

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2020-0020

HLC DATE:

April 27, 2020

PC DATE:

APPLICANTS: Neema and Pedram Amini

HISTORIC NAME: Majors-Butler-Thomas House

WATERSHED: Boggy Creek

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 1119 E. 11th Street

ZONING FROM: CS-1-H-NP-NCCD to CS-1-NP-NCCD

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The application is to remove historic zoning from the property. Staff cannot recommend the proposed zoning change to remove H zoning from this parcel without a plan for the landmark house and seeks guidance from the Commission for exploring courses of action. The applicant has provided substantial evidence of the long-term deterioration of the existing house, indicating that the house has been rendered unusable without an imprudent investment of funds for restoration and rehabilitation, and will therefore seek demolition of the house if the requested zoning change is recommended and ultimately approved by the City Council.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION: The Majors-Butler-Thomas House was designated as a historic landmark in 2015 for its significance in architecture and historical associations. The original staff report and supporting materials are appended to this report.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION:

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The house was designated as a historic landmark by the City Council in 2015. Since then, it has failed several inspections relating to maintenance of the property and the owners were denied their tax exemption for this property last year.

CITY COUNCIL DATE:

ACTION:

ORDINANCE READINGS: 1ST 2ND 3RD

ORDINANCE NUMBER:

CASE MANAGER: Steve Sadowsky

PHONE: 974-6454

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: Organization of Central East Austin Neighborhoods

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

The applicants seek to remove the historic landmark designation (H) zoning from the property based upon its deteriorated condition and infeasibility to repair, restore, and rehabilitate. While staff recognizes the condition of the house, and agrees with the assessments contained therein, the designation of the property as a historic landmark was known to the current applicants, who are the prospective buyers of the property. The condition of the house has worsened since the time of initial designation of this house, as it

has remained vacant. Staff seeks further evaluation of ways the historic landmark house can be incorporated into the applicants' proposal for the property or other alternatives to eventual demolition of the structure. Rehabilitation of this house in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for use as a non-homestead property may also qualify for state and federal tax credits to encourage preservation.

PARCEL NO.: 0205070505

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 4 BLK 7 OLT 2-3 DIV B ROBERTSON GEO L SUBD

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT: \$2,359 (income-producing), no cap.

APPRAISED VALUE: \$412,075

PRESENT USE: Vacant

CONDITION: Poor

PRESENT OWNERS:

Linda Cheryl Thomas et al
19797 Manor Creek
San Antonio, Texas 78245

DATE BUILT: ca. 1905

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: Rear addition completed during the historic period.

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Robert and Alberta Majors (1905)

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: Determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places

E-mail from applicant referencing attached Mold Inspection Report, March 31, 2020:
Steve,

As discussed, please find attached a mold inspection report for the property. To control for costs, we declined the majority of tests. Only limited samples were taken. Despite this, the report indicates how dire things are within the property.

The report highlights high levels of various toxic molds in the only places they took samples. The report notes other suspected mold growths, as well as hidden mold growth, but we told them to just take a few samples.

The report also highlights:

1. water damage in the crawl space,
2. extensive wood decay,
3. the roof leak,
4. external penetrations in several parts of the property,
5. damaged roofing materials,
6. splitting/bowing of exterior walls,
7. deteriorated siding material,
8. warped and raised floors,
9. insect infestations

Among other problems. The photos the inspectors took are demonstrative of how dilapidated this property has become.

I will be in touch with the second engineering report once we get it. Any updates on your end?

E-mail from applicants' architects, March 19, 2020:

Hey Steve,

Hope you're enjoying working from home and staying safe!

Circling back on our conversation we had earlier this month, Neema and his brother Pedram, are really interested in buying 1119 E. 11th Street / Major Powers House.

The House, as we both know, is in terrible condition and not sure how or what can really be saved at this point. We've looked at ways of shifting the existing house on the property, but are challenged by the following items:

- **Change-of-Use Parking**
 - Will trigger parking and make most of the lot paved. So even restoring the house will make it surrounded by asphalt.
- **Heritage Tree**
 - There's a 36" Oak Tree along the alley that limits any construction around it.
- **Costs + Economics**
 - Keeping the existing structure a residential user is unlikely give the economics and potential costs of just making the house liveable.
- **Compatibility**
 - The building envelope / tent is limited towards the alley, due to the SF-3 zoning across the alley. So, moving the house around on the property or building behind it isn't feasible.
- **Cutting Up the House**
 - I looked at how the house was built in (2) eras. The original 1912 house is almost 1500 Sq.Ft., or 21% of the site area. Each time we studied moving it on site, it required cutting it down to ~700 SF...Basically the wrap-around porch and front room.

