

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**  
**PERMITS IN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS**  
**APRIL 3, 2024**  
**PR-2024-025938; GF-2024-030606**  
**OLD WEST AUSTIN**  
**2715 WOOLDRIDGE DRIVE**

## **PROPOSAL**

---

Demolish a ca. 1930 house.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

---

Two-story cross-gabled house set into the hillside, with replacement 1:1 windows and a partial-width front porch. The building has been significantly altered, though it was listed as a contributing structure.

## **RESEARCH**

---

The house at 2715 Wooldridge Drive was built around 1930 for the Whitney family. Dr. Francis Whitney was a geology professor at the University of Texas for over 40 years and was one of the world's authorities on fossils and their relationship with the locations and quality of oil and gas deposits. His daughter, Dr. Marion Whitney, also became a geologist and university professor of geology, as well as a photographer and children's book author.

## **PROPERTY EVALUATION**

---

The property contributes to the Old West Austin National Register district.

### *Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark*

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain low integrity. The building's form, fenestration, and materials have been modified.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it does not meet two criteria for landmark designation:
  - a. Architecture. The building does not appear to convey architectural significance.
  - b. Historical association. The property is associated with geologist Dr. Francis Whitney and his daughter, geologist Dr. Marion Whitney.
  - 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**

---

Release the demolition permit upon completion of a City of Austin Documentation Package.





## PROPERTY INFORMATION

### *Photos*



*Demolition application, 2024*

### *Occupancy History*

City Directory Research, March 2024

1959	Olen E. Hager, owner
1955	Francis and Grace Whitney, owners – professor, UT
1952	Francis and Grace Whitney, owners – professor, UT
1949	Francis and Grace Whitney, owners – professor, UT
1944	Francis and Grace Whitney, owners – professor, UT
1941	Address not listed



## Volcano Subject of Geologist-Author

A volcano has been born . . .

These intriguing words flashing across the screen of a small theatre in Kilgore back in 1943 made a deep impression on at least one person in the audience.

—So deep that it later became the subject of her first book.

That person was Doctor Marion Isabelle Whitney, geologist.

Miss Whitney, who is a native Austinite, is well-known here in the academic circles.

Her father, Doctor Francis L. Whitney is professor emeritus of geology at the University of Texas where he taught for 44 years, and where she herself spent eight years working on the various degrees she holds, including her doctorate.

During the summers Miss Whitney attended Cornell and Columbia Universities.

If you attended either the Pease or Fulmore school between 1933 and 1936 you may have been one of her pupils, since she taught at both.

She has also taught at Kilgore College, Texas Christian University and the Kansas State Teachers College in Pittsburgh, Kans., and she taught last year at Sul Ross College in Alpine.

Miss Whitney has established a department of geology at Polytechnic in Russellville, Ark., where she plans to return this fall. This summer she is visiting her parents here at 2715 Wooldridge Drive.

But about her book—rather, books—since she now has another book ready to go to press close on the publicationheels of her first one, "Juan of Paracutin" . . .

It began something like this:

Among her many other accomplishments, Miss Whitney is a musician, and during the fall of 1943 was studying with concert artist, Virginia Estes in Kilgore.

And shortly after the news short on the newly erupted Paracutin volcano in Mexico, Miss Estes received a letter from her manager offering her an opportunity to do a concert in Mexico City.

Eager to see the rare phenomenon of a volcano in the making, Miss Whitney encouraged her music teacher to accept the concert offer and they would go together.

They went in 1944, and, having organized a small party of other friends, they spent eight weeks.

During this trip the author made two visits to the volcano, one by day and one by night, with Juan, the little Mexican boy in her story, as her guide . . .

She took a few pictures of the volcano and other typical of Mexican life and scenes, but the idea of writing a book did not really crystallize until the author saw Dr. Fred M. Bullard's collection of colored pictures taken earlier of the lava flow and the lava cascading into the canyon.

Dr. Bullard's extraordinary photos really inspired her to write the book from a geologist's point of view, telling what the Paracutin meant to geologists.

And having taught youngsters in school, Miss Whitney also tried to portray through the eyes of Juan the destruction and terror the volcano caused, and what it meant to the little Mexican boy, his family and friends who lived in the little town of San Juan de Parangaricutiro which was covered by the black rivers of rocks erupting from "el monstruo," changing the life of the people in far-off Michoacan.

One of the great appeals the book has for juvenile readers is the fact that it is "real." And if you have ever told stories to children you will understand how important that is. They are always asking, "Is it real?"

Juan of Paracutin is real. The author either experienced first-hand the incidents or met the people who did. She saw the "old man's dance," typical of the Tarascan Indians. And into the story she wove revealing and sympathetic glimpses of the primitive life, the isolation, the strong religious feeling and superstition and the customs.

Miss Whitney gives a great deal of credit to her friend, Dr. Cora Martin, also an author, who read the first draft of her script, making various suggestions which Miss Whitney says she gratefully followed.

Dr. Martin, who has been a professor of primary education, suggested the title of the book and also the glossary which the author included, with fine restraint. It covers just enough Spanish words with their pronunciation and meaning to give the book native color, yet not confusing to the young reader.

