

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DEMOLITION AND RELOCATION PERMITS
DECEMBER 13, 2023
DA-2023-1431; GF-2023-149310
4702 SOUTH CONGRESS AVENUE, BUILDINGS 18 AND 19

PROPOSAL

Demolish a ca. 1941 tourist court and ca. 1954-58 motel extension building.

ARCHITECTURE

Building 18 consists of 8 small stone cottages joined by flat-roofed garages. A 1942 advertisement touts the “Texas Quarry Rock” cladding and “Mediterranean style with gable roofs and small covered front porches,”¹ though the buildings more closely resemble a Minimal Traditional version of the Calcasieu Cottage-style buildings located on the adjacent lot. Building 19 is a flat-roofed, one-story extension to the existing Classic Inn building, formerly part of Goodnight Court. It has a Ranch-style full-width porch and shallow side-gabled roof.

RESEARCH

Merle Goodnight opened the Goodnight Tourist Courts in 1941 to capitalize on the increasing tourist traffic in the corridor from Austin to San Antonio, a section of pre-Interstate road known as the Meridian Highway. In the Winter 2017 edition of Preservation Austin’s quarterly newsletter, TxDOT architectural historian Rebekah Dobrasko writes:

Although no remnants of the original road itself remain in Austin, there are small pockets of roadside businesses that still tell the story of the Meridian Highway through our city... Early motels typically took the form of motor courts, with an office out front and individual buildings accommodating travelers needing a bed. As demand rose, these tourist courts morphed into motel styles more typical of today. Some motels along the Meridian Highway in Austin include the Blue Bonnet Court (1929, 4407 Guadalupe Street), the Austin Motel “Tourist Court” (c. 1940, 1220 S. Congress Avenue), the St. Elmo-Tel (1940, 4501 S. Congress Avenue, now demolished), and the Goodnight Courts/Classic Inn (c. 1941, 4702 S. Congress Avenue). Restaurants served both locals and travelers, and some have become Austin institutions, such as El Patio (1954, 2938 Guadalupe Street), Martin’s Drive-In (1926, 2808 Guadalupe Street), and Hill’s Café (1941, 4700 S. Congress Avenue).²

PROPERTY EVALUATION

Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The buildings are more than 50 years old.
- 2) The buildings appear to retain moderate integrity. All original windows, doors, and garage doors have been replaced. Historic Preservation Officer Steve Sadowsky determined in 2017 that the cottages making up Building 18 were Calcasieu cottages moved on and remodeled by Goodnight in the 1940s, as several other cottages of similar size and proportion were moved onto adjacent lots owned by the Goodnight family over the years.³
- 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. Building 19 does not appear to have architectural significance. Building 18 is associated with the architecture of pre-Interstate motor courts, though the individual cottages have been modified.
 - b. Historical association. The property is associated with the Goodnight family, prominent Austin businesspeople.
 - 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 was not evaluated for its ability to 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.

¹ The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex. 8 Jan 1942: A18.

² Dobrasko, Rebekah for Preservation Austin. Preservation Austin, March 17, 2021. <https://orb-chicory.squarespace.com/news/2021/3/17/the-meridian-highway>.

³ Sadowsky, Steve. “Calcasieu Cottages” Presentation. 2017. <https://services.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=210309>

- e.* Landscape feature. The property is not a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