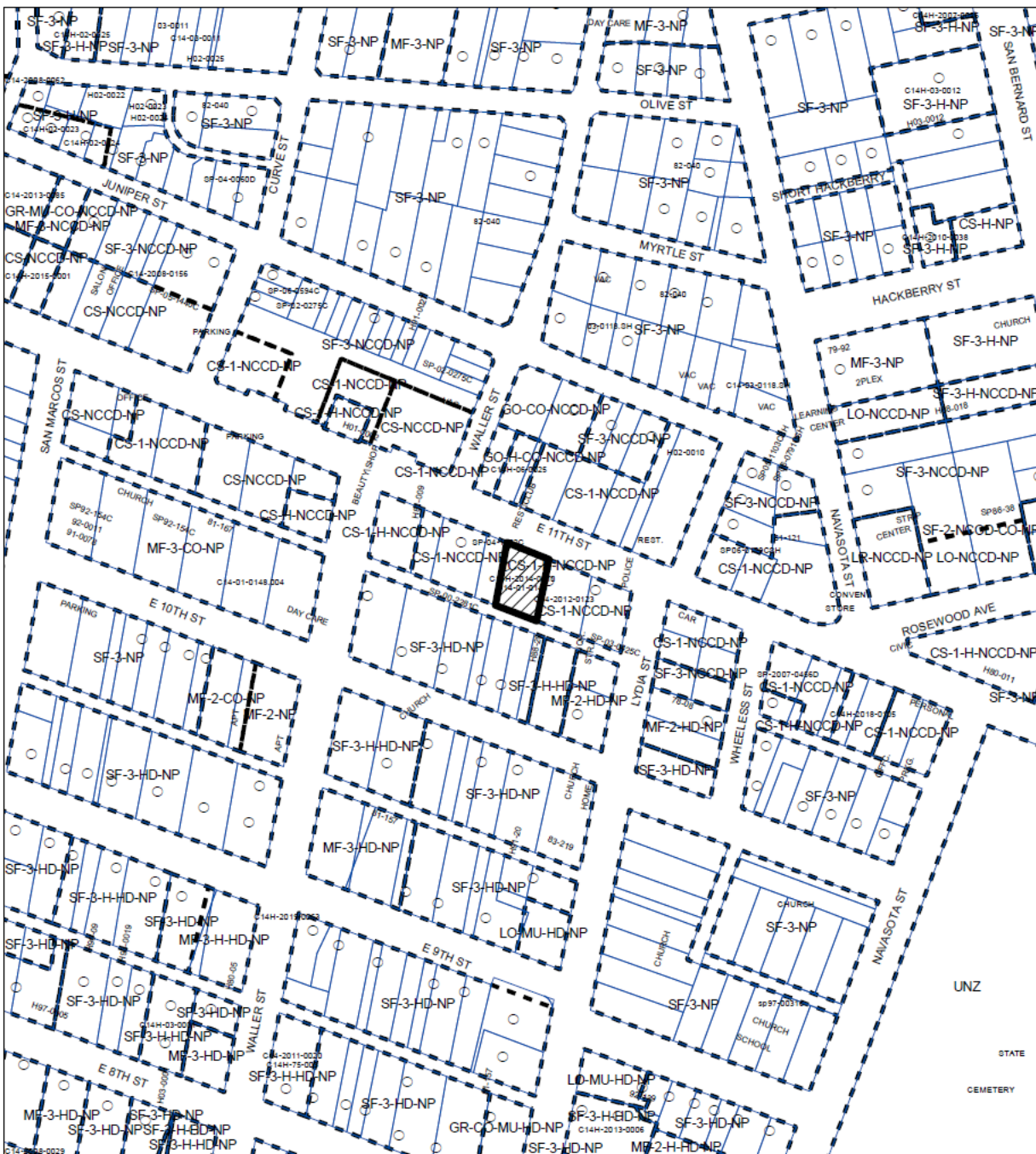
Summary - We've landed at wanting to build a new 3 story building. We'd like to incorporate a cultural plaque / exhibit near the Tree to tell the history of the land, previous owner and former house. See the attached PDF.

Would you allow us to remove the house and the H designation?

