

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
JANUARY 24, 2022
PR-2021-191341/GF-2021-205527
3621 WINDSOR ROAD

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1949 house and garage apartment.

ARCHITECTURE

One-story, cross-gabled brick residence with basement, central copper-roofed bay window, partial-width covered porch, and mulled and single multi-light wood windows. A two-story garage apartment clad in brick and board-and-batten siding is behind the primary building.

RESEARCH

The house at 3621 Windsor Road was designed by C. H. Page and Son and constructed in 1949 for Alma Langham Thomas, along with a rear accessory dwelling unit, originally servants' quarters. Thomas, a former rancher, school principal, and oilwoman, was a prominent philanthropist and civic contributor during her tenure in the home. Born a rancher's daughter and married to rancher E. R. Thomas, who died in the 1920s, Thomas spent her early life in Oklahoma and West Texas. Upon moving to Austin to attend the University of Texas at age 38—along with her two sons—she completed a Master's degree and returned to Midland to work as a school principal. Thomas moved back to Austin in 1948 after oil was discovered on her family's ranchland. She traveled extensively for the rest of her life, donating art objects from her travels to university collections throughout the state.

Thomas was the first woman appointed to Southwestern University's executive board of trustees. She was honored for her philanthropic contributions to arts education with a theater building bearing her name in 1956. In Austin, she was a leading patron of the fine arts, serving on the boards of the Austin Arts Council, Austin Woman's Club, Texas Fine Arts Association, and Austin Symphony.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain high integrity.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it may meet two criteria:
 - a. Architecture. The building, designed by C. H. Page and Son, displays early Ranch- and Revival-style influences.
 - b. Historical association. The property appears to have significant historical associations with philanthropist Alma Thomas.
 - c. Archaeology. The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
 - d. Community value. The property 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.

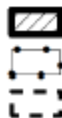
STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consider initiation of historic zoning based on the home's association with Alma Thomas. Should the Commission decide against historic zoning, encourage adaptive reuse and rehabilitation or relocation, then release the demolition permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.

LOCATION MAP



1" = 250'



SUBJECT TRACT
PENDING CASE
ZONING BOUNDARY

NOTIFICATIONS

CASE#: GF 21-205527

LOCATION: 3621 WINDSOR ROAD

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.



PROPERTY INFORMATION

Photos







Demolition permit application, 2021

Occupancy History

City Directory Research, December 2021

- 1959 Alma Thomas, owner (widow of E.R.)
- 1957 Alma Thomas, owner
- 1955 Alma Thomas, owner
- 1952 Alma Thomas, owner
- 1949 Address not listed

Biographical Information

RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION WORK CONTINUING HERE AT FAST PACE

Building construction continued at a fast pace in Austin last week with residential building showing no signs of abating despite continued high prices of materials and labor costs.

The largest single residential permit issued during the period was one for \$52,500 for the construction of a masonry residence at 3621 Windsor Road for Mrs. Alma Thomas. Robert Morris is general contractor and the firm of C. H. Page and Son, architects, on the residence consisting of one story and basement with seven rooms, two baths and a lavatory.

The Austin American (1914-1973); May 23, 1948

SOUTHWESTERN TO HONOR 6 TEXANS

GEORGETOWN, May 10 (SC)—At the 112th commencement this spring Southwestern University will confer honorary degrees on six outstanding Texans: John H. Sharpe of Austin, Herman Brown of Houston, Mrs. Alma Thomas of Austin, George W. Vaught of Medina, the Rev. Wesley V. Hite of Dallas and the Rev. W. Richard Swain of Longview.

Sharpe, who will be awarded the doctor of civil law degree, holds the AB degree from Southwestern. Formerly a member of the Commission of Appeals of the

Texas Supreme Court, he has been associate justice of the Texas Supreme Court since 1935.

The doctor of laws degree will be conferred upon Brown, Mrs. Thomas, and Vaught.

Brown, who was a student of the University of Texas, organized, developed and is now president of Brown and Root Construction Company. He is a director of the Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation, chairman of the board of Capital National Bank of Austin, member of board of City National Bank of Houston, member of board

of Armco Steel Corporation, vice president of Highland Oil Company, Esperado Mining Company, and Texas Railway Equipment Company, and also serves as director of the Brown Ship Building Corporation. In 1948 he was elected a trustee of Southwestern University and is serving as treasurer of the board.