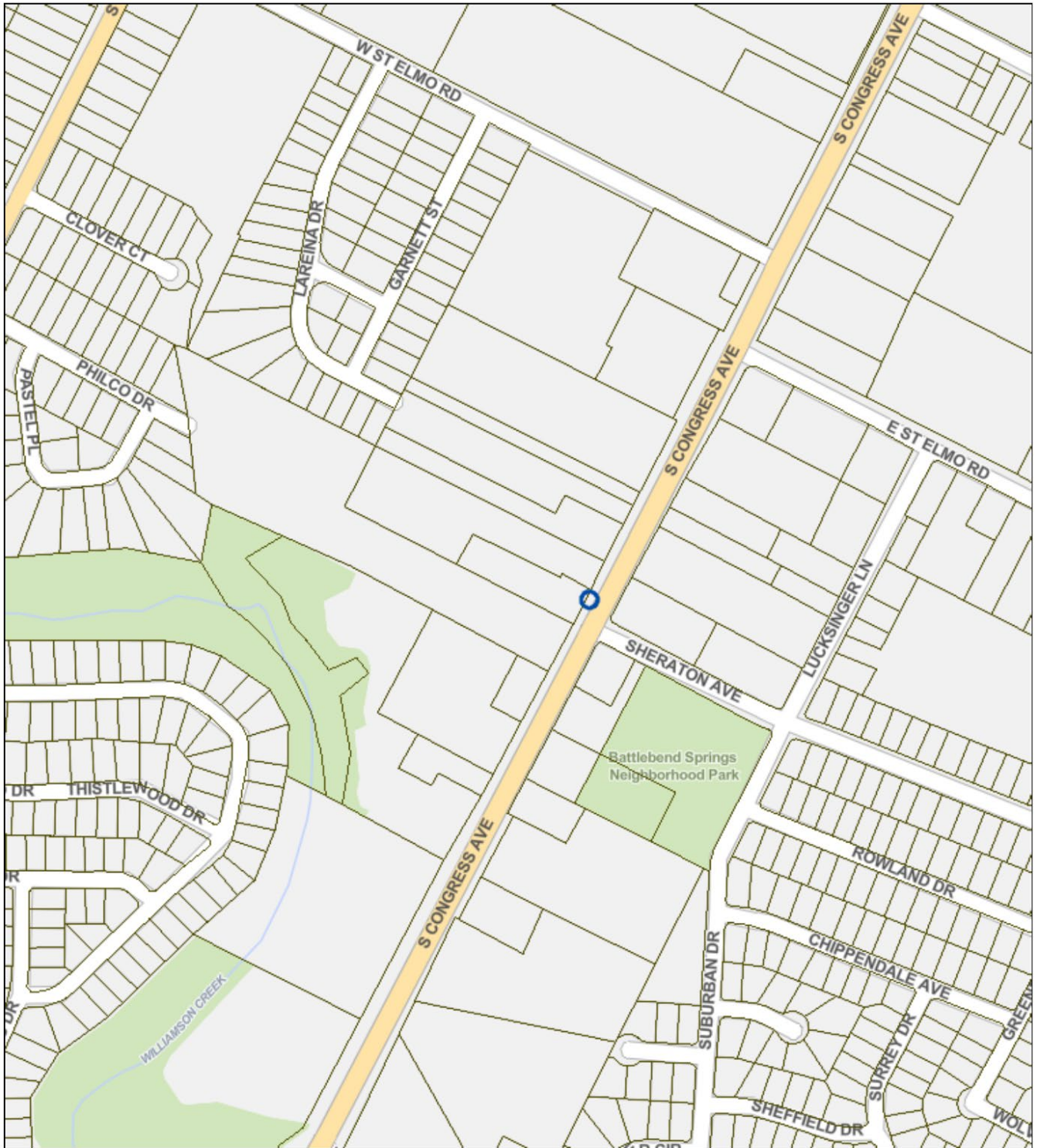
COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Retain any original signage on the property. Retain 3 or 4 cottages if possible to preserve the feel of the property.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Strongly recommend rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of cottages, then relocation over demolition, but release the demolition permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.

LOCATION MAP



Lot Lines
Lot Line

1: 4800

11/30/2023

GF 23-149310

4700 S CONGRESS AVENUE UNIT 10



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. This product has been produced by the City of Austin 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, 2023





Google Street View, 2022

Occupancy History

City Directory Research, July 2022

1959	4702: Goodnight Motel 4700: Hill's Café
1955	Goodnight Motel (tourist cts) Hill's Café Merle and Hazel Goodnight, owners
1952	Address likely listed as 4700 San Antonio Hwy Goodnight Court (Merle Goodnight)
1949	*Address likely listed as 4700 San Antonio Hwy* Goodnight Court (Merle Goodnight)
1947	Address not listed



1940, 1958 aerial photos (City of Austin CTM and Addressing)



1965, 1977 aerial photos (City of Austin CTM and Addressing)



1997, 2022 aerial photos (City of Austin CTM and Addressing, Nearmap.com)

Historical information

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given in accordance with the provisions of the Texas Liquor Control Act that Goodnight's Cash Grocery is making application with the Texas Liquor Control Board for a Retail Liquor Store Permit. Said business is to be conducted 1.7 miles from City Limits of the city of Austin, County of Travis, Texas, on the right hand side of the Austin-San Antonio Highway.

Goodnight's Cash Grocery,
Merle Goodnight.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 20 Oct 1938: 19.

<p>venetian blinds Maple Doors Ten Closets 3 Tile Baths</p> <p>SEE THIS PLACE TODAY. For Appointment</p> <p>Ph. 2-9824 Sundays Ph. 2-4164 Weekdays</p> <p>Capital City Lbr. Co.</p>	<p>Congratulations TO Mr. and Mrs. Goodnight on opening of their Court</p> <p>INSPECT IT TODAY Linens from Us</p> <p>McKEAN-EILERS CO. 321 CONGRESS</p>
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<p>Congratulation TO GOODNIGHT COURTS Open for Inspection Today Garrett & Ziller Insurance Bonds 819½ Congress Ph. 2-9211</p>	<p>WE EXTEND OUR THANKS and CONGRATULATIONS TO MR. AND MRS. GOODNIGHT ON COMPLETION OF THEIR LOVELY GOODNIGHT COURT VENETIAN BLINDS</p> <p>From Unit Home Decorating Co. 1107 Red River Ph. 2-2644</p>
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The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex. [Austin, Tex]. 18 Jan 1942: A18.



Drive Today-1½ Miles OUT THE SAN ANTONIO HIGHWAY
And Inspect Austin's Newest Tourist Court

This Court Reflects Unique Floor Arrangement and Careful planning for the Convenience and Comfort of Its Customers.

