

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
JANUARY 25, 2021
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
PR-20-186435
1904 MOUNTAIN VIEW ROAD

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1949 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, irregular-plan brick house with a flat roof and metal-framed fenestration in a horizontal 2:2 configuration. The house reflects tenets of the International Style, made popular by the designs of architect Philip Johnson in the 1930s, and featuring a boxy composition, use of rectilinear forms, and a lack of surface ornamentation or decoration, in contrast with the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles popular at around the same time. The International Style was generally considered a style for commercial buildings, but there are also examples of the style applied to residential construction. As far as can be determined, this house was not designed by an architect, but constructed for the Acme Brick Company of Austin.

RESEARCH

This house on Mountainview Road was the last house in Austin owned by Edmond C. and Ruth V. Rather, who lived here from around 1951 at least until Edmond died in 1974. Edmond Rather was born in Kaufman, Texas in either 1897 or 1898 (documentary evidence is conflicting), and moved to Austin at a young age. He married Ruth Vivian Gregory in 1916, and was living on Longfellow Street in the North University neighborhood for a time before moving to a two-story stucco house at 101 Laurel Lane, at the corner of Speedway, in Aldridge Place in the early 1920s. They moved from Laurel Lane to this house, which was described as overlooking Lake Austin, around 1951 and lived here for several decades. E.C. Rather died in 1974; Ruth V. Rather died in 1989.

Edmond C. Rather was the general manager of the University Co-Op, established in 1903 by Dr. William Battle, a professor of Greek and the Classics, at the University of Texas, and the namesake for Battle Hall. Rather started working at the Co-Op in 1917 and quickly rose through the ranks, serving as general manager of the store until his retirement in 1965. During that time, the Co-Op grew tremendously and Rather was recognized as a leader in college textbook store circles for his marketing prowess. He broadcast away games from a radio to crowds that would stand in front of the store on Guadalupe Street. He oversaw the expansion of the building to add a second story in the late 1940s. Rather was also very involved with various philanthropic and charitable activities in Austin, including the Ben-Hur Shrine.



Historic photo of the University Co-Op on Guadalupe Street.

He and Ruth had two daughters, Dorothy and Katheryn. Dorothy's 2004 obituary noted that the family was one of the first in Aldridge Place, "where the family home stands today." E.C. and Ruth Rather lived on Laurel Lane for about 24 years, and in this house for at least an equal period of time.

STAFF COMMENTS

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

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

- a. **Architecture.** The house is good and intact example of the International Style applied to residential architecture, with its boxy composition, flat roof, and lack of exterior detailing. It is a relatively modest house, especially in comparison with the family's former home in Aldridge Place, and unusual for its date of construction and identity as a spec house built by a brick company. The design of this house is noteworthy, and may qualify it for consideration as a historic landmark under the criterion for architecture.
- b. **Historical association.** The house is significantly associated with E.C. Rather, the general manager of the University Co-Op, an Austin and University of Texas institution. Rather and his wife Ruth lived here from around 1951 for over 20 years, during which he continued to build the capacity and reputation of the Co-Op to make it the pre-eminent source of college textbooks, college attire, and other merchandise in Austin. Rather was living in this house when he retired from business life in the mid-1960s, after a career of nearly 50 years. In his retirement, he enjoyed golfing and planting azaleas, some of which must surely remain at this house. This house qualifies for consideration as a historic landmark for its associations with E.C. and Ruth Rather, although the Commission should also consider the house at the corner of Laurel Lane and Speedway as another home closely associated with the Rathers for a similar amount of time. The Commission should keep in mind, however, that contributing houses within locally-designated historic districts, such as the Laurel Lane house in Aldridge Place, cannot rely upon the architecture criterion for individual landmark designation.



The house at 101 Laurel Lane, where E.C. and Ruth Rather lived for more than two decades prior to moving into the Mountainview Road house around 1951

- 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.** The house does not 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 the applicant to consider alternatives to demolition, including postponement or initiating a historic zoning case on this house, which appears to have both architectural and historical significance for its associations with Edmond C. and Ruth V. Rather for over 20 years. If the Commission votes to release the permit, then condition that release upon completion of 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" = 208'

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: PR 20-186435
LOCATION: 1904 MOUNTAIN VIEW 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.



