

Deadline: July 12

LFP: Aug 10

Parks Board: Aug 25

OPENSOURCE:

CC: Sept. 24



RECEIVED

APR 13 2015

Application for Naming a Public Facility or Property

Please follow the instructions below when submitting an application for naming a facility or property.

1. Complete the application by providing detailed information about the proposed facility or park name. Please include supplemental information such as articles, letters of support and signature list with the application.
 2. Send all submittals to: Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Attn: April Thedford, 919 W. 28 1/2 Street, Austin, TX 78705
 3. Questions may be directed to April Thedford via email: april.thedford@austintexas.gov or by phone: (512) 974-9408
-

Current Name of Facility or Property: Shoal Beach at Town Lake Metropolitan Park

Proposed Name for the Facility or Property: Roberta Reed Crenshaw Overlook

If proposing the name of an individual, include a biographical description of nominee:
Please see attached biography, environmental and cultural efforts, and chronology.

Describe the individual's involvement in the Austin community:
Please see attached biography regarding Paramount Theatre, Austin Ballet Society, Heritage Society, Austin History Center, Symphony Orchestra Society, Women's symphony League, Laguna Gloria Art Museum, and Umlauf Garden as well as contributions to Austin Parks and the Lady Bird Lake Hike & Bike Trail.

Describe the individual's connection to the facility or property, if any:

She had a flagstone walk built near the Congress Avenue bridge down to the shore, and nurtured the trail by personally purchasing and planting - along with a few of her own ranch hands - close to 400 trees, some of which continue to bloom each spring. Flowering pear:

Please see attached paragraph #3 under "Summary."

If proposing a name other than individual, summarize the reason for the name:

Name of requester: Shudde Fath, Mary Arnold, Phoebe Allen

Phone Number: 

Roberta “Bobbie” Purvis Reed Crenshaw

April 17, 1914 - February 8, 2005

Compiled by Phoebe Allen

Sources: Obituary, Austin History Center biographical file and interview, personal files and memories of Shudde Fath and Mary Arnold

SUMMARY

Lady Bird Johnson often receives the credit for the beauty of Lady Bird Lake and its Hike & Bike Trail, but she claimed that all she did was get aboard a moving train. She would be the first to acknowledge that it was Roberta Reed Crenshaw who was the engineer of that train's locomotive.

A pioneer of the Greenbelt and one of the leading forces behind the creation of many of Austin's best-loved natural and cultural treasures, Roberta Crenshaw was an environmentalist before the word was coined.

She campaigned to preserve the parkland along Town Lake (now Lady Bird Lake) and helped galvanize support for the hike and bike trail that has become an Austin landmark. **She had a flagstone walk built near the Congress Avenue bridge down to the shore, and instigated the trail by personally purchasing and planting - along with a few of her own ranch hands - close to 400 trees, some of which continue to bloom each spring: flowering peach, redbud, jasmine, weeping willows and other trees on the north shore between Congress Avenue and Lamar Boulevard.** She worked together with **Beverly Sheffield** to envision the first hike and bike trail and lay out the loop around the lake.

Her vision and tireless personal commitment helped shape the Austin parks system into the nationally recognized source of pride and inspiration that it is today. She helped expand the Parks and Recreation Department, enlarging the scope of the former Austin Parks Board beyond playgrounds and softball leagues and giving parks a significance of their own. She was a visionary, but also an eminently practical person. It was she who convinced the State Department of Transportation to pay for and install the pedestrian bridge under MoPac to complete the loop of the expanding hike and bike trail. She fought against the lake becoming an amusement park or being filled with motorboats and noise.

Bobbie was a member of the **Austin Parks Board** from 1952 to 1970, serving as chair from 1964 to 1969, at which time she helped develop the original plans for the beautification of Town Lake. She created **Reed Park** by donating six acres along Taylors Slough, and donated 30 acres of parkland for the **Colorado River Park**, now the Roy Guerrero Colorado River Park. She served as a director and trustee of the **National Recreation and Parks Association**, and was a founder of the **Austin Environmental Council**.

