

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
MARCH 25, 2019  
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS  
HDP-2019-0090  
1603 WILLOW STREET**

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**PROPOSAL**

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Demolish a ca. 1902 house.

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**ARCHITECTURE**

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One-story, wing-and-gable plan frame house with board-and-batten siding; partial-width shed-roofed independent porch with bracketed turned wood posts; single and paired 4:4 fenestration.

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**RESEARCH**

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The house appears to have been built around 1902. The first owners and occupants were Adolph and Mary Gruber, who moved here from a multi-family dwelling on South Congress Avenue. Adolph Gruber was born in New Orleans; his father was a Bavarian-born brewer. Adolph worked for the telephone company at the time that he and Mary bought this house. His job titles included switchboard man, electrician, and loose wire chief. Around 1911, he went to work as a laboratory assistant in the School of Physics at the University of Texas, a job he retained until his death in 1936.

After Adolph Gruber died, the house became a rental property. Ruell L. and Ethel Turner rented the house through the 1940s; he was a warehouseman for Central Freight Lines. Subsequent tenants included a driver for the Firestone Test Fleet, and two Air Force families. In the mid-1960s, the house was rented by Santos and Eloisa Trevino, who lived here until the early 2000s. Santos Trevino was a clockmaker and watch repairman.

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**STAFF COMMENTS**

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The house is listed in the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (1980), indicating its significance. The house is erroneously listed in the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (2016) as previously listed as a local landmark, but is still recommended as contributing to a local or National Register historic district, or individually eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.

The former owner of the house agreed to a restoration of the house and provided plans for restoration and an addition. No work was ever completed by the former owner and the house is currently boarded up and has deteriorated significantly since the last time the case was reviewed by the Commission. The current owner has provided a new structural report and photographs that document the condition of the house in support of his application for demolition.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Under normal circumstances, staff would recommend initiating historic zoning on this house, but staff is swayed by the condition of the house and the fact that restoration is not so much the option now as reconstruction, which would defeat the purpose of historic preservation. Staff must very reluctantly recommend release of the permit due to the condition of the house and the feasibility of preservation.

## LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 250'

## NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2015-1006  
1603 WILLOW STREET

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

This product has been produced by CTM for the sole purpose of geographic reference. No warranty is made by the City of Austin regarding specific accuracy or completeness.





1603 Willow Street  
ca. 1902



Photographs from 2015-16





Photographs from March, 2019

## OCCUPANCY HISTORY 1603 Willow Street

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

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| 1992    | Santos and Elouisa Trevino, owners<br>Retired   |
| 1985-86 | Santos and Elouisa Trevino, owners<br>Watch repairs (at the house)                                    |
| 1981    | Santos and Elouisa Trevino, owners<br>Watch repairs (at the house)                                    |
| 1977    | Santos and Louisa Trevino, owners<br>Watch repairs (at the house)                                     |
| 1973    | Santos and Louisa Trevino, renters<br>Watch repairs   |
| 1968    | Santos and Louisa Trevino, renters<br>Watch repairs   |
| 1962    | Willard and Pearl Wortham, renters<br>No occupation listed  |
| 1959    | Harold and Leona Reaves, renters<br>U.S. Air Force  |
| 1955    | M.C. and Gennie V. Walker, renters<br>Driver, Firestone Test Fleet, research, 211 E. Riverside Drive. |
| 1952    | Jess W. and Geneva Noble, renters<br>U.S. Air Force   |
| 1949    | Vel V. and Helen E. Ives, renters<br>No occupation listed   |
| 1947    | Ruell L. Turner, renter<br>Checker, Central Freight Lines, 401 Colorado Street.                       |
| 1944-45 | Ruell L. and Ethel Turner, renters<br>Foreman, Central Freight Lines, 401 Colorado Street.            |
| 1941    | Ruel L. and Ethel Turner, renters<br>Foreman, Central Freight Lines, 401 Colorado Street.             |
| 1939    | Cecil Whitehead, renter<br>Laborer  |
| 1937    | Adolph A. Gruber, owner<br>Chemist  |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1935    | Adolph A. Gruber, owner<br>Laboratory assistant, University of Texas   |
| 1932-33 | Adolph A. Gruber, owner<br>Laboratory assistant, University of Texas   |
| 1930-31 | Adolph A. Gruber, owner<br>Laboratory assistant, University of Texas   |
| 1929    | Adolph A. Gruber, owner<br>Laboratory assistant, University of Texas   |
| 1927    | Adolph A. Gruber, owner<br>Laboratory assistant in physics, University of Texas  |
| 1924    | Adolph A. Gruber (not listed as owner)<br>Laboratory assistant in physics, University of Texas   |
| 1922    | Adolph A. Gruber, owner<br>Laboratory assistant in physics, University of Texas  |
| 1920    | Adolph A. Gruber, owner<br>Laboratory assistant in physics, University of Texas  |
| 1918    | Eva Gruber, owner<br>Widow, Anton Gruber<br>No occupation listed<br>Also listed is Adolph A. Gruber, a laboratory assistant in physics at the University of Texas.                             |
| 1916    | Eva Gruber<br>Widow, Anton Gruber<br>No occupation listed<br>Also listed is Adolph A. Gruber, a laboratory assistant in the School of Physics at the University of Texas.                      |
| 1914    | Eva Gruber<br>Widow, Anton Gruber<br>No occupation listed<br>Also listed is Adolph A. Gruber, a laboratory assistant in the School of Physics at the University of Texas.                      |
| 1912-13 | Adolph A. Gruber<br>Laboratory assistant, School of Physics, University of Texas.<br>NOTE: Eva Gruber, the widow of Anton Gruber, is listed at 22307 Leon Street; she had no occupation shown. |
| 1910-11 | Adolph A. Gruber<br>Switchboard repairman, Southwestern Bell Telephone Company   |
| 1909-10 | Adolph A. Gruber<br>Loose wire chief, Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company   |



