

# ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

**CASE NUMBER:** C14H-2018-0103

**HLC DATE:**

September 24, 2018

October 22, 2018

**PC DATE:**

November 27, 2018

January 8, 2019

**APPLICANTS:** William and Nicole Kessler, owners

**HISTORIC NAME:** Philip D. Creer House

**WATERSHED:** Shoal Creek

**ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE:** 1605 Gaston Avenue

**ZONING FROM:** SF-3-NP to SF-3-H-NP

**SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from single family residence, neighborhood plan (SF-3-NP) combining district to single family residence – Historic Landmark – neighborhood plan (SF-3-H-NP) combining district zoning. While staff is not entirely comfortable setting a precedent for recommending landmark designation for houses which have been modified in recent times, the Historic Landmark has recommended landmark designation for other houses which have had modifications, including the Harry Ransom House in this same neighborhood, which has aluminum siding and the removal and relocation of the front door. In that case, the Historic Landmark Commission, as well as staff, felt that the historical associations of the house were so significant that the architectural modifications to the house could be tolerated. This house, as was the Harry Ransom House, should be treated as an extraordinary circumstance if the Commission decides to recommend historic zoning for the property, and if the Council approves historic zoning for this house, to prevent setting an example to allow consideration for landmark designation for modified houses that do not have the same extraordinary historical significance.

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION:** **September 24, 2018:** Postponed the case to October 22, 2018 to discover historic photographs of the house. Vote: 8-0 (Brown and Hibbs absent). **October 22, 2018:** Recommended the proposed zoning change from SF-3-NP to SF-3-H-NP. Vote: 7-0 (Reed, Koch, and Myers absent).

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** **November 27, 2018:** Recommended the proposed zoning change from SF-3-NP to SF-3-H-NP. Vote: 9-3 (Thompson, Kenny, and Witte opposed). **December 11, 2018:** Voted to rescind the previous action by the Commission to hear new evidence. Vote: 9-2 (McGraw and de Hoyos-Hart opposed; Kenny absent).

**DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:** The house is beyond the bounds of any City survey to date.

**CITY COUNCIL DATE:** January 24, 2019

**ACTION:**

**ORDINANCE READINGS:** 1<sup>ST</sup> 2<sup>ND</sup> 3<sup>RD</sup>

**ORDINANCE NUMBER:**

**CASE MANAGER:** Steve Sadowsky

**PHONE:** 974-6454

**NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION:** Pemberton Heights Neighborhood Association

## **BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

### **Architecture:**

The Creer House is a two-story, rectangular-plan, hipped-roof Colonial Revival house that was built in 1949. The house features all of the hallmarks of the Colonial Revival style, with a symmetrical composition, 8:8 and 6:6 windows, and a classically-inspired front entry – here, a flat-roofed portico with fluted pilasters framing the front door and an oversized lintel with dentils. The front door itself features bull's-eye glass, another characteristic feature of the Colonial Revival style. The house has had several modifications: the front portico was added to the house in 2008; the garage addition, which also modified the original side-gabled configuration of the roof to the current hipped roof was constructed in 2016. Also in the 2016 modifications, the stone veneer from the front of the house determined to be non-original was removed and the house is now clad in cementitious fiberboard.

The Colonial Revival style first became popular around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was a response to the perceived garishness of late Victorian architecture, as well as the economic downturns of the 1890s. The style began on the East Coast, where many examples of true colonial architecture still remained; these colonial houses represented the strength of American value systems and hearkened back to a simpler time in a world that was changing very rapidly, and not always for the better. Colonial Revival styled homes became the dominant architectural expression in the country during, but especially after the popularity of bungalows. While bungalows were one-story and more modest in their scale and audience, Colonial Revival homes were generally two stories and symbolized national ethic, pride, strength of historic American architecture.

### **Historical Associations:**

This house has had several significant owners in its history, but is primarily associated with Philip D. Creer, the dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas and the first chair of Austin's Historic Landmark Commission, who bought the property in 1957.

Before Creer came to Austin, however, this house was owned by Werner and Kathleen Perlitz, who lived here until around 1954. Werner Perlitz was the president of Austin's largest veterinary supply house, C.J. Martin and Sons. It is easy to forget that Austin was once the seat of a large agricultural area, including many truck farms, cotton farms, and ranches with many different kinds of livestock. Many early prominent businesses in Austin centered on the agricultural needs of the surrounding countryside, including feed stores, seed stores, veterinary supply stores, and stores selling agricultural implements. The dominance of agricultural-related businesses remained strong in Austin well into the 1950s. C.J. Martin and Sons was one of the older veterinary supply houses, founded in 1883, by Charles J. Martin, and run as a family business for several generations. The company had offices and a factory on E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street and a retail store in the 200 block of E. 6<sup>th</sup> Street before moving all operations to 413 Chicon Street.

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# FEED AND SEED FIRM GROWS

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## Martin Firm Manufactures 35 Products.

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The firm of C. J. Martin and Sons was originated by C. J. Martin in 1883. The first location was in the second block on West Sixth street, known then as Pecan street. At that time Mr. Martin was in the wholesale and retail seed and feed business. Later on the location was moved to Fourth and Congress avenue and as the poultry industry became commercialized and the necessity of insecticides and poultry remedies was recognized these items were added by Mr. Martin to his business. This location was kept until 1913 and was then moved to 114 East Fourth street. At that time his sons were actively engaged in business with him and the style of the firm was changed to C. J. Martin and Sons.

Several insecticides were manufactured by the concern at this time and also floor sweep, and distribution of these products was handled by the sons, who traveled. As the years went by and the de-

mand was created other products were worked out and put on the market by this concern. On account of the necessity of a location to install modern machinery and the proper facilities for the manufacture of their products this firm purchased a location at 815 East Fourth street and they are now manufacturing over 35 different preparations that have state-wide distribution and are also sold in some parts of the other adjoining states.