1904 Mountainview Road
ca. 1948



OCCUPANCY HISTORY 1904 Mountainview Road

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
December, 2020

- 1959 Edmund C. and Ruth V. Rather, owners
General manager, University Co-Operative Society, Inc., 2246 Guadalupe Street.
- 1957 Edmund C. and Ruth V. Rather, owners
General manager, University Co-Operative Society, Inc., 2246 Guadalupe Street.
- 1955 Edmund C. and Ruth V. Rather, owners
General manager, University Co-Operative Society, Inc., 2246 Guadalupe Street.
- 1953 Edmund C. and Ruth Rather, owners
General manager, University Co-Operative Society, Inc., 2246 Guadalupe Street.
- 1952 Vacant
NOTE: Edmond C. and Ruth Rather are listed at 101 Laurel Lane; he was the general manager of the University Co-Operative Society, 2246 Guadalupe Street.
- 1949 The address is not listed in the directory.
NOTE: Edmond C. and Ruth Rather are listed at 101 Laurel Lane; he was the general manager of the University Co-Operative Society, 2246 Guadalupe Street.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

Edmund C. and Ruth V. Rather (ca. 1951 –)

Edmond R. Rather married Ruth Vivian Gregory in Travis County, Texas on December 23, 1916.

His 1918 World War I draft registration card shows that Edmond C. Rather was living at 2016 Longfellow in Austin. He was born in 1897. He was a stenographer for the University of Texas. His next of kin was his wife, Ruth Vivian Rather. He was of medium height and had a medium build with light hair and blue eyes.

The 1920 U.S. Census shows E.C. and Ruth Rather at 2016 Longfellow in Austin; it is not clear if they owned or rented that home. E.C. Rather was 22, had been born in Texas, and was the manager of the University Co-Op. Ruth Rather was also 22, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had an infant daughter, Dorothy May, who had been born in Texas

E.C. and Ruth V. Rather appear in the 1930 U.S. Census as the owners of the house at 101 Laurel Lane in Austin; the house was worth \$10,000. E.C. Rather was 31, had been born in Texas, and was the manager of a book store. Ruth V. Rather was also 31, had been born in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had 2 daughters: Dorothy, 12; and Katheryn, 9, both of whom had been born in Texas. The Rathers had two male lodgers in their home: Leslie Neill and Lex Neill. Leslie Neill was 25, had been born in Texas and was a salesman for a newspaper. Lex Neil was 19, had been born in Texas and was a salesman in a book store.

The 1940 U.S. Census shows Edmond C. and Ruth V. Rather as the owners of the house at 101 Laurel Lane; that house was worth \$11,000. Edmond C. Rather was 42, had been born in Texas, and is listed as the manager of a retail book store. Ruth V. Rather was also 42, had been born

in Texas, and had no occupation listed. They had a daughter, Katheryn N., 18, who had been born in Texas and had no occupation listed.

Edmond C. Rather registered for the draft for World War II in 1942. He was living at 101 Laurel Lane in Austin at that time. He was born in Kaufman, Texas in 1898 and was employed by the University of Texas as the manager of the University Co-Op. He was 5'-6" tall, weighed 175 pounds, and had a ruddy complexion with brown hair and hazel eyes. He had a scar on his neck.

His 1974 death certificate shows that Edmond C. Rather was living at this address at the time of his death. He was born in Kaufman County, Texas in 1897, and was the manager of the University Co-Op. He was married, and had lived in Austin for 76 years.

