

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 24, 2020
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2020-0004
1610 E. 7TH STREET

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1912 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, irregular-plan frame house with a projecting front gable over a partial-width, shed-roofed independent porch; single and paired 1:1 fenestration, single, glazed front door. The house has had many alterations over the years, as evidenced by the attached Sanborn maps showing the configuration of the house in 1921, 1935, and 1962. The original form of the house may still be discerned, but the wraparound porch shown on the 1921 map has been filled in, and porches shown on the 1935 and 1962 maps have been eliminated or modified. There is a building permit from 1959 to install aluminum siding on the house and replace the windows.

RESEARCH

The house appears to have been built around 1912, but retains little of its original form as shown on the 1922 Sanborn map, and materials. The first known occupants were Benjamin F. and Emma Cayce, who lived here until around 1915. Benjamin Franklin Cayce was a bartender before moving into this house; while he and Emma lived here, he was a car inspector for the Houston and Texas Central Railroad.

The demographics of the occupants of this house as well as the entire neighborhood, changed around 1917, when city directories show a shift from Anglo residents to African-American residents. The city directories of 1918 and 1920 show African-American renters in this house; both the male heads of household were listed as laborers in the city directories. Around 1921, the house was purchased by William A. and Linnie Swisher, an African-American couple. Members of the Swisher family owned and occupied this house from 1921 until around 1970, when Lillie Swisher Williams, a daughter of William and Linnie Swisher, sold the property and moved away. The Swishers were typical of Austin's small African-American middle class in East Austin, despite many hardships in their lives. William Swisher's 1921 death certificate notes that he was a porter. After his death at the age of 30, Linnie Swisher raised their children on her own. The city directories for the period of Linnie Swisher's tenancy in this house indicate a family with working children and students, particularly at Samuel Huston College, which was located to the west of the family home on Robertson Hill. Linnie's son Earl worked as a clerk at the Ideal Drug Store, owned by one of Austin's first African-American pharmacists, U.S. Young, whose later Hillside Pharmacy at 11th and Rosewood has been designated as a historic landmark. Theo and Earl Swisher were both students at Samuel Huston College, and Theo Swisher went on to become a teacher at Kealing Junior High School, the first junior high school for Austin's African-American students, opened in 1930. Earl Swisher also became a teacher at Kealing, and their younger sister, Lillie, became a first grade teacher at Blackshear Elementary School, in the heart of the African-American residential district in East Austin.

Linnie Swisher passed away in 1940, and the house became a rental property; the tenants were working-class African-Americans, both employed as porters. Lillie Swisher meantime had married James D. Williams, who had several occupations, including an agent for an African-American life insurance company, before becoming a teacher at Kealing Junior High School. Lillie Swisher Williams and James D. Williams lived in this house from around 1948,

when they moved back in after the rental tenants, until around 1970. Little is known of James D. Williams, but Lillie Swisher Williams died in 1995 in Austin. Other Swisher family members moved to California in the 1940s; Lillie's brother Theo died in Alameda County, California in 1950.

From around 1970, when James D. and Lillie Swisher Williams moved away, until the present, the house has been a rental property.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house was recommended as not eligible for local or National Register designation 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 does not meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:





- a. **Architecture.** The original ca. 1912 house has been modified to the extent that the 1912 architectural details and form are no longer readily apparent in the current construction. The 1921 Sanborn map shows a house with a modified T-plan and a porch wrapping around the south and east sides of the projecting front bay. By 1935, either the house shown on the 1921 map had been replaced, or had been filled in towards the front. The 1935 and 1962 Sanborn maps show a more rectangular-plan for the house with a small porch off the projecting front bay and a small porch along the front in what would have likely been a wing-and-gable configuration. The current house has had more modifications, and retains very little of its historic appearance, as required by this criterion for designation.
- b. **Historical association.** The house may qualify as a historic landmark for its long-term associations with the family of Linnie Swisher, who lived here from around 1921 until around 1970. Linnie Swisher was a widow who raised her 5 children in this house, all of whom, it seems, received higher education at Samuel Huston College, and 3 of whom became school teachers in segregated African-American public schools in Austin. Their continuous engagement in education in Austin is 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

Encourage rehabilitation and adaptive re-use, then relocation over demolition, 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. While the house reflects the history of the African-American Swisher family of educators in Austin, it has been so modified from its historic appearance that the second criterion necessary for designation cannot be met.