TAKE SPECIAL NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING FEATURES:

★ Design and Construction of Each Unit	★ Each Unit equipped with Beauty Rest Mattresses
★ Closed Garage Adjoining Each Cottage	★ Down Comforts and All Wool Wool Blankets
★ Design of Furniture and Fixtures	★ All Tile Bath Room with Latest Fixtures
★ Lighting and Heating Fixtures Installed	★ Plate Glass Shower Door in Shower Room
★ Landscape and Shrubbery around Court	★ Complete Carpet on Floor of Each Unit
★ Individual Front Porches on Each Cottage	★ Ceiling Fans Installed in Each Cottage

Refreshments Will Be Served

GOODNIGHT COURT
 1½ MILES OUT SAN ANTONIO HIGHWAY
 MERLE GOODNIGHT, OWNER

The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex.. 18 Jan 1942: A18

Goodnight Tourist Court Opens Today

Ultra-Modern Stone Construction Assures Soundproof Rooms

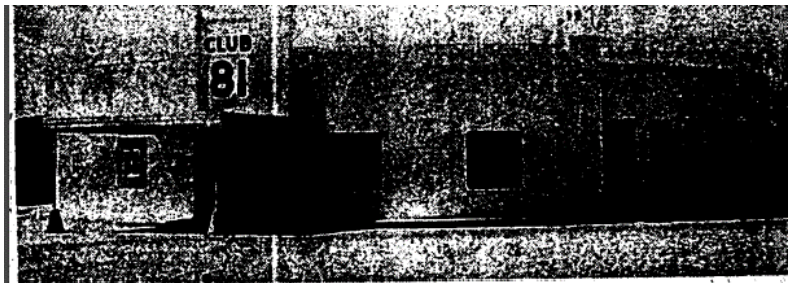
One mile and a half out on the San Antonio highway, a new ultra modern tourist court has just been completed. This distinct court is outstanding in many ways and contains the comforts of a hotel, yet has quiet surroundings and all modern conveniences. The construction of each unit is sound-

proof and built of Texas Quarry rock which resembles limestone, yet is of a hard consistency. Each unit is complete within itself, and has its own adjoining garage with over-head door.

The units are built on a Mediterranean style with gable roofs, and small covered front porches. Inside each cottage, the walls are finished in knotty pine, with Celotex ceilings. Fluorescent lights and built-in gas heaters furnish lighting and heating for the units. The cottages are furnished with references to harmony in colors and comfort of the customers, with thick carpet on the floor, glass top desk, and Monterey type furniture. Each bed has a Beauty Rest mattress and box springs, with down comforts and all-wool blankets. Venetian blinds are found in each cottage, as well as ceiling fans.

The bathroom contains the latest type of bath fixtures, and is finished in tile from the ceiling to the walls and floors. A shower adjoins the bathroom and is also equipped with the latest type fixtures. One of the most outstanding features in this part of the unit is the plate glass door, which has a border in plastic material.

Surrounding the court is a rock wall and all garages and drives are concrete. The grounds surrounding the cottages have been landscaped and bushes and shrubbery planted to give the court a home-like atmosphere. This court will be open all day Sunday and the public is invited to inspect it at this time. Refreshments will be served, and Mr. and Mrs. Merle Goodnight will be on hand to welcome visitors.



THIS IS a view of the swanky new Club 81, whose opening is announced Sunday

Club 81 Sets Gala Opening This Week With Johnnie 'Scat' Davis

Eddie Edwards' swank new Club 81 is set for formal opening Thursday and Friday nights with Johnnie "Scat" Davis and his band key-noting the occasion. Terry Shand and his "biggest little band in America" will move in Saturday night for an indefinite stay.

Located a few miles from Austin on the San Antonio highway, Club 81 is Edwards' answer to a long-felt local need of a cosmopolitan, big time night club. The club, far and away the most costly ever built here, will specialize in good bands and good food.

Admission will be by reservation only and the two opening nights will be formal for women, optional for men.

As an opener, Johnnie "Scat" Davis will be returning to the town where he started his musical career. Davis, well known from his flock of recordings and nine movies, played trumpet in Jimmy Joy's band at the University of Texas in 1929.

which Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters are recording for Decca this weekend, and "Give Me the Moon Over Brooklyn," which has already been pressed by Guy Lombardo and his orchestra and will be released Friday.

The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex.. 18 Jan 1942: A18.

The Austin American (1914-1973); Austin, Tex.. 10 Mar 1946: 8.

Night Spot Destroyed By Flames

Club 81, night spot on the San Antonio Highway near Austin, was completely destroyed by fire at 1:15 a. m. Thursday.

The night club was empty at the time, having been closed at 12:30 a. m. The cause of the fire was still undetermined Thursday morning.

The Austin fire department received a call at 1:13 a. m. Thursday and dispatched one company. A fire hydrant was near the club but all the hose available was still 200 feet short of reaching the fire.

Another company of firemen was then sent out, but the fire by this time was completely out of control, and the building burned to the ground.

The building was owned by Merle Goodnight, who operates the Goodnight Tourist Court alongside the club. It had been leased to two World War II veterans, R. D. Edwards and Joe Sanders.

Goodnight said the big club, finished only three years ago, was only one-fourth covered by insurance. He estimated the total loss at between \$75,000 and \$85,000.