Crenshaw was a heroine and mentor to today's environmentalists **Mary Arnold** and **Shudde Fath**. Fath recalls: "She was responsible for starting more good things in this city than almost anyone else. She was my hero. She never gave up."

Her personal contributions to Austin are simply astonishing in their scope. As a cultural philanthropist, Roberta Crenshaw's financial contributions to our city in large measure continued the legacy of her first husband, Malcolm Reed. She donated her interest in the **Paramount Theatre** to a non-profit corporation and persuaded her two daughters to follow suit with a total of 51% ownership, enabling the Paramount to be restored to its former glory.

She was not just a member, but one of the *founders* of **Austin's Ballet Society** (now Ballet Austin), **Heritage Society of Austin** (now Preservation Austin), **Austin History Center**,

Symphony Orchestra Society, Women's Symphony League, and Laguna Gloria Art Museum.

She spearheaded the creation of the **Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum** by persuading Umlauf to donate sculptures, negotiated an exchange of City land as a natural extension of Zilker Park, and raised private funds to ensure its future, circling back to her work as an advocate for Austin's parks. Widely respected in the community, she also served on the advisory board for the UT School of Architecture and was an honorary member of the Austin AIA (American Institute of Architects).

She once said, "Culturally, I've helped, but the main thing I did was to create an environmental awareness of the city of Austin."

ENVIRONMENTALIST

- A visionary, Bobbie campaigned for 60 years as the driving force for preserving parkland and trails in Austin. With a passionate commitment to protect the environment around Lady Bird Lake, she galvanized support for the Hike & Bike Trail.

- 1950s - **Lady Bird Lake Greenbelt** - One of originators of the comprehensive development plan for Town Lake; *the* motivating force behind developing the beauty of the shores. Had a flagstone walk built near the Congress Avenue bridge down to the shore and instigated the trail by personally donating and planting, along with a few of her own ranch hands, almost 400 flowering trees, some of which continue to bloom each spring - flowering peach, redbud, jasmine, weeping willows and other trees from Congress to well beyond Lamar.

- 1952-70 - **Austin Parks & Recreation Department** – Board member, 18 years; Chairman, 4 years 1964-69. Appointed by Emma Long of the City Council in 1952, when the parks were part of the Public Works division, she convinced the city to move the parks into PARD. RC: *"You weren't supposed to do anything [as a board member] but go and behave, but the city was such a great challenge it was impossible to be passive about it."*
 - She enlarged the scope of PARD beyond playgrounds, swimming pools and softball fields.
 - Lobbied forcefully against motorized boating on Lady Bird Lake, and against Six-Flags-like amusement park development along its shoreline.
 - Advocated successfully for joint planning of new schools and parks so that the city and school district could share land and facilities

- 1954 - **Reed Park** - bought and donated six acres of land to the City

- 1965 - **National Recreation & Park Association** – Charter Trustee, founded during White House Conference on National Beauty, Council for the Outdoor Recreation Resources Comm. *Held garden party at Reed Hall for the NRPA trustees (64 nationally prominent leaders) in April of 1967. Guests included Lady Bird, Laurance Rockefeller (NRPA president) & his wife, Senator & Mrs. Ralph Yarbrough, Mayor & Mrs. Palmer, Emma Long, Dick Nichols, the Richard Colgates of New Jersey and others. Roberta was one of three Texans and only Texas female on board. Extensive media coverage*

increased status of Roberta and got the attention and cooperation of the local power structure. [“Visit with First Lady at Austin Garden Party” AAS 4/16/1967]

- 1969 - **Austin Environmental Council**, which campaigned to create hike and bike trails - founding member, advisor, director
- **Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park** in East Austin - donated 30+ acres
- **Austin Task Force for Model Cities Program** - Member
- **Shoal Creek Greenbelt** advocacy: “When I started out in the early Thirties [Fifties?], Shoal Creek was a drainage ditch. The lakes and creeks were thought of in terms of producing hydro-electric power and controlling floods.” Roberta saw them as parks, trails and scenic parkways.
- **Texas Nature Conservancy** – founding member