This concern was incorporated in 1924 as a private corporation and C. J. Martin was president of the corporation up to the time of his death, Aug. 15, 1926.

This concern is now being operated and managed by his sons, C. E. Martin and F. A. Martin, and they attribute their success to the satisfaction their products have given to the trade based on their efforts to standardize their goods and give quality and service. This concern also operates a retail seed and poultry supply store at 214 East Sixth street and in this store they handle a complete line of garden, field and flower seeds; cotton and plant-life insecticides; poultry remedies, supplies and insecticides, fertilizers and bird and dog supplies and other lines necessary to make a modern seed and poultry store complete.

Story on the history of C.J. Martin and Sons  
Austin American-Statesman, August 14, 1927



Interior of C.J. Martin and Sons, ca. 1943  
Courtesy of the University of North Texas Libraries, Portal to Texas History

Werner Perlitz was born in Schulenburg, Texas in 1900 but grew up in Houston. After he finished his schooling, which included a degree in mechanical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, he returned to Texas and began working in a wholesale grocery business founded by his grandfather in LaGrange. That business, the Schuhmacher Company, had a large office in Austin, and Perlitz moved to Austin in 1932 to manage the local office. After World War II, he returned to Austin and purchased C.J. Martin and Sons, which he maintained until 1966. He and his wife, Kathleen, moved to a house on Preston Avenue after living here.

## Schuhmacher Firm Tells Of Building Sale

The Schuhmacher Building at 400 San Antonio Street has been sold to Austin interests, for an undisclosed amount, it was announced Saturday by Sterling Sasser and Son agency, handling the sale negotiations.

The Schuhmacher Company, wholesale grocery with main offices at Houston, will retain a cash-and-carry department here at 306 East Fourth Street, according to Werner Perlitz, president of C. J. Martin and Son and a Schuhmacher director.

The Schuhmacher Company was founded in the 1870s at La Grange by John Schumacher, widely known Central Texas merchant. Perlitz is a grandson of the founder.

The building on San Antonio Street, which is equipped for cold storage, is now occupied as a warehouse by an Austin firm, Nelson Davis & Son.

Story on the sale of the Schuhmacher Building in Austin by Werner Perlitz  
Austin American-Statesman, May 20, 1956

The next owners of this house were August M. and Doris Michalske, who lived here from around 1955 until 1957, when they sold the home to Philip D. and Cleon Creer. August Michalske was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and played football for Penn State in the mid-1920s. He then played professional football in New York for a season before signing with the Green Bay Packers in 1929. Michalske led the Packers to three consecutive championships in 1919, 1930, and 1931, and was known as "Iron Mike" because he was never injured in a game. After 8 seasons with the Packers, he went into coaching at various colleges and professional football teams, before becoming head coach at Iowa State University from 1942 to 1946. He came to Texas in 1950, as the line coach for Baylor. He became the line coach for Texas A&M University in 1953, and came to Austin in 1955 as an assistant football coach at the University of Texas. He was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1964, and died in Green Bay, Wisconsin in 1983.



**"IRON MIKE" MICHALSKE**  
... Next Head Man at AggieLand?

Iron Mike Michalske being considered for the head coaching job at Texas A&M  
Austin Statesman, January 21, 1954

A University of Texas football team eager to recoup its fortunes Saturday got two important aides to help with the chore.

One is veteran line coach A. M. (Iron Mike) Michalske, who is notable for his achievements at Baylor and Texas A&M.

Michalske, an All-America selection while at Penn State, went on to become an all-time all-pro player in 10 years of professional football. He also has nine years of collegiate coaching experience—five as head coach at Iowa State, three as assistant coach at Baylor and one at Texas A&M.

After playing guard at Penn State in the mid-20's, Michalske played for the New York Yankees. There he teamed with Harold (Red) Grange. Later, he was with the Green Bay Packers in the sterling Herber-Ishell-Hutson era and won all-time all-pro honors there.

After Michalske quit playing, he coached LaFayette College for two years and then returned to the Packers as a coach for one year before moving to Iowa State. He went back to pro football as assistant coach of the Baltimore Colts for two seasons, 1948 and 1949, and then joined Baylor's staff in 1950.

Excerpts from the news story on Mike Michalske and Bobby Layne joining head coach Ed Price at the University of Texas

Austin American-Statesman, January 23, 1955

In 1957, Philip D. Creer and his wife, Cleon, purchased this house. A native of Pennsylvania, Creer earned his degree in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1927, and began teaching architecture at Penn. He was hired to lead the architecture program at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1933, a position he held until 1956. He emphasized practical experience as an integral part of an architect's education while at RISD. He was also a partner in the Providence, RI firm of Creer, Kent, Cruise, and Aldrich, designing schools, commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings. His designs for a public housing project was recognized by the Public Housing Authority. Creer also lead the brand-new Historic American Building Survey efforts in Rhode Island in the 1930s, and brought an understanding of how, when, and why buildings came to be in his documentation and analysis of historic structures.

He left Rhode Island in 1956 to accept the position of dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas, a position he held until 1967. He partnered with local Austin architect Roland Roessner, known for his mid-century Modern designs. Creer resigned as dean of the School of Architecture in 1967 but continued to teach at the University of Texas for many years. His interest in historic preservation led him to the newly-established City of Austin Historic Landmark Commission in 1974. Creer served as the chair of the Commission for a decade, and served on the Commission until 1990. Under his leadership, the city's Historic Landmark Commission oversaw the genesis of Austin's historic preservation program, addressing rampant losses of historic buildings with landmark designations and the attendant property tax incentive for historic preservation. Creer also served on the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners in his later years, as well as on the publication board of The Texas Architect, published by the Texas Society of Architects. He passed away in Austin in 1993.



