

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
JANUARY 25, 2021
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
PR-20-183612
1601 BRACKENRIDGE STREET**

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1915 house.

ARCHITECTURE

One-and-a-half story, rectangular-plan, side-gabled frame Craftsman bungalow with a central, partial-width, front-gabled dormer; single, paired, and triple fenestration in 1:1, 6:1, and 9:1 patterns; exterior brick chimney. It appears that the original front porch of the house was infilled, and that the windows currently on the front of the house were the original windows before the porch was infilled.

It appears that the north side of the foundation has collapsed, significantly undermining the structural soundness of the house.

RESEARCH

The house appears to have been built around 1915 by William M. and Lettie Webster Davis, both teachers at the Texas School for the Deaf. Lettie Webster Davis was originally from Grayson County, Texas, and moved to Austin around 1903. She first boarded with noted deaf teacher William H. Davis, at his home on Newning Avenue (a city historic landmark). She married William M. Davis, a teacher in the manual department of the deaf institute, in 1911, and four years later either built or moved in to this house on Brackenridge Street, where they lived until William passed away in 1947 after a close-to-40-year career in deaf education. After his death, Lettie Davis moved to a house on Oakland Avenue in West Austin, across the street from her family's home, where her sisters still resided.

Both William and Lettie Davis taught at the Deaf School during a time of great upheaval in the methods of teaching deaf students and successfully adapted their teaching methods accordingly. As educators moved away from sign language in favor of "oralism" - reliance on lip reading, many deaf teachers were replaced with hearing teachers. Students who did not succeed with the oralist approach to deaf education were sent to the "manual" department, where they were taught to spell with their fingers. Both William Davis and Lettie Webster Davis came from families that devoted their careers and lives to deaf education. Lettie Davis' sister, Jessie Webster, was one of the longest-tenured instructors at the institution.

After William M. Davis' death, and Lettie Davis' move back to her old neighborhood in West Austin, this house had a series of owner-occupants through the mid-1950s. Betsy Pinkerton opened Betsy's Nursery School and Kindergarten in this house around 1955; it operated here until around 1970. Another nursery school and kindergarten, Gingerbread House, operated by Edyth S. Simpson, was located here until the house became a Montessori School in the mid-1980s. The house was used as a Montessori School until recently.

STAFF COMMENTS

The house is listed as contributing to the pending Travis Heights-Fairview Park National Register Historic District.

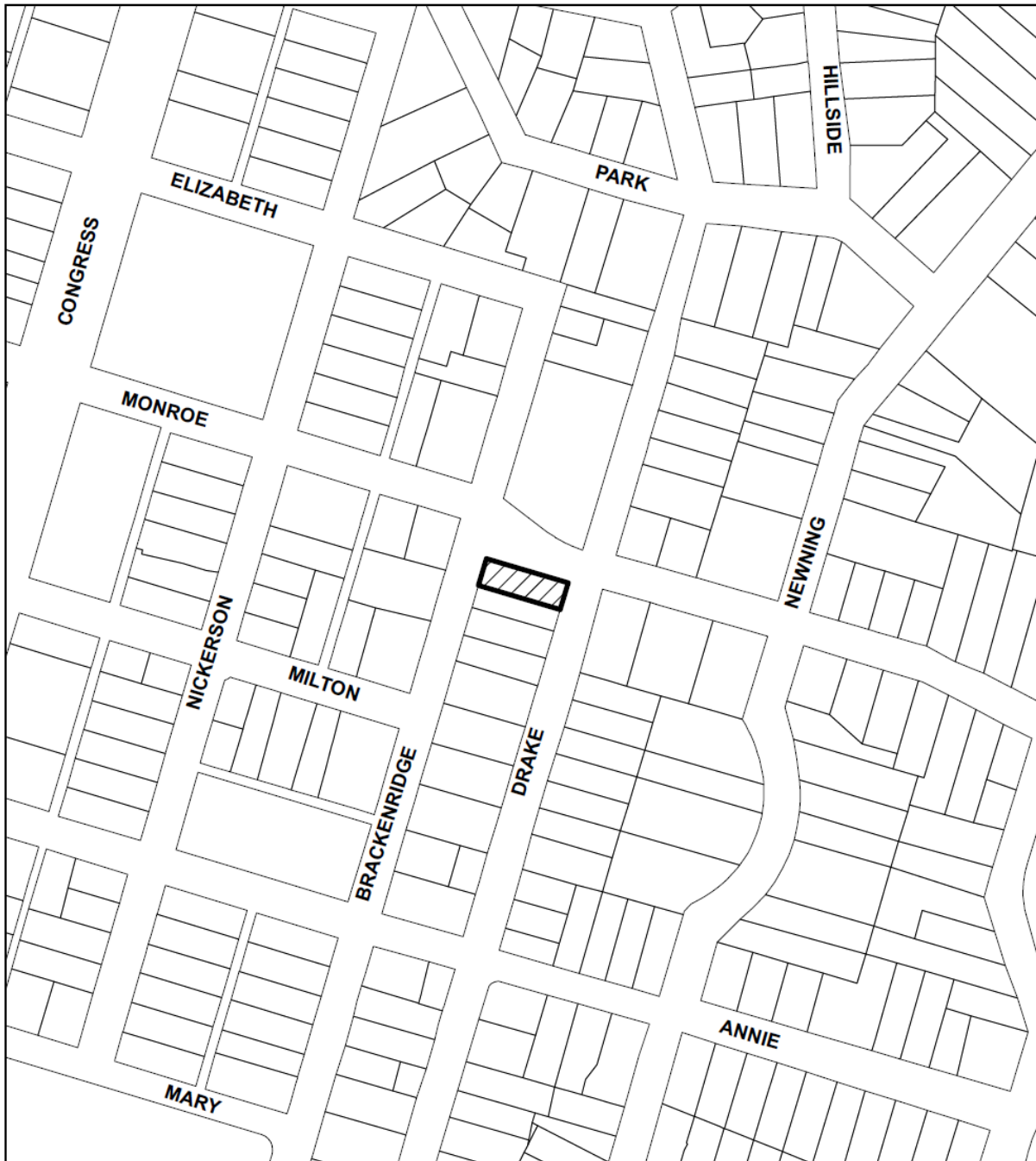
Staff has evaluated this house for designation as a historic landmark and has determined that the house may meet the criteria for landmark designation as set forth in City Code:

- a. **Architecture.** The house is an excellent example of an early Craftsman bungalow which retains a high degree of integrity. The front porch of the house has been filled in for additional living space, but it appears that this occurred during the historic period, and may have relocated windows from the front wall of the house to the new infilled wall; windows or vents in the central dormer have been covered with plywood, and the back of the house has been modified with a series of glass doors opening onto a back patio, deck, and play area. The biggest concern is the apparent catastrophic failure of the foundation on the north side of the house, which is reflected by a sagging wall and window out of plumb near the chimney. It is not known whether it would be reasonable to repair and salvage the house given its condition, but the house does appear to meet the criterion for architectural significance.
- b. **Historical association.** The house was built by and was the long-time home of two prominent teachers at what is now the Texas School for the Deaf; there do appear to be significant historical associations.
- 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 rehabilitation and adaptive re-use, or postpone to receive evidence of the structural soundness of the house and the work required to rehabilitate the obvious foundation failures, rotted wood, and other condition of the house as a candidate for rehabilitation and preservation. If the Commission votes to release the permit, then staff recommends the 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. Staff believes that the house meets the criteria for designation as a historic landmark, but may be too far gone to make preservation reasonable at this point.

LOCATION MAP



SUBJECT TRACT



PENDING CASE



ZONING BOUNDARY

1" = 208'

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: PR 20-183612

LOCATION: 1601 BRACKENRIDGE ST

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.



1601 Brackenridge Street
ca. 1915



2011 photograph above; 2021 photographs below





Photograph showing the north side of the house where the foundation has failed; the window has sagged, and much of the wood siding and window frames exhibit extensive rotting.

OCCUPANCY HISTORY 1601 Brackenridge Street

City Directory Research, Austin History Center
By City Historic Preservation Office
November, 2011

1992	Montessori House of Children Ginger Logan, director
1985-86	Montessori House of Children Tom Logan, director
1981	Gingerbread House Nursery and Kindergarten Edyth S. Simpson, director
1977	Gingerbread House Nursery and Kindergarten Edyth S. Simpson, director
1972	Gingerbread House Nursery and Kindergarten Edyth Buddecke, director
1969	Betsy's Nursery School and Kindergarten Betsy R. Pinkerton, director NOTE: There was also a Betsy's Nursery School and Kindergarten at 1223 Corona Drive.

