

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DECEMBER 14, 2020
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
HDP-2020-0431
605 BARTON SPRINGS ROAD**

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1928 commercial building, apartment, and greenhouse.

ARCHITECTURE

The complex consists of a two-story rectangular-plan commercial building with living quarters upstairs; this building has single 1:1 fenestration and corner parapets; it is a stuccoed building. The front section of the two story building is a one-story, rectangular-plan commercial building with large display windows and a round-arched stuccoed trellis at the entryway. Several one-story glass and metal greenhouses flank the west (right) side of the commercial building.

RESEARCH

This complex was once the home of McPhail's Wayside Gardens, later McPhail's Wayside Florist, one of the first and only 24-hour florists in Austin. Virgil and Rosa McPhail came to Austin from Beaumont and established the Wayside Gardens on the south side of Barton Springs Road. They built their home and florist shop on the site around 1928; the business remained in family hands until about 10 years ago. Virgil McPhail had several relatives also involved in the floral business in Austin. A brother owned the Barton Springs Floral Company down the road, and various other family members owned florist shops throughout the city, including the Airport Florists on Airport Boulevard. After Virgil and Rosa McPhail divorced around 1938 (and Virgil moved to 1108 Lavaca Street while Rosa remained here), Virgil McPhail went on to operate the Avenue Florists at 19th (now Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard) and the Interregional Highway (now IH-35), while Rosa McPhail continued operations at this Barton Springs Road location. Virgil McPhail also served as the chief floral inspector for the State Department of Agriculture in the late 1930s, and was renowned for traveling the state investigating flowers that he could bring back to Austin to cultivate.

The Wayside Gardens and Florists was only one of several business interests Virgil McPhail had in the city. He was also the proprietor of the Hokey Pokey Grocery Store at 709 E. 6th Street in the 1920s, and opened the Sunken Gardens, an amusement area, on Barton Springs Road in the early 1930s. It appears that Virgil and Rosa McPhail reunited after their divorce – she is listed as his widow in his 1965 obituary.

STAFF COMMENTS

The building is beyond the bounds of any City survey to date.

Staff has evaluated this building for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that the building may meet the criteria for designation as set forth in City Code:

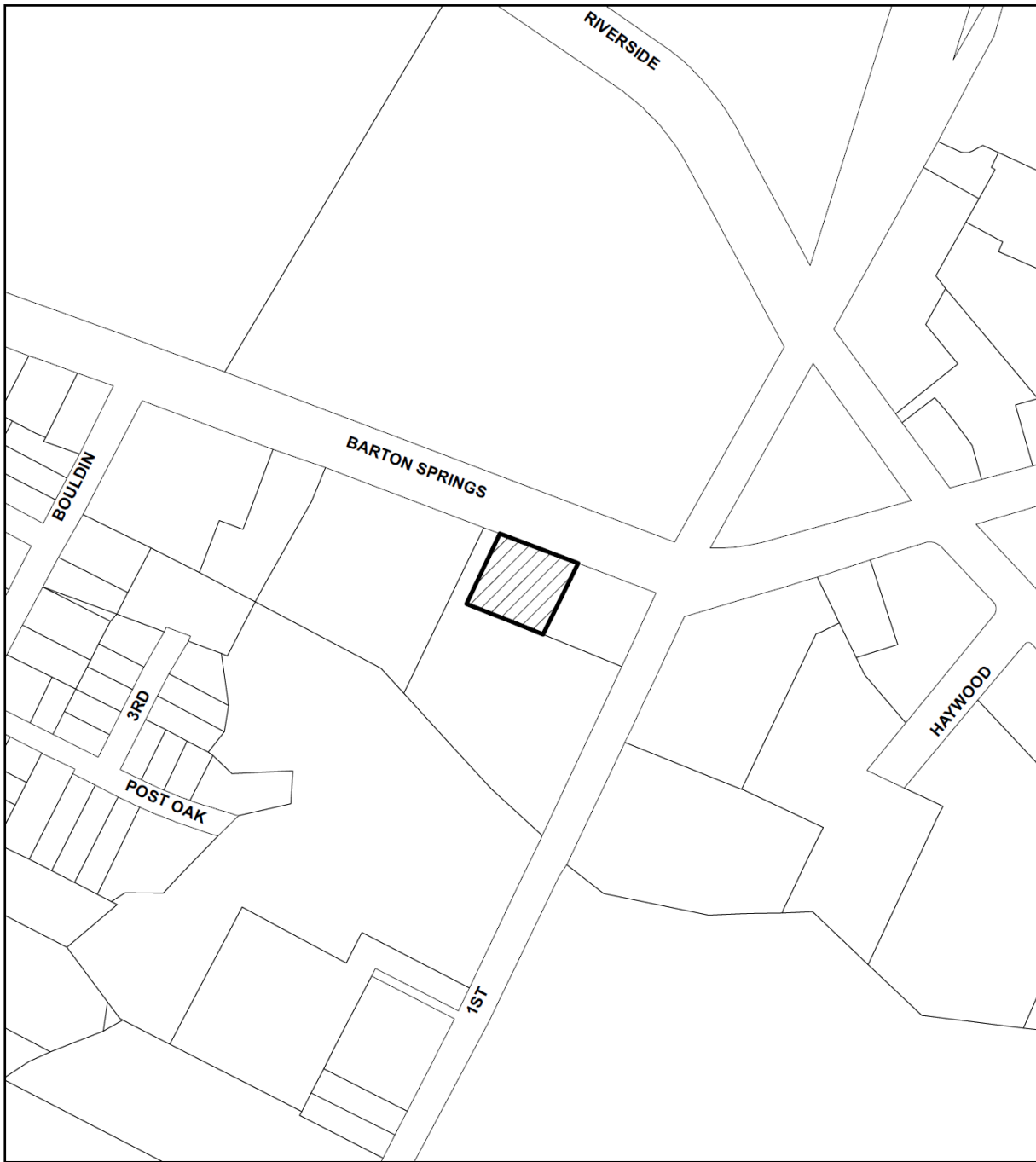
- a. **Architecture.** The building is a two-story combination commercial florist space with an apartment above, an example of the living arrangements of many “mom and pop” businesses in Austin in the early 20th century where the family lived above or adjacent to their store. The setting for the flower shop is picturesque in its garden environment, but has fallen into serious disrepair over the years since it was vacated. The building may qualify for landmark designation under the criterion for architecture as an example of an early live-work arrangement.