CULTURAL LEADER & PHILANTHROPIST

- **Austin Ballet Society** (now Ballet Austin) – co-founder with Barbara Carson, and first president, 1953. Beverly Scarborough: *“There are a lot of people in this town who call attention to themselves. She doesn’t. She just does what needs to be done. And she has incredible vision.”*
- **Austin Heritage Society** (now Preservation Austin) - leadership
- **Austin History Center** – founding member; donated several items to the archival collections, including the elegant Persian rug in the lobby and a painting of herself by well-known portrait artist Wayman Adams (-1957) [Adams’ wife was from Austin; the couple retired to Austin from Indiana]
- **Austin Symphony Orchestra Society** - founding member
- **Laguna Gloria Art Museum** - helped establish and served on its board
- **Paramount Theater** - “patron saint” and board member, helped revive and restore to its former glory by donating her 51% ownership in the building to a non-profit organization that restored it as a performing arts center – she literally stood on a scaffold to personally assist with painting; persuaded others to contribute to restoration of the six opera boxes.
- **Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum** - secured donation of sculptures from Charles Umlauf and arranged a land swap with the State of Texas as a natural extension of Zilker Park; spearheaded efforts to raise private funds to create a million dollar endowment to ensure future of garden, which opened in 1991. An octagon-shaped learning center was built in 1996 and named for the garden’s “founding mother”.
- **Women’s Symphony League** - charter member
- **UT Fine Arts Association** - Life member
- **UT Chancellor’s Council**
- **UT School of Architecture** - Advisory Board
- Professor Sinclair Black holds the Roberta Crenshaw Centennial Professorship in Urban Design & Environmental Planning
- **Texas Chapter of American Institute of Architects (AIA)** - Honorary Member

- **Meals on Wheels & More** – raised community awareness, founding member for Endowment Fund Board of Trustees
- **Caritas** – active contributor

PROFESSIONAL

- President, Iraan Producers, Inc.
- President, Dickson Properties, Inc.
- Vice-president, Colorado River Development Co.

AWARDS

- 1987 City of Austin Distinguished Service Award
- 1989 Jane D. Sibley Award for Sustained Arts Leadership in Austin
- 1989 Nature Conservancy Oak Leaf Award
- 1990 Lola Wright Foundation Raymond Todd Civic Award
- 1991 Rotary Community Service Award
- 1997 Austin Community Keepsake Award for volunteerism to improve quality of life for Central Texas residents, Meals on Wheels & More
- Austin Parks & Recreation, Distinguished Service
- Award of Appreciation for Contribution and Dedicated Service to Conservation of the Environment and the Development of the City of Austin Parks Program – City Council, PARD, & Environmental Council (2004? May)
- 2005 – Park Patron Award, made out of a piece of Treaty Oak
- Dictionary of International Biography
- Members' Roll of Board of Architects
- National Register of Who's Who
- Sue & Frank McBee Visionary Award for longstanding commitment to historical preservation in the Greater Austin area
- 2005, April 18 Roberta Crenshaw Walkway Dedication, Austin PARD
- Honorary Honoree Women on Their Toes Award, Ballet Austin Guild
- Conservation Leadership Award, Nature Conservancy

ROBERTA CRENSHAW CHRONOLOGY

Roberta Reed Crenshaw married **Malcolm Reed** at the age of 22. She was the mother of two daughters and, after Reed's death, continued to live at Reed Hall as Mrs. Fagan Dickson. She left Reed Hall reluctantly in 1980 to join husband Charles Crenshaw, father of golf pro Ben Crenshaw, in their new home.

1914 **Roberta Farrish Purvis** was born April 17th in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her father, Walter Marshall Purvis, was a lawyer; her mother, Lucy Burford Purvis, a homemaker. Attended school at National Park Seminary in Washington, D.C.