# Rhode Island Educator Named Head Of University Architecture School

A leading Rhode Island architect and educator, Philip Douglas Creer,

52, has been named University of Texas School of Architecture director.

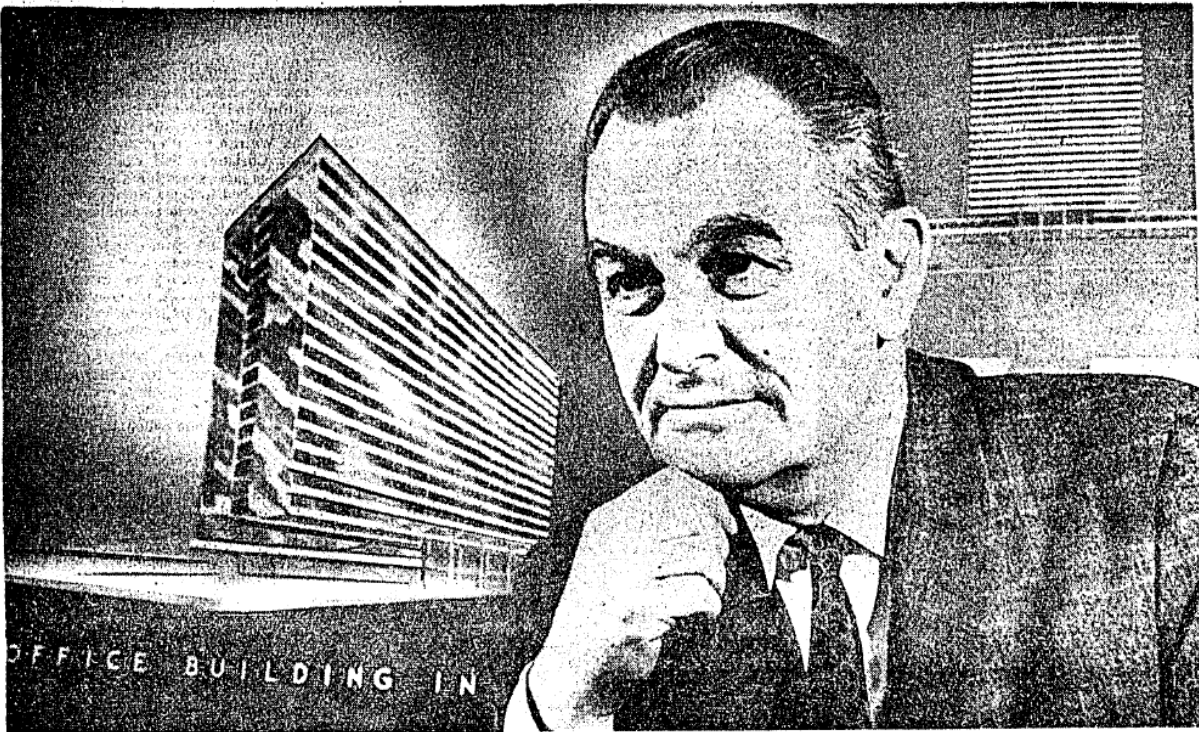
Creer has been head of the Rhode Island School of Design's architecture department since 1933, and is senior partner in the Providence, R. I., architectural firm of Creer, Kent, Cruise and Aldrich.

He is expected to take over his new duties this summer. Professor Hugh L. McMath has been serving as acting director, following the resignation last year of Harwell H. Harris.

Creer, a native of Philadelphia, was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture in 1927. He was instructor in architecture there for three years and was head of the Wanamaker Institute department of architecture for five years before accepting his present position with the Rhode Island School of Design.

Creer has been active in local, state, regional and national affairs of the American Institute of Architects for many years, and last year was named chairman of the AIA's National Judiciary Committee, after being elected a member of the AIA board of directors in 1952. He is past president of the Rhode Island Society for Crippled Children and Adults, district officer of the Historic American Buildings Survey and has served the Providence city government in various advisory capacities. He is a member of the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence Art Club, University Club, Society of Colonial Wars, Shakespeare's Head Association, and Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity.

Philip Creer chosen to lead the University of Texas School of Architecture  
Austin Statesman, March 9, 1956



MAN AND THE WORLD HE LIVES IN GUIDE HANDS OF PHILIP CREER AS THE DESIGNER DRAWS A PLAN FOR TOMORROW.  
This Yankee-turned-Texan stretches days to turn students into architects, shape dreams into stone and steel.

American-Statesman/Darrell Heikes

# Building a Better Architect

Philip Creer Is a Man With a Mission: To Make The University of Texas  
Into a First Rate Center for New Ideas in American Architectural Design

By MARJ WIGHTMAN

Away north along the Schuylkill where leaves turn to red early in the September autumn and history walks with the sure footing of the winter patriot down the cobblestoned alleyways of Philadelphia, a small marble tablet hangs on the St. Paul's Presbyterian Church main sanctuary wall.

It is well remembered.

Down south along the Colorado where the wind blows warm until October and tomorrow whines with the speed of the jet across land that only yesterday was raw as a new ploughed furrow, a man thinks of that memorial sketched long ago by the hands of a marble salesman.

He returns to look at it now and again.

This marble tablet is — for Philip Creer, architect, winner of the Kemper Award, and director of The University of Texas School of Architecture — where the spark came from. His father, almost as much artist as salesman, painted the plaque's original water color pattern.

Today Philip Creer is as much teacher as architect, as often a jeller of plans as a sketcher of housing projects. That spark which caught fire 40 years ago is blazing away at one idea now: to build Architecture's corner of the 40 Acres into a center for new ideas in American design.