1906-07 Adolph A. Gruber  
Electrician, Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company

1905 Adolph A. Gruber  
Electrician, Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company

1903-04 Adolph A. Gruber  
Switchboard man, Southwestern Telephone Exchange

1900-01 Unknown  
NOTE: Adolph A. Gruber is listed at 1811 S. Congress Avenue; he was a general inspector for the Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company.

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

#### Adolph A. Gruber (ca. 1902 – ca. 1936)

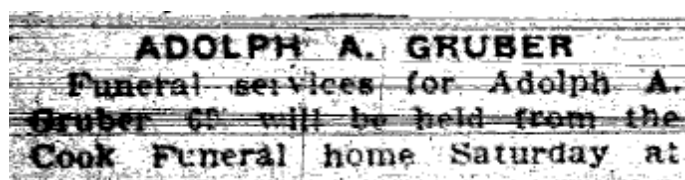
Adolph A. Gruber appears in the 1880 U.S. Census as the 12-year old son of Anton and Eva Gruber, who lived in Mesquite Street in Austin. He was born in Louisiana, and is listed as being at school. He was the oldest of the couple's three children. Anton Gruber was 37, had been born in Bavaria, was a brewer. Eva Brewer was also 37, had been born in Bavaria, and was listed as keeping house.

The 1900 U.S. Census shows A.A. and M.A. Gruber at 1811 South Congress Avenue, which also had two other families listed. A.A. Gruber was a 34-year old Louisiana-born electrician; M.A. Gruber was 38, had been born in Illinois, and had no occupation listed.

The 1910 U.S. Census shows Adolph A. and Mary A. Gruber at this address. Adolph A. Gruber was 45, had been born in Louisiana, and was an electrician for the telephone company. Mary A. Gruber was 48, had been born in Illinois, and had no occupation listed. They had a boarder, Bessie Galbraith, 25, who had been born in Texas, and was an operator for the telephone company.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows Adolph A. Gruber as the owner of this house. He was a 52-year old widower who had been born in Louisiana and was a laboratory assistant at the University of Texas.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows Adolph A. Gruber as the owner of this house. He was 62, and was listed as a teacher at the University. He had a roomer, Herbert H. Hamilton, 27, who had been born in Texas, and was a welder for the street railway company.



9:15 a. m. and at 9:30 a. m. from St. Mary's Catholic church with the Rev. Father Gallagan officiating. Burial will be in Mt. Calvary cemetery.

Active pallbearers will be Adolph Schnelder, Charlie Boes, Simon Gills, Bige Reno, W. L. Benson and J. W. Parks.

Honorary pallbearers, members of the Physics department of the University of Texas, will be Prof. W. T. Mather, S. L. Brown, J. M. Kuehne, Arnold Romberg, M. T. Colby, C. P. Boner, A. D. Lockenwitz, J. J. Miller, L. J. B. LaCoste and Earl Dickens.