Thanks,

Scott Magic AIA, NCARB
principal

LOCATION MAP



1" = 200'

- SUBJECT TRACT
- PENDING CASE
- ZONING BOUNDARY

HISTORIC ZONING

ZONING CASE#: C14H-2020-0020

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Following is the staff report prepared for the original zoning change to designate the house as a historic landmark:

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2014-0010**HLC DATE:**

July 28, 2014

PC DATE:

August 26, 2014

APPLICANTS: Monica Woods, Ri'chard Thomas, Thomas family members, and the City of Austin.**HISTORIC NAME:** Majors-Butler-Thomas House**WATERSHED:** Boggy Creek**ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE:** 1119 E. 11th Street**ZONING FROM:** CS-1-NCCD-NP to CS-1-H-NCCD-NP**SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from Commercial-Liquor Sales, Neighborhood Conservation, Neighborhood Plan combining district to Commercial-Liquor Sales, Historic Landmark, Neighborhood Conservation, Neighborhood Plan combining district.**QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:**

Architecture and associations with the Thomas family, influential in the East Austin African-American community.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: Recommended the proposed zoning change from CS-1-NCCD-NP to CS-1-H-NCCD-NP. Vote: 5-0 (Leary ill; Rosato absent).**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:****DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:** The house is listed in the Historic Resources Survey of East Austin (2000) as a high priority for preservation, and a house that is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (historical associations with the city's African-American community) and Criterion C (architectural significance).**CITY COUNCIL DATE:** September 25, 2014**ACTION:****ORDINANCE READINGS:** 1ST 2ND 3RD**ORDINANCE NUMBER:****CASE MANAGER:** Steve Sadowsky**PHONE:** 974-6454**NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION:** Organization of Central East Austin Neighborhoods**BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:****Architecture:**

The house is an excellent and intact example of late Queen Anne and Classical Revival detailing, with Doric porch supports and fishscale shingling in the tympanum of the gables. It is a one-story, wing-and-gable plan frame house with a hipped roof and projecting gables, and a wraparound porch to the left side of the projecting front gable. The front gable has a large window with a multi-lite transom, indicative of the Queen Anne style.

Historical Associations:

The house was built around 1905 by Robert H. and Alberta Majors. Robert H. Majors had grown up just down the street at 1012 E. 11th Street, the son of an expressman, Andrew Majors. Robert Majors was a mail clerk for the Austin Post Office. Alberta Majors was a

music teacher who had grown up in Waco, and had taught music there. She also taught music at the Texas Colored Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute. Alberta (Butler) Majors lived in Waco, sometimes with her father, Lewis (or Louis) Butler, who was a hotel cook. Louis Butler seems to have alternated between living in the Majors' home in Austin and then in Waco. Robert Majors was shot to death by Lewis Butler in 1915. The story in the Austin newspaper referenced Lewis Butler as a kinsman to Robert Majors, but staff has been unable to positively determine whether the killer was Alberta's father or another relative with the same name. After her husband's murder, Alberta took back her maiden name and moved to Houston, where she is listed in the 1917 Houston directory. However, she still owned this house, and around 1917, she had married a man named John Ward and moved back into this house. Ward was a porter in a Congress Avenue barbershop. John Ward is listed with Alberta in the 1918 Austin city directory, but only Alberta Ward is listed at this address in the 1920 directory. In the first few years of the 1920s, Alberta reassumed her maiden name and moved back to Houston, where she is listed in city directories as a teacher. There is some possibility that Theresa Nelson, who is listed as the renter of this house in the 1922 Austin city directory, was also a relative of Lewis and Alberta Butler, but staff is unable to positively identify her with extant census reports and other available documentation.

In the mid-1920s, Samuel D. Butler (another possible relative of Lewis and Alberta Butler) is listed as the owner and occupant of this house. Samuel D. Butler was a minister in the A.M.E. Church, who had served in both Waco and Houston before moving to Austin. (Robert and Alberta Majors had been members of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Austin). After Samuel Butler's death, his widow, Mahalie Butler, continued to live here until the early 1940s.

Around 1945, the house was purchased by Roger W. and Eva Thomas, who lived here for the rest of their lives. Roger and Eva Thomas had rented various houses in the neighborhood prior to buying this one – he was a linoleum installer, a paper hanger, a carpet layer, and one of the first African-American interior designers in Austin. He began his working life in a furniture store, installing linoleum floors, shades, and carpet, and eventually he had his own business. He worked prolifically with the finest Austin hotels, various schools, and many of the city's elite in their choices for carpeting. Although documentary sources indicate that he was a carpet layer, he was much more than that – he was instrumental in the design of many hotel, school, public, and private spaces in the city due to his craftsmanship, skill, flair, and sense of design. His wife, Eva, was a former school teacher, had attended Prairie View Normal School, and inspired several of her children to pursue careers in education. The Thomas family has owned this house since the mid-1940s, and has used this house as their base for providing an educational and cultural hub for the African-American community in East Austin. It is one of the very last houses left on E. 11th Street, and serves as a physical reminder of the former residential character of the area when it was the center of activity in black East Austin.

PARCEL NO.: 0205070505

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 4 BLK 7 OLT 2-3 DIV B ROBERTSON GEO L SUBD

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT: \$2,217 (owner-occupied); city portion: \$621. \$1,118 (income-producing); city portion: \$311.

