

# ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

**CASE NUMBER:** C14H-2020-0011

**HLC DATE:**

February 24, 2020

**PC DATE:**

February 25, 2020

**APPLICANT:** Historic Landmark Commission

**HISTORIC NAME:** Lavada Durst (“Dr. Hepcat”) House

**WATERSHED:** Boggy Creek

**ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE:** 1906 E. 21<sup>st</sup> Street

**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.

**QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:**

Architecture and Historical Associations

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION:** February 24, 2020: Recommended the proposed zoning change from SF-3-NP to SF-3-H-NP. Vote: 10-0 (Valenzuela absent).

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** February 25, 2020: Recommended the proposed zoning change from SF-3-NP to SF-3-H-NP. Vote: 12-0 (Shieh absent).

**DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:** The house was moved from its location on E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street to its current location in 2019 to encourage its preservation, and was given to a community member who owns the 21<sup>st</sup> Street property after her house burned. The house was not recommended for designation in the East Austin Historic Resources Survey (2016).

This house reflects a wealth of history in Austin and should be preserved at any cost. The house has significance as an example of mid-1920s working-class bungalow architecture, and long-term historical associations with Lavada Durst, a ground-breaker in race relations in Austin, bridging the gap between white and black through music and sports. Lavada Durst was the first African-American radio announcer in Austin, and brought the races together through his roles as emcee, performer, and director of the Rosewood Playground, promoting local talent presentations at traditionally white venues, such as the Hillside Theater in Zilker Park. He introduced white audiences to African-American music, and his contributions to race relations in Austin are invaluable and incalculable.

**CITY COUNCIL DATE:** March 26, 2020

**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:**

**BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

**Architecture:**

One-story, rectangular-plan, front-gabled frame bungalow with a partial-width inset porch; single and paired 1:1 fenestration; round attic vent in the tympanum of the front gable.

The house is a frame vernacular structure, that was a typical housing form for the working class of both races in Austin in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; this house is a “step up” from simpler vernacular structures, which had board-and-batten, rather than wood siding, suggesting a higher economic status for the inhabitants of this house over the simpler, smaller working-class houses elsewhere in East Austin. The basic form and features of the house remain fully intact. While certainly not a high-style building, this house reflects the typical housing of a skilled African-American working-class family in East Austin, and meets the criterion for architectural significance.

**Historical Associations:**

This house appears to have been built around 1926. There is a water service permit for this address dating from 1926, and the 1922 Sanborn map shows a different (ca. 1909) structure on this site. City directories also show that beginning around 1926, the house was owned and occupied by a single family, whose members lived here until around 1990. That family was extremely significant in Austin history and culture, as this was the home of Albert Lavada Durst – known to most Austinites from the 1940s onward as “Dr. Hepcat.”

Albert Lavada Durst was born in Austin in 1913 to Maud and Katie Durst, the third of seven children. Maud Durst was born in Bastrop County, Texas, and worked as a carpenter and construction laborer for most of his life. He was also a church deacon, and several city directory listings reference him as Deacon M. Durst. Katie Durst was a practical nurse; she was born in Caldwell County, Texas. The Durst family lived in other houses in East Austin before moving into this house around 1926, and outside of a period of vacancy in the mid-1930s, when the Durst family moved to a house on Hackberry Street for a very short time, this was the family home for the next 65 years. This house is across the street from the historic site of Mount Olive Baptist Church, which was a focal point of the African-American community in this neighborhood. It was in this church that young Lavada Durst first developed his taste and talent for music, learning to play the piano. He chose his own, more secular style as he grew older, playing blues and ragtime numbers, but from this church beginning, a major star of the local music scene blossomed and thrived.

Lavada Durst worked several types of jobs early in life – like his brothers, he was a porter at the State Capitol for several years in the 1930s, a kitchen hand for a potato chip manufacturing company, and finally began his career with the City of Austin in the early 1940s. He was the janitor at the Rosewood Playground (now Rosewood Park), and later became athletic director for the Rosewood Playground, truly significant as Austin, like most segregated cities in Texas and the South, provided very few recreational amenities for its African-American population. He was also very active in promoting the talent of neighborhood youth for city musical programs at the Hillside Theater at Zilker Park and other venues, long before city facilities were integrated. While African-Americans could not use Zilker Park or Barton Springs, Lavada Durst brought the talent of his community to the greater attention of white Austin at programs throughout the city. By the late 1940s, he was very much in demand as an emcee for various talent programs in town, and was beginning to develop his signature style of jive, which attracted the attention of John F. Connally and Jake Pickle, the owners of KVET radio station; they recruited Lavada to announce Negro League baseball games on the air. Lavada Durst was the first African-American deejay in Austin, a monumental achievement in the late 1940s. His broadcasts were advertised in the Austin newspapers, and by the early 1950s, Lavada Durst was renowned throughout the city as “Dr. Hepcat” and even published a book in 1953. He was regularly noted with great praise in the entertainment columns in the newspaper, and continued to emcee major talent shows, announce baseball games for KVET, and he recorded a couple of blues numbers for the record

company owned by a principal at the radio station. He continued his city job at Rosewood, maintaining that position until his retirement in 1979. For all his secular fame, however, Lavada Durst maintained his faith. He was a devout Baptist, and steadfastly refused to play or perform in bars and nightclubs. His career skyrocketed in the 1950s, but in 1963 he decided to leave the secular world of music and return to his roots in the Baptist church. He became a Baptist minister in 1965, and led the congregation at Olivet Baptist Church. It was not until the late 1970s when he was convinced to return to the world of entertainment, and he had a comeback in the local blues scene. He retired from his city employment in 1979, and lived a relatively quiet life, more so after the death of his beloved wife Bernice, who passed in 1983. Lavada Durst moved back into this house in the mid-1980s to be with his remaining siblings, who continued to reside here. He passed away in 1995. His funeral was huge and was covered reverently by the Austin newspapers.

The house was the home of Lavada Durst from around 1926 until the early 1950s, when he and his wife Bernice, moved to a new house on Ulit Avenue. Lavada Durst spent his young adult life in this house. When he married, he and his wife lived in this house with his parents until they bought their new house. It was in this house that Lavada Durst began his career that spanned several decades on the radio, and as emcee for major talent events in Austin. The house has significant historical associations.

**PARCEL NO.:** 0211090809

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** E 45' OF S 95' OF LOT 2 BLK 9 OLT 46 DIV B JOHNS C R SUBD

**ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT:** Unknown. The last valuation of this property occurred before the current house was moved onto the lot, so there is no information for determining the estimated annual tax abatement. The house will be used as a homestead, so the annual tax abatement will be under \$8,500 with the caps imposed by the City of Austin, Travis County, and the Austin Independent School District.