Fire Marshal W. L. Heaton said early Thursday that he had not made an inspection as yet of the fire, and therefore could give no reason for the fire nor an estimate of the loss.

The club is located a mile south of the city limits at 4700 San Antonio Highway.

Mrs. Goodnight said she and her husband were awakened around (Continued on Page 11, Col. 6)

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 28 Oct 1948: 1.

Night Spot Burns Down

(Continued From Page 1)

1:15 a. m. Thursday by shouts of "fire." The fast spreading flames soon enveloped the building and within an hour, there was nothing but smoking ashes.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to give public notice that an appeal has been made to the Zoning Board of Adjustment, City of Austin, by Merle Goodnight for a variation from the Zoning Ordinance requirements of Use so as to permit extending a cafe on the premises at 4700 San Antonio Highway.

This appeal has been set down for hearing at 7:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building on Monday, June 16, 1952.

Any interested parties may appear at this hearing and present any written objections that they may have to the granting of the permit requested.

Signed:
WM. B. CARHSOW,
Chairman, Zoning Board
of Adjustment.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 10 June 1952: B9.

Flames Gut Hill's Cafe

Hill's Cafe, popular steak house at 4700 South Congress Avenue, was gutted by fire early Saturday morning, causing extensive damage throughout the modern masonry building.

No estimate of damage was given by Charlie Goodnight, operator of the cafe, who said he had "no idea" of the dollar and cents cost of the fire. Goodnight said it would be impossible to estimate the damage.

The fire alarm was turned in at 1:20 a.m., and firemen had the blaze extinguished 30 minutes after arriving at the scene, Assistant Chief Gene Sappington said. Sappington said two rooms and a serving area of the cafe were destroyed and that heat and smoke damaged the rest of the building. Burned out were a part of the kitchen, a room housing machinery and ice making equipment and the serving area.

Sappington said the cafe has only three doors and no windows, and that the flames generated a lot of heat and smoke, which hung heavily in the area.

Sappington said Charlie Good-

night told him he had checked the cafe within an hour of the time the fire broke out and everything was in order at the time. The fire marshal's office is checking Saturday to determine the cause of the fire.

The cafe is owned by Merle Goodnight, and it adjoins the Goodnight Courts.

Charlie Goodnight said the cafe would open "just as fast as possible."

Approval Granted For Construction

The city has approved plans for a \$70,000 addition to the Goodnight Tourist Courts, 4700 South Congress Avenue.

A permit issued by the building inspector's office to C. Merle Goodnight authorized an addition to the court's office building and 19 new units.

The permit listed A. Fitzgerald as contractor.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 01 Oct 1954: 10.

"FLAMES GUT HILL'S CAFÉ SATURDAY" Austin American Statesman (1921-1973), Jan 25, 1958 1

Announcing The
RE-OPENING
OF
HILL'S CAFE
Completely Remodeled and Decorated
4700 S. CONGRESS
TODAY

OPEN
24
HOURS

WE
NEVER
CLOSE



SAME
FINE
FOODS

YOU'RE INVITED....

OLD FRIENDS . . . NEW FRIENDS
TO FREE COFFEE TODAY THROUGH SUNDAY

We are sorry we have not been able to serve you for the past several weeks because of the recent fire damage. We now invite you to come back and see our Completely Remodeled and Redecorated Cafe and you will find the same friendly service and fine quality food we have always strived to give you.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 21 Feb 1958: 11.

Goodnight New Head Of TRA

HOUSTON — Charles M. Goodnight, of Austin, was elected 1968-69 president of the Texas Restaurant Association Wednesday.

The board of directors of TRA named Goodnight president at a breakfast session held in connection with TRA's 29th annual convention.

Other officers of the 3,500-member state association are Charles W. Horan Jr., Fort Worth, senior vice-president; James R. Hill, Corpus Christi, vice-president; Charles Langford, Abilene, vice-president, and Bill McCoy, San Antonio, secretary-treasurer.

Goodnight, owner of Hill's Cafe, has served as Legislative chairman for three years and as senior vice-president.

After accepting the gavel from the outgoing president, Tom Katz of Houston, Goodnight said:

said:

"Taking notice of the poverty campaign by job hunters the other day, I looked beyond the highly propagandized figures on poverty and found that thousands of jobs across the length and breadth of the land are going begging. Yet we have the "poor" converged on Washington, demanding that the government tax those who work to reward those who will not. For you know as do I that employers almost everywhere are begging for workers.

"From here it looks as though it would be a good thing for Texas government leaders to make a clear, concise, non-political study of the so-called unemployment situation in this state. It should be aimed at determining which persons are mentally or physically unemployable, which are technically unfit for good jobs and how many just don't want to work."

"I think they'd be surprised at the number who aren't even looking for a job — and 90 per cent of them would refuse if you offered them work."

Goodnight also owns the Goodnight Motel, two drive-ins, and a partnership in G&M Catering Service.

He and his wife, Claudia, moved to Austin in 1949 where he went into real estate and insurance before buying Hill's Cafe in June, 1957, and then the Goodnight Motel in July, 1961.