1932 Arrived in Austin to attend UT, where she was a classmate of her future husband's daughter.

- 1936 Received liberal arts B.A. degree; graduated with Accolade; chosen Outstanding Senior; in Who's Who for College Students. Cactus yearbook: Bobbie Purvis, President, Zeta Tau Alpha sorority. (Shudde Fath was a sorority sister.)
- 1936 Age 22, married prominent cotton merchant and oilman **Malcolm Hiram Reed**, age 60; the same year he divorced his wife of 38 years and mother of their four children. It is said that she met Reed through his daughter, one of her college friends. The newlyweds traveled to Europe for a one-year, round-the-world honeymoon. Before they left for their honeymoon, the couple purchased ten acres of land in West Austin for a new home, **Reed Hall**, a Tudor Revival mansion completed in 1937.¹ Mrs. Purvis, Roberta's mother, supervised the building of a cottage while they were away. Malcolm and Roberta had two daughters, **Roberta Purvis Reed Burns** (11/13/1938-2001) and **Lucy Burford Reed Hibberd** (1/2/1941-), current resident of Dripping Springs, Gardner and Aspen, Colorado. "Little" Roberta (Mrs. Latham Burns) had three children: **Reed Burns** of Dripping Springs and San Miguel de Allende, Mexico; **Holton Burns** (Malcolm Burns) of Austin, and **Farrish Burns Stevens** (Lindsey Burns-Stevens and Berenger) of Sydney, Australia.
- 1945 Malcolm Reed died in his sleep of a heart ailment
- 1947 Married (#2) James **Fagan Dickson** (1903 – 1977)
A native of Kentucky, Dickson arrived in Texas in 1929 after schooling at Georgetown College in Kentucky and Harvard Law School '29. Very active in Democratic Party.
- 1941 Dickson represented Bexar County (San Antonio) in Texas Legislature; moved to Austin
- 1942-49 Dickson was first assistant attorney general
- 1949-77 Dickson's Austin law practice until his death
- 1947 Divorced first wife; married Roberta 12/30/47
- 1950 Dickson ran for Texas Supreme Court
- 1968 Dickson launched "Bring Lyndon Home" antiwar campaign; ran for Congress against Jake Pickle, but withdrew before election.
- 1952 Roberta Reed Dickson was appointed to Parks Board by Emma Long; served until 1970
- 1954 Donated 6 acres of land to the City for Reed Park, originally intended as a park between Casis School and Lake Austin; has a swimming pool; site of an old limekiln. June.
- 1960s Fought an amusement park proposed for Town Lake.
- 1970 An aneurysm/stroke forced her to cut back activist work; she continued to work quietly behind the scenes, contributing money and land for civic improvements.

¹ McBee, Sue Brandt, "Reed Hall: On the Brink of Change," Austin Homes & Gardens, May 1980. vol. 1, no. 11. page 28-36.

- 1974 Divorced Dickson (filed April 8, 1974) after 27 years (no children). Dickson died in 1977. Worth estimated at more than \$10 million in extensive oil and property interests, primarily from Reed.
- 1975 Married (#3) **Charles Edward Crenshaw** (1914- May 10, 1999), in October 1975. Charlie was an attorney, gourmet cook, and father of famed golf pro Ben Crenshaw. Both were aged 61. A 23-year marriage.
- 1980 Moved to new home with Crenshaw
- 1982 First Roberta Crenshaw Award given to honor service to West Austin Neighborhood Group (WANG) and the City.
- 1984 **Sand Beach Litigation.** Mary Arnold: "When I was on the Parks Board from 1978-84, Roberta would come to some of the meetings as a board member emeritus. One of the meetings she attended introduced me to the Sand Beach Reserve. The round hotel on the north side of Lady Bird Lake, on the east side of IH 35 as it crosses the river, wanted to use some city parkland right below the hotel to add additional parking. Roberta came out swinging, saying NO WAY should Sand Beach Reserve be used for private parking!!! And she told of the history of the city acquiring Sand Beach Reserve from the State of Texas. So, when the Town Lake Joint Venture zoning was approved, including the road over a portion of Sand Beach Reserve, I contacted Roberta, and she joined in the fight against that road." Mayor Ron Mullen announced that his insurance company would office in the Town Lake Joint Venture Building. Litigation ensued (for 17 years) with Roberta Crenshaw, Susan Toomey Frost and Mary Arnold suing the City of Austin for taking dedicated parkland for a private development. They eventually lost and had to pay attorney fees for both sides.
- 1988 Secured grants for Umlauf Sculpture Garden and Museum to build a Visitors' Center and to develop the City's adjacent land as gardens.
- 2000 Death of Charles Crenshaw. Roberta broke both hips soon after and began using a wheelchair.
- 2005 Passed away February 8, age 90.