- b. **Historical association.** The property was the home of a prominent Austin florist and his family for many years. McPhails Florist was known throughout the city for the quality of their arrangements and variety of flowers through the early 2000s. Virgil and Rosa McPhail were members of a family who owned and operated several flower gardens throughout the city, but especially along the fertile lands between Barton Springs Road and the Colorado River, where they grew many of their own flowers for sale, and raised many others in their greenhouses on site. There may be significant historical associations worth considering for designation.
- c. **Archaeology.** The house was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
- d. **Community value.** McPhail's Wayside Florist was one of several flower businesses along Barton Springs Road in the early 20th century, and its prominent location and unusual architecture is known to many in the city. The building may possess a unique location, physical characteristic, or significant feature that contributes to the character, image, or cultural identity of the city, the neighborhood, or a particular demographic group.
- e. **Landscape feature.** The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Encourage rehabilitation and adaptive re-use, including consideration of initiating historic zoning on this site. Staff is well aware that there are major Code violations on this site, and a garage apartment at the rear of the site has already been removed (2018) as a dangerous structure. However, staff also recognizes that this is a building and location known to many people in Austin, and its history represents a chapter of Austin history when flower "farms" and truck farms lined the south bank of the Colorado River along Barton Springs Road. Nothing else remains from that time in Austin's history to commemorate the former agricultural character of the Barton Springs Road area. If the Commission decides to release the permit for demolition, then staff recommends that the applicant complete a City of Austin Documentation Package, consisting of photographs of all elevations, a dimensioned sketch plan, and a narrative history, for archiving at the Austin History Center.

LOCATION MAP



-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 250'

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: HDP-2020-0431
LOCATION: 605 BARTON SPRINGS RD

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.