**APPRAISED VALUE:** Unknown. The last valuation of this property occurred before the current house was moved onto the lot.

**PRESENT USE:** Single family residence

**CONDITION:** Excellent

**PRESENT OWNER:**

Mary A. Clark  
1906 E. 21<sup>st</sup> Street  
Austin, Texas 78722

**DATE BUILT:** ca. 1926

**ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS:** Moved to its current site in fall, 2019.

**ORIGINAL OWNER(S):** Maud and Katie Durst (1926)

**OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS:** None.

## LOCATION MAP



1" = 111'



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

### NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: C14H-2020-0011  
LOCATION: 1906 E. 21st 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.





Current photograph - February, 2020



Original location - 1608 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
ca. 1926



OCCUPANCY HISTORY  
1608 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center  
By City Historic Preservation Office  
August, 2018

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 1992    | Anita Mendutta, renter<br>No occupation listed<br>NOTE: The directory indicates that Anita Mendutta was a new resident at this address.   |
| 1985-86 | Lavada L. Durst, renter<br>Retired  |
| 1981    | Katie C. Durst, renter<br>Recreation center supervisor, City Parks and Recreation Department.<br>NOTE: Lavada and Bernice Durst are listed at 1408 Ulit Avenue; he was the athletic director for Rosewood Park. |
| 1977    | Katie C. Durst, renter<br>Recreation center supervisor, City Parks and Recreation Department.   |
| 1973    | Katie C. Durst, owner<br>Widow, Maude Durst<br>Leader, City Parks and Recreation Department.  |

NOTE: This reference may be in error – Katie C. Durst was the daughter of Maude and Katie Durst.

- 1968 Katie C. Durst, owner  
Manager, Palladium Club, 1500 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1964 Maud Durst, owner  
No occupation listed  
Also listed is Katie C. Durst, the manager of the Palladium Club, 1500 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street; and Andrew L. Durst, the manager of the Palladium Club.
- 1960 Maud and Katie M. Durst, owners  
No occupation listed  
Also listed are Andrew Durst, a porter at the State Education Agency; and Katie C. Durst, no occupation shown.
- 1957 Maud and Katie M. Durst, owners  
No occupation listed
- 1955 Maud and Katie M. Durst, owners  
No occupation listed
- 1952 Deacon M. and Katie M. Durst, owners  
No occupation listed  
Also listed is Katie C. Durst, no occupation shown.  
NOTE: LaVada and Bernice are listed at 1408 Ulit Avenue; he was an announcer on KVET Radio.
- 1949 Deacon M. and Katy M. Durst, owners  
Carpenter  
Also listed is Lavada Durst, a leader at the City Recreation Department. Bernice Durst is not listed in the directory.
- 1947 Deacon M. and Katie M. Durst, owners  
Laborer  
Also listed are Albert L and Bernice Durst; he was a caretaker for Rosewood Park; Andrew Durst, no occupation shown; and Katie C. Durst, no occupation shown.
- 1944-45 Maud and Katie Durst, owners  
Laborer  
Also listed are A. Lavada and Bernice Durst, noted as employed but with no indication of a place of employment; Andrew Durst, a deputy sheriff; and Charles Durst, a porter for the State Attorney General's Office  
NOTE: The house is listed as 1610 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1942 Maud and Katie Durst, owners  
No occupation listed  
Also listed are Albert and Bernice Durst; he was a janitor at the Rosewood Community Center; she was a maid for a private family.
- 1940 Maude and Katie M. Durst, owners  
No occupation listed  
Also listed are Albert (Lavada) and Bernice Durst. He was a kitchen hand at Sani-Products of Texas, potato chip manufacturers, 810 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

- 1939 Maud and Katie Durst, owners  
Carpenter  
Also listed are Albert Durst, no occupation shown; Andrew Durst, a chauffeur; Bernice Durst, a maid; Charles Durst, a porter; Maudie B. Durst, a maid; and Nellie Durst, a domestic.
- 1935 Vacant  
NOTE: Maud and Katie Durst are listed at 1612 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, the house next door; neither had an occupation shown. Also listed with them are Albert Durst, no occupation shown; Annie M. Durst, no occupation shown; Bernice Durst, a domestic; and Maude B. Durst, no occupation shown.
- 1932-33 Vacant  
NOTE: Maud and Katie Durst are listed at 1508 Hackberry Street. Neither had an occupation shown. Also listed at 1508 Hackberry Street were Albert (Lavada) Durst, Andrew Durst; and Margaret B. Durst. None had an occupation shown.
- 1929 Maud and Katie Durst (colored), owners  
Carpenter  
Also listed are Charles Durst and Andrew Durst; neither had an occupation shown.
- 1927 Maud and Katie Durst (colored), owners  
No occupation listed  
Also listed are Charles Durst, and Veda Durst; neither had an occupation shown.

NOTE: The following listings are for a ca. 1909 house on this site, prior to the construction of the instant house.

- 1924 Jesus and Mariana Martines, renters  
No occupation listed  
  
Salvador and Maria Martines, renters  
No occupation listed  
NOTE: There is a listing for a Mose and Maud Durst at 1611 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street; neither had an occupation shown. There is no listing for Maud and Katie Durst in the directory.
- 1922 James Jones (colored), renter  
Gas maker
- 1920 Priscilla Ferrell (colored), owner  
No occupation listed  
NOTE: Maude and Katie Durst are listed at 2209 E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street; he was a carpenter. There was a family named Durst at 1601 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street – Charles and Mable Durst – he was a laborer, Mary Durst, a laundress, and Nellie Durst, a cook at the Union Hotel.
- 1918 Priscilla Ferrell (colored)  
No occupation listed
- 1916 Priscilla Ferrell (colored)  
No occupation listed
- 1914 Georgia Ann Wilson (colored)



NOTE: There is a listing for a Georgianna Wilson at 1614 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, but none for a Georgia Ann Wilson at this address. Georgianna Wilson had no occupation shown.

- 1912-13      Georgia Ann Wilson (colored)  
No occupation listed
- 1910-11      John Wilson (colored)  
Laborer
- 1909-10      Vernon Mitchell (colored)  
Driver, Heidenheimer, Strassburger & Company, wholesale groceries and  
produce, 201-03 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.  
NOTE: John Wilson is listed as a laborer living at 1502 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- 1906-07      The address is not listed in the directory.  
NOTE: Vernon Mitchell is not listed in the directory.