Mrs. Thomas attended Sul Ross College and received her BA and MA degrees from the University of Texas. She has done graduate work at various universities, including University of California, New York University, Harvard, University of Wisconsin and American University in Washington. From 1931 to 1942 Mrs. Thomas served as principal of the elementary school in Midland. She attended the National Education Association in Japan and served as vice president of the state Delta Kappa Gamma. Mrs. Thomas is a member of the American Association of University Women, the Art League, the Board of Missions of the Southwest Texas Conference, and a trustee of Southwestern University. Always an enthusiastic traveler, Mrs. Thomas has twice visited Europe, the Caribbean, Norway, Africa, the Mediterranean area, has made a trip around the world, and recently toured South America.

The Austin American (1914-1973); May 11, 1952



MRS. ALMA THOMAS . . . statue is moon goddess from Bali
—(Neal Douglass Photo)

*Magellan Straits Impress
Mrs. Thomas During Trip*

(Editor's Note: This is another in a series of articles appearing in the Sunday American-Statesman on the most interesting experiences some of Austin's travelers have encountered in their journeys).

By ELLEN SCHMIDT

"I have never seen a place so mysterious," exclaimed Mrs. Alma Thomas, 3621 Windsor Road, of the quiet waters of the Strait of Magellan which she visited on a recent cruise of several South American countries.

The wind, always from the Pacific, loses its force upon meeting the current from the Atlantic, said Mrs. Thomas in describing the mystic silence of the straits she crossed on the cruiser Coronica only a short while ago.

"We just glided along on the smooth water between glaciers from the ice fields of surrounding mountains . . . they looked very cold and very blue," she continued.

Comparing the latitude of the straits with that of Iceland, the traveler found even more contrast in the barren waste and sand dunes of the Pacific side of the scene. Here the boom city of Punta Arenas (Land of sand) houses a refining industry, a product of the recent discovery of oil.

ONE OF THE islands, Mesa Tierra, is a very rugged, austere fishing town of 400 Spanish-speaking inhabitants. But due to modern refrigeration, they are able to freeze their fish and lobster, which are delicious, exclaimed Mrs. Thomas.

This being Mrs. Thomas' second trip down the South American continent, her boat, the first cruiser known to pass through the straits, was docked in Montivideo and her party toured the river La Platte to Buenos Aires while she remained in Montivideo. Passing through the Panama Canal and down the West Coast to Valparaiso, the ship went south and then east to Montivideo, she said outlining her course.

The wardrobe problem in going from north to south, Mrs. Thomas found acute.

"It was cold from New York to the Gulf of Mexico," she explained, "and through the equatorial zone it was hot. It was cold in Valparaiso and very cold in the straits."

"Going around the world is different," she said. She was referring to a cruise in 1951 which started from New Orleans and continued west through the Panama Canal.

"WE TRAVELED almost in the path of the raft Kontiki, landing on the island where it was wrecked, visiting the South Pacific islands of Fiji, British and American Samos, Java and Bali," she related.

Guadalcanal with its post-war ruins was "terrible," she said, adding that they left the ship at Ceylon and had a week's flying trip through India.

India was not the most enjoyable or the most pleasant but the most interesting country she ever visited, she said, expressing surprise at the wide gap between Nehru and his people and the lower class.

"Women in the street are not as veiled as they used to be," she was happy to comment. She added that she believes planned parenthood and birth control are becoming more prevalent.

Scenes which impressed her most were the Indian way of "putting away the dead" and seeing cows—even at the temple gate. Two methods of the former were cited as cremation and the more prosaic method of leaving the body to vultures at what is commonly called the "Tower of Silence."

Crafts of the old civilization Mrs. Thomas found beautiful. Cited were ivory carving, silver and rug making which, she says, were done "beautifully." The boat picked up her party at Bombay and crossed the Adriatic to Zanzibar. There they went east on a train trip through Africa—Victoria Falls, Kruger National Park and Johannesburg—and joined the boat again at Capetown.

The next stop was St. Helena, the island on which Napoleon was exiled.

IN EUROPE in 1950, Mrs. Thomas saw the Oberammergau Passion Play in its original setting. That also happened to be Holy Year the pageantry of which almost equaled that of the Mardi Gras in Rio de Janeiro, but was, of course much more sacred.

"In Rio, children appeared in devil costumes, and people danced to the Mardi Gras theme song over and over again," explained the traveler, who found delight in the beautiful costumes and the spraying of ether as a practical joke—"just to see people jump," she said.

Some men even caught the substance in their handkerchiefs and sniffed it while dancing, she said.

The crowd is part of the pageantry, thinks Mrs. Thomas.

Not content to stay put long after her South American trip, from which she returned only a few weeks ago, Mrs. Thomas is already planning another.