LOCATION MAP



-  N
-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2020-0004
1610 E 7TH STREET



1" = 292'

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.

1610 E. 7th Street
ca. 1912



OCCUPANCY HISTORY 1610 E. 7th Street

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

- | | |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1992 | Craig Gardner, renter
No occupation listed
NOTE: The directory indicates that Craig Gardner was a new resident at this address. |
| 1985-86 | Mary Medellin, renter
No occupation listed |
| 1981 | Jose and Mary Medellin, renters
Construction worker |
| 1977 | Vacant |
| 1973 | Van and Lucille Dixon, renters
No occupation listed
NOTE: The directory indicates that Van and Lucille Dixon were new residents at this address. |
| 1968 | James D. and Lillie E. Williams, owners
Teacher, public schools |

- 1965 James D. and Lillie E. Williams, owners
Teacher, public schools
- 1961 James D. and Lillie Williams, owners
James: Teacher, Kealing Junior High School
Lillie: Teacher, Blackshear Elementary School
- 1957 James D. and Lillie Williams, owners
Teacher
Also listed is Lillian C. Brown, the proprietor of Brown's Nursing Home, 1105 E. 12th Street.
- 1954 James D. and L. Marilyn Williams, owners
James: Technician, Holland Page Industries, contractors' equipment, 705 W. 10th Street and 8305 Lamar Boulevard.
L. Marilyn: Teacher, Blackshear Elementary School
- 1952 James D. and Lillie Williams, owners
Teacher
- 1949 James D. and Lillie S. Williams, owners
James: Agent, Excelsior Life Insurance Company, 1206 Rosewood Avenue.
Lillie: Teacher, Blackshear School
- 1947 Leon and Blanche Webb, renters
Porter, State Board of Education
NOTE: James D. and Lillie Williams are not listed in the directory.
- 1944-45 Charles H. and Esther Hutson, renters
Porter, State Board of Insurance Commissioners, Life Insurance Division
NOTE: Linnie M. Swisher died in October, 1940.
NOTE: No other member of the Swisher or Williams family is listed in the directory.
- 1941 Linnie M. Swisher, owner
No occupation listed
Also listed is Lillian E. Swisher, a student.
- 1939 Linnie M. Swisher, owner
Laundress
Also listed are Theo E. Swisher and his wife, Georgia B.; he was a public school teacher.
- 1937 Linnie Swisher, owner
No occupation listed
Also listed are Earl M. Swisher, a teacher at Kealing Junior High School, Granville Swisher; Theo E. Swisher, a teacher at Kealing Junior High School; and Willie M. Swisher, no occupation shown.
- 1935 Linnie M. Swisher, owner
No occupation listed
NOTE: Theo and Georgia Swisher are listed at 1170 ½ San Bernard Street; he was a teacher at Kealing Junior High School/