1963	Betsy's Nursery School and Kindergarten Betsy Pinkerton, proprietor NOTE: Betsy Pinkerton had another Betsy's Nursery School and Kindergarten at 1225 Corona Drive.
1958	Janice O'Brien, renter Baby sitter, Betsy's Nursery School (Betsy Pinkerton, proprietor), 1601 Brackenridge Street.
1953	Louis L. and Elizabeth Bowen, owners Proprietor, Sanitary Barber Shop, 124 W. 5 th Street.
1949	Mary Williamson, owner Widow, W.E. Williamson No occupation listed
1947	William M. and Lettie Davis, owners No occupation listed
1944-45	William M. and Lettie Davis owners No occupation listed
1941	William M. and Lettie W. Davis, owners William: Teacher Lettie: Teacher, State School for the Deaf
1939	William M. and Lettie R. Davis, owners William: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf Lettie: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1937	William M. and Lettie Davis owners William: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf Lettie: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1935	William M. and Lettie R. Davis, owners William: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf Lettie: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1932-33	William M. and Lettie W. Davis, owners William: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf Lettie: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1930-31	William M. and Lettie R. Davis, owners William: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf Lettie: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1929	William M. and Lettie W. Davis, owners Teacher, State School for the Deaf
1927	William M. and Lettie R. Davis, owners William: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf Lettie: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1924	William M. and Lettie W. Davis, owners

	William: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
	Lettie: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1922	William M. and Lettie Davis, renters Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1920	William M. and Lettie W. Davis, owners Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf NOTE: Lettie Davis is not separately listed.
1918	William M. and Lettie Davis, owners William: Teacher, High School, Texas School for the Deaf Lettie: Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1916	William M. and Lettie R. Davis, owners Teacher, Texas School for the Deaf
1914	The address is not listed in the directory, NOTE: William M. Davis does not appear to be listed in the directory; however, Lettie Davis is listed as a teacher at the Texas School for the Deaf, and she lived on the campus at 1102 S. Congress Avenue. The same information holds true in the 1912-13 city directory,

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

William M. and Lettie Davis (ca. 1915 – ca. 1947)

W.M. Davis married Lettie R. Webster in Travis County on June 14, 1911.

W.M. and Lettie Webster Davis are noted in an article in the March 8, 1914 Austin Statesman as teachers at the Texas School for the Deaf. W.M. Davis was a teacher in the high school department; Lettie Webster Davis was a teacher in the primary department.

His 1918 World War I draft registration card shows that William Martin Davis was living at this address at the time of his registration. He was born in 1874 and was a teacher at the State School for the Deaf. Lettie W. Davis was his wife. He was tall, and had a slender build; he had dark brown hair and light blue eyes. The draft registration card shows that he was deaf and dumb.

William M. and Lillie [sic] Davis are listed as the owners of this house in the 1920 U.S. Census. William M. Davis was 44, had been born in Texas to a Mississippi-born father and an Alabama-born mother, and was a teacher at the School for the Deaf. Lillie [sic] Davis was 39, had been born in Texas to Alabama-born parents, and had no occupation listed. They had no children listed with them.

The 1930 U.S. Census shows William M. and Kittie [sic] W. Davis as the owners of this house, which was worth \$5,000. William M. Davis was 54, had been born in Texas to Alabama-born parents, and was a teacher at the Deaf School. Kittie [sic] W. Davis was 50, had been born in Missouri to a New York-born father and a Missouri-born mother, and was also a teacher at the Deaf School. They had no children listed with them.

William Martin Davis was living in this house at the time of his death in 1947. He was born in 1875 in Hill County, Texas and was a retired teacher at the School for the Deaf.

DAVIS: William M. Davis, 72, died early Friday morning at his residence, 1601 Brackenridge Street. Davis had been a resident of Austin for the past sixty years, having taught in the School for the Deaf until his retirement a few years ago. He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Lettie W. Davis.

Funeral services will be held from the Cook Funeral Home at 2 p. m. Saturday with the Rev. Flynn Long officiating. Active pallbearers will be Seth Crockett, Homer Thornberry, W. H. Martin, R. L. Davis, Charles Burney and William Bruns. Monorary pallbearers will be Jr. W. Blattner, Roger Powell, R. M. Rives, Douglas Johnson, O. L. McIntyre, and William Anderson. Burial will be in Oakwood Cemetery.

Obituary of William M. Davis
Austin Statesman, April 11, 1947

MRS. LETTIE W. DAVIS

Mrs. Lettie W. Davis, 86, of 801 Oakland Avenue, died in an Austin hospital Tuesday afternoon. She was a member of the Presbyterian church and had taught at the School for the Deaf.

She is survived by two sisters, Mrs. W. H. Martin and Miss Etta Webster, both of Austin; two nieces and one nephew; and several great-nieces and great-nephews.

Funeral arrangements are pending at Cook Funeral Home.

Obituary of Lettie Davis
Austin American, January 4, 1967

10-14-63 Repaired 7' of
4" pipe with 7' 4" C.I.