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:**

**Maud and Katie Durst**

**Lavada and Bernice Durst**

**Katie Durst (daughter)**

**ca. 1926 – ca. 1990**

Maud and Katie Durst appear in the 1930 U.S. Census as the owners of this house, which was worth \$3,500. Maud Durst was 50, had been born in Texas, and was a carpenter. Katie Durst was 39, had been born in Texas, and was a practical nurse. They had 7 children listed: Charley, 20, a cook in a cafe, and his wife, Fannie M., 20, who did housework for a family; Andrew, 19, a carpenter's helper; Albert (Lavada), 16; Maudie B., 14; Annie M., 12; Callie, 8; and Katie, 3. All the children had been born in Texas. The Durst family also had a boarder, Albert Soles, 8, who had been born in Texas.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Maud and Katie Durst as the owners of this house, which was worth \$2,000. Maud Durst was 65, had been born in Texas, and was a laborer in building construction. Katie Durst was 59, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 2 single and 3 married children living with them. The single children were Charlie Durst, 35, who had been born in Texas and was a porter at the State Capitol; and Katie Corrine Durst, 15, who had been born in Texas and had no occupation listed. The married children were Albert (Lavada) Durst and his wife, Bernice, and their son, Albert, Jr. Albert (Lavada) Durst was 27, had been born in Texas, and was a porter at the State Capitol. His wife, Bernice, 25, had been born in Texas and was a maid in a private home. Their son, Albert, Jr., was 6. Maud and Katie Durst's daughter Maud was married to Willie B. Pender. Maud Pender was 24, had been born in Texas, and was a maid in a private home. Her husband, Willie B. Pender, 27, had been born in Texas, and was a porter at the State Capitol. Maud and Katie Durst's daughter Callie was married to Howard Williams, a 22-year old Texas born porter at the State Capitol. Callie Williams was 18, had been born in Texas, and did housework for a private family.

Annie May Durst died in a 1938 auto wreck. She was married (her husband's name was John Henry Hicks), and living in this house at the time of her death. She was born in Austin in 1917 and was a housewife.

Maud and Katie Durst's son Charlie Durst died in 1958; he was living in this house at the time of his death. He was born in 1905 in Austin and was a porter at the State Capitol. He was divorced. His death certificate reveals that Katie Durst's maiden name was Mackey.

Katie Durst died in 1959; her last address was this house. She was born around 1885 in Caldwell County, Texas, and was a housewife.

His 1966 death certificate shows that Maud Durst was born in 1875 in Bastrop County, Texas, and was living at this address at the time of his death. He was a retired construction laborer.

### **MRS. KATIE DURST**

Funeral services for Mrs. Katie Durst will be held Friday at 3 p.m. in New Mt. Olive Baptist Church with the Rev. H. A. Sneed officiating. Burial will be in Evergreen Cemetery under the direction of King-Tears Mortuary.

Survivors include her husband, Maud Durst; three daughters, Mrs. Maud Pender and Mrs. Callie Williams of Los Angeles, and Miss Katie Corine Durst of Austin; two sons, Lavada Durst and Andrew Durst, both of Austin; and two brothers, Thadd Mackey of Sealy and Andrew Mackey of Ft. Worth.

Obituary of Katie Durst  
Austin American, October 23, 1959

### **MAUD DURST**

Funeral for Maud Durst will be held Sunday at 1 p.m. at New Mt. Olive Baptist Church, Rev. H. A. Sneed officiating. Interment will be in Evergreen Cemetery under direction of King-Tears Mortuary.

He is survived by two sons, Rev. Lavada Durst, Andrew Durst; three daughters, Mrs. Maud B. Pender, Mrs. Callie Williams, Katie Durst; three grandchildren.

Obituary of Maud Durst  
Austin American-Statesman, June 4, 1966

# Dr. Hepcat

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Albert Lavada Durst** (January 12, 1913 – October 31, 1995) known as **Dr. Hepcat**, was an American blues pianist, singer, and baseball commentator who became the first black radio DJ in Texas, influential in the spread of rhythm and blues and rock and roll music.

## Biography

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Durst was born in Austin, Texas and learned to play piano as a child. He grew up playing barrelhouse blues locally, and developing a talent for hip rhythmic jive talk which won him a position as announcer at Negro League baseball games in Austin.

He was heard by radio station KVET manager John Connally, later the Governor of Texas. With the support of station owner Jake Pickle, he hired Durst to be the station's baseball commentator and first black disc jockey, in 1948. Naming himself "Dr. Hepcat", Durst's presentation made him successful with white as well as black radio listeners, and according to the Texas State Historical Association, he "can be credited for introducing an entire generation of white Austin listeners to jazz, blues, and rhythm and blues." Pickle said of Durst: "[He] had a lingo all his own... A lot of people listened to Senator games solely for the pleasure of hearing Dr. Hepcat.... He was as good an entertainer as he was an announcer, and he became famous all over Austin..."

Durst also recorded for Uptown Records, a label owned by KVET program director Fred Caldwell, and managed a gospel music group, the Charlottes. He wrote the gospel song "Let's Talk About Jesus" for the Bells of Joy, and also published a dictionary of jive talk, *The Jives of Dr. Hepcat*, in 1953.<sup>1</sup> The magazine Wax in 1978 credited him as one of the inventors of rock'n'roll radio. He was also responsible for bringing many prominent black entertainers to perform in Austin.

He retired from KVET in the early 1960s and was ordained as a minister at Mount Olive Baptist Church in 1965. He gave up performing for several years, returning to play the blues from the mid-1970s at festivals and other venues. From the mid-1940s until retiring in 1979, Durst also worked as director of athletics for the Rosewood Recreation Center in Austin. He died in Austin in 1995.

**DURST, ALBERT LAVADA [DR. HEPCAT]** (1913–1995). Albert Lavada "Dr. Hepcat" Durst, pianist and first black disc jockey in Texas, was born in Austin on January 9, 1913. As a youth he taught himself to play piano in the church across the street from his home. Later, influenced by Boot Walden, Baby Dotson, Black Tank, and others, Durst became a master at playing the 1930s and 1940s barrelhouse blues.