On May 27, after receiving an honorary degree from Southwestern University only a few days before that, she will fly to England for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. After the coronation she plans to take a motor trip through the English lake region and into Scotland.

Things Mrs. Thomas has brought back with her have been mostly wooden, but she has some venetian glass and some la Lique glass from France. An oval table with two legs made out of monkey pod wood from Hawaii serves as a coffee table in her patio, which is done in bamboo. An elephant table, the base of which is in one piece, is from Africa.

Also wooden is a moon goddess from Bali, and the head of a larger one in dancing costume. Other priceless treasures include elephant tusk lamps from Africa and a voluminous diary.

"Americans make things better even though they are not as pretty," she says, explaining how the Caribbeans use banana and coconut leaves for makeshift shoes and bags.

She also has metals to represent the various countries—silver from Peru; copper from Chili; gold from Argentina; and specimens of many of the 400 different kinds of hard woods and semi-precious stones to be found in Rio.

The Austin American (1914-1973); May 3, 1953

Frat To Honor Austin Woman

GEORGETOWN, Nov. 14 (SC)—Mrs. Alma Thomas, 3621 Windsor Road, Austin, will be installed in a Tuesday evening reception as patroness of Southwestern University's Delta Nu chapter of Delta Omicron, national music fraternity.

The installation of Mrs. Thomas in Southwestern's Laura Kuykendall Hall will precede the fall concert of the chapter at 8 p.m. in the university auditorium.

Mrs. Thomas is a member of the executive committee of the board of trustees of the university and last May received the honorary LLD degree from Southwestern for her efforts in behalf of Texas Methodist education work.

Present at the installation of Mrs. Thomas will be Mrs. Ralph Jones, Iota Province president of Delta Omicron; Mrs. Thomas Douglass, chapter adviser; and Mrs. Iola Bowden, faculty adviser. Presiding over the installation ceremonies will be Marjorie Zimmerman, student president of Delta Nu chapter.

A lover and a collector of art, Mrs. Thomas is a member of the Art League, Texas Fine Arts Association, and patron of the Austin Symphony. In 1951, she endowed Southwestern's School of Fine Arts. She is the only woman to serve on the university's board of trustees during its century-old history.

The Austin American (1914-1973); Nov 15, 1953

Southwestern Buildings Will Cost \$750,000

GEORGETOWN, Dec. 23—Construction on two new Southwestern University buildings totaling \$750,000 is expected to begin about Jan. 15, President William C. Finch has announced.

Contracts were signed Wednesday for the Alma Thomas Fine Arts Center and the Martin Ruter Boys Dormitory, first unit of a proposed three-unit men's dormitory.

The contract calls for the completion of both in 1955. Contractor for both buildings is Rex D. Kitch-

ens of Austin. Cameron Fairchild of Houston, a Southwestern ex-student, is the architect.

The boys dormitory will be completed by Sept. 15 in time for the fall enrollment, Dr. Finch said. It will be located to the rear and west of the chapel and will house 100 men students. It is to be the first of three men's dormitories of that capacity, forming an open end quadrangle.

The Alma Thomas Fine Arts Center, named in honor of Mrs. Alma Thomas of Austin, is the result of a year of careful study.

The faculty committee, composed of Dean Henry E. Meyer, Professor John D. Richards and Professor Angus Springer, has worked closely with other members of the School of Fine Arts in completing details. The university building committee for the project is composed of Dr. Claude C. Cody Jr. of Houston; Mrs. Alma Thomas of Austin; Dr. I. J. McCook, vice president in charge of finance of the university; and Dr. Finch, president.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Dec 23, 1954

Southwestern University Arts Center Dedicated

GEORGETOWN, April 14—The Alma Thomas Fine Arts Center, named in honor of Mrs. Alma Thomas of Austin, was dedicated here Saturday afternoon at Southwestern University.

A magnificent structure built at a cost of more than a half million dollars, the center provides 27 semi-acoustically treated and air conditioned practice rooms, 11 studios, classrooms, art studio, lecture rooms (to be used for choir rehearsals, piano recitals, etc.), recital hall (seating 70), listening rooms, reading room, art gallery, administrative offices, etc.

One of the most modern and best equipped college theatres in the state is also a part of the center. With a seating capacity of 850, it has been designed with special attention to acoustical perfection. Theatre interior is finished with mahogany veneer and the stage is large enough for the presentation of theatre-in-the-round productions with an audience of 150 seated on the stage itself. The lighting equip-

ment is adaptable to both methods of presentation. In connection with the theatre there is a workshop, flat storage, dressing rooms, costume storage, green room, lighting control room, etc.