They have three children: Charles Jr., 23, manager of Hill's; Susan, 1968 graduate of Travis High School; and Dean, 7.



NEW DIRECTOR—Charles M. Goodnight was recently installed as a director of the Bank of Austin. A 25-year resident of Austin, Goodnight is also owner of Hills Cafe, Goodnight Motel and a partner in the G & M Catering Service. He is also the director of the 1973 United Fund.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 19 June 1968: 6.

The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 31 Jan 1973: 47.

SOUTH

(Continued from Page B9)

lin tract, with more families in the South Austin tract," Rube said.

ALL OF THIS IS A drastic change. Until 1943, only one bridge crossed the river inside the city limits. Now there are seven.

Until 1953, there was no high school in South Austin. Until 1968, there was only one. Now there are two.

The south side didn't even have a bank until 1957. There were no large office buildings south of the river less than 10 years ago.

SOUTH AUSTIN'S STEPCHILD status, though fading, was no accident. It wasn't a matter of prejudice — it was geography.

The men who picked Austin to be capital of the Republic of Texas knew the Colorado River was subject to terrific rampages.

Since Texas' population center was to the east, Austin was developed on the north side of the river so that a flood would not isolate the city from the rest of the state.

THE DEVELOPMENT WHICH occurred on the south side took place mainly on the roads out of Austin — the trails to Fredericksburg and San Antonio.

The river normally could be forded just east of the present railroad bridge, between the Lamar Boulevard and the South 1st Street bridges. There was a ferry, later a pontoon bridge and finally, in 1883, a rock bridge at Congress Avenue.

A few businesses opened on South Congress, but as late as the early 1930s, the pavement didn't reach far past Liveoak Street.

AND, UNTIL COMPLETION of the dams that created the Highland Lakes, each spring brought the threat of isolation for what little there was of South Austin.

Austin was almost 40 years old before the first subdivision was developed south of the river. That was the Swisher Addition, opened by John Swisher in 1877. The city limits — and city taxation — ended at the river. The jobs were still north.

THIRTEEN YEARS LATER, the area still was not officially part of Austin. A newspaper ad which appeared Aug. 10, 1890, touts South Austin as the working man's part of town:

"Great Popular Sale of Lots on the South Side," the ad proclaims. "Homes for the laboring men. No city taxes! Homes for the young couples! No city taxes!"

THAT DIDN'T LAST. In 1891, the "Village of South Austin" was incorporated into Austin.

The city, though still split by an unpredictable river, was joined. For whatever reason, Austin did not become a Shreveport-Bossier City, St. Louis-East St. Louis, or Minneapolis-St. Paul, all separate cities divided only by a river.

Though part of the family had been afforded table privileges, South Austin still got the leftovers. The gravy — utility extensions, new businesses, schools — went north. New homes followed, with one exception.

In 1912, a 230-acre addition was developed on high, flood-proof ground above what is now Riverside Drive.

THE TRAVIS HEIGHTS addition became a silk stocking area. For a time, there were more telephones — then considered more of a luxury item than a necessity — in Travis Heights than in any other part of Austin.

"Out of the Noise Zone: Into the Ozone" was the advertising slogan of its developers.

In 1932, Merle Goodnight had a service station at the southeast corner of Riverside and Con-

gress. After the 1936 Colorado River flood washed it away, Goodnight looked for the highest land he could find south of the river. He chose a four-acre tract off the San Antonio highway in what is now the 4700 block of South Congress.

GOODNIGHT'S NEPHEW, CHARLIE, came to Austin in 1937 and opened a general store on the site. In 1941, he opened an eight-unit tourist court with rooms available for \$2.50 a night.

After the war, Goodnight opened a hamburger stand, which grew into a landmark South Austin eating place.

When land was still cheap south of the river, he scraped up cash to buy what he could. "I struggled to pay for it on credit," he smiles, resting his big body in a comfortable chair behind an equally massive desk in his antique-filled office adjacent to his Hill's Cafe. "Now the fruit is about ready to harvest."

ACTUALLY, HE'S ALREADY brought in a few crops. Only 10 years ago, Goodnight hunted quail near the intersection of Oltorf and IH 35 on a 100-acre tract of land he bought for \$3,500 an acre.

"Not too long ago," he said, "I sold two small lots — about 38,000 square feet — for \$115,000." He owns about 2,000 acres either in South Austin, or just south of the city limits.

"I see nothing but sunshine and warm summer breezes in the future for South Austin," he said. "If not, I'm a busted duck."

THOUGH GOODNIGHT SAYS he has often

been approached to run for the city council, he never has, though he was on the Civil Service Commission for several years.

Only three South Austinites have served on the (See SOUTH, Page B11)

SOUTH

(Continued from Page B10)

city council in recent years.

The late Ben White, the councilman for whom South Austin's largest east-west thoroughfare is named, was a council member for 16 years.

THE NEXT SOUTH AUSTINITE to be elected to the council was Dick Nichols, who served two terms. Nichols, who has lived in Austin 25 years, remembers the South Austin stigma and, like others, sees bright days ahead for the area.