He also had a talent for a pre-rap method of rhythmic "jive talk." During the mid-1940s this helped land him a job as an announcer for Negro League baseball games at the old Disch Field in Austin. When players such as Jackie Robinson were in Austin some whites attended, including a young [World War II](#) veteran, [John B. Connally, Jr.](#), who was impressed by the talented, smooth-talking Durst. Connally and another progressive young war veteran, Jake Pickle<sup>qv</sup>, owned KVET radio in Austin. Connally was also the station manager. In the late 1940s the two opened their station to African-American and Mexican-American broadcasts. In 1948 Pickle hired Durst as the first black disc jockey in Texas. "Dr. Hepcat's" cool jive-talk was a hit and made him a celebrity with the local white college students. He can be credited for introducing

an entire generation of white Austin listeners to jazz, blues,<sup>qqv</sup> and rhythm and blues. While working as a disc jockey, Durst made two singles, "Hattie Green" and "Hepcat's Boogie." Both were recorded in 1949 for Uptown Records, which was owned by KVET program director Fred Caldwell. During the 1950s Durst managed a spiritual group, the Charlottes. He also wrote the hit gospel song "Let's Talk About Jesus" for the group Bells of Joy, and published a pamphlet called *The Jives of Dr. Hepcat*, a dictionary of jive-talk. Durst retired from KVET in the early 1960s and gave up performing the blues to become a minister. He was ordained at Mount Olive Baptist Church in 1965 and was named an associate minister at Olivet Baptist Church in 1972. In the mid-1970s, convinced that God wanted him to use his talents, he returned to performing the blues. For the next several years, he played "boogie-woogie barrelhouse blues" at festivals, museums, and other venues.

In addition to his musical endeavors, Durst worked for the city of Austin as director of athletics for the Rosewood Recreation Center. He retired in 1979, after working there for thirty-five years. Durst was preceded in death by his wife, Bernice, who died in 1983; he himself died in Austin on October 31, 1995, and was buried there in Cook-Walden Capital Parks Cemetery and Mausoleum. They had two sons and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In 1995 Durst was inducted into the unofficial Rock Radio Hall of Fame. In 2008 he was one of the inaugural inductees for the Austin Music Memorial.

From the Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association

***Here It Is Again!***

**AUSTIN BLACK SENATORS**

VS.

**HOUSTON BLACK  
GREYHOUNDS**

**Announced by Lavada Durst**

**8:30 TONIGHT**

**KVET-1300**

## 'Stars' Listed At Sing-Song

The regular sing song at Barton Springs Thursday night will feature the performers from Rosewood playground with Lavada Durst as master of ceremonies. The program from Rosewood is an annual affair at the sing song.

Lavada Durst is already quite an MC as he has his own program on KVET every night, the Rosewood Ramble. Numbers on the program include: trio by the Scales Sisters, Rosewood Chorus Girls composed of Doris Johnson, Rose Ann Wade, Madge Scott, Lavera Smith; dance solo by Doris Tolliver; deep purple act with Johnny Johnson, Dolly Tolliver, and McKinley McCutcheon; dance solo by Anita Stanton; Hepcat Boogie, a number that was written and recorded by Lavada Durst; dance solo by Mary Louise Carothers, interpretive dance by McKinley McCutcheon, and trio singing "Now Is the Hour."

Numbers included by Dr. Dan Grieder in the sing song are: "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain," "Put On Your Old Grey Bonnet," "For Me and My Gal," "Ten Pretty Girls," "Oh What a Beautiful Morning," "Humoresque," "John Brown's Baby Had a Cold Upon His Chest," "Pretty Baby," "I Want a Girl Just Like the Girl That Married Dear Old Dad," "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise," "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," "Home Sweet Home," "Let the Rest of the World Go By."

The band will be featured in a 30 minute concert beginning at 8 p. m. with Weldon Covington as director.

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Story on Lavada Durst serving as emcee for the Barton Springs Sing-Song by Rosewood Park performers

Austin Statesman, August 5, 1948



# Rosewood Group Presents Program at Hillside Tonight

A variety show featuring talent from Rosewood Negro Recreation Center will be included in the program of Thursday night's community sing-song at Barton Springs Hillside Theater at 8 p.m. Lavada Durst, better known as "Dr. Hepcat," will be master of ceremonies throughout the program.

A concert by the Austin Municipal Band, under the direction of Weldon Covington, will precede the sing-song and variety show.

The talent on the Rosewood show will include Margaret Pearson, who will sing "Danny Boy," accompanied by Elizabeth Pearson. Edith Davis, accompanied by her sister Ruth Davis, will sing "With A Song in My Heart."

The Rosewood Dance Chorus, composed of six girls, and the San Marcos Air Base Glee Club will perform. The Rosewood "Little Wonders" Quartette will sing "My Heart Cries For You." Also included in the program will be Tobe Scott singing "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise;" Peggy Beaver, tap dance; and Maurice Sauls and Peggy Beaver, jitterbug dance team.

Lavada Durst will give his "Dr. Hepcat" version of piano boogie-woogie. Durst is a play leader at the Rosewood Center and is a disc jockey for a radio station.

Catherine B. Lamkin, program director of Rosewood is in charge of the variety show. Anita Stanton is the Rosewood accompanist.

Music of the band concert will

be provided through the cooperation of Local 432 of the American Federation of Musicians through a grant from the Music Performance Trust Fund of the Recording Industry. This fund is an extension of public service originated by the Recording and Transcription Fund of the American Federation of Musicians and provides pay for musicians' services in free public concerts.

Numbers included in the sing-song are "In the Good Old Summertime," "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "John, Jacob, Jingle Hiram Schmidt," "Hushabye, My Baby" (Missouri Waltz), "Listen to the Mockingbird," "Brahm's Lullaby," "My Heart Cries for You," "My Old Kentucky Home," "O The Bulldog on the Bank and the Bullfrog in the Pool," "Gypsy Love Song," "Sing Your Way Home," and "Look for the Silver Lining."

Dr. Dan Grieder is song leader and Mrs. Nolen Harvey is pianist.

Story on Lavada Durst serving as emcee for the Rosewood Recreation Center talent program at the Barton Springs Hillside Theater  
Austin Statesman, August 14, 1952

## ***Dig Hepcat's Book, It's Ace High, Qualified***

**By JOHN BUSTIN**  
**Amusements Editor**

Dr. Hepcat, officially designated as Lavada Durst among the square set, is a round little man of many pursuits, hip to many tips, whose unique brand of dialogue—and the freeness with which it flows through even his casual conversations—have long amazed nearly everyone who has occasion to exchange words with him.

Fame for Hepcat, as his close friends call him (the "doctor" prefix sounds too formal), started when he emerged from Rosewood Playground as the town's champion jitterbug. It was boosted when he later took over as director of the big eastside park. And it increased enormously when he came up with his super-groovy disc-jockey show, a spot from which he still maintains his eminence as the Bard of Bop.

Now it should move even higher, because Hepcat has penned a tome titled "The Jives of Dr. Hepcat," which is now on the stands around town. The book, as Hepcat explains in his prologue, "is an attempt to put down in literary form the strong undercurrent of swing life of young America . . . In it, you will find many of the jive talk and classy hep terms that are being used today."

Unlike the volumes of Cab Calloway and other top exponents of the well-turned jive phrase, Hepcat's work isn't so much of a dictionary as it is a series of dialogues utilizing this hepster's quaint manner of ex-

pression which has established him as a very colorful personality.