Good architecture, the often pristine and beautiful line that makes the onlooker's glance crackle with excitement, is not something you get with a cloud and a pencil, a drawing board and a beard. It may start way out, but it has to come home to roost in stone and steel and glass.

What route does it follow from Cloud Nine to the bulldozer's first crunch into the building site?

It begins as a squiggle in the mind of a man who is part artist, part engineer, part dreamer and enough of a cost accountant to be able to switch the client's "too much" shake of the head to a "can do" nod. This happy combination is not easy to find in one man, even a talented man. And there are times when a teacher of architecture doubts that he'll find it at all.

"Sometimes the student you think should go out and sell shoes will catch fire in a few years and make a liar out of you," Creer admits.

"One child may reveal a natural bent toward line and spatial relationships by the use of his building blocks at play; with another, it's a delayed spark."

Right now the Educational Testing Service at Princeton University has a 12-year program going to try and decipher the qualities that can be dug out of a child early which reveal a talent for creative design.

"After the whole thing is over I'm reasonably certain they'll come up with the verdict 'this test is no damn good,' and we'll be right where we are today."

Even with all this non-finding of talent in the playpen, we're still 90 years ahead of the apprentice system which trained all our architects five years past the Civil War. And right now we're just 18 months behind tomorrow.

Tomorrow, in the terms of architectural schooling at The University of Texas, will come to the General Catalog in the spring of '63 when the present five-year course

grows into a six-year program offering two undergraduate degrees. Only Harvard Yale, Pennsylvania, Princeton and Minnesota are ahead on this new academic trail to better design for man and his environment.

Already approved by the Arts and Sciences faculty, the School of Architecture faculty, the University administration and the Board of Regents, the six-year plan now awaits the final okay from the Texas Commission of Higher Education.

"When the Massachusetts Institute of Technology sprinkled a couple of architecture courses into its liberal arts program early in the 1870's, it started a revolution," Creer, a man who tacked design education on to his own intellectual drawing board more than 30 years ago, explains.

Then ground-hugging office buildings began to scrape the skies, plumbing moved indoors, and elevators made stairways seem old-fashioned. By the early 1900's technical courses began to push the classics aside, timidly at first then almost frantically as new ideas, new materials, new needs jumped over the old traditions. A student of the 1930's found the liberal arts background for architects had been whittled to shadow box size.

The training period went to five years and now, so the architect can be an educated man, it's bound for six.

"We need the architect who can design for our environment," Creer points out. "If he's going to do that, he has to learn all he can about man himself."

Under Texas' new six-year plan, the freshman student will stay with a liberal arts program plus one course in architec-

tural appreciation. He'll add basic design and drawing in his second year. By the third year, he'll know whether he's going for broke or switch off to another field. At the end of four years he'll receive a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Studies.

At this point, the student can quit with a degree and go into a related field such as building or material supply or some such thing.

The truly talented will bear down hard on design courses, complete a thesis, and graduate two years later with a second degree, the Bachelor of Architecture.

Then he's an architect — if he has the talent plus the drive.

Creer, who always liked to draw better than anything else, has made his living using both in equal helpings. What does it take to be a successful architect?

Like most questions that could be starting points for chapters, or maybe even books, we found this one led down more than one road. The first one we came to is the career of Philip Creer.

A man who "always liked to draw better than anything else," Creer is what other benders over the drawing board call an architect's architect.

He loves his work. Almost as important, he sees its needs. A practicing architect in Providence, R. I., while he also led the Rhode Island School of Design's drive for academic rating, Creer is a pusher at horizons.

"Many artists on the Rhode Island faculty objected to the academic look at architecture," this man who came to Texas five years ago recalls. "They relied solely on

natural talent and refused to develop any further. The really good ones — teachers and students — can do both. At Texas we look for a good academic background and an interest in drawing in our students."

#### 'WE THE PEOPLE'

A member of the University of Pennsylvania Class of '27, Creer has been looking at architecture's tomorrow for a generation. In 1946 he helped found one of the country's first firms to combine the talents of architects and engineers.

"They called us 'We the People,'" he grins.

Creer left the five-partner firm in Providence to come south to Texas. But, he still has one memento on his office wall — a giant photograph of a prize winning housing project in which two "firsts" helped create the design. Creer combined high and low rise buildings in the same project for the first time and gave the builders their first experience with exposed reinforced concrete.

Yet, when this architect wanted a house of his own, he went hunting in Old Providence.

"Brown University had to find room to expand and this meant tearing down many of the fine old homes. There was so much furor that Brown offered to give the houses away to anyone who'd move them. I took a look and found what I wanted — the house lived in by 'Annabell Lee' when she was courted by Edgar Allen Poe."

It was, in Creer's words, utterly charming.

"The old carpenters had a sensitivity not only for their craft but they instinctively had a sense of the rick proportion, good scale, and sound construction."

Once he had subtracted what all the succeeding generations had thought was "modernizing," Creer had an early 19th Century three-quarter house with two windows on one side of the front door and one on the other — plus nine fireplaces.

What's the best, the utterly charming of the 20th Century?

"The best work of American architects right now is going into our embassies abroad. There have been too many building with all the design concentrated around the front door, far too many with Queen Anne fronts and Mary Ann behinds.

"Somehow, many of our architects do their best work when they're competing for the approval of a commission. I know this smacks of red tape, but they still put forth their best efforts.

"They look at their drawing boards and say, 'the boys will tear me apart if this isn't right.' The result is better design. Many men have it in them to do fine work, but the drive, the 'I can do it better' feel-

ing is vital. You don't arrive at a masterpiece overnight."

#### PRESSURE ON HIM

Today Philip Creer is still matching his fifth-year students hour-for-hour of drawing board time. A partner in the Austin architectural firm of Creer and Roessner, he is one of the principal designers of the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary master plan.