APPRAISED VALUE: \$210,919

PRESENT USE: Vacant

CONDITION: Good.

PRESENT OWNER:

Evelyn Joyce Thomas
1119 E. 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78702

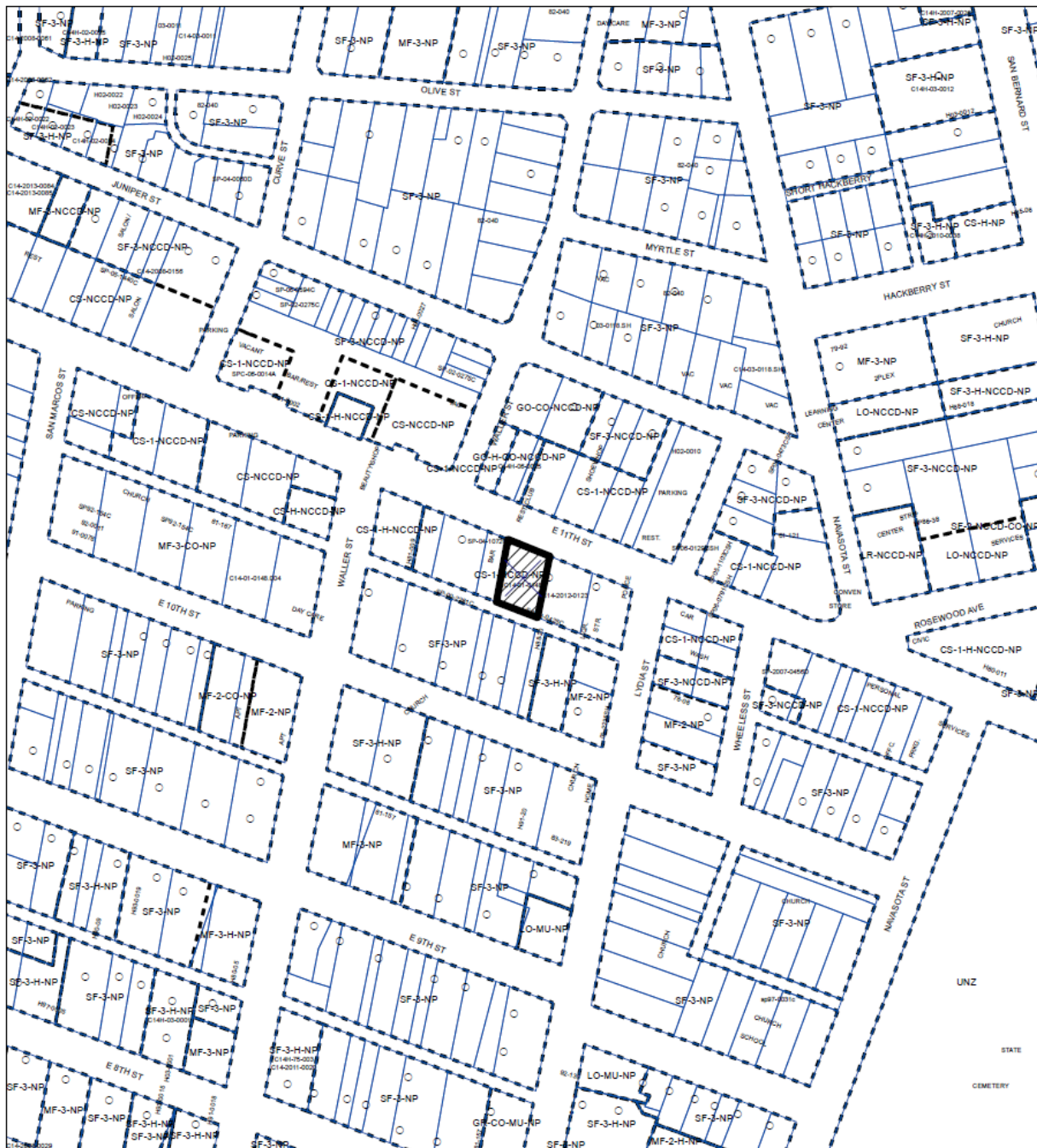
DATE BUILT: ca. 1905

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: None

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Robert and Alberta Majors (1905)

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: Determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

LOCATION MAP



- SUBJECT TRACT
- PENDING CASE
- ZONING BOUNDARY

HISTORIC ZONING

ZONING CASE#: C14H-2014-0010

1" = 200'

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1119 E. 11th Street
ca. 1905



OCCUPANCY HISTORY 1119 E. 11th Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
July, 2014

1992	Eva Thomas, owner Retired
1985-86	Eva Thomas, owner Retired
1981	Eva Thomas, owner Retired
1977	Eva Thomas, owner Retired
1973	Eva Thomas, owner Retired
1968	Eva Thomas, owner Retired Also listed is Roger Thomas, Jr., a public school teacher.
1962	Eva Thomas, owner Retired

Also listed is Roger Thomas, Jr., a waiter at the Sheraton Hotel.