- 1932-33 Linnie M. Swisher, owner
No occupation listed
Also listed are Earl M. Swisher, a student at Samuel Huston College; and Theo E. Swisher, a teacher at Kealing Junior High School.
- 1930-31 Linnie M. Swisher (colored), owner
No occupation listed
Also listed is Theo Swisher, a porter at Thrift Book Binding Company, 413-15 Congress Avenue.
- 1929 Lennie Swisher (colored), owner
No occupation listed
Also listed are Earl Swisher, a clerk at Ideal Drug Store (U.S. Young, proprietor), 421 E. 6th Street; and Theo E. Swisher, a student at Samuel Huston College.
- 1927 Linnie Swisher (colored), owner
No occupation listed
- 1924 Linnie Swisher (colored), owner
No occupation listed
- 1922 William A. and Linnie Swisher (colored), owners
No occupation listed
- 1920 George Quinton (colored), renter
Laborer
NOTE: William A. and Linnie Swisher are listed at 309 Comal Street; he was a janitor at Austin National Bank, 507-09 Congress Avenue.
- 1918 William H. and Margaret Hart (colored), renters
Laborer
- 1916 Jesse C. Stiles (not listed as colored)
Laborer
- 1914 Benjamin F. Cayce (not listed as colored)
Car inspector, Houston and Texas Central Railroad.
Also listed is Laura Cayce, a student.
- 1912-13 Vacant
NOTE: Benjamin F. Cayce is listed at 1208 E. 10th Street; he was a bartender.
- 1910-11 The address is not listed in the directory.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Benjamin F. and Emma Cayce (ca. 1912 – ca. 1915)

B.F. Cayce married Emma Langford in Stephens County, Texas in May, 1897.

The 1910 U.S. Census shows Benjamin F. and Emma Cayce living at 902 San Antonio Street in Austin, a house they rented. Benjamin F. Cayce was 36, had been born in Illinois to a Kentucky-born father and an American-born mother, and was a bartender in a saloon. Emma Cayce was

32, had been born in Texas to a Georgia-born father and an American-born mother, and had no occupation listed. They had 4 children: Laura, 12; Prentice, 9; Baylor, 8; and Garrett, 1 month. All of the children had been born in Texas.

His 1918 World War I draft registration card shows that Benjamin Franklin Cayce was living at 2009 Whittier Street in Austin at the time of his registration. He was born in 1873, and was an unemployed miner. He had served as a mess sergeant at Leon Springs, Texas. His nearest relative was his wife, Emma Langford Cayce. He was of medium height and had a slender build, dark gray hair and brown eyes. He suffered from lumbago.

Benjamin Franklin Cayce was born in Ashley, Washington County, Illinois in May, 1873, and died in Snyder, Texas in 1928. He is buried in the Eastland City Cemetery in Eastland, Texas. Emma Dale Cayce was born in Gatesville, Texas in 1876, and died in Andrews, Texas in 1971. She is buried in the Andrews County Cemetery in Andrews, Texas.

Linnie Swisher and family (ca. 1921 – ca. 1940)

William and Lennie Swisher appear in the 1920 U.S. Census as renters of an apartment at 1511 E. 4th Street in Austin. William Swisher was 28, had been born in Texas and was a laborer in the oil mill. Lennie Swisher was 25, had been born in Texas to Virginia-born parents, and had no occupation listed. They had 4 children: Theodore E., 7; Earl, 5; Granville, 3; and daughter Willie, 11. Also in the household was William Swisher's sister, Barbara, a 52-year old Texas-born widow who was a laundress for a private family.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows Linnie Swisher as the owner of this house, which was worth \$900. Linnie Swisher was a 38-year old widow who had been born in Texas and was a laundress at home. She had 5 children: Theodore, 17; Earl, 15; Granville, 13; Willie May, 11; and Lillie, 8. All of the children had been born in Texas, and none had an occupation listed. Also in the household was an uncle, Harvey Hill, a 50-year old widower who had been born in Texas and was a porter in an office building.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Linnie Swisher as the owner of this house, which was worth \$1,600. She was a 47-year old Texas-born widow who worked as a laundress at home. With her lived her daughter, Lilly, 18, and son, Theodore, 27, a public school teacher, with his wife, Georgia B., 27, and their 2 children, Theodore, Jr., 5, and Rose C., 3. Everyone in the family had been born in Texas.

Linnie M. Swisher was living in this house at the time of her death in October, 1940. Her death certificate indicates that she was born in 1899 in Travis County and was a widow who did housework. Lillie E. Swisher signed her death certificate.

Theodore Evans Swisher died in Alameda County, California in June, 1950.