605 Barton Springs Road
ca. 1928



View of the old front of the building



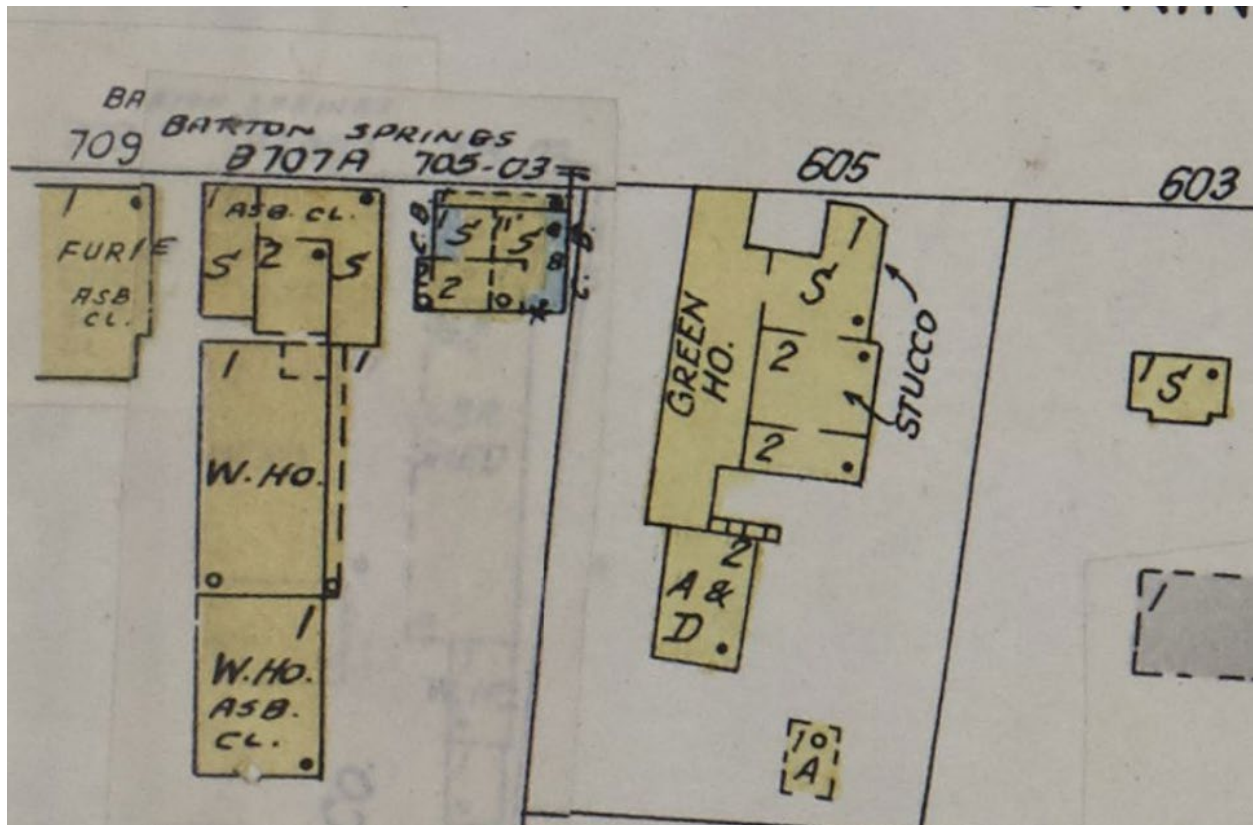
West side of the building, showing the old greenhouse



View of the east side of the building



View of the old greenhouse along the west property line.



View of the complex from the 1962 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map
 NOTE: This map was first drawn in 1951; this section of the city was not shown on the 1935 map.

OCCUPANCY HISTORY 605 Barton Springs Road

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

1992	McPhail's Florist and Greenhouse Rex Minyard, proprietor
1985-86	McPhail's Florist and Greenhouse Rex Minyard, manager
1977	McPhail's Florist and Greenhouse Jeannette McPhail Smith, proprietor
1973	McPhail's Wayside Florists Rosa McPhail, proprietor
1968	McPhail's Florists Rosa McPhail, proprietor A: Rosa McPhail, owner Proprietor, McPhail's Florist, 605 Barton Springs Road.