SANITARY SEWER SERVICE PERMIT

No. 11470

Austin, Texas

Received of Wm. DAVIS Date 3-26-34
 Address 1601 BRACKENRIDGE ST.
 Amount \$ _____
 Builder or Owner Wm. DAVIS Plumber _____
 Lot 1 Block 12-6 Subdivision FAIRVIEW PARK Plat No. 125

Date of Connection	<u>3-30-34</u>	No. Fittings	Size	Price
By City	<u>14' SINK IN DRAKE</u>	4" Pipe	6" TILE	.60
By Plumber		14" Pipe	4" TILE	1.26
Checked By	<u>W.F. BATES</u>	1 Wyes	6 x 4	.66
Size Main	<u>6"</u> Depth <u>1'</u>	1 Bends	4" 45°	.39
Main Assign.	<u>15' FROM PL IN DRAKE</u>	Reducers		
Stub Depth	_____ Prop. Line _____	Plugs		
Stub Location	_____	Sand		
Book No.	<u>B-407</u>	Gravel		
Paving Cut	_____ No. _____	Remix		
		Stoppers		
		Castings		
		Other		
		LAINING PIPE		.90
		Labor: 2 DAYS		5.40

Sewer service permit for this address (1934)

L. L. Bowen 1601 Brackenridge St.
 125 1 12-6 -
 Fairview Park
 Frame garage.
 48494 6-14-51 \$350.00
 J. Shropshire

Building permit to L.L. Bowen for the construction of a frame garage (1951)

Betsy Pinkerton

1601 Brackenridge

125

1

126

Fairview Park

Remodel & Repair Residence

86298

12-17-62

50.00

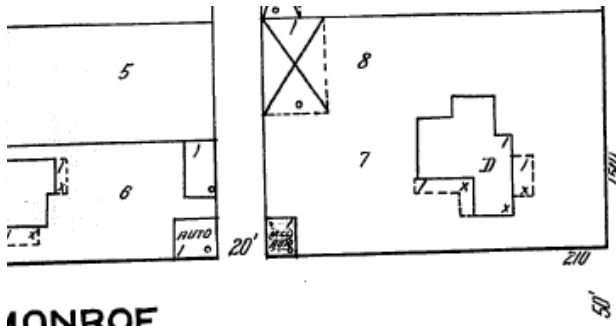
Owner

1

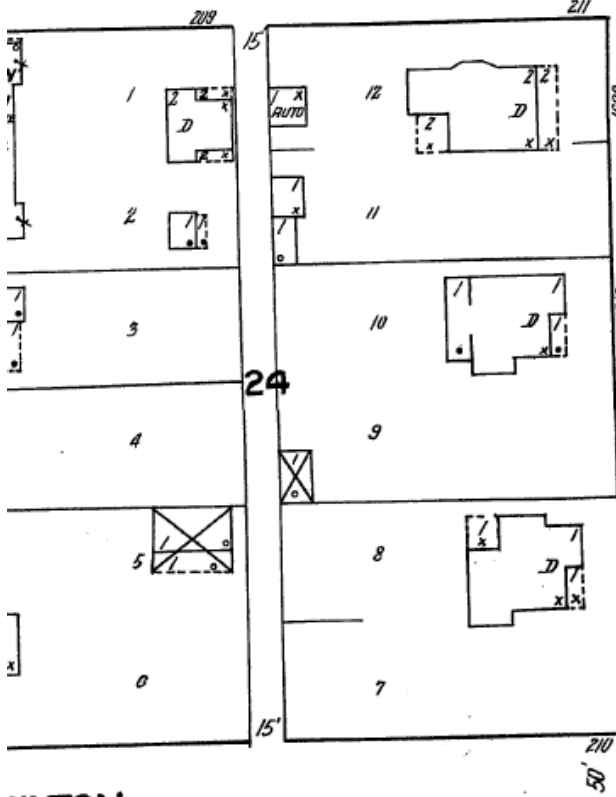
RESIDENCE

Partition off HW heater from Bath room; partition
off Bathroom

Building permit to Betsy Pinkerton to remodel and repair the residence, to partition off the hot
water heater from the bathroom (1962)