"South Austin is going to grow, and grow quickly," he said.

Margret Hofmann is the only South Austinite on the present city council.

Tourist courts follow road of automobile

By MIKE COX
American-Statesman Staff

Alta Woodard is 82 now, and some of the details are hazy in her memory.

She thinks it was somewhere about 1933 or 1934, a year or so after she and her husband, J.S. Woodard, built one of Austin's earliest tourist courts just north of the city limits at 4505 Guadalupe St.

Someone cleaning one of the rooms at their Petrified Forest Lodge noticed the writing on a wall calendar. "It said 'Bonnie and Clyde stayed here' or 'Bonnie and Clyde slept here.' I don't remember which," Alta Woodard recalled.

If the outlaw couple did stay at the Petrified Forest Lodge, J.S. Woodard didn't know who they were.

"A man and woman had to register as man and wife," Alta Woodard said. "If they didn't, they didn't stay with us."

Folks are still spending the night in the old tourist court, the first motel built in North Austin, the oldest still in operation, and Austin's most luxurious non-hotel accommodation for years.

The Woodards eventually sold the Petrified Forest Lodge to Jean Droppleman, who operated it until 1969, said her daughter, Mary Finger.

"Mother kept it up, and my sister and brother and I helped her," Finger said.

"It was a family-run motel. All during the war, soldiers from Fort Hood and Camp Swift stayed there."

Now called the Timber Lodge Apartment Motel and owned by Gary and Nancy Caywood, it was one of a dozen or more tourist courts along Highway 2, the route that until the mid-1950s was the main highway through Austin.

Highway 2 — made up of Lamar Boulevard, Guadalupe Street and Congress Avenue — became U.S. 81, and more motels opened as Austin grew. But when East Avenue was transformed into the expressway that is now Interstate 35, business fell off, and the old tourist courts took on a somewhat less glamorous life.

Over the years, they've changed clientele, owners and names, but most of the old tourist courts remain as reminders of the era when the automobile revolutionized travel and tourism, almost making downtown hotels extinct.

Audray Bateman, director of the public library's Austin-Travis County Collection, said the forerunner of the motel was first known as a tourist camp.

"Before the 1920s, people stayed in hotels or boarding houses. In 1929 there were seven tourist camps here," she said. "In 1932-33 there were 17. In 1937 there were 23 camps and one tourist

See Courts, B8

Courts — From B1

court. In 1942 the city directory shows 43 tourist courts and one motel."

By the mid-1950s, she said, the transition from tourist court to motel was complete.

Many of the old courts had Texas-sounding names such as Cactus Courts, Blue Bonnet Courts, Camp Texas Tourist Park, Travis Motor Courts, Longhorn Motel, Goodnight Motel, Ranger Motel, Lamar Motel.

The Lamar Motel was at 5300 Lamar Blvd., across from Leslie's Fried Chicken. Its 26 units, according to a 1941 advertisement, had "Ceiling Fans — Steam Heat — Tile Baths — Beauty Rest Mattresses — P.B.X. Room Phones."

The old motel, which later evolved into a place with almost exclusively a weekly or monthly rental trade, now is being razed.

"It was pretty run-down," said Leroy Bednar, owner of the property for nine years. "I'm tearing it down, and I'm going to put in retail shops."

The Lamar Motel used to be just about the last place to stay for motorists heading north. Up the Georgetown Road a bit was Threadgill's service station, where a tourist could stop for gas, a beer and the country music of Kenneth Threadgill. Next possible stop after that would have been Coxville Courts and Zoo.

"I had three cottages I built in 1939," said A.W. Cox, 64. "I rented the rooms for \$1.50 a night, but by the time I closed them, they were up to \$4.50."

Cox had a service station and grocery, which he still operates, as well as a 50 cents-a-day fishing hole and the zoo, which grew from the acquisition of one monkey in 1939.



Staff Photo by Stanley Farnar

The Lamar Motel at 5300 Lamar Blvd. is being razed to put in retail shops. The motel used to advertise that it had ceiling fans, steam heat and tile baths.

But when the interstate opened, Cox's gas sales dropped from 21,000 gallons a month to 3,000 gallons, and the cottage trade plummeted. In 1969 he closed the zoo.

Rooms at Austin's still-operating tourist courts go for more than \$4.50 these days, but by comparison to the rates at the newer motels, they are bargain places to stay — if nostalgia and saving money mean more to a guest than appearances and air conditioning.

Karen Marburger and Gary Roe were staying last week in a \$65-a-week room at the Blue Bonnet Courts at 4407 Guadalupe.

"We love it," Roe said. "The people are really friendly and kind. I'll hate to leave."

He and Marburger are joining the Army under the "buddy system" in

which the Army guarantees they can be together at the same posts.

But while the details were being arranged by their recruiter, they spent their time in the "living room" under the giant cottonwoods outside.

"When the sun goes down and the breeze comes up, everybody sits out here and drinks beer and talks," Marburger said.

Additional entertainment is provided by "Crip," a one-legged grackle and three "weird" squirrels, she said.

Just up Guadalupe from where the young couple sat under the trees is the place where J.S. Woodard took a chance on something he perceived as a needed business 50 years ago.