John Bernardoni (Austin, TX): "It is unimaginable to think what would have transpired with The Paramount Theatre's resurrection had it not been for the generosity and tireless efforts of Roberta Crenshaw. We were up against the wall with a grant application to the Economic Development Administration (U.S. Dept. of Commerce) without which the restoration effort would have stalled permanently. The hurdle we had to overcome was this – the EDA would not consider the grant unless we "owned" the building and land. At that time we had a long lease with two trusts at then American Bank. I asked Bobbie if she would consider donating her 51% interest also owned by her daughters. Finally, she agreed. The other trust gave us a 99-year lease tantamount to ownership. The EDA gave us a grant of \$750,000 and The Paramount was truly saved. The EDA would end up making \$1.85 million in grants to The Paramount. But she did so much more for the theatre. The first board meeting was at her house. She single-handedly

launched a campaign to raise \$10,000 for each of the six opera boxes restoration. Bobbie served on our board for umpteen years. She was a driving force who gave the theatre legitimacy with Austin's business, political and social set. There is one particular moment that stands out which showed Bobbie's true spirit. Beautifully dressed, she stopped by the theatre to see how a particularly difficult painting job was progressing wherein the walls are "umbered" with a natural sponge. Not liking what she saw, she scrambled up the scaffolding in the inner lobby, high heels and all, and proceeded to show the painter how it was done. That was Bobbie Crenshaw in spades. She was both regal and down to earth, ready to roll up her sleeves and do whatever it took. Bobbie had a tremendous impact on my life as a young man of 25. She became a close friend, teacher, mentor, guide yet had no problem putting me in my place in her sensitive manner if she thought I was off base. No performing arts organization or young dreamer had a better friend. Millions of people have had their hearts lifted in The Paramount, in large part to Bobbie Crenshaw's indomitable spirit. What a woman. God, get ready for a powerhouse on her way to heaven."

Malcolm Hiram Reedⁱ (1876-1945)

Malcolm Reed, a cotton exporter who made significant contributions to the economic and social development of the city, was Crenshaw's first husband and the source of her wealth.

Born February 22, 1876, at Gabriel Mills in the Pilot Knob community in Williamson County, Texas, capitalist and businessman Malcolm Reed was the second child and first son of pioneers Thomas Selden Reed (1851-1924) and Medora (Connell) Reed (1857-1886). Malcolm's father, born in Fulton, Arkansas - a busy place for provisioning the new state of Texas, just across the Red River but apparently unsuitably dangerous as a place to live in those days - was a schoolteacher and merchant. The elder Reed purchased a general mercantile store in Bertram, Texas, in 1888, taking Malcolm and his brother **David Cleveland** into the business as T.S. Reed & Company until 1899, when T.S. left the Bertram business to David and opened a wholesale grocery business in Beaumont January 1, 1900. He had also been involved in banking in Bertram. T.S. Reed visited Malcolm and his brother in Austin frequently; he died in 1924.ⁱⁱ Dora Connell Reed was born in Milam County, Texas, to a prominent pioneer Texas family.

Malcolm attended high school in Bertram, Hill's Business College in Waco, and began his career working in his father's general mercantile store in Bertram in 1893. He was sent to Marble Falls to sell a stock of goods and remained in Marble Falls for 15 years, at first as T.S. Reed & Company and later as M.H. Reed & Company. Malcolm married a Marble Falls resident, Margaret 'Maggie' Badger, in 1898. Malcolm organized and served as president of Home State Bank in Marble Falls until two years before his death and was the owner of Marble Falls Water & Light Plant in 1920ⁱⁱⁱ. In 1908, he moved to Austin, which he made his permanent home.

