

Letter from the Sellers

In 2014, we purchased this Mid-Century Modern home with the goal of restoring it to the beautiful unique home it had once been then leasing it to responsible tenants. Built in 1959 by Ben and Lillie Robinson, it was sold to us by their daughter who had grown up in the home near other family – her grandmother lived on Angelina Street and her mother had relatives at 1406 E. 11th. At the time we purchased the home, the seller lived in a different area of Austin and had been leasing her childhood home. Several years prior, her long-term renter moved into assisted living; subsequent renters were not as diligent about caring for the home, so it had fallen into disrepair. We felt honored she chose to sell it to us and also felt the responsibility of carefully and lovingly restoring it. While respecting the history and unique qualities of the area, we dedicated ourselves to doing that!

There is so much history intertwined in this unique neighborhood. In a conversation with the woman who had grown up next door, just to the west, we learned that her father had been a Buffalo Soldier. We were told that the home on the corner of 11th and Angelina had been the neighborhood's beloved hair salon; it is now designated as a historic property. While it continues to preserve its history and charm, we've watched the area transform into the modern vibrant neighborhood it is today!

With the home's magnificent view of the beautiful and historic Texas State Cemetery it has a window into Texas history. Stephen F. Austin and other legendary Texans are buried there. The caretakers take great pride in this area and keep the grounds pristine. During the time we were working on outside projects, we became familiar; they would cheer us on, reminding us to "take a break" or "drink water." They shared that the property was lovingly called "the Brady Bunch home" (presumably because of its modern style.) The manager actually thanked us for bringing the home back to life and giving them a beautiful view! (Cont'd)

A little more history. . . 11th Street used to be “Mesquite Street” and what is the home’s driveway was a through street between 11th and Rosewood. In 1904, the property owner, Robert S. Harrison conveyed the lot to Albert Sydney Burleson. In 1913, A. S. Burleson was postmaster general. He was the grandson of General Edward Burleson. General Burleson, the first person buried in the Texas State Cemetery, was a prominent military figure and a commander in the Texas Revolution serving under Stephen F. Austin. He was a Vice President of the Republic of Texas and later a State Senator.

Interestingly we found a distant family connection between the lot and an ancestor, Titus Merriman (1843-1930.) Titus is buried in the Texas State Cemetery. Titus was the son of Dr. Eli Todd Merriman (1815-1867) who was one of the 3 founders of San Marcos, TX and the first doctor there. General Edward Burleson was also one of the founders of San Marcos, making Albert Sydney Burleson indirectly linked back to our family through Dr. Eli Todd Merriman!

In 1937, so that a storm drain could be constructed, the City of Austin purchased from A. S. Burleson, for \$1.00, a “south portion” of our lot (as well as portions from the surrounding lots.) At that time, Rector Street ran north and south between Rosewood & 11th and along the east side of the property. In 1981 the residents, whose homes abutted Rector Street, petitioned the city to “vacate” the street. So per Ordinance No. 800904-D, the city deemed it ‘closed for public travel’ and split it between the property owners for use as the driveways; the city retained a public utility easement.

In 2014, our son and his family were our first tenants. Our grandson has fond memories of living there. Subsequent tenants have also thoroughly enjoyed living in the home, each for their own reasons – the unique design, the location, the extra-large yard. Our last tenant was a Texas State Representative who especially liked that he could “walk to work” (the TX Capitol!) Every tenant has commented how comfortable and quiet the home is and although their journeys took them to new places, they all expressed regret at having to move out.

We’re proud of this home. The restoration journey is very personal and significant to us. Our care of it will always have a place in our hearts; the home is a treasured part of our family’s history.