"My husband worked for the State Department of Agriculture, and he traveled all over the state," Alta Woodard said. "He saw the need for motels."

They sold their house in the Shippe addition and used the money and their savings to start a new business as the nation sank into the Depression.

"We came to Austin from Glen Rose in North Texas, and he knew where there was a lot of petrified wood," she said. "He thought the wood would be attractive for tourists, so he bought enough to build 10 units."

Room rent was \$1.50 for a single, \$2.50 for a double. "We didn't suffer, but we didn't get rich, either," she said.

Charles Merle Goodnight

 funeralinnovations.com/obituaries/view/317224/2



Charles M. "Boomer" Goodnight, Jr. Boomer was born in Galveston, Texas on October 7, 1944 to Charles Merle Goodnight, Sr. and Claudia Whitter Goodnight. Boomer was a wise and intuitive person with strong family values and devout dedication to those values. He was a trickster and prankster, and delighted in stirring up conversation and actions. Hunting was Boomer's love and he enjoyed sharing this passion with his sons. A perfect day would be for Boomer, PawPaw G, Dean, Damon, Pruitt and B.W. to be in the field working the dogs. He was a dynamic water skier up until 80's. Hill's Cafe was his love from 1957 to 1989. He would wish to remind all the staff at Hill's Cafe how important they were to him and how their nurturing eased his struggle. He served as a leader in the following organizations; Austin Restaurant Association President, Austin Restaurateur of the Year, Chairman of United Funds Victory Drive, Chairman of Taste of the Town, Travis County Sheriff's Posse, member of Sheriff's Posse Drill Team, Travis County Sheriff's Posse Rodeo Committee for several years, President and member of Westgate Lanes Bowling League, Board member of young South Austin Medical Center, numerous sponsorships to support youth. Boomer and his wife Darlene shared 43 years of dedication and loyalty. Together they learned a great deal about the things that are truly important. His pride and joy were his three sons: Damon and wife Tammi, Pruitt and wife Theresa, Boomer Wade and wife Elaine. Then came the cherished grandchildren; Morgan, Kennedy, Cierra, and Chance. Boomer adored his brother Dean Goodnight and wife Shawn & sister Susan Pond and husband Willard. He was an exceptional husband,

father, brother and friend. He cherished the tight family unit and they will strive to perpetuate his valor, dignity, and humor in life. Boomer will be missed and adored through eternity. The family will receive friends from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., Friday, March 12, 2010 at Harrell Funeral Home in Austin. Funeral service will be held at 3:00 p.m., Saturday, March 13, 2010 at Harrell Funeral Home Chapel. Burial will follow at Forest Oaks Memorial Park. Pallbearers are Dean Goodnight, Damon Goodnight, Pruitt Goodnight, and Boomer W. Goodnight, Mike Goodnight, and Will Pond. Honorary pallbearers and special friends are Alvin Pruitt, John Boyd, Junior Smith, David Smith, Willard Pond, Mickey Hodnett, Gary Rodgers, Don Laine, Robert Leffingwell, Ross Sterzing, Larry Wernli (deceased) and Jimmy Mosley (deceased). The family wishes to thank the outstanding staff at South Austin Hospital Emergency and ICU. Special thanks to Fresenius Dialysis Clinic staff and Doctor Alpar. Boomer had a long fight but these angels of medicine made the struggle more tolerable. Additional thanks to dedicated Doctor's Steven Nail, Tom Tracey, Dr. Golf, and Dr. Jobe. These gentlemen truly care about healing. God bless them. "There will never be another that could captivate our hearts as well as this good man." 4435 Frontier Trail Austin, TX 78745 (512) 443-1366

Charles Merle Goodnight Obituary, <https://funeralinnovations.com/obituaries/view/317224/2>, 2010

Famous cattle baron and Texas Ranger Charles Goodnight is credited as the inventor of the chuckwagon – the first "restaurant" known to cowboys on the cattle drive. Austin's own Goodnight clan has a Charles in every generation, and all are distantly related to the legendary ranger they refer to as "the Colonel." They chose to invoke his legend and honor the family history of simple country cooking and fine char-grilled steaks when they built a 20-seat coffee shop next to the Goodnight Motel (established 1941) on South Congress, along with partner Sam "Posey" Hill (hence the name Hill's Cafe). The Goodnights bought out Mr. Hill in 1957, but the name stayed. Hill's Cafe has seen floods and fires, but the Goodnights always found a way to keep their steak-house tradition alive.

The family served the public for nearly 50 years before closing the restaurant in the late Eighties. They moved their real estate offices into the front of the building and wisely rented out the kitchen to a mobile food vending and off-premise catering operation to keep city permits active. Local radio personality Bob Cole approached them a few years ago with the intention of opening a barbecue restaurant in the historic facility, but his subsequent on-the-street research revealed the public's strong desire for aspects of the original Hill's to be reborn. Cole dropped his initial plan, and his willingness to preserve Hill's heritage persuaded the Goodnights to make a deal with him. The cafe complex has grown to accommodate nearly 500 people, and live music is featured on a weekly basis. The classic Western scenes are augmented with big-screen TVs, and legions of Longhorn fans gather to eat Hill's famous chow and enjoy a cold beer or two while watching ball games. It hardly gets any more Texas than that – they're still doing the Colonel proud.