M.H. Reed & Company, with associates E.G. Beschoff and G.E. Bryson, became one of the leading cotton exporters in the state, with offices in five foreign countries, and was a major wholesale dealer of cedar timber in Central Texas as well as one of the state's largest buyers and sellers of pecans. According to Sue Brandt McBee,^{iv} he liked to describe himself as being "in the cedar post business." Reed invested widely in minor interests that included real estate, oil properties and a pipeline as well as extensive farm and ranch acreage across Texas.

After the decline of the cotton business in the 1930s, Reed devoted substantial time to oil investments, mainly royalties, and to Pecos Producers, Inc., which managed his production in the Yates Pool. He negotiated a 300,000-acre transaction with the heirs of **George W. Littlefield** for the South Plains project known as Littlefield Lands. Working through his **Yellow House Land**

Company (1923-1942) in West Texas and the Plains Investment Company, Reed purchased, divided into 1200 tracts, and resold to settlers the 177-acre farming tracts carved out of the Yellow House Ranch in Lamb and Hockley counties. **The Yellow House enterprise played a key role in the settlement of the South Plains of Texas, bringing in excess of \$10 million to Reed and his associates.** ^v

Reed was a member of Central Christian Church, Austin Country Club (past president), a long-time member of the Austin Rotary Club, and an original member of the local Red Cross Board. He served as **president of the Austin Chamber of Commerce in 1927**, and from 1919-1932 was active in the **Texas Cotton Association, serving as its president in 1923**. He was a patron of the Texas Fine Arts Association and the Smithsonian Institution. A Mason since 1897 in his Marble Falls days, Reed was Worshipful Master 1903-1904 and was honored with 33rd degree as a York Rite and Scottish Rite Mason and Shriner in 1919. He was a potentate of the Ben Hur Temple in Austin in 1930. At one time Reed held membership in the New York Stock Exchange and in the Chicago Board of Trade. During WWI Reed handled finance campaigns in Austin and Travis County for the American Red Cross, serving as chair of several civilian relief committees and drives. His favorite recreation was golfing. ^{vi}

Malcolm divorced his first wife and remarried in 1936 at the age of 60. His bride, 22-year-old Arkansan, Roberta Purvis, was a graduate of the University of Texas, where she was a classmate of Malcolm's daughter. Malcolm Reed died in his sleep of a heart ailment in 1945 and was buried in Memorial Park. His widow placed clarion bells in the Central Christian Church in his memory. ^{vii}

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Bobbie Crenshaw recounted her experiences of the early 1950s in an oral interview with Anthony Orum in 1986. The complete interview has been transcribed and is on file at the Austin History Center, Austin Public Library. Below are several interesting excerpts.

Women In Politics

... "Then I came down here to university, and after I was in the university and received my degree I married Mr. Malcolm Reed. I remember just being swept gradually into the political scene of Austin because he had such [influential] acquaintances, you know, and I sort of followed the activities of some of his acquaintances, and one of them was the mayor of the city, Mayor Tom Miller... I...became interested in various facets of the city government, but I certainly was not a student of government in any sense of the word. ...but I think that Emma Long was elected to the City Council about that time [1948]... and she was quite a remarkable woman. ...[But] the men that she had to associate with...you know, they weren't interested in a woman politician. And so I feel sure that she must have recommended me to be on the Parks Board. ...[I] was accepted in about the same vein that she was, that I was considered at the time to be the little old lady in tennis shoes that wanted to plant petunias every place, you know, that neither of us was very capable of any real substance of thought, and we were just trying to do simple little things that little old ladies were supposed to go do. ... the park board was called the Park and Recreation Board, and it was a misnomer because it was not. It was nothing but a recreation board. The parks were managed entirely under the Public Works System of the city, and it was very frustrating to us."