- 1959 Roger W. and Eva Thomas, owners
Laborer
Also listed is Roger W. Thomas, Jr., a waiter.
- 1955 Roger W. and Eva Thomas, owners
Waiter, The Tower "The favorite rendezvous of Austin and Texas University,"
good food and continuous popular dance music," 407 S. Congress Avenue.
NOTE: This listing is most likely in error – it was Roger W. Thomas, Jr. who was
a waiter.
- 1952 Roger W. and Eva Thomas, owners
Interior decorator
- 1949 Roger W. and Eva Thomas, owners
Layer, Francis Floor Covering, carpets and linoleum, 503 Barton Springs Road.
- 1947 Roger W. and Eva Thomas, owners
Paperhanger
- 1944-45 John and Marie Bedford, renters
Porter
NOTE: Mahalie L. Butler is not listed in the directory.
- 1941 Mahalie L. Butler, renter
No occupation listed
- 1939 Mahalie L. Butler (not listed as owner)
No occupation listed
- 1937 Mahalie L. Butler, owner
No occupation listed
- 1935 Samuel D. Butler, owner
No occupation listed
- 1932-33 Samuel D. and Mahaley Smith, owners
Teacher
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1930-31 Mahaley Butler (colored), owner
No occupation listed
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1929 Mahaley Butler (colored), owner
No occupation listed
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1927 Mahaley Butler (colored), owner
No occupation listed
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1924 George S. and Armita Daniels (colored), owners
Bricklayer
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.

- 1922 Theresa Nelson (colored), renter
No occupation listed
NOTE: Alberta M. Ward is not listed in the directory.
NOTE: The 1923 Houston city directory lists an Alberta Butler, who was a teacher.
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1920 Alberta M. Ward (colored), owner
Music teacher, Texas Colored Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1918 John .H. and Alberta Ward (colored), owners
Porter, W.F. Wolf, barber, 806 Congress Avenue.
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
NOTE: The 1917 Houston city directory shows Alberta living in Houston; she had no occupation listed, but was listed as a boarder in a house on Crockett Street.
- 1916 Alberta Majors (colored)
Music teacher, Texas Colored Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute
NOTE: Robert H. Majors was killed in 1915.
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1914 Robert H. Majors
Clerk, Post Office
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1912-13 Robert H. Majors
Mailing clerk, Austin Post Office
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
NOTE: Louis Butler, Alberta Majors' father, is listed in the 1911 Waco city directory as a cook at the Metropole Hotel there.
- 1910-11 Robert H. Majors
Mailing clerk, Austin Post Office
Also listed are Andrew Majors, no occupation stated; and Lewis Butler, no occupation stated.
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1909-10 Robert H. and Alberta Majors (colored)
Robert: Mailing clerk, Post Office
Alberta: Music teacher, Samuel Huston College
Also listed is Andrew Majors, no occupation stated.
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1906-07 Robert H. and Alberta Majors (colored)
Robert: Mailing clerk, Post Office
Alberta: Music teacher
NOTE: Andrew Majors (Robert's father) is listed at the old Majors family home at 1012 E. 11th Street. He had no occupation listed.
NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.
- 1905 Robert H. Majors (colored)
Mail clerk, Post Office

NOTE: Andrew Majors is listed at his home, 1012 E. 11th Street. He had no occupation stated.

NOTE: The address is listed as 1103 E. 11th Street.

1903-04 Robert H. Majors is listed at the home of his father, Andrew Majors, 1012 E. 11th Street. Robert Majors was a mailing clerk at the Austin Post Office; Andrew Majors was an expressman.

NOTE: The 1894 city directory for Waco shows Louis Butler and Alberta Butler (later Majors) living there. Louis Butler was a 2nd cook at a hotel; Alberta Butler was a music teacher. The 1896 Waco city directory shows the father and daughter living in the same house in Waco. She was a music teacher; he was a cook.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Robert H. and Alberta Majors (ca. 1905 – ca. 1921)

Robert H. and Alberta Majors appear in the 1900 U.S. Census as living in the home of his parents, Andrew and Jane Majors, at 1012 E. 11th Street in Austin. Robert Majors was 38, had been born in Texas, and was a postal clerk. Alberta Majors was 26, had been born in Texas, and was a music teacher. They had a daughter, Grace Majors, 10, who had been born in Texas. Robert's father, Andrew Majors was a 68-year old Hackman who had been born in Tennessee; his mother, Jane Majors, 72, had been born in North Carolina. Neither Andrew nor Jane Majors could read or write.