Some samples from his little gem:

On an exciting combo: "You can believe they put the wheel on any deal, every sound is hip to the tip. When they put up some wild riffs, it ain't no sin to take off your skin and dance around in your bones."

An expression of love: "Little one, you are a triple scream and one big yell. Yes, you must have it much made, because you don't rattle when you roll."

A report on a night-club floor-show featuring an unusually accomplished dance: "Fine frame, no parts lame. The pad is loaded with hipsters from all fronts, mad aces in their places, cool chicks strictly the lick, fine and most bulling."

Of course, if your claws aren't sharp on this mad mess of chatter that Hepcat lays down, you can always eyeball the glossary to hip your knowledge box and move on down, ace high and qualified.

Or do you dig me?

News story on the release of Lavada Durst's book, "The Jives of Dr. Hepcat,"  
Austin American-Statesman, March 29, 1953

A few fast odds and ends:

Baseball fans who follow the Austin Indians' games can find as much entertainment over the Disch Field loudspeakers as on the diamond when Lavada Durst is furnishing the game commentary. Durst, better known as Dr. Hepcat, dishes up a colorful patter of jivey jargon which is quite a novelty to the ear of the uninitiated. His next Disch Field stint will be Sunday afternoon when the Indians take on the Nuevo Laredo Aztecas . . . The Austin Civic Theater, having extended its try-out sessions for "The Rainmaker,"

will hold its first reading audition Sunday night at the Playhouse. All aspiring actors are invited to attend . . . Incidentally, ACT will go into its second weekend of "Nellie of the Sawdust Ring," its current melodrama, Saturday night. The lively opus will run until "Rainmaker" takes over the Playhouse stage.

Story on Lavada Durst's providing game commentary  
Austin Statesman, July 15, 1955

## **'Dr. Hepcat' Is No More: Pulpit Wins**

Lavada Durst, the voice of rhythm and blues in Austin for 15 years, has taken up another cry these days. The longtime disc jockey, widely known throughout the area as "Dr. Hepcat," has officially been ordained a Baptist minister, and his next audience will be the congregation of the Jackson Chapel Church, where he will occupy the pulpit for the 11 a.m. service Sunday.

Since preaching his first sermon in May at the New Mount Olive Baptist Church, where he is also a member, the Rev. Durst has continued his duties as a recreation director at Rosewood Playground and the adjacent Doris Miller Auditorium, a post he has filled since before World War II.

But the colorful career of Dr. Hepcat, he says, is now in his past, and if he returns to radio

in the future, it will be with gospel and spiritual music instead of Fats Domino's and Ray Charles'.

"I'm movin' now with the gospel," says the new reverend.

Dr. Hepcat retires in favor of the ministry  
Austin American-Statesman, July 21, 1963



# East Avenue Playground Plans Show

East Avenue playground and pool invites the public to its annual carnival and water show Thursday from 7 to 10 p.m. at East Avenue and 21st.

The water show opens with a synchronized performance by girls from Reed Pool coached by Ann Austin. Swimming and diving exhibitions also will be given by members of the Austin Aquatics Club. The aquatics show ends with crowning of the Queen of East Avenue Park, elected by those using this city playground.

Carnival fun includes games for every member of the family, plus the popular hot dog and snow cone treats.

Special event of the evening is a record dance and variety show to be emceed by Lavada Durst of "Dr. Hepcat" fame. Durst, who is giving up his radio disc jockey work in favor of the ministry, says this benefit event will be his last as a record spinner. The dance begins at 8 p.m. with the intermission variety show scheduled at 9 p.m.

Recreation leaders Bill Meinecke and Mrs. Jo Ann Stiles and guard Hugh Geck are in charge of the show.

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Last event emcee'd by Dr. Hepcat (Lavada Durst)  
Austin Statesman, July 31, 1963



**HONORED**—Mt. Olive Baptist Church will honor Mrs. Lavada Durst Sunday. An active member of the church for more than 30 years, Mrs. Durst has been chosen Woman of the Year by church members. She is the wife of Rev. Lavada Durst.

Story on the honoring of Bernice Durst by Mount Olive Baptist Church  
Austin American-Statesman, May 5, 1973

**DURST, Bernice White,**  
68, of Austin, died Wednesday. Services 1:30 p.m. Monday at Mount Olive Baptist Church. Burial, Capital Memorial Park Cemetery. (King-Tears Mortuary)

Death notice for Bernice Durst  
Austin American-Statesman, May 8, 1983

# Durst, a versatile Austin icon, dies at 82

## Durst's unique airwave style had far-reaching influence

**By MICHAEL POINT**

*Special to the American Statesman*

Albert Lavada Durst, who died Tuesday at 82, will be remembered for more than a few careers that helped bring people together in Austin.

On radio, he spanned generations and the races as the jive-talking "Dr. Hepcat," and that came after he stopped calling baseball plays. In music, he pounded a barrelhouse blues piano and brought the greats of his era to town. From his position at an eastside recreational center, he put youths on paths to

success in athletics and teaching. From the pulpit, he preached what he believed.

Durst died following a lengthy illness at the East Fourth Street home where he was born.

"If the world had more people like Lavada Durst in it, we would be closer to realizing the elusive ideal of true brotherhood," said Jake Pickle, the former congressman who hired Durst as the city's first black disc jockey in 1948. Pickle and future politician John Connally owned KVET radio station then.

Durst's activities and influence were a pervasive part of life in Austin after

World War II. He moved as easily among West Austin socialites as he did among East Austin musicians, and he earned respect from all he encountered.

In his radio persona as "Dr. Hepcat,"<sup>6</sup> Durst exposed a generation of white Austin music fans to sounds and sensibilities they had never experienced. His "Rosewood Ramble" program, which usually opened with Duke Ellington's "Things Ain't What They Used to Be," enlightened local listeners with a steady diet of R&B, jazz, blues and whatever

else crossed his mind. But it was his fast-flowing, between-platters patter that made him a celebrity. So ground-breaking was Durst's verbal virtuosity that an aircheck of his was included in the national Rock and Roll Hall of Fame that opened recently in Cleveland.

Stringing together rhythmic rhymes that presaged rap by decades, Durst caught the fancy of white college students with lines such as "Jumping jills and jiving cats, upstate gates and high hats can lace their boots and tighten their wigs, here's some jive that anyone can dig."

### **'He was my hero'**

Many of Austin's current crop of DJs, and more than a few musicians, still exhibit the influence of the early days of Durst's reign on the Austin airwaves.