James D. and Lillie E. Swisher Williams (ca. 1948 – ca. 1970)

Lillie Eleanor Swisher was born January 1, 1923 in Austin and died October 17, 1995 and only had a death notice in the Austin newspapers. She was a first grade teacher at Blackshear Elementary. She married James D. Williams, also a school teacher.

Blackshear P-TA Slates Last Meeting

Blackshear P-TA will hold its last meeting of the year Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria, at which time officers for the year 1955-56 will be installed by the Rev. B. L. McCormick, pastor of Grant Chapel A.M.E. Church. The officers are as follows.

Mrs. Catherine Lampkin, president; Mrs. Lillie Hill, vice-president; Mrs. Ruth Bracy, secretary; Mrs. Nettie Woods, treasurer, and the Rev. T. P. Robinson, chaplain.

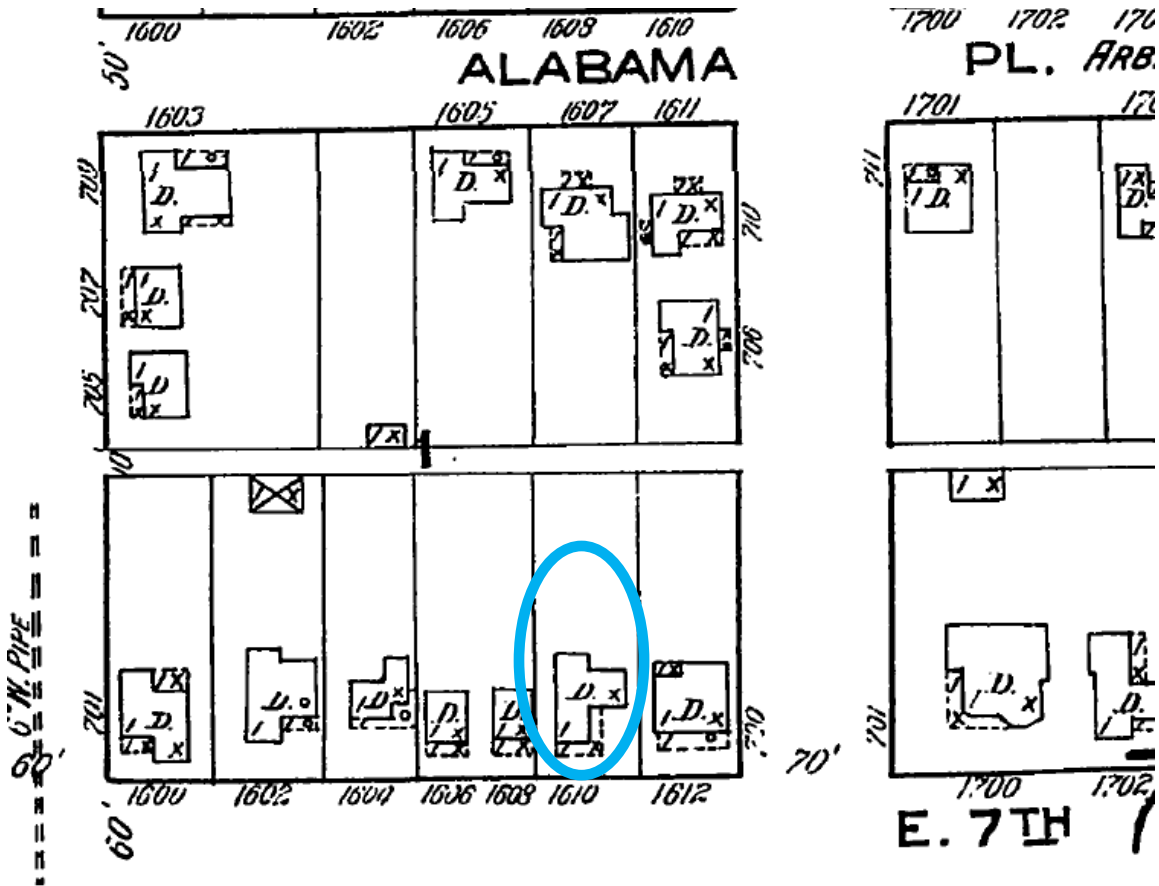
Mrs. Lampkin has been supervisor of the Rosewood Division of Recreation for the past 15 years.