Ed Rather Heads College Store Group

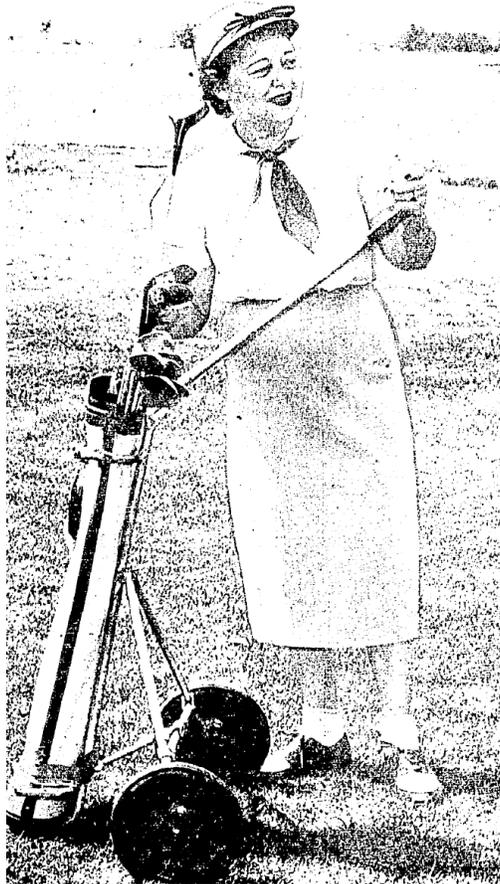
E. C. Rather, manager of the University Co-Op here, was elected president of the National Association of College Stores Tuesday at the close of the 22nd annual convention in Chicago at the Edgewater Beach hotel.

Vice president for the past two years and former board member of the national association. Rather has been manager of the Co-op for the last 27 years. He is a past potentate of the Shrines and has served on a number of chamber of commerce committees here.

Article noting Ed Rather's election as president of the National Association of College Stores
Austin Statesman, May 9, 1944

Grandmothers Have Changed

By PAT FOLMAR ROBINSON



Past the mid-century mark but far from inactive, Mrs. Edmond C. Rather, 1904 Mountainview, enjoys a frequent game of golf. She also attributes her youthfulness to swimming and dancing—the Rathers are enthusiastic members of the Austin Waltz Club and the Tuesday Night Dance Club. Always on the go, Mrs. Rather says, "I just don't like to stay home!"

Portion of a society page feature on "modern" grandmothers featuring Ruth Rather
Austin American-Statesman, August 5, 1956

Ed Rather Praised In Article

Ed C. Rather, general manager of the University Co-op book store on Guadalupe Street opposite the University of Texas campus, was accorded a triple tribute for his service of 42 years with that organization and for the fine modern store that was recently enlarged and completed under his direction.

The triple tribute was paid to him in the spring issue of the *College Store*, the magazine of the National Association of College Stores which Rather served a two-year term in 1944 and 1945 as president.

The magazine carried a story on the design of the larger, more beautiful store as written by Henry Berry of Henry Berry Association Inc., of Milwaukee, who designed the building with its main floor, top floor and basement. The store from the viewpoint of the University of Texas student who patronizes it is described in another article written by Roberta Love, a student in the School of Journalism at the University of Texas.

Miss Love in a second article wrote the tribute to Rather, as the administrator and manager of the University Cooperative Society, the real name of the firm. At 64, said the story, Rather still manages to play 18 holes of golf regularly and puts in a stint on the dance floor occasionally.

Rather started his long career with the Co-op back in 1917 as a bookkeeper at \$75 a month. Two years later he was named general manager and has held that post since. During that time he has seen the University student body grow in number from 1,200 to a peak of 18,700 and the sales of the Co-op jump from an initial \$5,000 gross a year to the present volume of \$1,500,000 annually.

Rather is known in the trade as "the dean of college book store managers." He served in 1942 as a member of the board of trustees of the National Association of College Stores during the hectic World War II year of 1942, and became president two years for a two-year term.

Over the years Rather has served a number of Austin organizations including the Austin Chamber of Commerce, the Austin Retail Merchants Association and the Texas All-State Shrine Association all of which he headed as president at varying times. He is a past master of University Lodge No. 1190, AF&AM, a past potentate of Ben Hur Shrine Temple and a past director of the Royal Order of Jesters. He also holds charter membership in the Texas Cowboys, men's honorary service organization at the University.

When he is not engaged in business and civic activities, Rather and his wife, the former Ruth Vivienne Gregory, spend their leisure moments in a lovely house overlooking Lake Austin. They are parents of two daughters and they share their joys with four granddaughters. Rather himself lists azalea growing as a hobby.

Tribute to E.C. Rather
Austin Statesman, April 21, 1960

Ed Rather Will Retire From Co-Op Post in '65

Ed C. Rather, veteran manager of The University of Texas Co-Op, will return from full-time duty next fall, and Charles Walker, present assistant manager, will be moved up to manager. These actions were approved this week by the Co-Op Board of Directors, and announced Saturday by DeWitt Reddick, chairman of the Board.