"We have to work doubly hard; we can't coffee it," his partner, R. Gommel Roessner admits. Roessner, who is also chairman of the design committee at the UT School of Architecture, probably knows the Creer strong points best.

"He knows construction and material and he know how to make things jell."

Max Brooks, another top Austin architect and co-designer of the new United States Embassy in Mexico City, describes Creer this way:

"He works beautifully with groups and has an ability to get things done."

Winner of the American Institute of Architects Kemper Award for Distinguished Service in 1960, Creer has for several years been a member of the Governor's Advisory Committee on the Capitol Master Plan.

Projects in brick or on the drawing board perk up the pulse thump of any architect. But, when that architect is a teacher, too, it takes something more.

Today the first stirrings of architectural research are burning the midnight neon at The University of Texas. Bright and perking young faculty designers are delving into the mysteries of architectural scale and developing new building methods which may cut the costs of school buildings in Austin or houses in Southeast Asia.

Other men are writing books on architectural history and designing buildings for the peculiarities of Jamaica. That big stone hunk of old Spain on Guadalupe is a lively place these days.

Now that the six-year program is almost here, a new faculty committee is hard at work on a new question: Can a graduate program work in a city the size of Austin or does it need a major metropolitan center?

Today two of the top graduate programs in architecture have New York City (Columbia University) or San Francisco (University of California) at their doorsteps.

Tomorrow, the big towns and the big schools may look south to Austin with a newly raised eyebrow on their academic faces.

How did they do it at Texas?

Well, they did exactly what Philip Creer said when someone asked him what he'd do if his wife wanted to build a new house.

"I'd hire an architect," he said with the broadest grin of the day.

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Feature story on Philip D. Creer  
Austin American-Statesman, December 17, 1961



**PHILIP D. CREER**  
Retiring in August

## **Director To Resume Teaching**

Philip Douglas Creer, University of Texas School of Architecture director since 1956, will retire from that position Aug. 31 and resume full-time teaching.

Creer said he is relinquishing the directorship on his 64th birthday, a year ahead of the mandatory retirement age for university administrative officials, because of his long-standing conviction that the last year of such service is often "just marking time."

He has taught and practiced architecture since 1927 and has held administrative positions since 1933. He will continue to teach his courses in professional practice and specification writing.



Dr. Norman Hackerman, vice chancellor for academic affairs, said he would name a faculty committee to recommend a successor to Creer in the directorship. The appointment will be made by the regents upon nomination by Chancellor Harry Ransom and Hackerman.

Before coming to Texas, Creer was head of the Rhode Island School of Design architecture department. He is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, where he also taught.

As senior partner of the firm of Creer, Kent, Cruise and Aldrich of Providence, R. I., Creer designed schools, hospitals, public housing, overseas Army installations and commercial, industrial and institutional buildings. One of his public housing designs was selected as one of the 10 best in the United States by the Public Housing Authority's architects advisory committee.

Reviewing the architecture school's progress during the past 10 years, Creer said both the faculty and student enrollment had gained in quality and size. Improvements in curriculum and physical plant were also noted.

The teaching staff has grown from a dozen (many of them at the instructor level) in 1956 to 21, most of them registered architects with academic ranks of assistant professor or higher.

The school of architecture registered 427 students in the 1966 fall semester. A student council has been created, and the student chapter of the American Institute of Architects has expanded, Creer reports.

He believes one of the most significant student accomplishments is publication of a new periodical, Image, financed with alumni gifts. Students also engage in studies for Texas communities, such as a plan for restoration and modernization of the Lockhart town square.

News story on Creer stepping down from the directorship of UT's architecture program to continue teaching

Austin Statesman, February 22, 1967

## Students Rebuild East Austin House

# Dream Home Now Reality

By DAVE MAYES

Staff Writer

The plain, two-bedroom dwelling at 2013 E. 8th may not appear to be much of a "dream house" but in a sense it is.

For the Espinozas, the place is the happy ending to a long-cherished dream; for Philip Creer, it is the beginning of another.

The Ignacio Espinozas are an impoverished family which last month moved out of the 18th century and into the modern age. Their tumble-down shack — home for 20 years — has given way to a newly refurbished house, complete with such novelties as electricity, hot water, glass window panes, a flush toilet, a bathtub and a refrigerator.

Philip Creer is an architecture professor whose University of Texas students remodeled the Espinoza house as part of a college course.

Success of the project has encouraged Creer to consider attempting a bold step in supplementing the local housing market by establishing a small

factory to build low-cost modular houses for low-income Austin families.

"Yes, I think we could do it. Certainly it needs doing; there are no houses being built in Austin that a poor man can afford," Creer says, noting that city building permits for new housing are averaging well above \$20,000.

"All efforts, both federal and local, have failed to meet the housing needs of the lowest income families," he contends.

"The people most in need simply cannot qualify for any programs . . . yet produced."

A case in point is the Espinoza family. Creer says for two years the family tried unsuccessfully to qualify for assistance in repairing their house or purchasing another one.

Even though Espinoza owned his old house outright and held the same job more than 25 years, his minimum-wage income as janitor of a lumber company could not qualify him for aid.

A student interest in grappling with "real world problems" coupled with Creer's involvement in the Community Development Corporation of Austin (CDCA), a non-profit housing firm, led to an architecture course offered last fall in low-income housing.

Creer recalls students at first tried to design a new two-bedroom home for the Espinozas, but quickly found the \$9,000 price "was far beyond the family's slender resources."

So instead they sought the help of the Austin Urban Renewal Agency, located a small house slated for clearance, bought it for \$250 and moved it onto the Espinoza's E. 8th Street property.