Mrs. Thomas is a distinguished trustee of Southwestern University. A native Texan, she has spent a great portion of her life on a ranch. Her life has been packed with experiences of utmost variety. She is a devoted churchwoman, a world traveler and a collector of art. Three years ago she made an outstanding contribution to education when she endowed the School of Fine Arts at Southwestern.

A graduate of the University of Texas, Mrs. Thomas has done graduate work at Harvard, Michigan University, University of California, New York University, and the American University in Washington, D. C. She holds the Master of Arts degree from the University of Texas and the LLD degree from Southwestern University.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Apr 14, 1956

Rancher, Teacher, Oilwoman

By NANCY PHILIPS JONES

Written for The American-Statesman

ON a trip around the world a shipmate turned to Mrs. Alma Thomas and urged her to join the couples on the dance floor.

Mrs. Thomas laughed with delight but remained seated.

"However, I will be dancing every step with you," she explained.

This great sense of appreciation for all that life has offered and thrown at her has kept Mrs. Thomas in step.

Sometimes she is running ahead and at 73 she knows when to run.

Tall, straight and proud Mrs. Thomas is a rancher first, a teacher second and a rich oilwoman third.

All prepared her for her present role of philanthropist, civic leader and world traveler.

The Fine Arts Center at Southwestern University was made possible by the donations of Alma Thomas and was named after her. There is a stern portrait of her, painted by Wayman Adams, hanging on the wall.

Mrs. Thomas definitely did not like the idea of the center being named after her and was seething inwardly while sitting for the portrait.

The tall ranch woman prefers to remain anonymous in her numerous donations for the benefit of mankind. This includes scholarships, orphanages, church chapels, summer camps, charities.



Austin American-United Press

MRS. ALMA THOMAS

A fine arts patron.

Her present project, as a member of the International Goodneighbor Council, is the promotion of maintenance funds for scholarships open to Latin students.

"A lot of scholarships are not being used because these students can't afford living expenses," she points out.

Mrs. Thomas knows all about living expenses.

Born in Troup, Texas, Oct. 1, 1884, Alma Langham was the second of nine children of a cattle broker. Since her father was gone a great deal following the cattle business, the Langham family grew up to be self reliant and adjustable.

Both sides of her family were strong Methodist, following the custom of the eldest son being dedicated to the ministry.

"Alma is a rugged individualist . . . she reminds me of those statues you see of pioneer women," a close friend commented.

The Herd Law, which kept cattle off farm land, finally drove the family to Oklahoma, then Indian territory and open country.

Lawton was a city of tents and Mrs. Thomas recalls that a sign over a local saloon read "All Nations welcome except Carrie".

In 1910 Alma, an 18 year old willowy brunette with fun eyes, married E. R. Thomas, rancher from a Texas ranching family.

THEY had two sons, Thalbert R., now living at 4205 Edgemont, and James Louis, rancher and architect, who died suddenly one April at the age of 41.

As the farmers moved in to Oklahoma the cattlemen moved out and the Thomas family moved to Midland and the ranch life of West Texas.

"I wouldn't take anything for the life on the ranch when the children were growing up—they learned self reliance early, to cook, to be mechanics.

"They never needed to be psychoanalyzed."

The whole family rode horseback every morning, following the routine of ranch life that has all but disappeared from the modern scene.

"There is no use of anybody living to be 90 to get all the experience of life—you can get it all in 10 days riding herd," the big boned woman grinned.

She referred to the time she was riding with her husband, taking the cattle to pasture near Seminole. Of the 310 head of cattle they lost 90 to gyp water, the remainder stampeded; and after falling exhausted into their bedroll the couple woke up the next morning to find they had been sleeping with a stray, strange dog.

Tragedy hit the family in the ill-fated month of April, 1923, when E. R. Thomas fell to his death while repairing a windmill.

Mrs. Thomas' stern self discipline helped her carry on. She kept the ranch going while the boys finished high school.

(Continued on Page D-10)



SHE BALANCES GOOD FORTUNE WITH GOOD WORKS AND TRAVEL
Mrs. Thomas examines a carving from her art collection.

Austin American-United Press

RANCHER, TEACHER, OILWOMAN

(Continued from Page D-1)

A die hard optimist, the widow looked ahead. Her boys were ready for college. At 38, she was a strong, healthy and inquisitive woman.

All three of them went to the University of Texas.

Majoring in sociology, Mrs. Thomas graduated with Louis, the architect.

When Thalbert graduated she received her masters. Her thesis was "Echology of the Cattle Ranch in West Texas".