1965	McPhail's Florists Rosa McPhail, proprietor A: Vacant
1961	A: Rosa McPhail, owner Proprietor, McPhail Florist, 605 Barton Springs Road. ½: H. Earl, Jr., and Beverly Vaughan, renters Laborer, State Highway Department John L. and Gail Surber, renters No occupation listed
1959	McPhail's Wayside Florist Rosa McPhail, proprietor A: Rosa McPhail, owner Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florist Edward R. and Frances Chaloupka, renters Student ½: Ralph B. and Laverne Hudson, renters Proprietor, Avenue Café, 211 Congress Avenue. Monty W. and Ernestine Smith, renters Examiner, Texas Insurance Checking Office
1955	McPhail's Wayside Florist Rosa McPhail, proprietor Rosa McPhail, owner Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florist, 605 Barton Springs Road.
1952	McPhail's Wayside Florist Rosa McPhail, proprietor Rosa McPhail, owner Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florist, 605 Barton Springs Road.
1949	McPhail's Wayside Florist Rosa McPhail, proprietor Rosa A. McPhail, owner Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florist, 605 Barton Springs Road.
1947	McPhail's Wayside Florists – "Your Patronage Appreciated." Rosa A. McPhail, proprietor Rosa A. McPhail, owner Widow, Virgil McPhail Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florists, 605 Barton Springs Road.
1944-45	McPhail's Wayside Florist Rosa McPhail, proprietor

Rosa McPhail, owner
Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florist

½: Henry J. and Willie C. Hudson, owners
No occupation listed

1941 McPhail's Wayside Florist
Rosa McPhail, proprietor

Rosa McPhail, owner
Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florist
Also listed is Ruth McPhail, a student at the University of Texas.

Henry J. and Willie C. Hudson, owners
No occupation listed

1939 McPhail's Wayside Florist
Mrs. R.A. McPhail, proprietor

Rosa A. McPhail, owner
Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florist, 605 Barton Springs Road
Also listed is Ruth G. McPhail, a student at the University of Texas.
NOTE: Virgil McPhail was a florist and inspector for the State Agricultural Department.

1935 McPhail's Wayside Florist – "The Original McPhail Flowers for any Occasion,
Corsages our Specialty, 1st Greenhouse on Barton Springs Road, corner S. 1st.
We never close."
Virgil McPhail, proprietor

Virgil and Rosa McPhail, owners
Proprietor, McPhail's Wayside Florist
Also listed is Rosa N. McPhail, s a student at the University of Texas.

1932-33 McPhail's Wayside Florist
Virgil McPhail, proprietor

Virgil and Rosa McPhail, owners
Proprietor, Hokey-Pokey Grocery, 709 E. 6th Street; McPhail's Wayside Florist;
and vice-president Barton Springs Floral Company, 1610 Barton Springs Road.
NOTE: The address is listed as being on the south side of Barton Springs Road,
3 houses west of South Congress Avenue.

1929 Virgil and Rosa McPhail, owners
Florist, south side of Barton Springs Road, and proprietor of a grocery at 709 E.
6th Street.
NOTE: The address is listed as being the south side of Barton Springs Road, 3rd
from Barton Creek.

1927 The address is not listed in the directory.
NOTE: Virgil and Rosa McPhail are listed at 1909 Wichita Street. He was a
grocer at 709 E. 6th Street.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:**Virgil and Rosa McPhail (ca. 1928 – ca. 1978)**

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Rosa McPhail as the owner of a residence with the address of 607 Barton Springs Road, but which is likely the residential unit on this property, as the florist shop had the address of 605 Barton Springs and there is no listing for a residential address of 605 Barton Springs Road in the census report. Rosa McPhail was 43, divorced, and had been born in Arkansas. (Apparently she and Virgil McPhail reunited later; she is listed as his widow in his 1965 obituary). She was a florist. With her lived 2 daughters: Ruth Grace, 19; and Laura Janet, 16. Both girls had been born in Texas, and neither had an occupation listed. Rosa McPhail had a lodger, Annie Burton Atkinson, 20, who had been born in Texas, and was a saleslady in a floral shop. Ms. Atkinson lived in Florence, Texas in 1935.

The 1939 obituary of his brother, Francis Marion McPhail, notes that Virgil McPhail was the chief floral inspector for the State Department of Agriculture.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows Virgil and Rosa McPhail as the owners of a residence with the address of 510 Barton Springs Road in Austin; that house was worth \$2,500. Virgil McPhail was 34, had been born in Louisiana, and was a florist. Rosa McPhail was 35, had been born in Oklahoma, and had no occupation listed. They had 3 daughters listed: Rosa Nell, 13, who had been born in Oklahoma; Ruth, 9; and Janet, 6. The family had a boarder, Miss Vesta Hicks, 25, who had been born in Texas, and was a public school teacher.