Although structurally sound, the interior of the house was in extremely poor condition, and a half dozen students spent the last seven months renovating the building.

Meanwhile, with the backing of several members of Central Methodist Church, the Espinozas were able to qualify for a \$4,000 loan on the purchase of the house.

Only one lending institution in Austin was willing to take the risk on the family, and then at 10 per cent interest, Creer says.

"They're just not interested in loans that size," he explains. "They say it takes as much paperwork to handle a \$4,000 loan as one for \$10,000."

Conceding the poor success record of modular housing ventures across the nation leaves little room for optimism.

Creer believes the Espinoza house has demonstrated many potential problems in the undertaking can be solved.

For example, labor costs — one of the greatest expenses in home-building — can be cut to the bone using students working for academic credit instead of money, he says.

Creer sees the non-profit factory as a potential training grounds not only for university architecture students who want to get a feel for the materials they'll be using in designs, but also for high-school or community college students who want to learn a building trade.

Costs will be reduced by building housing units in basic 12-foot by 24-foot modules. Wood-frame walls and flooring panels would be assembled at the factory and the modules would be trucked to the building site to be fitted together, he explains.

Creer has designed plans for two-, three- and four-bedroom houses with square footages of 576, 864, and 996 respectively.

The professor believes he can build these houses for \$11 to \$12 per square foot — little more than half conventional costs — if he has to use all paid labor. If students and volunteers are employed, however, the cost could drop to \$7 or \$8 per square foot, he says.

What makes a professor think he can succeed where so many businessmen have failed?

Creer says, first, he's not trying to make profit, and, second, he is trying to find a handle on the financing problem — the difficulty that has been the death-blow to many other ventures.

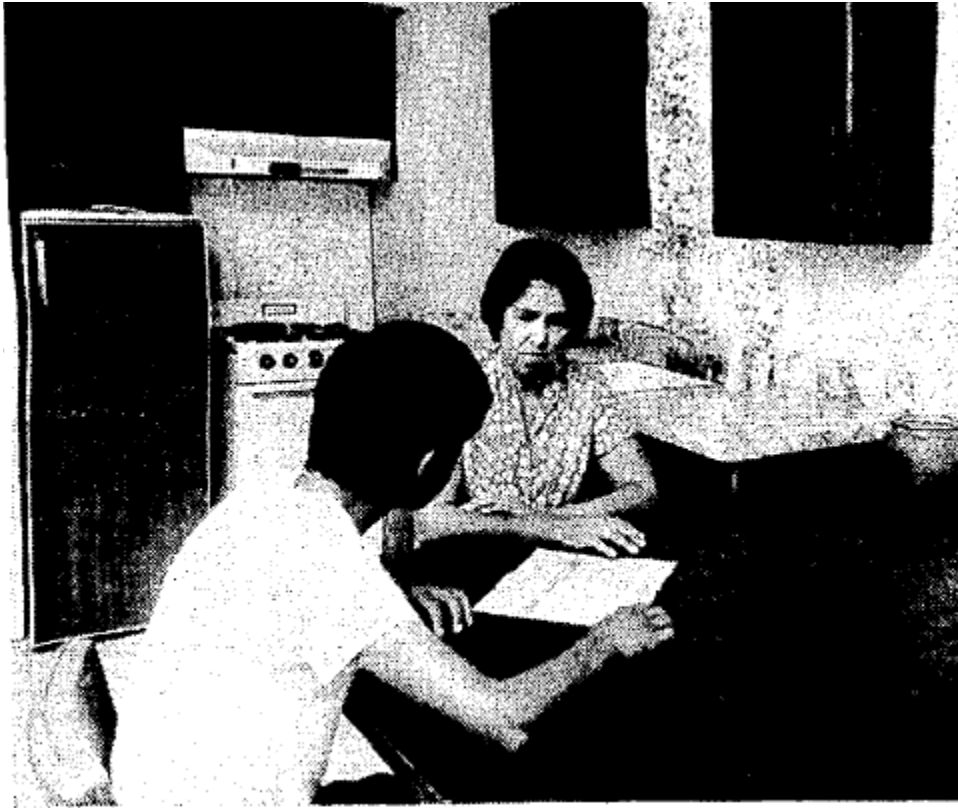
"That's the real hang-up," he says, explaining that usually the low-income buyer and the low-cost house can seldom get together. Either the poverty-level buyer cannot qualify for a loan because of his income or credit rating, or else the lending institutions aren't interested in making small-potato loans for the risk involved.

If, however, several loans can be put together in a single package, and if the low-income borrowers can be underwritten so risks can be reduced, then money-lenders should become more interested, Creer believes.

An agency like CDCA could serve as such a middle-man, and Creer says he presently is working toward that end.