Austinchronicle.com. "Austin Landmarks on the Menu," 2015. <https://www.austinchronicle.com/food/2008-09-12/austin-landmarks-on-the-menu-hills-cafe/>.

No sooner had I recovered from the tasting menu marathon than I found myself in a long conversation with radio personality and restaurateur **Bob Cole**. Readers had been emailing me about Cole all week, and we finally got to chat on Friday. Earlier in the week, Cole told his early morning KOKE-FM listeners that he had just used the last \$18,000 of his savings to cover payroll at **Hill's Cafe**, and he had serious concerns about the future of the iconic South Austin eatery (4700 S. Congress). The news was all over social media by the end of the day, and Cole said he was gratified and humbled by the outpouring of public support, which translated into some increased business at the restaurant. However, our conversation revealed problems a few extra customers may not be able to solve. For those who aren't familiar with Hill's, the business dates back to 1947, when a 20-seat coffee shop was built to serve the customers at the **Goodnight Motel**. Over the years, the Goodnight family expanded the business, and by the time Cole took over in 2001, it was an aging building with dining and kitchen facilities that could accommodate 500 people. That's an enormous amount of space to heat and cool; Cole says the utilities alone run about \$10,000 a month. And though the parking lot is often full, when you've got cooking and dining space for 500, and you're rarely feeding that many, it's tough to be profitable. Cole said Hill's had always been a labor of love that didn't really make any money, but the economic downturn and changing tastes have had it running in the red for too long now. Cole said he'd love to keep the place open and build up the special event and catering parts of the business in order to maximize the potential. He also said he's in conversation with a local restaurant group that has shown an interest in the property in the past. I'll admit, I hadn't eaten at Hill's Cafe in years and really had no idea what to expect when I dropped by Saturday. I'm pleased to report the food is perfectly respectable – not cutting-edge trendy, but well prepared, flavorful, and reasonably priced. Find out more about that on our blog as well. And for all those folks who loudly lament the loss of iconic, quintessentially Austin places, get on down to Hill's.

Austinchronicle.com. "Is it "Goodnight" for iconic Hill's Cafe?," 2013. <https://www.austinchronicle.com/food/2013-01-18/food-o-file/>.

Permits

4618

0 Merle Goodnight 4700 S Congress

567 Goodnight 3.9 ac

Fortview

add to tourist court & office

58229 10-1-54 70,000/

A Fitzgerald

Building permit for motel, 1954

OWNER Hill's Cafe ADDRESS 4700 S. Congress

PLAT 567 LOT Merle Goodnight Tract BLK

SUBDIVISION Unplatted

OCCUPANCY Storage;freezer

BLD PERMIT # 95224 DATE 3-19-65 OWNERS ESTIMATE \$3,000.

CONTRACTOR Joe Gilbreth NO. OF FIXTURES see plans

WATER TAP REC # X SEWER TAP REC # X

Concrete block addition to community building

Addition to Hill's Café, 1965

OWNER Charles Goodnight ADDRESS 4700 S. Congress
 PLAT 567 LOT Merle Goodnight Tr. BLK
 SUBDIVISION Unplatted
 OCCUPANCY Hills Cafe
 OWNERS
 BLD PERMIT # 143999 DATE 7-19-74 ESTIMATE 50,000.00
 CONTRACTOR B & M Bldrs. NO. OF FIXTURES See Plans
 WATER TAP REC # Exist SEWER TAP REC # Exist
 1 Sty. Mas. Addn. to Exist. Comm. Bldg. 2897.2Sq.Ft.
 2897.2Sq.Ft. Pak. Req.- 96
 4-7-75-148636-semi private pool-Elite pools of Austin
 \$3600.00 480 sq ft. water and sewer exist

Addition to motel and pool, 1974

OWNER Betty Mayfield ADDRESS 4700 S. Congress
 PLAT 567 LOT Merle Goodnight Tr. BLK
 SUBDIVISION Unplatted
 OCCUPANCY Motel
 BLDG. PERMIT # 170765 DATE 2-24-78 OWNERS ESTIMATE 935.00
 CONTRACTOR Bill Malone Jr. NO. OF FIXTURES
 WATER TAP REC# SEWER TAP REC#
 Remodel interior of existng 2 stry wd frm rock ven
 comm bldg.

Remodel permit, 1978

OWNER Hill Corp ADDRESS 4700 S. Congress
 PLAT 567 LOT Merle Goodnight Tr. 3.9A BLK
 SUBDIVISION Unplatted
 OCCUPANCY Restaurant
 BLDG. PERMIT # 175940 DATE 9-11-78 OWNERS ESTIMATE 14,500.00
 CONTRACTOR ACS Austin Const Ser NO. OF FIXTURES
 WATER TAP REC# SEWER TAP REC#
 Repair roof on existing 1 stry wd frm comm bldg.

Roof repair permit, 1978