26, had been born in Texas, and was a house cleaner. Also in the household was Nellie Morris' brother, Bob Prout, 89, who had been born in Alabama and had no occupation listed. The family also had 3 lodgers: Willie Thompson, 30, a sewerage laborer for the WPA Sewerage Project; Myrtle Thompson, 18; and Margie Thompson, an infant. All the members of the Thompson family had been born in Texas.

Nellie Morris died in 1955. Her death certificate shows that she was living at this address at the time of her death, and was a widowed domestic. She was born in Bastrop County, Texas in 1871 to a Robert Proutt and M. Allen.

Willie Lee Morris was born in 1913 in Texas. His World War II draft card shows that as of October, 1940, he was working for himself and living in Austin. Nellie Morris was his next of kin. He was 5'-9" tall, weighed 142 pounds, and had black hair and brown eyes.

Willie L. Morris married Fannie Bell Toliver in Travis County in August, 1946.

MORRIS, Willie Lee, 82, of Austin died Monday. Visitation 11 a.m. Thursday, Phillips, Upshaw & Richard Funeral Home. Services 11 a.m. Friday, Ebenezer Baptist Church. Burial Assumption Cemetery.

Obituary of Willie Lee Morris
Austin American-Statesman, July 10, 1996

MORRIS, Fanie Toliver, 75, of Austin died Monday. Visitation 11 a.m. Friday, Phillips-Upshaw & Richard. Services 11:30 p.m. Saturday, Ebenezer Baptist Church. Burial Assumption Cemetery.

Death notice for Fannie Toliver Morris
Austin American-Statesman, February 27, 1997