

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: The Miller House

OWNERS: Kandice Melchor

APPLICANTS: Kandice Melchor

LOCATION: 501 Rouse Street, Houston, Texas, 77020 – Denver Harbor/Port Houston

AGENDA ITEM: C

HPO FILE NO.: HP2021_0202

DATE ACCEPTED: JULY 23, 2021

HAHC HEARING: JULY 2021

SITE INFORMATION: Lots 1, 2 and 3, Block 76, Denver Harbor/Port Houston, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a 1,330 square foot, single-family house on a 9,375 square foot lot. There is a detached frame garage on the property. Designation is requested for the house only.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Protected Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Miller House is a frame, Craftsman-style bungalow built in 1923 in Denver Harbor/Port Houston. The area is located east of the Greater Fifth Ward, seven miles east of downtown and north of the Houston Ship Channel Turning Basin. There is a mix of residential, commercial and industrial buildings in the area, though the Denver Harbor neighborhood is primarily residential.

This part of Houston was sparsely developed through the late 1890s and early 1900s. What is now known as Denver Harbor was historically four separate additions – Denver, Harbor, Harbordale (also known as Harbour Dale) and Liberty Heights. Residential development increased during the mid-1920s. The historic housing stock is typical of the houses found in working-class and middle-class neighborhoods developed in the first decades of the 20th century throughout Houston.

The house at 501 Rouse Street remained in the Miller family for about 96 years. It was built in 1923 by Robert Eugene Miller. Robert was a skilled cabinet maker and his wife Josephine Horton Miller was a stenographer. The house was first located at the intersection of Deepwater and Brownwood streets in Denver Harbor. Josephine Miller had the house moved to its current location at 501 Rouse Street in 1956, ten years after her husband died. After she passed away in 1985, her daughter, Roberta Eugenia Carberry, became the new owner, followed by her brother, Paul Edward Miller, and his wife, Billie Hellums, in 1991. The last Miller-family owner was a great-grandchild of Josephine, Christopher Miller, who owned the house from 2015 to 2019. The current owner, Kandice Melchor, purchased the house in 2019. She has since undertaken a historic rehabilitation project to restore the historic characteristics of the house.

The current owner is seeking a protected landmark designation for the house. Kandice Melchor is passionate about preserving the house and its history. If designated, The Miller House will be the first landmark and protected landmark in the historic Denver Harbor neighborhood. 501 Rouse Street meets criteria 1, 4 and 8 for landmark designation and criteria 1 for protected landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE*DENVER HARBOR/PORT HOUSTON SUBDIVISION*

Denver Harbor/Port Houston is often referred to as Denver Harbor and is a largely Hispanic community seven miles east of downtown and north of the Houston Ship Channel Turning Basin. The boundaries of the neighborhood are Wallisville Road, the Union Pacific Railroad and the Port Terminal Railroad Association's tracks and yard. A mix of residential, commercial and industrial buildings make up the building stock, though the Denver Harbor neighborhood is primarily residential. Lyons Avenue was the major commercial corridor. The construction of I-10/East Freeway split the neighborhood into two sections and resulted in the loss of a significant amount of historic housing stock. Historically, the neighborhood was blue collar and Anglo, with many European immigrants residing and working in the community. The neighborhood is now predominantly Hispanic.

Denver Harbor previously encompassed four separate additions – Denver, Harbor, Harbordale (also known as Harbour Dale) and Liberty Heights. Many of the additions were managed by the Guardian Trust Company. “Denver Harbor” began to be used by residents in the late 1920s to describe the area. A Denver Harbor Civic Club met in 1938 to represent the needs of the various additions.

Residential housing developed rapidly from the 1920s to the 1930s. A *Houston Chronicle* article from 1923 described the increasing demand for lots in the Denver Addition, stating that the neighborhood was the second-largest addition being built at the time. Denver Addition was touted for its ideal location “in the pathway of North Side industrial activity” and had amenities such as “shelled streets, cement walks, fire protection, city water, electric lights, drainage, shade trees” (see Exhibit C). The lots were said to be large and affordable with easy financing available. The Houston Electric Company brought streetcar service between downtown and the Denver Addition in 1923 with the line routed down Lyons Avenue.