Dr. Martin was the first to produce a book using real photos; and her Real Life Readers were state-adopted text books. She encouraged Miss Whitney to also use the real photographs, which the author did, using some of her own and some of Dr. Bullard's.

The story was originally written and planned around 50 pictures, but proved too expensive for publication. However, Miss Whitney's newest book which is ready for the press is also planned around some 50 photos which the author herself made, and she says she intends to

make every effort to have it published with pictures included.

The new book, with its present title of "Stubby's Tail of Woe," is the true tale of a pet possum which the author first acquired when it was no bigger than a mouse.

She spent months and months getting the pictures to portray just the right part for her story with some pictures requiring as much as three months to complete.

The story should have great appeal to young and old alike, since it evolves around one of the most affectionate of pets and cunning animals.

Left behind when its mother scurried away in fright, carrying her other babies and leaving Stubby at the mercies of the world, he fell into fortunate hands, and fared well until the day an accident caused the loss of his tail; a catastrophe indeed for an opossum. And, incidentally the accident caused the name Stubby to be coined by the author's father.

Her pictures are little masterpieces in photography themselves. Her skill with the camera comes naturally, though, since she received her first camera at 14 and began not only to take the pictures to develop, print and even enlarge them, plus the fact that her father did scientific photography and had insisted in including a dark room in their home.

Her father also built cameras from the size of a Leica up to those 10½ feet in length. They had a copying camera which he also built. She won a number of awards with her photographs while a member of the Fort Worth Camera Club.

A more recent honor is the honorary membership to the Mark Twain Society which has been conferred upon her for her contribution to literature with the publication of Juan of Paracutin.

The book, published by the Steck Company and priced at \$2.00, was also chosen by the Catholic Children's Book Club as its July selection for their intermediate group.

## Retired UT Geology Prof Dies

Dr. Francis L. Whitney, who taught geology at The University of Texas for 44 years, died Thursday in a hospital in Mount Pleasant, Mich.

Graveside funeral services for the 83-year-old professor emeritus will be held Monday at 2 p.m. in Elmira, N. Y.

He is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Marion Whitney of Shepard, Mich.

After retiring in 1932 from the UT faculty, Dr. Whitney made his home with his daughter.

Dr. Whitney was well known for his research in the development of several devices which demonstrated new and better mathematical methods for solving problems involving geological structures, especially oil bearing structures.

He was an authority on fossils, the remains of ancient marine animals which are found in the earth. Fossils provide clues to age zones of rock layers and help petroleum geologists as they seek oil and gas.

During the years Dr. Whitney taught here, he and his students compiled a fairly complete file on the geology of Central Texas. This information has recently been placed on geological maps by Dr. Keith Young of the geology faculty. The maps have been published and are available from the Bureau of Economic Geology.

A native of Enfield, N. Y., Dr. Whitney had bachelor of arts, master of arts and doctor of philosophy degrees from Cornell University. He joined the UT faculty in 1908, and served as chairman of the geology department from 1921 until 1929.

Before becoming a geologist, he worked as a machinist. Machine work continuing to be his hobby, and he had an extensive machine shop in his home.

*The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 07 July 1953: 8.*

*The Austin Statesman (1921-1973); Austin, Tex.. 26 Jan 1962: 3.*

## Permits

Connecting Charge \$ 1500  
**Application for Sewer Connection.**

No. 9885A

Austin, Texas, 1970 1930

To the Superintendent of Sewer and Public Improvements,  
 City of Austin, Texas.

Sir:-

I hereby make application for sewer connection and instructions on premises  
 owned by F. P. Whitman, W. L. B.  
 at 109 Edgmont Street  
2715 Woolridge Dr.  
 which place is to be used as a residence

In this place there are to be installed 5 fixtures.

I agree to pay the City Sewer Department the regular ordinance charge.

Respectfully,

PLAT 62

Location of Public Sewer

sewer in street EXP

Stub Out

Connected 12-10 193 OK ok

OWNER Homer Williams ADDRESS 2715 Woolridge Dr.  
 PLAT 62 LOT 4 BLK 1  
 SUBDIVISION Edgemont  
 OCCUPANCY Repair Res  
 BLD PERMIT # 92111 DATE 5-26-64 OWNERS ESTIMATE 1500.00  
 CONTRACTOR Fletcher Boland Conc NO. OF FIXTURES 1  
 WATER TAP REC # \_\_\_\_\_ SEWER TAP REC # \_\_\_\_\_  
 RESIDENCE - Repair foundation and gutters

OWNER Dr. David Edwards ADDRESS 2715 Woolridge  
 PLAT 62 LOT 4 BLK 1  
 SUBDIVISION Edge mont  
 OCCUPANCY storage  
 BLDG. PERMIT # 179936 DATE 3-6-79 OWNERS ESTIMATE 4,000  
 CONTRACTOR owner NO. OF FIXTURES \_\_\_\_\_  
 WATER TAP REC# \_\_\_\_\_ SEWER TAP REC# \_\_\_\_\_  
Remodel res.