

PETITION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

703 Bolivar Street  
Denton, Texas 76201

Submitted by:

Ann Caldwell  
Sandy Ferguson Taylor  
703 Bolivar Street  
Denton, Texas 76201

PETITION FOR HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION TO THE HISTORICAL LANDMARK COMMISSION, PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION, AND CITY COUNCIL OF DENTON, TEXAS:

I/We, the undersigned, owner(s) of, or party(s) with financial interest in, all property herein described, do hereby file this, my/our petition, asking that the said property be designated as a historic landmark under the provisions of Ordinance #80-30 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Denton, Texas. The said property is located at 703 Bolivar

and is more particularly described as follows:

(see attached sheet.)

*Twenty-five Dollars \$25.00*

I/We herewith tender the filing fee of ~~One Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$150)~~.

I authorize the City of Denton to place a sign or sign(s) on the above property for public notification of the proposed historic designation.

NAME Ann Caldwell  
ADDRESS 703 Bolivar  
CITY Denton STATE Texas  
PHONE 817-387-8008

Submitted this 2nd day of June, 1983.

That VERNICE DOYLE TALIAFERRO and wife, JOYCE R. TALIAFERRO, 11

of the County of Denton, State of Texas for and in consideration of

the sum of TEN AND NO/100-----

-----(\$10.00)-----DOLLARS,  
and other good and valuable considerations,

to us in hand paid by DAVID WALTON JAY, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, and the assumption and agreement on the part of the Grantee herein to pay off and discharge the unpaid balance of principal and interest owing on a note executed by the Grantors herein payable to Birdie V. Thurman, having an original principal balance of \$11,500.00, payable in monthly installments of \$100.00 each, bearing interest at the rate of 7% per annum, and being described in Deed from Birdie V. Thurman to the Grantors herein, dated the 27th day of July, 1967, recorded in Volume 554, Page 57, of the Deed Records of Denton County, Texas, and the agreement on the part of the Grantee herein to hold Grantors harmless from further liability on said note;

have Granted, Sold and Conveyed, and by these presents do Grant, Sell and Convey unto the said

DAVID WALTON JAY,

of the County of Denton, State of Texas all that certain lot, tract or parcel of land situated in the City and County of Denton, Texas, a part of Robert Beaumont Survey, Abstract No. 31, being part of a tract conveyed by Darthula Matlock, et al, to C. E. Miller on July 3, 1943, shown of record in Volume 301, Page 227, Deed Records, Denton County, Texas, more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at the southeast corner of said tract conveyed to C. E. Miller;

THENCE North 65 feet to its northeast corner;

THENCE West 145 feet, more or less, to the northeast corner of a certain lot conveyed by C. E. Miller and wife to R. A. Boyd by deed dated October 9, 1946, and shown of record in Volume 330, Page 374, of the Deed Records of Denton County, Texas;

THENCE South along east line of said Boyd lot 65 feet, its southeast corner in the south line of said lot conveyed to C. E. Miller;

THENCE East along the south line of said C. E. Miller lot, 145 feet, more or less, to the place of beginning

Grantee herein assumes payment of taxes for the year 1974.

Criteria to be used in Historical Landmark Designation

The petitioner will be responsible for furnishing data to the Planning and Community Development Department for submittal to the Landmark Commission substantiating that the property meets at least one or more of the following 13 criteria for Historic Landmark designation:

1. Character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Denton, State of Texas, or the United States.
2. Recognition as a recorded Texas historic landmark, a national landmark, or entered into the National Register of Historic Places.
3. Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.
4. Identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city.
5. Embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation.
6. Relationship to other distinctive buildings, sites or areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif.
7. Portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an area of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.
8. Archaeological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest.
9. Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of the City, State or United States.
10. Location as the site of a significant historic event.
11. Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, State or United States.
12. A building or structure that because of its location has become of value to a neighborhood, community area, or the city.
13. Value as an aspect of community sentiment or public pride.

Bolivar Street, Denton, Texas, has a history which is as old as the city itself. When Denton was founded in 1857, Bolivar Street was so named because it was a wagon trail that led to the town of Bolivar. In the late 1870's, several private schools were located on Bolivar Street. Later, in the 1880's and 1890's, many churches were built on south Bolivar Street, among them the Central Presbyterian, the Church of Christ, the Roman Catholic, and the German Baptist. Several churches still remain on Bolivar Street.

The unassuming residence at 703 Bolivar was built in Prairie Box style, a popular style of the late 1800's and early 1900's in Texas. This simple frame cottage, with its nearly square shape, wide front porch, tall rectangular windows, and hipped roof, is a testimony to the solid construction and pleasing design of many modest homes of its time.

According to Ruby Matlock Presnell, who moved to the house when her father bought it in 1915, the house was built between 1905 and 1909<sup>1</sup>, but records of the original owner or builder have been unobtainable. The interior of the house substantiates Mrs. Presnell's claim that the house dates back at least to 1905. One wonders if the house were built even earlier, perhaps in the late 1800's, because of the shiplap exterior walls, solid wood interior walls, hardwood and pine floors, remnants of ornate wallpaper in one of the bedrooms, eleven foot wooden ceilings, and wavy blown glass window panes in some of the windows.

Also, the sale price of \$1350.00 for the property in 1899 indicates that a structure occupied the lot, since the imposing two-story brick Scripture Building sold for \$10,000 only five years later.

The early owners of the Bolivar Street property were among the most prominent and influential men in Denton. W.H. Mounts originally purchased the land, which was in the Robert Beaumont one-third league survey, abstract 31. Mounts was one of the first businessmen to leave New Alton and move to Denton when it was determined that Denton was to be the new county seat, in 1856.<sup>2</sup> Since Bolivar Street was one of the earliest streets to be designated in 1856, Mounts possibly bought the land at the public auction of lots on January 10, 1857. No records exist about the purchase, however, because the Denton County Courthouse burned in 1875, and most records previous to that year were lost.