Local talk radio personality Sammy Allred, who admits to recycling a Dr. Hepcat line from time to time, was a loyal fan of Durst. "He was my hero," Allred said. "I heard my first Elvis Presley record on his program. I still remember things he said, and I smile every time I do."

Veteran humorist Cactus Pryor, who worked at a competing radio station during Durst's prime, strongly seconded Allred's opinion. "Oh, Lavada was definitely an original," Pryor said. "He had a way with language the rest of us could only dream of having. He could make anything interesting."

Durst came to the attention of Pickle and Connally through his work as the public address announcer for Negro League baseball games in Austin in the 1940s. He used the same tongue-twisting, crowd-pleasing patter to describe baseball action, and it was unlike anything heard on the diamond before or after.



Durst's involvement with athletics continued throughout his radio and musical careers. He retired as director of athletics at the Rosewood Recreation Center in 1979 after 35 years of working for the city there. He was involved in most of East Austin's youth sports activities.

Among the locals benefiting from Durst's leadership were former National Football League stars Richard "Night Train" Lane and Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson, former Anderson High School coach Lonnie Jackson and Huston-Tillotson College athletic director James Wilson.

Henderson said his years with the Dallas Cowboys were a direct product of the care and attention Durst gave his aspiring young athletes. "I couldn't have done what I did without him starting me out on the right path," Henderson said. "Mr. Durst was always there for young people. When I look back at my activities at the park I always remember how he was ready to help every kid who needed assistance, whether it was teaching them how to play or just helping them tie their shoes."

## **Musical beginnings**

Durst started playing blues piano at age 12 and, under the tutelage of his friend Robert Shaw, mastered the style. He also served as a promoter, bringing in legends such as Ray Charles, Nat "King" Cole, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald and others to their black fans in East Austin. In addition, Durst wrote the lyrics for the Bells of Joy's gospel million-seller "Let's Talk About Jesus."

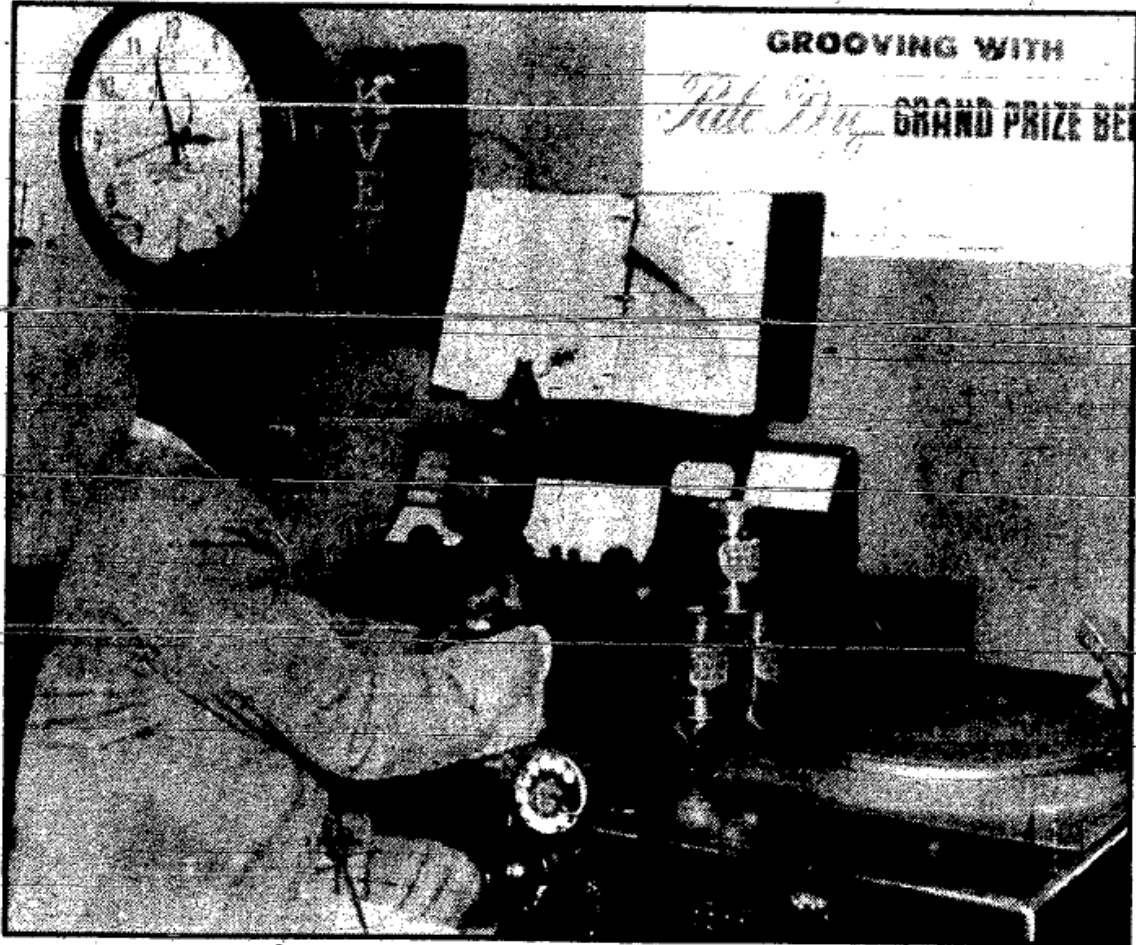
The devout Durst put his musical career behind him in 1965 to pursue sacred studies, convinced by his wife, Bernice, that his energy and abilities were being misused on secular concerns. He was named an associate minister at Olivet Baptist Church in 1972. It was only when the church's minister, the Rev. Lawrence V. Wicks, reminded Durst that it was quite all right to make a joyful noise that he resumed his musical career.

Durst, who steadfastly refused to play bars and nightclubs, maintained a low-key performing profile for several years before local blues activist Tary Owens brought him back into the musical mainstream in the 1980s with a series of projects. Durst joined with his local piano peers Roosevelt "Grey Ghost" Williams and the late Erbie Bowser to record the classic "Texas Piano Professors" album. He played an assortment of museum and festival dates with his fellow professors when they took the concept on the road.

"Lavada was the glue that kept things together for the African

American community in Austin," Owens said. "He was not only a gifted musician but he was also a perfect role model. And the most important thing is that he was just as good a role model for white kids as he was for the black community."

Funeral arrangements were pending.



**Albert Lavada Durst, who was hired by KVET radio station in 1948 as Austin's first black disc jockey, exposed a generation of white music fans to a steady diet of R&B, jazz, blues and whatever else crossed his mind.**

News story and obituary of Albert Lavada Durst – "Dr. Hepcat"  
Austin American-Statesman, November 1, 1995

## Mourners recall the spiritual side of Austin's 'Dr. Hepcat'



Olivet Baptist Church pastor Kennedy Young remembers Albert Lavada Durst as a 'servant of the Lord' at

Friday's funeral for the Austin man. Known to his fans as 'Dr. Hepcat,' Durst died Tuesday at 82.