Mr. Gruber is survived by one sister, Mrs. J. H. Williams, and one brother, L. H. Gruber, both of Austin.

Mr. Gruber, a resident of Austin for many years, was born in New Orleans, La., June 29, 1867. He had been connected with the Physics department of the University of Texas for a number of years.

Obituary of Adolph A. Gruber  
Austin American, March 21, 1936

#### **Ruell L. and Ethel Turner (ca. 1940 – ca. 1948)**

Ruell L. and Ethel D. Turner appear in the 1940 U.S. Census as the renters of this house. Ruell L. Turner was 40, had been born in Georgia, and was a warehouseman for Central Freight Lines. Ethel D. Turner was 34, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 2 sons: Weldon L., 16, ; and Floyd O., 13. Both boys had been born in Texas, and neither had an occupation listed. With them lived Ethel Turner's mother, Violet Bazemore, a 74-year old Illinois-born widow with no occupation listed.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows R.L. and Ethel Turner as the renters of the house at 1901 Riverview Street in Austin. R.L. Turner was a 30-year old Georgia-born milker in a dairy. Ethel Turner had no occupation listed. Their two boys were listed, as well as Ethel's mother, Mrs. I.B. Bazemore, who had no occupation listed.



**BUELL L. TURNER**

Ruell L. Turner, 58, of 3710 Munson, died in a local hospital Sunday. A life long resident of Austin, he was a retired state employee.

Survivors include two sons, Floyd Turner and Weldon Turner of Austin; seven brothers, O. D. (Jack) Turner of Round Rock, Buford Turner of Houston, Leonard Turner, L. D. Turner, E. A. Turner, Tom Turner and Jake Turner of Austin; three sisters, Mrs. Lola Carvell, Mrs. Adelle Atchison and Mrs. Avis McFarland of Austin; and six grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held at Hytlin-Manor Funeral Home at 2 p.m. Monday with H. L. Methaney of the Govalle Church of Christ officiating.

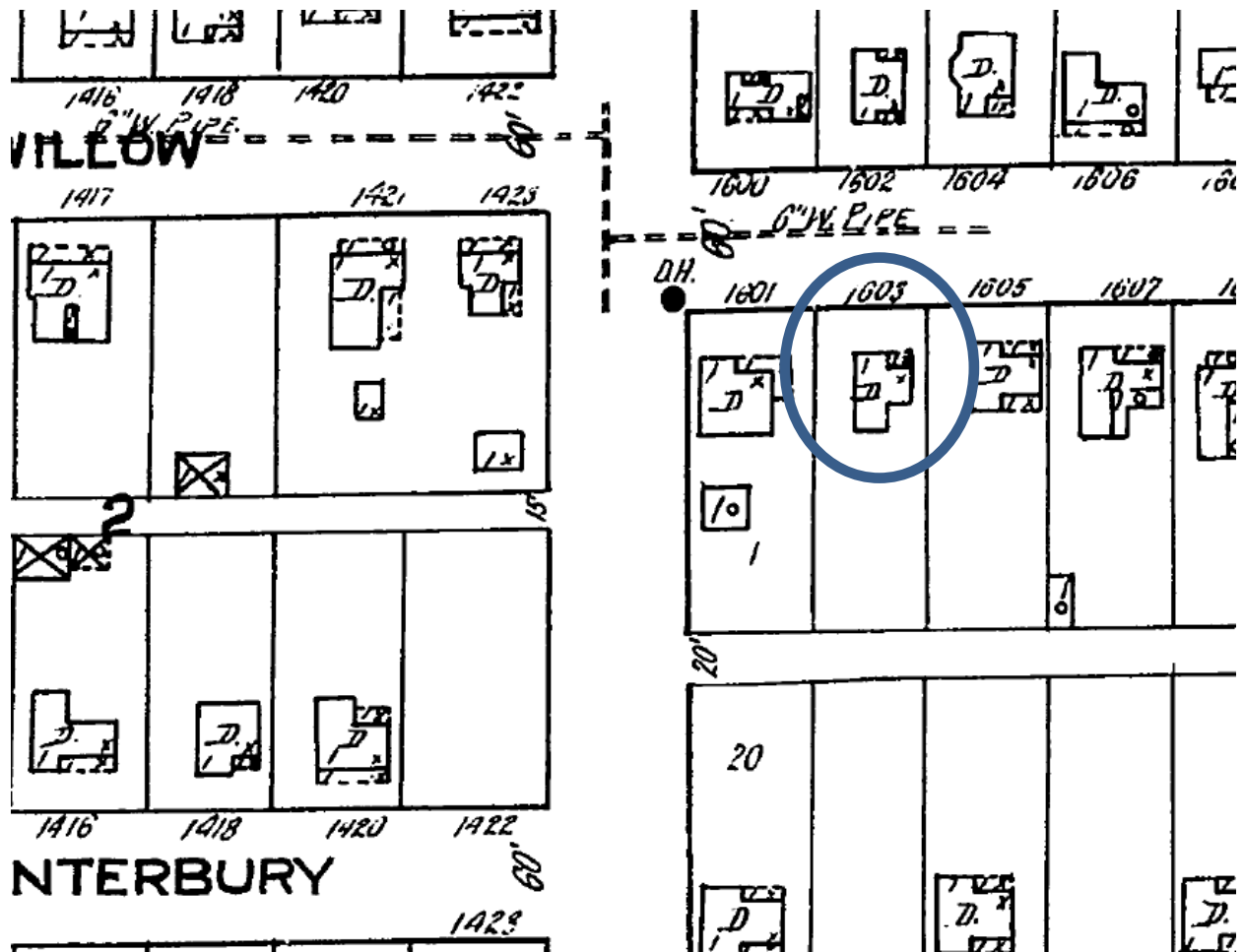
Obituary of Ruell L. Turner  
Austin American, October 28, 1957