The 1910 U.S. Census shows Robert and Alberta Majors as the owners of this house. Robert Majors was a mailing clerk at the post office. Alberta Majors was a music teacher at the house. With them lived Robert's father, Andrew Majors, now a 77-year old widower with no occupation listed; and Alberta's father, Louis Butler, a 59-year old Missouri-born widower who worked as a hotel cook.

Robert H. Majors was shot and killed by a relative (possibly Alberta's father, referenced in the 1910 U.S. Census as living with them). The newspaper story references a Lewis Butler as the killer, but it is not clear if this was Alberta's father or possibly another relative. Robert Majors died May 18, 1915. According to his death certificate, he had been born in Waco in 1861, and was a postal clerk. He is buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

NEGRO MAILMAN IS DEAD FROM WOUNDS; ASSAILANT FUGITIVE

Robert H. Majors, the negro who was shot by Lewis Butler, a kinsman, last Friday night, died of his wounds yesterday morning at 5:30 o'clock at his home, 1143 East Eleventh Street. His assailant is still at large.

Majors, who was 30 years of age, was a mail clerk in the Postoffice. Upon receiving notice of his death the employees who had worked with him at the Postoffice collected \$10 to be used toward defraying the funeral expenses. He is survived by his widow and a brother, Dr. M. A. Majors, who has come to attend the funeral from Chicago. Interment will be made in the Oakwood Cemetery from the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church under the auspices of the Bureka Lodge and the Ancient Order of Pilgrims. Rev. S. J. Johnson will officiate.

News story on the death of Robert H. Majors
Austin American, May 20, 1915

Samuel D. and Mahalie L. Butler (ca. 1926 – ca 1942)

Mahalie L. and Samuel D. Butler appear in the 1920 U.S. Census as the owners of a house at 1001 E. 10th Street. Samuel D. Butler was 44, had been born in Texas, and was the minister of an AME church. Mahalie Butler was 30, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 3 children: Samuel D., Jr., 11; Ouida E., 6; and Bernice, 5. All the children had been born in Texas.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows S.D. Butler as the owner of this house, which was worth \$2,500. However, this listing is for Mahaley Butler, who is listed as a 43-year old widow. She had no occupation listed. With her lived her children, S.D. Butler, Jr., 20; Ouida E., 16; and Bernice, 15. The family also had a lodger, Tom Smith, 38, who had been born in Texas, and was the proprietor of a restaurant.

Roger W. and Eva Thomas (ca. 1945 - 1991)

Roger W. and Eva Thomas appear in the 1930 U.S. Census as the renters of a house at 1169 Curve Street in Austin. Roger W. Thomas was 28, had been born in Texas, and was a shade and linoleum man for a furniture store. Eva Thomas was 25, had been born in Texas, and had

no occupation listed. They had 3 children listed: Fanny R., 5; Roger, Jr., 3; and Joyce, 7 months. In addition, the family had a lodger, Bessie Watrous, 20, a Texas-born hotel maid.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Roger and Eva Thomas as the renters of the house at 1002 Catalpa Street. Roger Thomas was a 39-year old proprietor of a carpet business; Eva had no occupation listed. In addition to Fanny, Roger, and Joyce, the family now had 3 younger children: Lucellastine, 8; Narva, 5; and Thelma Mae, 3.

Roger William Thomas, Sr.

Roger William Thomas, Sr., the oldest of five children born to the late George and Fannie Barton Thomas was born December 22, 1900, in Sayersville, Texas, died Sunday.

He attended private school, St. John's Academy, where he learned a variety of trades, and later attended Tillotson College, Austin. He was married to Eva Morgan.

Mr. Thomas, a pioneer in his chosen profession as an interior decorator, was one of the first black men to enter this field of endeavor in Austin and pursued his vocation for approximately 60 years. He made many outstanding contributions in the decoration and beautification of many outstanding Austin landmarks, like the Capitol, First Baptist Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, among others. One of his greatest joys was to be asked, in the 1930's, to install the carpet in George W. Littlefield granddaughter's New Mexico home.

A very talented and skillful man, he was instrumental in training his son, George Richard Thomas, also a carpet installer, his grandson and many others to become carpet installers in Austin.

Survivors include: wife, Eva; children, Mrs. Lawrence E. (Fanny Ruth) Houston, Roger Jr. and Georgia Nell Thomas, Mrs. Augustus (Joyce E.) Williams, Mrs. Marshall (Lucellastine) Woods, Mrs. Therman (Narva Jean) Kirby, Mrs. Mae Brown, George Richard and Cheryl Thomas, Mrs. Alfred (Donna Sue) Clark, Ms. Linda Cheryl Thomas; sisters, Mrs. A.J. (Cora Lee) Cathey and Ms. Vallie Mae Thomas; grandchildren, Tillman 'Skeeter' Woods, Marsha Woods, Cory House, Lauralyn Houston, Monica Woods, Ri-

chard Kirby, Jadaun Roger Clark, Michael Thomas, Eva Lee Andra Thomas, Richard Thomas, four great-grandchildren, Keeta Woods, Emmitt Woods, Cory House Jr., Brandi House, a host of other relatives and friends.