Now she was ready for anything.

Alma Thomas returned to Midland as principal of the North Ward elementary school from 1927-48. She was still managing the ranch.

With both sons married and raising their own families, Mrs. Thomas sold the ranch—retaining the mineral rights.

Then oil was discovered on the ranch.

It was then that Alma Thomas "retired" to the life she was ready and waiting for—balancing her good fortune with good works . . . and travel and more travel.

"Some people inherit loneliness but I have never been lonesome one day in my life," Mrs. Thomas reflected. She came to Austin and built her home on a lovely wooded lot at 3621 Windsor Road.

The house is a good study of her personality.

Sturdily built, conservative in plan, the living room is a sudden burst of surprise with vivid colors magnified by her collection of Southwestern art. There are tasteful momentos of her travels—a lot of glass and ceramics—and a collection of brilliant Japanese prints shield the fireplace.

However, best of all is a huge glass window looking over her front garden into the hills beyond.

When she talks, Mrs. Thomas is glib, entertaining and as warm as a camp stove on a cold night.

Her magnificent health allowed her to learn to swim at the age of 50 in an old stock tank.

At 60, she broke a wild horse so he would be safe for her grandchildren to ride.

The grandchildren are Thalbert's grown daughter, Tommie Todd; and Louis James' three children, George, Tack and Dorothy, living in Midland with their mother. A sister, Mrs. H. C. Barnes, lives at 1204 Marshall Lane.

"I've always said I wanted to write four books. The first one would be 'Funny Noises in Mexico' about the street sounds of the tradesmen.

"The second book would be 'The Funny Things People Say to Me', When teaching in Midland I slipped and broke my shoulder. A student wrote me a letter which said 'Dear Mrs. Thomas, I am sorry you broke your shoulder. You must be awful clumsy.'

"The third book would be titled 'Life's Most Embarrassing Moments'." During the dedication of the Southwestern

art center Mrs. Thomas asked the well known Dallas News Critic John Rosenfield where he was from.

"Sunsets Around the World" would be the title of her fourth book.

Two years ago Mrs. Thomas made a three week tour of Russia.

"I came away with the feeling that all people want to be friends."

That visit played havoc with her linen closet mind.

"I like to have all my thoughts neatly arranged like a linen closet—all folded away and I don't want them disturbed. But in Russia everything was pulled out and I had to start re-arranging and folding all over again."

Russia was the opposite of everything she had expected and she liked the country and particularly the people.

"A laugh is always a good entree."

The tall woman loves baseball and attends the world series when her busy schedule permits. She is active in the AAUW, the Austin Woman's Club, the Austin Symphony League, the Pan American Round Table and Delta Kappa Gamma.

Religion plays the leading role in life of Alma Thomas and she is a member of the Tarrytown Methodist Church.

She has one big weakness—a love for sweets. Heaven will be stock piled with chocolate eclairs. She will eat them for breakfast.

A few years ago Mrs. Thomas and several of her friends were returning from a trip to the valley when the car engine caught fire.

Mrs. Thomas drove into the nearest filling station.

The attendant was also the trainmaster. Before he could take care of the car, a train came pounding in. The sound and confusion was spectacular.

The attendant - trainmaster made wild motions at the train and at the car.

The ladies started scratching at the ground for dirt to throw on the blazing engine. But Mrs. Thomas took off her new spring coat and smothered the fire.

"It is cheaper to buy a new coat than a new car," Mrs. Thomas grinned.

The Austin American (1914-1973); Dec 29, 1957

Alma Thomas Presented SU Sullivan Award

GEORGETOWN, June 9 — Recipient of the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award at Southwestern University during commencement exercises was Mrs. Alma Thomas of Austin, member of the board of trustees.

Given annually, this award "recognizes and encourages in others those same principles of love for and service to men, which were the dominant characteristics of Algernon Sydney Sullivan," first president of the New York Southern Society for whom the award is named.

In presenting the award, Dr. William C. Finch, president, said, "Southwestern University takes pleasure in presenting to you the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award for distinguished service to society and to your fellowman."

The citation continued, "Your interest in and concern for people has been and continues to be one of the major motivations of your life. From elementary school teacher to trustees of Southwestern University, delegate to the World Federation of Education in Tokyo in 1937 and again at Rio de Janeiro in 1939, member of the International Good Neighbor Council, member of the Board of Missions of the Southwest Texas Conference, your concern for the children at the Methodist Home in Waco, the youth at Mt. Wesley, your interest in the arts in Austin and Southwestern, all bear eloquent testimony to your sensitive devotion to the welfare of your fellowman."