Parents of children to be enrolled in the first grade in September will be oriented to the school's program. Such information as to what is required for registration of 6 year old pupils, health information banks, and a book entitled "Off To School" will be given to parents.

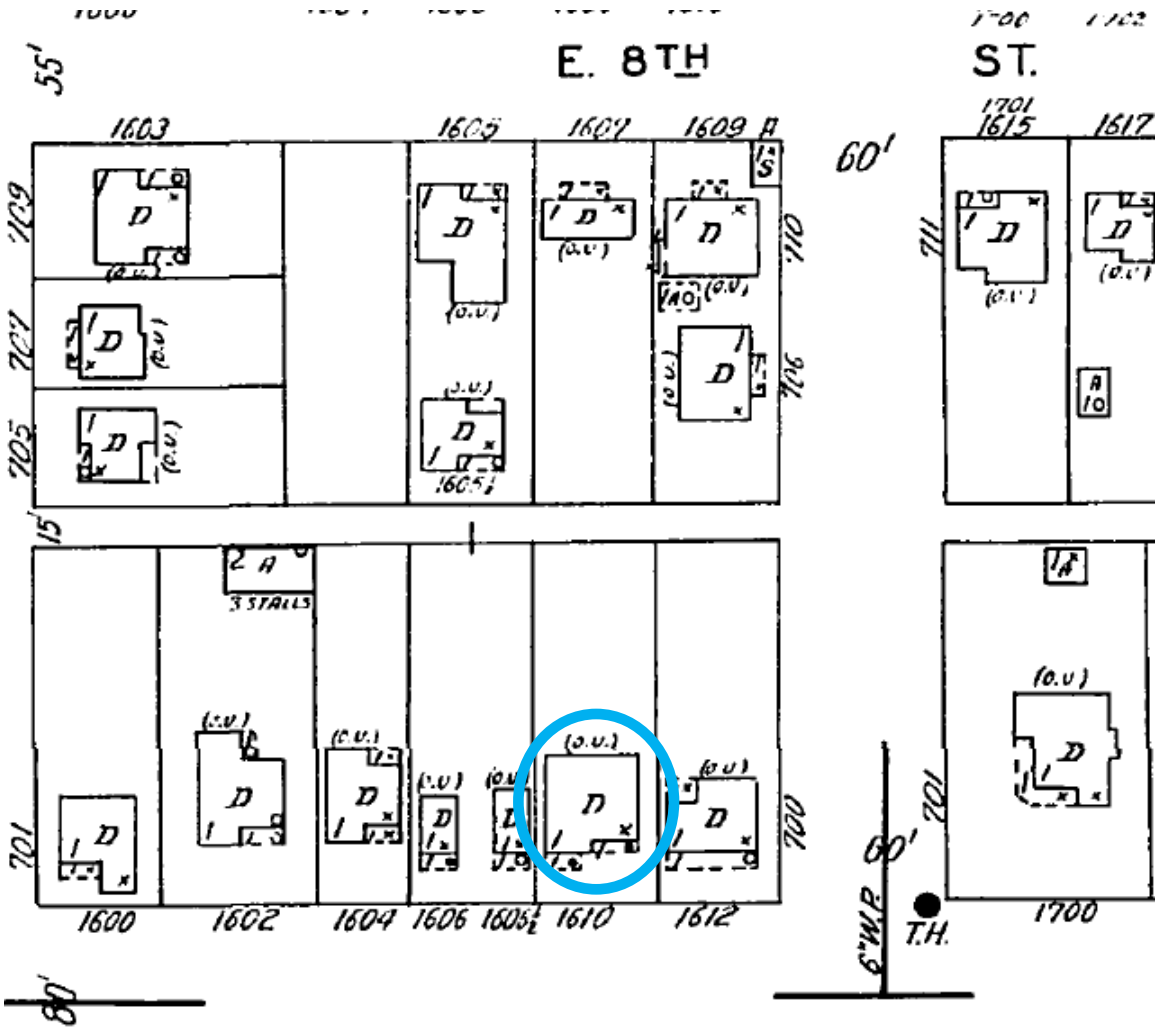
Principal F. R. Rice will be in charge with Mrs. Inez Baker, Mrs. Earc Lee Hodge and Mrs. Lillie Williams, first grade teachers assisting. Mrs. Christine McKnight, the school nurse will also be present. Immediately following there will be a social hour with refreshments. Parents and friends are invited to attend.