Services Thursday 4:00 PM, Ebenezer Baptist Church under direction of King Tears Mortuary.

Obituary of Roger W. Thomas
Austin American-Statesman, April 25, 1985



Eva Clydella Morgan Thomas

Eva Clydella Morgan Thomas was born to the late Richard and Fannie Jackson Morgan, March 15, 1905, in Washington County, Texas.

After her father's death, at the age of two, her mother moved to Temple, Texas, and married John Jackson. She attended the public schools of Temple and graduated from Dunbar High School in May 1922. She taught school for several years.

She married Roger William Thomas, Sr., March 22, 1925. They moved to Austin with great hopes and anticipation that the dreams of their future family would receive better educational opportunities. On moving to Austin, she became a member of Ebenezer Baptist Church. At Ebenezer, she was a member of Circle No. 5 of Mission I. With her departure goes the last original resident of the Robinson Hill neighborhood.

Eva Morgan Thomas devoted her entire life to her children, their families and numerous others throughout the community. Perhaps, one of the

greatest attributes was the quality of sharing her love and wisdom with those who were not a part of family. She was a source of inspiration to all her associates always encouraging them to develop their highest potentials to excell in their chosen field of endeavor. She was a "joy" to be around.

Thus, mother gets "the award" as the most outstanding, superior, distinguished, dedicated, inspirational mother and teacher. These awards are lovingly dedicated by Fanny Ruth Houston, Roger Thomas, Jr., Joyce Evelyn Williams (Augustus), Lucellastine Woods (Marshall), Narva Jean Kirby (Therman), Mae Thelma Turman (Robert), George Richard Thomas (Cheryl), Donna Sue Clark (Alfred), and Linda Cheryl Thomas; her sister, Mrs. Vallie Mae Thomas of Austin, Texas; her grandchildren, Tilman "Skeeter" Woods, Marsha Woods, Cory House, Lauralyn Houston, Monica Woods, Richard Kirby, Jadaun Clark, Michael Thomas, Eva Lee Andra Thoma, Ri-Chard Thomas; her great-grandchildren, Keeta and Emitt and Sabiya Woods, Cory House, Jr., and Mrs. Judy Jones Carter, Temple, Texas, Mrs. Mary Alice Bess, Midland, Texas, Mrs. Opal Thomas, Dallas, Texas; nephews, Cecii White and Hugh Eddy Jackson, Temple, Texas. She had many great-nieces and nephews; and great-great-nieces and nephews; and a host of relatives and friends.

Funeral services will be at 3:00 PM, Tuesday at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Burial will follow at Evergreen Cemetery.

Arrangements by King Tears Mortuary.

Obituary of Eva Morgan Thomas
Austin American-Statesman, December 10, 1991

Roger Thomas, Sr. (December 22, 1900-April, 1985) and Eva Morgan Thomas (March 15, 1905-December, 1991) after their matrimony in 1925, moved to Austin from their perspective cities and began a family on East 11th street in 1944. At that time, the matriarchs of the family were unaware of their memorable history that they were about to embark in Austin, Texas. The historians of this family delivered nine children: Fanny Ruth, Roger Williams Jr., Joyce Evelyn, Lucellastine 'Shange', Narva Jean, Mae Thelma, George Richard, Donna Sue, and Linda Cheryl who

continued the legacy as influential citizens in the East Austin community. All nine children attended L. C. Anderson High School, the only educational institution in Austin for children of color before schools became integrated. When the Thomas family moved to the property on East 11th street, this was the beginning of historical memories for the family. As a result of living on a popular street, the Thomas family shared a valued friendship with Johnny Holmes, original proprietor of the historical site known as the Victory Grill, a venue for soul food and music entertainment.

Prior to pursuing his life-long career as an entrepreneur, Roger Thomas Sr. graduated from St. Johns Academy (private school), a public school in Sayersville, Texas, afterwards attended Tillotson College which is currently renamed Huston-Tillotson University. Roger would later find his passion for craftsmanship by marketing his talent as a carpenter and would be known as a pioneer for this talent. As a pioneer in this chosen profession, he was recognized as one of the first African Americans to thrive in a trade that was not common for people of color. The astounding accomplishment would afford him the recognition as a prolific carpet layer in town, serving the Austin community for over 55 years.