"Long time teacher, friend of youth, patron of the arts, devoted churchwoman, world traveler, trustee of the university, Southwestern takes rightful pride and pleasure in bestowing upon Alma Langham Thomas the 1958 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award."

The fine arts center at Southwestern is named in honor of Mrs. Thomas.

Member Of SU Board Gets Citation

GEORGETOWN — In recognition of "her generosity and unflagging devotion to the promotion of music in Texas", Mrs. Alma Thomas of Austin, a member of the Southwestern University Board of Trustees, was given a citation as an outstanding patron of music when the Festival of Contemporary Music, sponsored by the Texas Federation of Music Clubs, convened recently in Dallas.

Another citation was given to Miss Ima Hogg of Houston for her "outstanding influence in the promotion of American music".

A native Texan, Mrs. Thomas has spent a great portion of her life on a ranch. She is a devoted churchwoman, a world traveler, a collector of art. She made an outstanding contribution to education when she endowed the School of Fine Arts at Southwestern University, giving a structure built at a cost of more than a half million dollars.

A graduate of The University of Texas, Mrs. Thomas has done graduate work at Harvard University, Michigan University, University of California, New York University, and the American University in Washington, D.C. She holds the master of arts degree from The University of Texas and the LL.D degree from Southwestern.

A distinguished trustee and member of the executive committee of the Southwestern University Board of Trustees, Mrs. Thomas is the recipient of the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award from Southwestern University. Given annually, this award "recognizes and encourages in others those same principles of love for and service to men, which were the dominant characteristics of Algernon Sydney Sullivan", the first president of the New York Southern Society for whom the award is named.

The citations were presented by Mrs. Few Brewster of Austin, who is head of the manuscript archives committee of the federation.

Austinite, Firm Due Awards

Mrs. Alma Thomas of Austin and Brooks, Barr, Graeber and White, Architects, will be the recipients of the third annual Arts Council awards at 5:30 p.m. Thursday during a Chamber of Commerce meeting at the Stephen F. Austin Hotel.

Arts Council president Mrs. G. Felder Thornhill III and Dean William Doty of the College of Fine Arts of the University of Texas will present the awards.

According to Mrs. Thornhill, Mrs. Thomas is being honored for her many contributions to the arts in Austin including the realization of an educational program in the arts at Southwestern University, the Alma Thomas Fine Arts Center.

Mrs. Thornhill said the architectural firm of Brooks, Barr, Graeber & White is being honored "for its many contributions to the beauty of our city and the restoration of invaluable historic landmarks."

She said these include the Claudia Taylor Johnson Park and fountain near the two remodeled post office buildings on West Sixth Street, the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, East Mall Fountain, incorporation of the Old Bakery Building into the new Texas Highway Department Building and restoration of the St. David's Episcopal Church block.

The Arts Council of Austin is a non-profit, educational service organization. It is composed of 30 directors representing all of the educational institutions of Austin.

Recognition Given For Civic Efforts

By DIXIE SHIPP
Staff Writer

The Austin Arts Council presented its third annual recognition awards to Mrs. Alma Thomas and the architectural firm of Brooks, Barr, Graeber and White at the Chamber of Commerce board of directors meeting Thursday in the Stephen F. Austin Hotel.

Mrs. Thomas was recognized for her contributions to the Austin Symphony, Zachary Scott Theater and the Alma Thomas Fine Arts Center at Southwestern University in Georgetown.

Howard Barr accepted the award for his firm, being recognized for restoration efforts through projects like the park-fountain project at two remodeled University of Texas system buildings in downtown Austin; incorporation of the Old Bakery Building into plans for a new highway department headquarters building and others.

During the regular business meeting, the board heard a progress report on attempts to establish a chamber environmental committee. It adopted a resolution asking Congress to take a close look at proposals for better transportation systems.

The environmental committee has grown out of efforts by the chamber to act as a liaison between business and environmental groups in mutual concern for the "quality of life in Austin."

Hub Bechtol, vice president for civic affairs, said the

chamber has been accused of having interests adverse to those of improved environment. He said the committee soon will recommend a strong position statement which reflects the chamber's number one purpose, that is concern in maintaining high quality of life.

The transportation resolution was adopted at the request of Mo-Pac railroad on behalf of ASTRO (America's Sound Transportation Review Organization.)

In other department reports, directors were told of tourism efforts, which include production of a 25-point interest brochure and increased possibilities of a tour-guide service for Austin; a round-up committee report reflecting 100 new membership units; and a proposal by Vic Mathias, manager, for improved telephone service at chamber offices. The new telephone arrangement will cost \$100 more per month and provide 16 additional phones and six new lines.