On January 2, 1871, Mounts sold the property to W.F. Egan, who like Mounts, was also an important Denton businessman, and a charter member of the First Christian Church. He was once the employer and friend of the legendary outlaw, Sam Bass.<sup>3</sup> While Egan was the owner of the Bolivar Street property, his actual homeplace was on the more elegant "Sand" Street (South Elm Street).<sup>4</sup> In 1879, Egan sold the land on Bolivar to Dr. J.P. Blount.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Blount was a member of the illustrious Blount family who also lived on Sand Street.<sup>6</sup> He was a member of the original committee to draft suitable resolutions for the proposed North Texas Normal College in 1899<sup>7</sup> and in 1902, he was appointed to a committee to formulate plans for the proposed C.I.A. College.<sup>8</sup> Dr. Blount

also served as a committee member for the proposed "East Line Railroad" in June, 1892.<sup>9</sup> He became the first president of Denton County National Bank in 1892.<sup>10</sup>

Also in 1892, Dr. Blount sold the Bolivar Street property for \$800 to respected store owner C.M. Greenlee.<sup>11</sup> C.M. Greenlee owned the C.M. Greenlee Dry Goods Store, which was housed in "one of the very first brick buildings in Denton."<sup>12</sup> Greenlee also built the Greenlee Addition in Denton. Because C.M. Greenlee was in the house construction business, one could speculate that it was Greenlee who built the house on Bolivar Street sometime between 1892 and 1899 when he owned the property. Additional proof would be the mechanic's lien, obtained by Greenlee in 1895 for a house that is similar in its description to the house at 703 Bolivar.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, the first four owners of the Bolivar Street property were the namesakes for four streets in Denton...Mounts Street, Blount Street, Greenlee Street, and Egan Street, which intersects Bolivar on the south border of the lot on which the house sits.

In 1899, R.R. Turner bought the property from B.R. Greenlee, a relative of former owner C.M. Greenlee.<sup>14</sup> Turner and his wife, Ida, owned the property for over twelve years and sold it to E.M. Whitehead in 1911.<sup>15</sup> Whitehead owned the property for almost exactly four years, from 1911 to 1915, and must have made significant improvements upon it because its price increased \$1600

from his purchase price of \$1250 to the \$2850 agreed to by the next buyer, C.H. Thorton, on August 9, 1915.<sup>16</sup>

At this point in the history of the property, we must read between the lines and assume that Thorton suffered a misfortune or at least experienced some consequence which required him to relinquish the property to H.A. Matlock on September 25, 1915, scarcely six weeks after he bought it from E.M. Whitehead.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Thorton lost \$1,000 on the transaction (Thorton paid Whitehead \$2850 for the property; Matlock, \$1850), no small amount in the period just before the United States entered World War I.

The Matlock family lived in the house at 703 Bolivar from 1915 until the death of Mr. Matlock in 1943. Ruby Matlock Presnell grew up in the house and said that it "was a well-built house that we were proud of."<sup>18</sup> Darthula Matlock, H.A. Matlock's widow, sold the property to Clarence E. Miller in 1943.<sup>19</sup>

C.E. Miller, a Denton banker, used the house as rental property. He also sold a small portion of the lot behind the house to R.A. Boyd, on October 9, 1946.<sup>20</sup>

Walter S. Miller, C.E. Miller's son, sold the property to D.C. Thurman in 1957, to settle the estate of his father.<sup>21</sup> Thurman owned the house for almost ten years and his widow, Birdie Thurman, sold it to Vernice Doyle Taliaferro on the 27th of July, 1967.<sup>22</sup>

Taliaferro sold the property to David Walton Jay, a land



developer and builder, on May 29, 1974.<sup>23</sup> Jay used the investment as rental property for three years until artist and teacher Sandra Ferguson Taylor bought it on August 18, 1977.<sup>24</sup>

In the six years of her ownership, Ms. Taylor has made many changes to enhance the value and attractiveness of the property, including new roofing, fresh paint, improved plumbing and wiring, and landscaping. She currently rents part of the single family dwelling to another Denton school teacher, Ann Caldwell.

With its simple design and sturdy, economical construction, the house at 703 Bolivar is both a charming reminder of Denton's past and a functional, comfortable dwelling for the present and future. Its survival in a fast changing century reflects the skill of an unknown builder and the prudence of a succession of owners.

NOTES

- 1 Interview (telephone) with Ruby Matlock Presnell, June 18, 1982.
- 2 C.A. Bridges, History of Denton, Texas (Waco, 1978), p. 75.
- 3 Bridges, p. 143.
- 4 Bridges, p. 178.
- 5 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. M. p. 507.
- 6 Bridges, p. 178.
- 7 Bridges, p. 222.
- 8 Bridges, p. 262.
- 9 Bridges, p. 240.
- 10 Bridges, p. 239.
- 11 Denton County Deed Records, Vol 49, p. 560.
- 12 Bridges, p. 175.
- 13 Denton County Lien Records, Vol. I, p. 110.
- 14 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 73, p. 252.
- 15 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 119, p. 510.
- 16 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 141, p. 546.
- 17 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 142, p. 458.
- 18 Interview (telephone) with Ruby Matlock Presnell, June 18, 1982.
- 19 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 301, p. 226.
- 20 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 330, p. 371.
- 21 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 431, p. 258.
- 22 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 554, p. 56.
- 23 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 708, p. 750.
- 24 Denton County Deed Records, Vol. 849, p. 714.