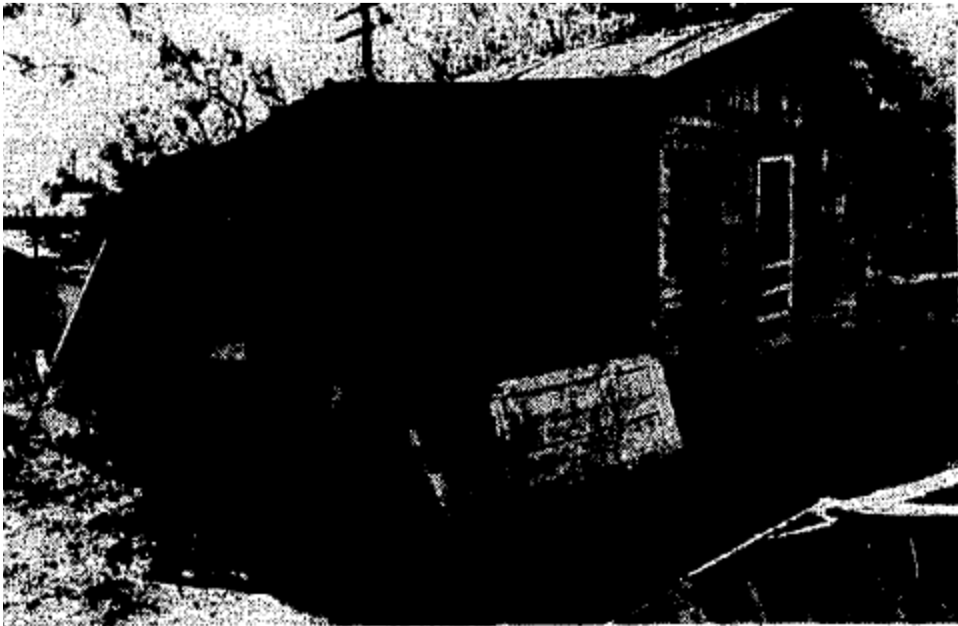


**BEFORE: ESPINOZA IN THE FAMILY KITCHEN**  
Stove was nortable. so was ice chest refrigerator

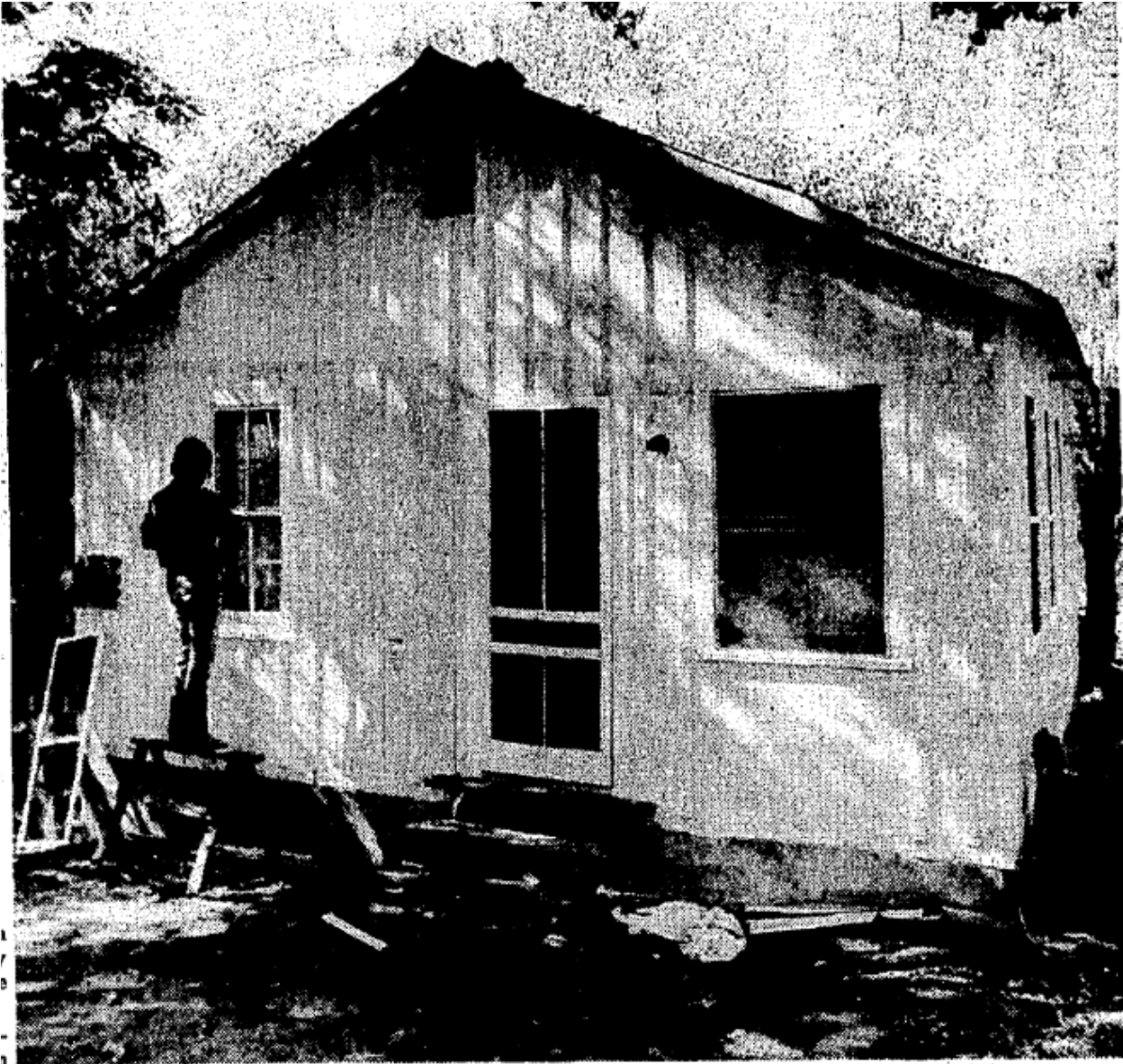


Staff Photo by Ray Cobb

**AFTER: KITCHEN INCLUDES REFRIGERATOR, RANGE**  
Mrs. Espinoza and youngest son Pat, 16, at table



**BEFORE: THIS IS WHERE THE ESPINOZAS LIVED**  
No electricity, no hot water for family of five



Staff Photo by Ray Cobb

**AFTER: UT STUDENT DON SPENCER ADDS LAST TOUCHES ON TRIM**

Next project is to build porch onto front

Article on Dr. Creer's East Austin student project  
Austin American-Statesman, September 2, 1973

**PARCEL NO.:** 0117021104

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** E 50FT OF LOT 4 & W 30FT OF LOT 5 BLK 30 PEMBERTON HEIGHTS SEC 10

**ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT:** \$8,500 (owner-occupied); city portion: \$2,500 (capped).

**APPRAISED VALUE:** \$1,865,871

**PRESENT USE:** Residence



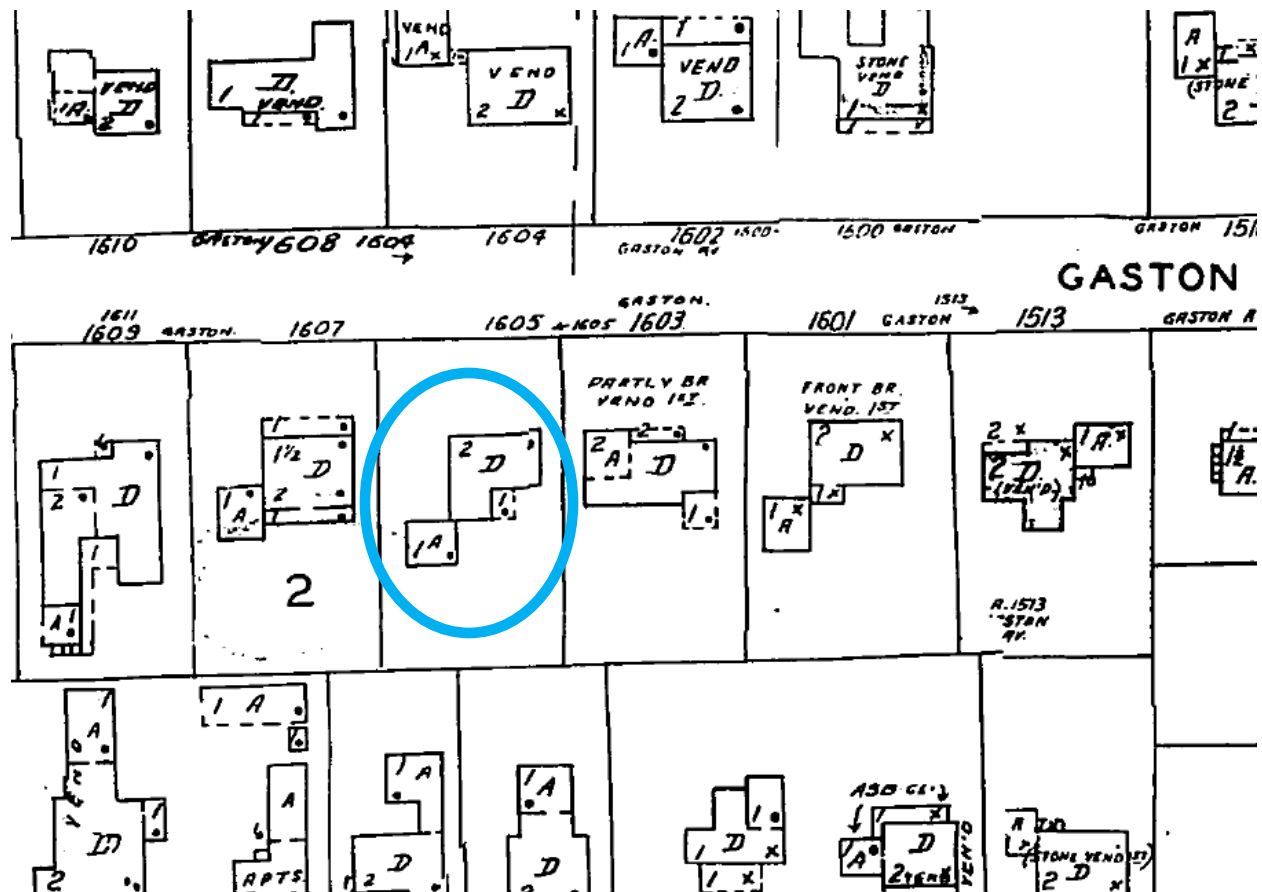
**CONDITION:** Excellent

**PRESENT OWNERS:**

William and Nicole Kessler  
1605 Gaston Avenue  
Austin, Texas 78703

**DATE BUILT:** ca. 1949

**ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS:** The portico was added to the house in 2008; the stone veneer on the first floor of the house was removed in 2016 and replaced with cementitious fiberboard siding; two-story rear addition constructed in 2016. Although staff recommended against the changes to the house in 2016 at the hearing before the Historic Landmark Commission, when the house was under review pursuant to its status as a contributing structure in the Old West Austin National Register Historic District, rather than as a historic landmark, later evidence shows that the stone veneer was not part of the original as-built design of the house, despite the reference in the building permit to stone veneer on the house. The 1962 Sanborn map, while showing masonry veneers on the adjacent houses, does not show the same for this house, indicating that the veneer was a later alteration; further, there was siding under the veneer, indicating that the veneer was a later alteration. If the veneer was part of the original design of the house, it would not have been applied over siding, as was done here.



The 1961 Sanborn map shows the house without the current portico, but also without the notation that the house has the stone veneer, as is shown for other houses on the street, primarily 1601 and 1603 Gaston Avenue.



ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Werner J. and Kathleen Perlitz (1949)

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: Contributing to the Old West Austin National Register Historic District.

W. J. Perlitz

1605 Gaston Avenue

161 E.40' of 4 & W.40' of 5 30 - -

Pemberton Section #10

Stone veneer & frame residence & garage  
attached.

42018 9-22-49

\$15,000.00

William Backer

13

Building permit to Werner J. Perlitz for the construction of this house (1949)



Photo of the front of the house (2008)





2014 photograph of the house showing the stone veneer and the portico added in 2008



Current appearance of the house (2018)

# LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 250'

## NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: C14H-2018-0103  
LOCATION: 1605 GASTON AVE

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.

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