Rather has been manager of the Co-Op since 1919. Under his managership, the Co-Op has increased its annual gross volume of business from about \$65,000 to \$3,000,000 expected for 1964-65. Rather began work for the Co-Op in 1917, and rose quickly to the top position. The staff has grown from seven employees to nearly 150. In 1962 Rather was selected as "the Manager of the Year" by the College Store Association.

Upon retiring as manager in his 68th year next fall, Rather will go on modified service until the age of 70. Policies estab-

lished by the Board call for retirement from administrative duties at 65, in keeping with the general policies of The University of Texas; but the Board postponed retirement for Rather for three years.

Walker also is a long-time employe of the Co-Op. He took his first job with the store while he was still a student in the University in 1941. After graduation with a degree in business administration in 1943 he took a full-time job with the Co-Op. He moved up the staff to the position of assistant general manager, which he has filled for recent years.

Walker is past president of the Austin Cerebral Palsy Center and the Travis County So-

National Park Service conservationists fear that lack of water could burn away the Everglades National Park.

Rather will retire from the University Co-Op
Austin American-Statesman, November 15, 1964



EDMOND C. RATHER
Funeral Friday

UT Group Founder Dead at 76

The co-founder of the Texas Cowboys, University of Texas men's spirit organization, and long-time manager of the University Co-op died Tuesday.

Edmond C. Rather, 76, helped W. L. McGill and UT Dean of Student Life Arno Nowotny organize the spirit organization in 1922. Many Texas politicians and businessmen have been members of the Texas Cowboys.

Rather, of 1904 Mountain View, was one of the originators of the National College Stores Association, serving as president from 1944-46.

Rather was manager of the University Co-Op for more than 53 years, during which the it grew from a small book store to a model for college department stores across the nation.

Rather supported the co-op's \$10,000 donation toward the construction of Memorial Stadium, and was an honorary member of the "T" Association.

He was named "man of the year" by the Texas chapter of Acacia fraternity, and was cited by the University of Texas Students' Association.

Rather was a past president of the Texas Shrine Association, past potentate of Ben Hur Shrine Temple, past master of University Lodge AF&AM, past director of the Royal Order of Jesters, Austin Court 35, and a 32nd degree member of the Austin Consistory of the Scottish Rite Bodies.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Edmond C. (Ruth) Rather of Austin; two daughters, Mrs. Wroe Owens and Mrs. Wayne Henneberger, both of Austin; four granddaughters; and two great-granddaughters.

Funeral services will be Friday at 10 a.m. in Weed-Corley Funeral Home, Rev. George M. Ricker and Rev. Charles Summers officiating. Burial will be in Austin Memorial Park.

Pallbearers will be Tinsley Penick, Dr. Henry Hilgartner, Dr. A. L. Nanney, Dr. Philip Overton, C. Aubrey Smith and Earle Burkhalter, all of Austin, John Kennedy of Houston and Reuben Friou of Dallas.

Obituary of E.C. Rather
Austin American-Statesman, July 3, 1974

Acme Brick Company 1904 Mountainview Rd.

164

~~1,8,8~~
123

Tarrytown #3

Brick residence with garage attached
37569
5-4-48 \$14,000.00

J. D. Monk

8

Building permit to the Acme Brick Company, noting J.D. Monk as the contractor, for the construction of this house (1948)

Austin Home Building Progressing at Fast Clip

Residential construction in Austin is proceeding with unabated speed these days with 19 homes placed under permit on Tuesday alone for a total value of \$189,500, according to the list compiled at the office of John C. Eckert, city building inspector.

J. D. Monk, contractor, was granted permits to construct seven

new brick residences with garage attached for the Acme Brick Company in Tarry town Addition No. 3. Two of the new homes costing \$14,000 each will be erected at 1904 and 1906 Mountainview Drive while four costing \$14,000 each and one costing \$12,000 will be constructed in the 1900 and 2000 blocks on Meadowbrook Drive.

Portion of an article referencing the construction of this house by J.D. Monk, contractor for the
Acme Brick Company
Austin Statesman, May 5, 1948