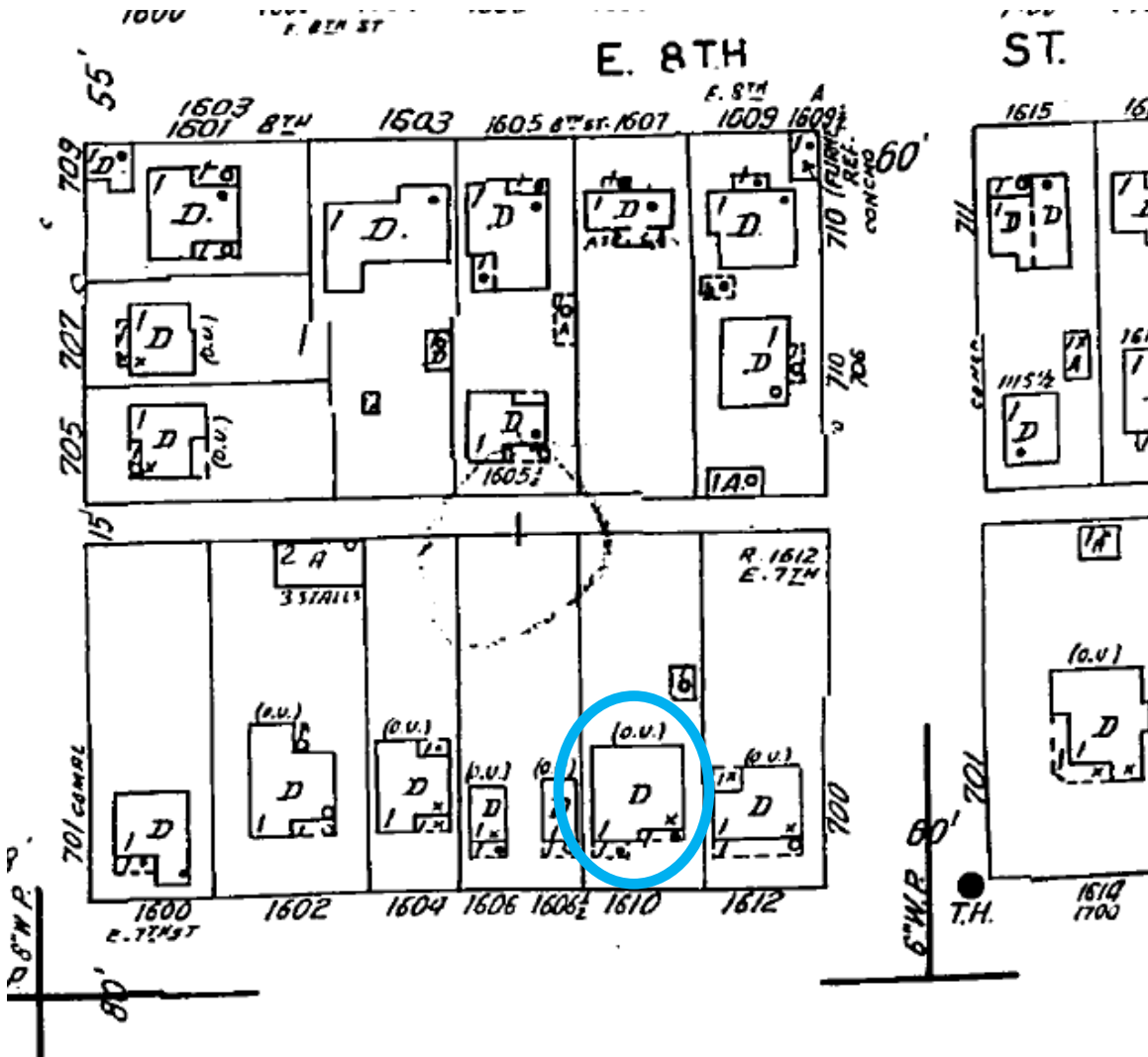
News story on the final meeting of the Blackshear P-TA for the 1954-55 school year, referencing Mrs. Lillie Williams as a first grade teacher.
Austin American-Statesman, May 22, 1955