Stirring Things Up

“A man named David Bell [this is a transcript error, should be Dave Barrow according to Shudde Fath]... managed to get appointed to various commissions pretty consistently, so he was very bright about keeping up with where the water lines were going to go and where the sewer lines were going to go...so that when he bought land and put in his development all that [infra]structure or whatever you call it was already there. ...David Bell was working right down under Mt. Bonnell. And I think there was a little house down there, and there was some problem came up that kids would stand up on Mt. Bonnell and throw rocks and they would hit this person's roof or something, or else it could have been their boats. I've forgotten what the problem was, so I looked down there and I found that here was this great machine working just making mud and piling it up and making land right under Mt. Bonnell where kids would throw rocks at everything. So they were going to have a row of houses right under the mountain. And I couldn't believe this, and so I went again and complained, and I got David Bell and [Council Member] Lester Palmer to go in a little boat and we rode up this way and looked at it. And I'll never forget the disgust of, I said, 'Look what's happening.' I said, 'Here is this fella' – and it was David Bell, you know – 'mining this earth and putting it up here making earth in the lake.'

“And Lester said, 'Now don't tell me, Bobbie, that you think the Park Board has anything to do with this lake.'

“Well, I was so taken aback, and I was really not quite up to all of this. These things would make me highly nervous, and I said, 'Well you can feel any way you want to, but do you think you have a greater recreational facility than this in the city? Is there anything else compares with this or will ever compare with it?'

“And that had never occurred to him. They explained to me what they were doing and how nice it was and let me know how off base I was. They said, 'There's no harm done because the water things will still work, the turbines will still turn. You are still going to have the same volume of water.' That's all they were interested in...

“But, I said, 'On your theory this lake could become 100 yards wide and 2 miles deep...' I said, 'With all these school kids there and the skiing and the water boating and all the things that's going to take place, the motorboats and all the rest of it is going to take place on this lake, you know, you're going to find that you just have a ribbon. And why on earth would you make it narrower? I mean, you'd think that you'd want to make it wider...' See, and Lester got real irritated with me.

“He said, 'Now don't tell me you think you have anything to do with this.'

“And I said, 'Well just categorize it any way you want to, whether it's our business or someone's else, but do you have any recreation facility equivalent to this?' And it never dawned on 'em. They had recreation value from a circus.”

National Exposure

“And you were supposed to be very flattered and very honored to be there – to do nothing of course, but just the fact that you're on the Park Board you're supposed to be very pleased to be a member and that's it. You're not supposed to come in here with a bunch of ideas. So somewhere in that era I was nominated to the National Park and Recreation Board, and so I started going to meetings with a very broad sector of people from all over the United States. And they were partially professionals and partially lay people. And the National Park and Recreation Board was founded in the White House under Theodore Roosevelt. And the people on it were people like Laurence Rockefeller ...

“So here I was exposed to all the thinking that went on, and soon it didn’t take too long for me to make my complaints to ‘em to where everybody was trying to help me. And they were telling me what a dreadful thing it was that we didn’t have a Park Department you see, and that we were tied into this Public Works routine.”

Rule By Public Works

“And the Public Works was strictly engineer, and all he wanted was to go with a sewer from here to here, the quickest, shortest route, and it happened to be right through this creek, or through the spring where it went, you know. And you could not break that down.

“And I sat on a meeting one day – I’ve never been this upset – where they asked this Director of Public Works [Reuben Rountree] what he considered Shoal Creek to be. And he said, ‘It’s a drainage ditch.’ And he said that, ‘We come in about once in the spring early before the floods and try to clear the debris so the flood will go through.’ And it – literally that was all it was in his mind.”

The One Hundred Year Flood

“Well, I kept telling them that when they started developing these hills northwest and they covered everything with impervious ground cover, and that the streets and the rooftops and all those things created, you know, just no way to absorb the water, and it was going to flow down into these creek bottoms ... I said, ‘You’re going to create, you know, horrible hazards for the City. Get those engineers down here and let’s get those flood plains delineated. Let’s know where they are.’

“Well, everybody got to ridiculing the fact that you were talking about the 100 Year Flood, so they naturally thought that was going to be a hundred years from now and, ‘It’s not going to bother me, so I’m gonna put my house wherever I want to, and they’re not gonna bother me, because the flood isn’t coming for a hundred years.’ And sure enough, the big flood came. In ‘81.”