President Bill Milstead said he will appoint a committee to study the relationship of the chamber to its sub-divisions, such as the Aqua Festival and Economic Development Council.

Jack Polk, a member of the board, said his firm will donate a week-end motor home trip, valued at \$200, to winners in the current chamber membership drive.

Great-Grandmother Says

'I've Done a Lot of Living'

BY ANNE DEE
Woman's Staff

When Thalber Thomas graduated from the University of Texas in 1930, his mother wore a cap and gown also.

Alma Thomas had worked hard for her B.S. degree in education. "It wasn't easy to go back to school again after being away for 23 years," recalled Mrs. Thomas. "I never could do math. I could do a little arithmetic, but when it came to algebra... oh my..."

One year later, in 1931, Thalber's brother, Louis, received his degree in architecture from UT and their mother was in cap and gown again. This time Mrs. Thomas was awarded her M.S. degree in economics.

"I never could have made it without my boys' help. I was crucified every day of my life as a student," she laughed.

When Mrs. Thomas's husband, Eben Rexford, was killed from a fall off a windmill in Midland, she realized that she couldn't "hang on to my boys forever," so she took steps to become independent. "I gathered all my courage and decided to enter the University of Texas with my two sons."

"I was a fond mother who couldn't cut the family ties immediately," she joked.

"It was awfully hard to learn to study, but my boys dragged me through math. School was really a struggle. I did more report-making than anything else," she recalled with a laugh.

While at UT, Alma was made president of the Present Day Club, an organization that presented a weekly luncheon and speaker. "I was able to meet many of the professors that way."

After graduation, Alma released the boys to marry and have children" and returned to Midland as an elementary school principal with 13 teachers in her charge. She stayed there for eight years doing some teaching along with her duties as principal.

Today she is an 86-year-old grandmother of four and great-grandmother of three. Her son Louis died several years ago leaving a wife and three children who are still in Midland. Thalber and his wife live in Austin. Their daughter,



Staff Photo by Larry Murphy

MRS. ALMA THOMAS, WORLD TRAVELER

At 86 years, she has visited 127 countries

Tommie Tod, married Bob Manderson. The Mandersons are the parents of Margaret, 10, a student at Casis.

She was recently recognized by the Arts Council at its third annual awards presentation for her personal contributions to the arts in Austin.

"I never could sing, or play the piano or write," says Mrs. Thomas, "so I had nothing to contribute but support. I wanted to sing since I was a child. I was zealous about

going to practice, but my instructors would invariably stop beside me and say 'Alma, you be the audience.'"

So she early resigned herself to doing what she could in the fields of theater, music and art — as a financial supporter. Since Southwestern University "needed so much" and since it was a Methodist school and "I'm Methodist," she made possible the housing of an educational program in the arts and at the university,

with the resulting center being named The Alma Thomas Fine Arts Center. "I had to stand for my portrait to go in the hall there. I didn't like the idea one bit, but they insisted."

The painting was finally hung and one night, during a heavy piano performance, it fell to the floor with a heavy crash, recalls Mrs. Thomas.

"I remember telling them that I now belonged to the big class of fallen women," she laughed.

She has also helped the Austin Symphony Orchestra Society, the Zachary Scott Theater and the Austin Civic Ballet with constructive advice and generous efforts.

Mrs. Thomas served on the advisory boards of the Salvation Army and the Austin Women's Club, but has now resigned because "I was so b-o-r-e-d."

She is a member of Tarrytown Methodist Church and the Travelers Club. "I hope I'm still a member at Tarrytown. They might have kicked me out since I haven't been there in so long," she said. Mrs. Thomas was just recovering from a broken hip when she fell and broke six ribs.

Before her injuries, she spent much of her time traveling. "I guess you could call it my hobby." She has visited 127 countries, including five trips to South America, three visits to Russia, a summer in the Scandinavian countries and three summers in Mexico where she studied Spanish.

She has spent much time in Europe, generally touring with the Travelers Century Club. Membership in the organization is limited to those who have visited a minimum of 100 countries.

One of the high points of all her trips was attending the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. "I wasn't able to get in the Abbey where she was crowned, but I watched her as she came down the driveway in her little gold carriage."

Alma has a replica of the Queen carried at her coronation June 2, 1953.

One of the most exciting trips for Mrs. Thomas was to the North Pole. "We had to use helicopters to land because the planes couldn't come in and take off on the

ice and snow." She learned that igloos are no longer built out of solid snow, but out of concrete blocks that are covered with snow and that seals no longer provide Eskimos with food, clothing and shelter, so many of the people have moved to the coast to fish for the herrings.