**TREVINO, Eloisa**, 73, of Austin died Friday. Prayer service 7 p.m. today, Mission Funeral Home. Services 2 p.m. Monday, Mission. Burial Assumption Cemetery.

Death notice for Eloisa Trevino  
Austin American-Statesman, May 16, 2004

**TREVINO, Santos Flores**, 86, clocksmith, of Austin died Aug. 25. Rosary 7 p.m. Tuesday, Mission Funeral Home. Services 10 a.m. Wednesday, Mission. Burial Assumption Cemetery.

Death notice for Santos Trevino  
Austin American-Statesman, September 9, 2013



The 1922 Sanborn map shows the house.



Oakman Building Company  
6507 Jester Blvd. #510-E  
Austin, TX 78750

March 20th, 2019

Mr. Reilert  
1603 Willow St.  
Austin, TX 78702

Dear Mr. Reilert:

Oakman Building Company has completed a Property Condition Report of the above referenced property. The subject property consists of one parcel of land totaling 0.1275 acre (TCAD). The parcel is improved with one single family residence totaling 1,250 SF. The residence has a small front porch totaling 112 SF. The home was constructed in 1910 & is wood stick frame construction. The roofing is metal. The foundation is wood beam construction on wood piers. There appears to be no central air conditioning or heating.

Based on the condition observed during the site visit, the subject property appears to be in very poor condition. The roofing system appears to be metal, in poor condition, the current roof is not salvageable and will need to be completely replaced. There appears to be multiple leaks that have caused damaged to the framing structure.

Most of the ceiling framing appears to be of 2x4 construction and not properly braced. The 2x4's are not up to the current IRC code. The ceiling joist and roof structure will need to be completely re-constructed to bring them up to current code as well as to be able to properly and safely carry the roof load.

The current state of the interior of the home is in poor condition. There is exposed electrical wiring where sheetrock or wall paneling has been removed. This entire electrical system will need to be replaced due to the wiring being out of compliance. All ceilings and walls will need to be repaired. The flooring throughout the house is in poor condition and will all need to be replaced. There are multiple rotten areas in the floor framing and extensive repair and replacement work will need to take place to bring the structure up to a livable condition.



The foundation appears to be wood piers with no concrete foundation or base. All wood piers will need to be replaced with concrete piers, engineered to support the structure of the house. The foundation work needed would be extensive.

Overall, the property would require significant repairs to bring the home up to code. It is the opinion of Oakman Building Company that the home should be demolished. The cost to remodel the home would far exceed the cost of demolishing the home and re-building.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RH' followed by a stylized flourish.

Ryan Hay  
Oakman Building Company











Hi Steve,

Thank you again for your communication regarding the demolition process.

I had previously submitted a thorough property condition report, and accompanying photographs, detailing the extremely distressed state of the 'structure' on the 1603 Willow St property.

I do not feel that it is justified having a hearing, and any associated fees, for a waiver to remove and rebuild a traditional home at this location.

I am happy to work with you and the city to ensure the traditions of Austin are maintained in my construction.

Best,  
Geoff Reilert