Larry Kolvoord/AA-S

## ■ Albert Lavada Durst is eulogized as a man of God and a role model to the young

By MICHAEL HURD

American-Statesman Staff

Albert Lavada Durst may be remembered by most for his pioneering radio days as "Dr. Hepcat," but Friday morning it was his spiritual side that carried the moment before about 200 mourners who attended his funeral at Olivet Baptist Church.

In a modest ceremony, just as Durst had requested, he was eulogized as "our shepherd and counselor" who loved to "just sit and worship" and would call every member of the church reminding them to attend the weekly prayer service. Durst, who died Tuesday at age 82, served as associate minister at Olivet for 17 years.

"I felt his heart," said Olivet Pastor Kennedy Young. "He had a spirit about him that wouldn't let him quit. All Lavada wanted to do was be a servant of the Lord."

In that, he may have had much more impact than as the city's first black disc jockey (at KVET, in 1948), as a renowned blues pi-



and player or as an announcer for local Negro League baseball games. He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame this summer for his unique air checks, and he wrote the lyrics for a best-selling gospel song, "Let's Talk About Jesus," recorded by the Bells of Joy.

In 1979, Durst retired from his City of Austin job as director of athletics at Rosewood Recreation Center. It was from Rosewood that Durst touched the lives of so many kids, including Adrian Sweeney, now 39 and a pastor's assistant at Zion Rest Baptist Church.

"He was a good man, always wanting to help," said Sweeney, who was given a \$20-a-day job by Durst as clock operator during the park's basketball games. "He was a great humanitarian. He taught us to be honest and make an honest living. He was a role model.

"His walk coincided with his talk."

And, as Dr. Hepcat and baseball announcer, Durst did have the gift of gab. Carl Mann, a Houston attorney who had teamed with Durst at KVET gave a highly emotional and tearful salute to his departed friend. Mann re-created Durst calling a simple fly ball, which had been hit "with the meat of the bat" and had traveled so high it was near enough the moon to ask "are you really made of

green cheese?" before the ball "settled into the darkness of the outfielder's glove."

"He had a profound effect and influence on my life," said Mann,

who was music and sports director at KVET during Durst's tenure there. "He had a way of cutting through to the heart of a subject. The spirit Lavada represented is

not often found anymore. He had an openness and an ability to laugh at himself."

Durst's survivors include his son, Charles A. Durst of Holly-

wood, Calif., a sister, Callie D. Williams of Austin, eight grandchildren and several great grandchildren.

"Lavada was a people person," said Raphael Smith, pastor at Mt. Olive Baptist Church, where Durst had been a member. "He was a good pusher — always with words of encouragement and wisdom."

Smith, in addressing Durst's family, recalled the spirit of Durst and his wife Bernice.

"They were a beautiful couple, real in the things they shared and taught and the example they set," Smith said. "Thank God that you are the offspring of Lavada and Bernice Durst."

Durst was hired for the KVET job by Jake Pickle, then co-owner (with John Connally) of KVET. Pickle, a former U.S. congressman, could not attend Friday's services but sent his condolences. Several other notable friends of Durst's attended the service, including several local ministers, and Roosevelt Williams, "The Grey Ghost," who teamed with Durst and Erbie Bowser to record the "Texas Piano Professors" album.

Another Durst friend, Tary Owens, said he'd remember Durst's courage, heart and persistence, and that his death leaves a musical void "like a Grand Canyon."

News story on the funeral and legacy of Albert Lavada Durst — "Dr. Hepcat"  
Austin American-Statesman, November 4, 1995

# ANDREW DURST

Andrew Durst, of 1608 East 4th St., died at his home Thursday. Funeral will be Monday at 3 p.m. at the New Mt. Olive Baptist Church with Rev. H. A. Sneed officiating. Burial will be in Evergreen Cemetery under the direction of King-Tears Mortuary, Inc.

Survivors include a brother, Rev. Lavada Durst of Austin; three sisters, Mrs. Maud Pender of Los Angeles, Mrs. Callie Williams and Miss Katie Durst of Austin.

Obituary of Andrew Durst, the son of Maud and Katie Durst  
Austin American-Statesman, February 21, 1971

PERMIT FOR WATER SERVICE Austin, Texas No. A 950

M. *Chatter Long* Address *1608 84*

Plumber *Sturges + Linnant* Size of Tap *1 1/2* Date *8/27/22*

Foreman's Report.