In the following excerpts, Roberta Crenshaw tells how the Town Lake Plan was developed, how she built connecting paths and stairs to the lakeshore and planted 398 trees along Cesar Chavez Street. Ultimately, the classification of the shores of the lake as parkland denied the building of the First Street Expressway. Remnants of her original stairway to the lake are still visible.

The Town Lake Plan

“... originally the reason the Town Lake Plan was so important to me is because [the river banks] had been built up by terrible kinds of business, because they dumped everything in the river. You know, the system was that you just used the river property because it was a good place to dump your old tires or your old mattresses or your old commodes or whatever you had. You threw ‘em out in the creek or the river, and people didn’t value their waterfront.”

“Well, the Town Lake Plan was when we first got our little planning department together, **we got them to go along and designate...everything we dared lay our fingers on and to try to widen it as much as we could and call [it the] Town Lake Corridor.** It goes all the way up to the Tom Miller Dam. The whole seven miles. ...this was my passion, to get that lake preserved from motorboats and from all kinds of unsightly things as fast as we could get it zoned or classified as park so that it could not be deprecated. But that was just a horrible ordeal,

absolutely a horrible ordeal to get that done. But we did it. We got it, we passed it through a Council, but apparently they never did really dedicate the land as parkland.”

Building Paths and Planting Trees

“Now I gave, to try to get the public to understand what we were doing and to understand that the river could be beautiful and could be enjoyable, and that it was a place that was worth recognizing. ... I had hired some men, and I went down and created a little path that starts at First and Congress right across from that hotel, and it starts right there and it goes, it has a little circle. So I did this little path that goes along and ... it makes a little circle and then it goes down and makes little steps and goes down to the lakeshore. ... then you pick it up on what literally is, well, it’s a normal little path right along the edge of the bottom down there.

“And I gave to the City all the plants – well, the plants originally that went all the way from there all the way down to Lamar and on both sides of [Cesar Chavez Street], all the flowering peach that you see there every year. Since that time of course Mrs. Johnson’s come back and they’ve been added to and a lot of azaleas have been planted, things like that. But I planted about 398 plants myself – willow trees, flowering peach, redbud, whatever I could find. There is a doctor in town that particularly knows I planted those and remembers some of the long battles way years back. He wasn’t very vociferous in those days, but now he’s very gracious about it, thanking me for ‘em.”

Stopping the First Street Expressway

“I was very worried that they were going to, if they opened MoPac with an opening onto the park – which they did – that they would turn the parkway into an expressway. They’ve tried every way since to do it, you know. They just keep on trying to indicate that that’s where a connector route should be between IH-35 and MoPac should go right along the lake. And until it is dedicated parkland, they can always mess with it. So they adopted the plan, the Town Lake Plan, but they didn’t dedicate the land. Now this year Sally Shipman’s bill has gotten a lot of the land dedicated. Well, yes, I think that she got that done, that that became parkland.”

Endnotes

ⁱ From an unidentified book, pages 198-201, in Reed file, Austin History Center

ⁱⁱ Reed, T.S., vertical file, Austin History Center.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Standard Blue Book*, Texas Edition, 1920. A.J. Peeler & Co., Standard Blue Book Publications, San Antonio. Photo pg. 33; “M.H. Reed,” pg. 208.

^{iv} McBee, Sue Brandt, “Reed Hall: On the Brink of Change,” *Austin Homes & Gardens*, May 1980. vol. 1, no. 11. page 28-36.

^v Dunn, Roy Sylvan, “Malcolm Hiram Reed,” *The New Handbook of Texas*, V. 5, 1996, p. 502.

^{vi} *Standard Blue Book*, Texas Edition, 1920. A.J. Peeler & Co., Standard Blue Book Publications, San Antonio. Photo pg. 33; “M.H. Reed,” pg. 208.

^{vii} Obituary, Malcolm Reed, *Austin American Statesman*, December 12, 1945.