Rosa McPhail died at the home of her daughter in Port Arthur, Texas in 1978; she had been there for just over 2 weeks before her death. Her last address was 605 Barton Springs Road in Austin. She was a florist who had been born in Arkansas in 1893, and is listed as a widow.

VIRGIL McPHAIL

Virgil McPhail, 71, 1904 Oldham, died in a local hospital Monday. He had been a florist for over 40 years and at the time of his death owned the Avenue Florist at 19th and Interregional.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Rosa McPhail of Austin; three daughters, Mrs. Douglas (Janet) Smith of Austin, Mrs. Howard Patterson of Port Arthur, and Mrs. Ruth Mers of Austin; one sister, Mrs. Grace Mobley of Cherokee, Okla.; and two brothers, Gates McPhail of Cherokee, Okla., and Homer McPhail of California; and eight grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements are pending at the Cook Funeral Home.

Obituary of Virgil McPhail
Austin American, November 2, 1965

VIRGIL McPHAIL

Funeral for Virgil McPhail, 1904 Oldham, will be Wednesday at 3:30 p.m. at Cook Funeral Home with Rev. Paul Joyner officiating. Burial will be in Austin Memorial Park. Pallbearers will be Alan Mers, Truman McPhail, Joe Grissom, Trueman O'Quinn, Douglas Smith and Howard Patterson.

Funeral notice for Virgil McPhail
Austin American, November 3, 1965

McPHAIL, Mrs. Rosa, 85, 605 Barton Springs Road, died Saturday. Services 1:30 p.m. Monday at Wilke-Clay Funeral Home. Burial, Austin Memorial Park. Survivors: daughters, Rosa Nell Patterson of Port Arthur, Ruth Grisson of Farmers Branch, Jeanette Hardin of Austin; eight grandchildren; three great-grandchildren.

Obituary of Rosa McPhail
Austin American-Statesman, July 30, 1978

WHEN SPENT AT
HOKEY-POKEY
 YOUR DOLLAR STAYS IN AUSTIN
 709 E. 6TH ST.

500—50-Cent Brooms, each ..	29c
Coffee, Maxwell House, lb.	43c
Ivory Soap Two 9c bars ...	15c
Honey, New Crop Quarts	35c

Notice

These hot days do your shopping after sundown. We are open each evening until 8 o'clock.

VIRGIL McPHAIL, Owner.

Advertisement for Virgil McPhail's Hokey Pokey Grocery Store on E. 6th Street
 Austin Statesman, July 15, 1927

BANTAM HEN IS PLAYING MAMA TO QUAIL

Birds and beasts are getting on more friendly terms in Austin, discoveries reported to The Austin Statesman within the last week indicate.

The Pathe News cameraman coming to Austin to photograph the dog that is mothering a litter of kittens can get another subject for his news reel by visiting Virgil McPhail's "city" farm in the Barton Springs road where a bantam hen is hovering a covey of young quails.

Three weeks ago a mother quail's nest was discovered in the yard at Mr. McPhail's home. But she observed that her nest had been discovered and after setting the 15 eggs for five days she abandoned the nest.

They turned the hatching over to the hen, who took up the task diligently. For three weeks she hovered over the tiny eggs, leaving them only at moments to get something to eat.

Friday they began pipping the shells—all of them in the same place. Little by little they pecked holes in the large ends of the shells and came out. Ten of them hatched. She has lost only one and the mother and the other nine are doing nicely.

All of them are running around with more sprightliness than young chickens would, even though they are only five days old, and Mr. McPhail expects them to be flying soon.

Bird experts advance the theory that the mother bird must teach her young to fly, but Mr. McPhail holds that the bantam is pretty well qualified to give them ground lessons herself.

A story of inter-species harmony on Virgil McPhail's farm on Barton Springs Road
Austin Statesman, June 13, 1929

F. M'PHAIL GIVES PLANTING TIPS

Those who like to dig in the dirt should heed the advice of Frank McPhail, who opened the Barton Springs Floral company, formerly the old Riverside Floral company on the Barton Springs road December 22. Mr. McPhail suggests that they put out bedding plants now.

In his modern greenhouses, Mr. McPhail has an almost endless variety of bedding plants, including snap dragons, geraniums, hollyhock, carnation pinks, daisies, violets, verbenias, sweet alyssum, petunias, bellis, Martha Washingtons, salvia, calendulas, digitalis and early chrysanthemums. He has five acres planted in spring flowers. Among these are sweet peas, roses and hydrangeas. One thousand Easter lilies are coming up and will be ready for the Easter season in April.