Mr. Thomas' known achievements in carpentry were recognized and reverend in many areas such as, George W. Bush granddaughter's home in New Mexico, the State Capital in Austin, First Baptist Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, the Governor's Mansion in Austin, Deluxe Hotel, Driskill Hotel, Stephen F. Austin Hotel, Commodore Perry, Gondolier, Sheraton-Crest, not to exclude other well-known hotels in Austin. Roger Thomas had a most remarkable career in the carpet business as a Black entrepreneur in addition to installing carpet in hotels, his illustrious talent propelled his talent to other business avenues such as, Joske's (currently known as Dillard's), Scarbroughs both department stores were located in Highland Mall. He installed a range of materials such as, "Battleship" linoleum, window shades and blinds in the State Capital during both terms of Governor Miram A. "Ma" Ferguson (the first female governor of Texas; terms 1925-1927 and 1933-1935) and future governors thereafter. Roger's accolades in the carpet industry propelled his business to colleges and universities such as, the University of Texas at Austin, Samuel Huston, Tillotson College. He installed carpet at the very first office of Lyndon B. Johnson and installed the first roll of carpet that Louis Shanks (prior to launching his own furniture store) sold as a salesman for a furniture store recognized Cabiness Brown. Roger was a regular carpet installer in office buildings along Congress Avenue. Mr. Thomas' work was requested by many patrons throughout the state of Texas. To continue the beginnings of a family business, Roger was instrumental in training his son George Richard and grandson Tillman Allan Woods to continue the excellent carpentry that the family is well known for in Austin, Texas.

Eva Morgan-Thomas, formally a teacher in Bartlett, Texas, was the first of her family to educate young children. Eva began her career as an educator prior to marrying her true love Roger. Six out of the nine children followed in their mother's footsteps as educators. In addition to her teaching career, Eva was granted the opportunity to work for Rebekah Baines who was the mother of Lyndon B. Johnson, the former president of the United States of America. At the time, Lyndon B. Johnson was a college student.

His wife Eva, attended Prairie View A & M University formally known as Prairie View Normal and Industrial College. All nine children received their high school diplomas from L.C. Anderson now known as Anderson High School. Also, all nine children attended college, seven out of nine completed and earned bachelors, and four out of the nine earned a Master's Degree in various forms of Education. It was unique to have parents and children of color attend and/or complete education beyond high school. Education was expected and valued in the Thomas family.

More about the children...

Fanny Ruth Thomas-Houston was the first born, who would also set a precedent for her siblings to attain their degrees. After completing high school in 1945 at the age of fifteen Fanny Ruth Thomas-Houston pursued a Bachelor's at Sam Houston and at nineteen years of age, she completed her bachelor's and soon after pursued a Master's at Prairie View A&M College. After completing her education, Fanny Ruth was hired by the Austin Independent School District to serve as a teacher at Fanny Andrews Elementary and Blackshear Elementary. She proudly taught children at Blackshear where she served for over 30 years and retired from Austin Independent School District after forty

years of service. Her late husband Lawrence Houston was employed by Austin Police Department in the early 1950's and retired in the early 1980's and dedicated over twenty-five years of service.

Roger Thomas Jr. was in the United States Army and after serving his country, he was one of the first teacher's employed at Gary Job Corps in San Marcos, Texas.

One of the nine Thomas children, Joyce Evelyn Thomas-Williams, was one of the first African American's to attend the University of Texas at Austin to receive an undergraduate degree.

George Richard Thomas was a founding member and former coach of the Greater East Austin Youth Association which was founded in the 1970's. GEAYA, a nonprofit volunteer organization that provides organized and structured sports activities for economically disadvantage youth year-round. This association continues to provide opportunities for children in a safe and structured environment.

After Roger and Eva settled into their new home in Austin, the family joined Ebenezer Baptist Church, a prestigious African America church in East Austin. All children accepted Christ at an early age under the pastoral leadership of the late Reverend Jerome C. Lott and Dr. Marvin C. Griffin at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

The home on Eleventh Street, built in 1916 holds many precious memories for the Thomas family. Many stories were shared with prominent citizens who began the career and families in Austin, Texas. Among many, Jackie Robinson, the first Major League Baseball player visited his friend Fanny Ruth. During the time Fanny Ruth attended Sam Houston College, she became friends with Jackie Robinson who was a then a coach at Sam Houston College.

The Thomas home is a result of deep rooted memories of an African American family that withstood many obstacles as people of color. Their choices, drive, and determination clearly defined their successes as noted by the continuation of their expanding family furthering their education and careers. A time when the image of Eleventh Street was economically challenged and many engaged in unlawful acts, the family remained influential in the African American community and forged through many barriers. Our hope is that others will understand the cultural and educational experiences of a prominent black family in Austin.

Submitted by Monica Woods and Ri'chard Thomas