The 1921 Sanborn map shows a house with a different configuration on this site. The house shown here has a projecting front bay with a wraparound porch on the south and east sides of the bay.



The 1935 Sanborn map shows a more rectangular house on the site with small porches at the front of the projecting bay and along the recessed front of the house.



The 1962 Sanborn map shows the same configuration as the 1935 map above.

J. E. Williams 1610 East 7th Street

29 5 1 6 B

General repairs to residence (interior)
37513
4-29-48 \$500.00

Owner

Building permit to James D. [sic] Williams for general repairs (1948)

James D. Williams

1610 East 7th St.

29

5

1

6

B

Frame garage.

52833 1-1-53

\$50.00

Owner

Building permit to James D. Williams to construct a frame garage (1953)

Lillie & Jas Williams 1610 East 7th St.

29

5

1

of OL 6

Remodel & Repair Residence

74906

12/8/59

2500.00

21

U.S. Bldg Materials Co.

=

Replace wooden front porch with concrete . Apply sheet
rock enlarge entrance to living room change windows
apply aluminum siding.

Building permit to Lillie and James Williams to replace the wood front porch with concrete, install sheetrock, changing windows, and installing aluminum siding (1959)

OWNER J. D. Williams ADDRESS 1610 E. 7th. St.
 PLAT 29 LOT 6 BLK 1
 SUBDIVISION of outlot #6
 OCCUPANCY Residence
 BLD PERMIT # 106111 DATE 12-7-67 OWNERS ESTIMATE 200.00
 CONTRACTOR O. W. Teinert NO. OF FIXTURES --
 WATER TAP REC # -- SEWER TAP REC # --

Remodel exist. res.

Building permit to James D. Williams to remodel the house (1967)

OWNER Jim & Lillie Williams ADDRESS 1610 E. 7th St.
 PLAT 29 LOT 5 BLK 1
 SUBDIVISION outlot 6
 OCCUPANCY res
 BLD PERMIT #148789 DATE 4-14-75 OWNERS ESTIMATE \$1500
 CONTRACTOR same NO. OF FIXTURES
 WATER TAP REC # exist SEWER TAP REC # exist

repair and remodel existing res and bring to min std.

5-27-77 164734 remodel exist res and bring to min standards

2-21-78# 170684- James Williams- Res. Repair & remodel
 res to min standrs. 3,500.00

Building permits to Jim and Lillie Williams to repair and remodel the house (1975, 1977, and 1978)

OWNER	James Williams	ADDRESS	610 E. 7th St.
PLAT	29	LOT	5
		BLK.	1
SUBDIVISION	Outlot #6		
OCCUPANCY	Res.		
BLDG. PERMIT #	175216	DATE	8-8-78
		OWNERS ESTIMATE	2,000.00
CONTRACTOR	Street Const	NO. OF FIXTURES	
WATER TAP REC#	SEWER TAP REC#		
Repair & remodel res to min standrs			

Building permit to James D. Williams to repair and remodel the house (1978)