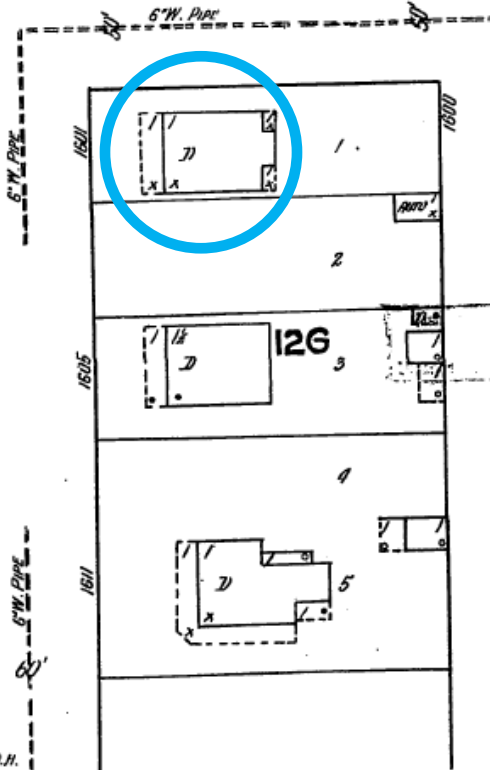
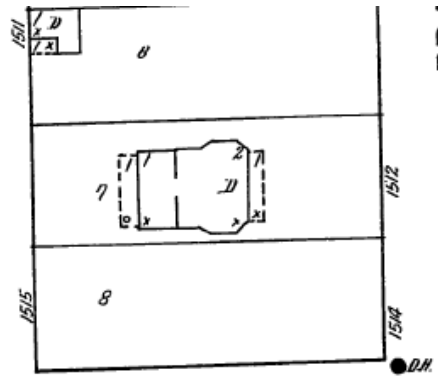


MONROE



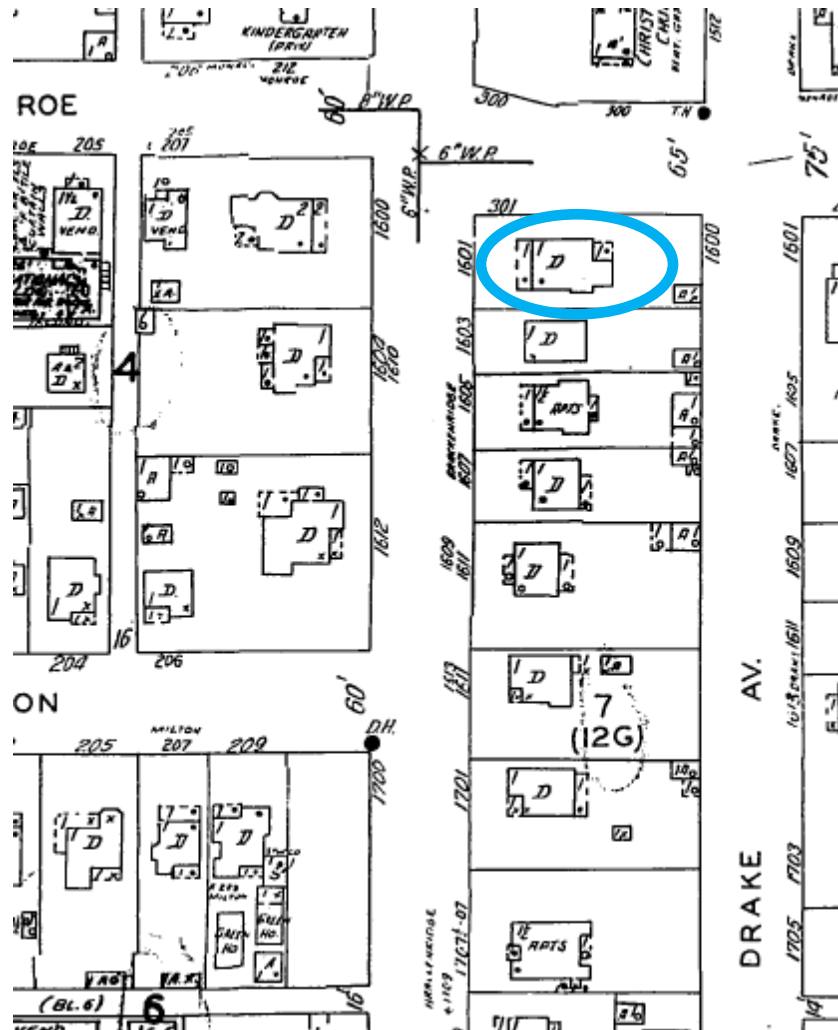
MILTON

BRACKENRI



The house appears on the 1921 Sanborn map with a full-width front porch

The 1935 Sanborn map shows the house with the full-width front porch and some changes to the rear of the house from the 1921 map above.



The 1962 Sanborn map shows the same configuration as the 1935 map above. It is therefore unclear when the front porch was filled in, as there is no permit history to do so. The fenestration on the enclosed porch may have come from the original front wall of the house as the windows are period-appropriate to the date of construction of the house.