Now is also the time to plant roses, according to Mr. McPhail, who has a large variety that will bloom this year. Among these are the popular Radiant Talisman and President Hoover.

The Barton Springs Floral company has 5 acres for flowers and plants. From office to water plant, the firm's buildings and greenhouses have been improved and enlarged. The office is filled with cut flowers of all kinds that are shipped in daily from flower centers of the country. There are ferns and blooming plants.

Mr. McPhail is not a stranger to Austin People. He is a brother of Virgil McPhail, owner of Wayside Gardens, and a former resident of Beaumont and Orange, Texas. He is assisted by Mrs. McPhail. They specialize in party and wedding decorating and floral designing.

Article referencing Virgil McPhail, owner of Wayside Gardens
Austin Statesman, February 4, 1933

MERRYMAKERS ENJOY NEW SUNKEN GARDENS

The new McPhail's Sunken Gardens, Barton Springs road, which are now complete in every way, continue to attract crowds of summer merry-makers. Allured by the many hued lights, soft, enchanting music of an orchestra, cool breezes of sunken, arbor and roof gardens, refreshing drinks and delicious sandwiches, youth and its elders flock to this pleasure center night after night.

The Sunken Gardens will accommodate 200 or more persons at rustic tables in the gardens. Extensive grounds about the recreation spot afford parking room for several hundred cars at one time for curb service.

Pretty girls, garbed in lavender uniforms, move swiftly among the tables and cars taking orders, and returning with trays of good things to eat and drink. The menus include all the wholesome fountain drinks and appetizing sandwiches that one can conceive of.

The music is good—putting new pep and exhilaration into the young and those a bit older. Local talent is given an opportunity to express itself in nightly programs, which are refreshingly different.

Virgil McPhail, owner and manager, desired to give Austin and environs something entirely new in entertainment when he opened Sunken Gardens, in the way of promoting local talent. He contends that youth should not have to go to New York or other cities to gain recognition. That he is achieving his aim can be readily seen by the popularity of his new business venture.

Sunken Gardens, occupying one corner of the extensive grounds of Wayside Gardens are entirely new—brick, stucco, cement, being converted into modernistic architecture. Pink and green color scheme in the tile of the soda fountain and counter, Indian, Mexican and Spanish scenes by Ben Bailey, Jr., palms, potted flowers, rustic tables and chairs combine to make the gardens unique.

Story on Virgil McPhail's Sunken Garden entertainment center on Barton Springs Road close to his Wayside Gardens
Austin Statesman, July 8, 1933

HIS HOBBY: VIRGIL McPHAIL, 1108 Nueces street, has a hobby of being ever on the lookout for new varieties and interesting flowers of Texas while on his business trips over

the state. During the past year McPHAIL has discovered two such flowers for one day while in Ingleside he noticed a large mesquite tree covered with a morning glory vine. The time was about 2 p. m. yet the blossoms were still wide open and of a beautiful golden yellow, with a fragrance almost as sweet and very similar to the honeysuckle. He called this vine to the attention of a florist and this spring the variety is being featured in a seed catalogue. On another trip in the Fredericksburg area, McPHAIL noticed an unusual rose growing in the yard of MRS. F. J. MAIER, and upon questioning her he learned this rose had been brought over from Germany over 100 years ago. It had been forgotten in nearly all sections of Texas, except around Fredericksburg. The rose is red with a border of white on the petals, and this spring has been given national notice by seed and plant catalogues under the name of Roger Lamberlin rose.

Society page column noting Virgil McPhail's hobby of discovering new flowers throughout the state. Note that his address is given as 1108 Nueces Street, indicating his separation from

Rosa, who was living at Barton Springs.

Austin Statesman, January 17, 1939

Austin, Texas

No. 18457 *A*

Grw/II

Tr. Isaac Decker League...

Paving Cut _____ No. _____

No.	Fittings	Size	Price
12½'	Pipe	4"	1.25
	Pipe		
	Wyes		
1	Bends	4" 45	.40
	Reducers		
	Plugs		
	Sand		
	Gravel		
	Remix		
	Stoppers		
	Castings		
	Other		
	4" Tap		.20
	Labor:	11 hrs	5.50
			7.35

NOTE: Mrs. Patterson was the daughter of Rosa McPhail