Date of Connection *9/23/24*

Size of Tap Made *1 1/2*

Size Service Made *5/8*

Size Main Tapped *6.0*

From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock *7*

Location of Meter *in Side Prop.*

Type of Box *Small*

Depth of Main in St. *14.0*

" " Service Line *14.1*

From Curb Cock to Tap on Main *19.6*

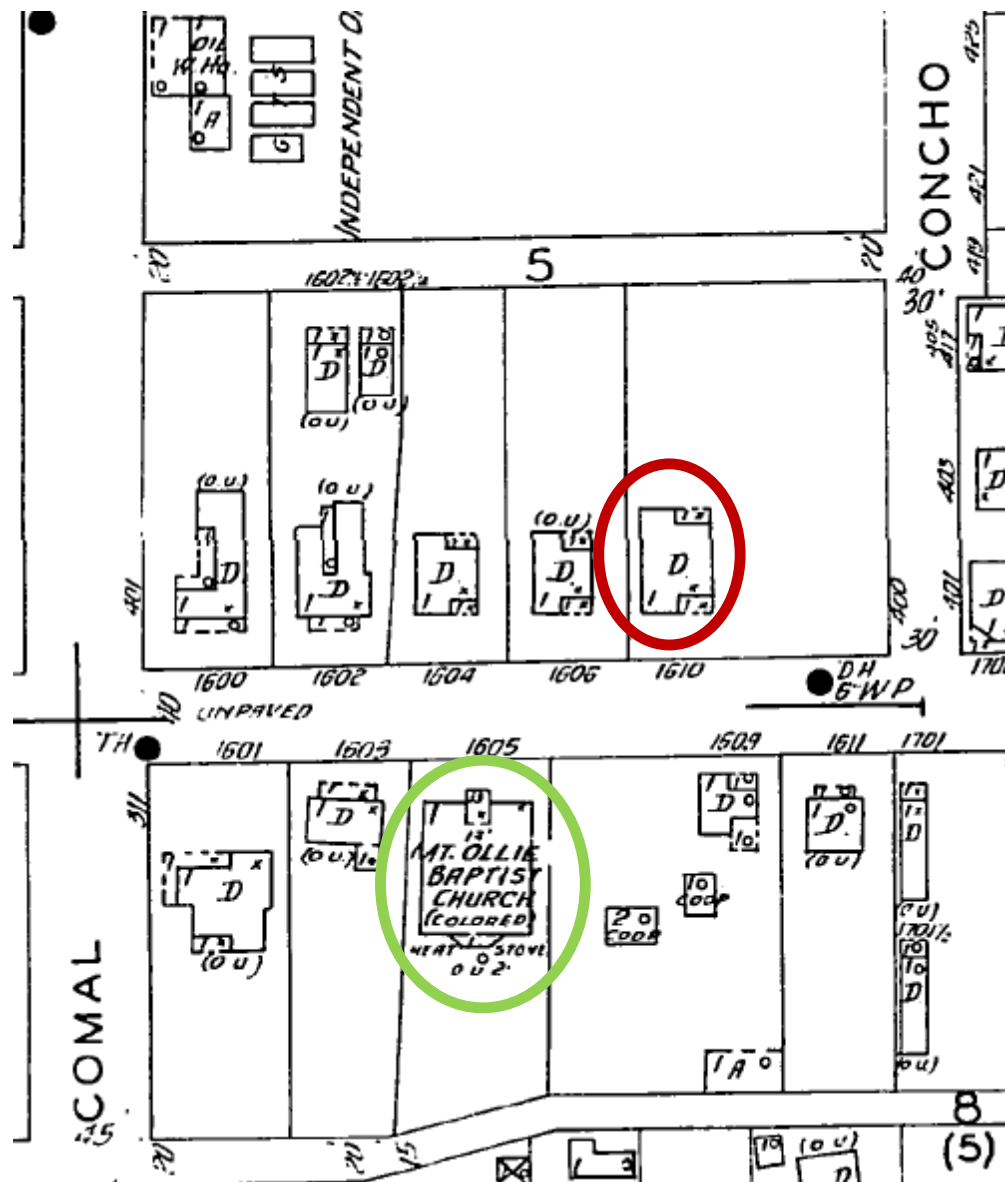
Checked by Engr. Dept. *[Signature]*

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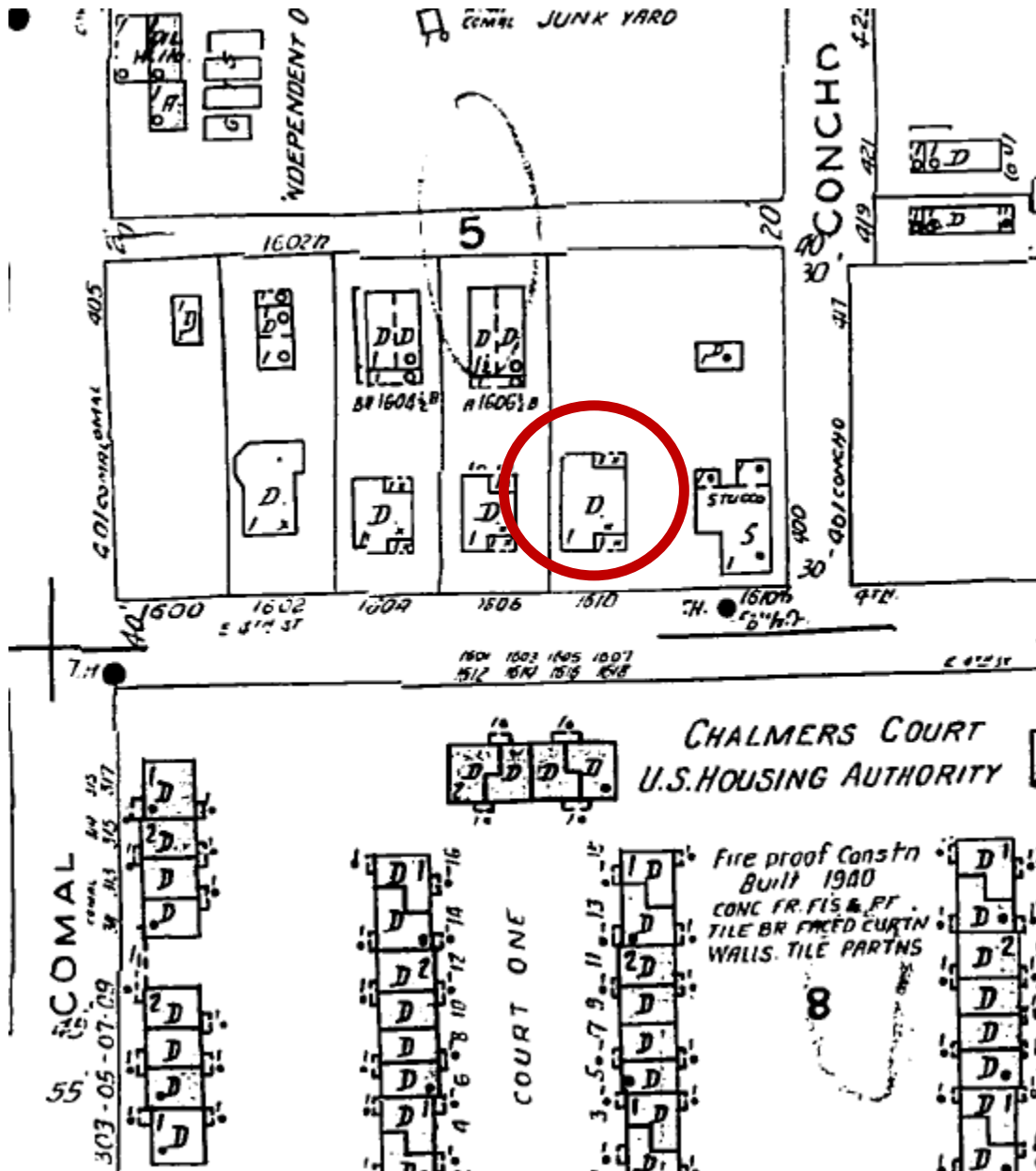
Foreman's Signature *[Signature]*

Water service permit for this address (1926)





The 1935 Sanborn map shows the existing house with its former address of 1610 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Mount Olive Baptist Church was located across the street on the south side of the 1600 block of E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.



The 1962 Sanborn map shows the house with the same configuration as shown on the 1935 map above; Mount Olive Baptist Church had moved out of the neighborhood at that time, and the south side of E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street was part of Chalmers Court, a public housing project. The house is still shown with its former address of 1610 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, although by the time of the publication of this map, the house had its current address of 1608 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.