Highlight of the trip was seeing a huge whale that was being processed for its oil. "I knew whales were big, but not THAT big," she said.

She still gets asked if she "actually got to see the Pole." "I always say yes, I got a splinter off it," she laughed.

In Africa, Alma had doubts as to just how hot the rocks were that one native tribesman was walking over. "I could see the red hot coals beneath, but I just couldn't believe they were as hot as they told me so I walked across them too. I guess I should say that I practically flew across them. You couldn't stand on them for an instant."

While still in Africa she decided that she wanted to see what the Christian missionaries were doing, so she left the guided tour. "We'll tell them which way you went," they jokingly consoled her.

Alma also fondly remembers tulip time in Holland. "I just wanted to sit down and stay," she said.

She has kept a daily diary on all of her trips which, she says, the family is already fighting for possession of. "I wrote in it every day religiously — no matter how tired I was," she recalled.

"I've done a lot of living, but keeping that diary was probably one of the craziest things I've ever done."

Her home is filled with items she has collected throughout her travels. An inlaid wooden table has a concealed music box which when opened plays the Isle of Capri — where she bought the tiny table. Wooden hand-carved statues from the South Sea Islands, a rose quartz figurine from China, carved elephant tusks made into lamps and a complete set of eight Royal Doulton figurines of seven English queens and Florence Nightingale are some of her favorite pieces collected on her many journeys.

24.13' x 160' + 140'

Water Service Permit

Austin, Texas

C N° 3837

Received of MRS. ALMA THOMAS Date 6-24-49

Address 3621 WINDSOR RD.

Amount FIFTY + NO/100 \$ 50.00

Plumber BRADSHAW + PURYEAR Size of Tap 2"

Date of Connection 7-13-49

Size of Tap Made 2"

Size Service Made 2"

Size Main Tapped 6"

From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock 7.5'

From E - Prop. Line to Curb Cock 7.8'

Location of Meter 0.123

Type of Box LOCK

Depth of Main in St. 3'

Depth of Service Line 2.5'

From Curb Cock to Tap on Main Common

Checked by Engr. Dept. 8-17-49 RWP

No. Fittings	Size
1	Curb Cock
1	Elbow 2" Cop-
1	St. Elbow 2" C.R.P.
1	Bushing
1	Reducer
1	Pipe 2" Cop. galv.
2	Lead Comp.
2	Nipples 2" x 5" N.P.
1	Union
1	Plug 2" x 3/4" T.E.F.
1	Stop
1	Box 2" x 6" x 22" x 35"
1	Lid 18" x 20"
1	Valves 2" Valve -
1	Job No. W-323-502
1	Req. No. V. P. 102-1

see 1" pd Tap: C-913

Water Service Permit, 1949

Lot 1077ae

Block 105

Plat Sec. 105

Water Service Permit

Austin, Texas Increase G N° 03503

Received of Will B. Hiestand Date 5-2-51

Service Address 3621 Windsor Rd Size of Meter 1"

Amount Three hundred and no/100 - \$300.00

Subdivision Unplatted (Alma Thomas) P.R.V. Yes No ✓

Date of Connection Refund

Size of Tap Made

Size Service Made

Size Main Tapped

From Front Prop. Line to Curb Cock

From Prop. Line to Curb Cock

Location of Meter

Type of Box

Depth of Main in St.

Depth of Service Line

From Curb Cock to Tap on Main

No. Fittings	Size
1	Pipe
1	Corp. Cock
1	Cop. to Iron ell
1	Cop. to Cop. ell
1	Cop. to Iron Coupling
1	Cop. to Cop. Coupling
1	Angle Stop
1	Stop
1	Bushing
1	Nipples
1	Service Clamp
1	Valve
1	Meter Box
1	Lock Lid
1	Drain Tile
1	Drain Tile Lid
1	Stop & Drain
1	Job No.
1	Foreman

RESIDENTIAL WATER

Water Service Permit, 1951

Mrs. Alma Thomas 3621 Windsor Road

249.13' x 160' and

165 140' A

Gilbert Survey (unplatted)

Masonry residence.

37751

5-19-48

\$52,500.00

Robert Morris

Building Permit, 1948

Mrs. Alma Thomas	3621-B Windsor Road
249.13'x160'x	
165 140' A	- -

Unplatted

Garage apartment (servants qrts.)

37805

5-26-48

\$5000.00

Robert Morris

Building Permit, 1948