Some residents requested the city to annex the neighborhood in order to receive improvements including sanitary sewers and the paving and widening of Lyons Avenue. In 1929, W.W. Jackson, the president of the Lyons Avenue Improvement Club, and a group of citizens from the Denver, Harbor, Liberty Heights, Carter, Burke and Harbor Homesite additions submitted a petition to city council requesting annexation. By late December 1929, city council annexed 3.31 square miles, which included several of these additions.

501 ROUSE STREET HISTORY

The house was built by its first owner, Robert Eugene Miller, at the intersection of Deepwater and Brownwood streets. In the 1923-24 Houston City Directory, this location is described as “Deepwater s.e. corner Cleburne Avenue.” In 1930, the address is “e.s. Deepwater 1 n. Brownwood.” By 1932, the house is listed as 310 Deepwater, and in 1935, the address is 7601 Brownwood Avenue. This address no longer exists as the intersection was Deepwater and Brownwood was eliminated during construction of I-10/East Freeway through the neighborhood.

Josephine Horton Miller moved the house to its current location from within the Denver Harbor addition. Harris County Property Tax Appraisal documents confirm that the house was moved in 1956 from lots 14-15-16, block 3 (see Exhibit C), and has been located at 501 Rouse Street for 64 years.

OWNERSHIP HISTORY

Mr. Robert Eugene “Bob” Miller (b. June 2, 1871, d. August 14, 1946)

Mrs. Josephine Horton Miller (b. November 10, 1889, d. February 21, 1985)

The house at 501 Rouse Street belonged to the Miller family from 1923 to 2019.

Robert Eugene Miller was born on June 2, 1871, in Iowa to Michael Marshall Miller and Lucy Ann Covert Miller. He was a skilled cabinet maker. Robert’s first marriage was to Ada Jean Clark on July 17, 1892, in Kerr, Texas. He had four children from that marriage – Marshall Michael, Nathan Daniel, Hamilton and Charles.

His second marriage was to Josephine Horton, a stenographer, on November 19, 1913, in Houston. They had two children, Paul Edward (b. 1926, d. 1999) and Roberta Eugenia Miller Carberry (b. 1916, d. 2017). Robert died on August 14, 1946, in a car accident, and is buried in Hollywood Cemetery.

Josephine Horton Miller was born on November 10, 1889, to Ralph Edward Horton and Mary Doty Tustin Horton in San Antonio. She was a member of the Denver Presbyterian Church, Northside Chapter #651 Order of the Eastern Star. Josephine died on February 21, 1985 and is buried in Hollywood Cemetery.

After Josephine’s death, her daughter Roberta inherited the house. Roberta Eugenia Miller Carberry was born on June 5, 1916. She married Gerald Alton Carberry in 1942. They had one child, Paul Joseph Carberry. Gerald passed away in 2000. Roberta worked in civil service after World War II, in such departments as the Social Security Administration. Like her mother, she was an active member of the Order of the Eastern Star. Shortly after her mother Josephine died, Roberta moved to Seabrook, where she lived until her death on April 29, 2017. Harris County Appraisal District records list Roberta’s brother, Paul Edward Miller, and his wife, Billie, as the property owners beginning in 1991.

Paul Edward Miller was born on July 20, 1926. He married Billie Geraldine Hellums on July 26, 1947. They had five children – Arlene, David Edward, Mary Ellen Carlisle, Robert E. Miller and John O. Miller. Paul was a dispatcher for the Galveston, Houston & Henderson Railroad, a member of AF&AM Masonic Lodge #1296 and served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II and the Korean War. Paul died on August 29, 1999. Billie owned the house until she passed away in 2015.

Christopher A. Miller, a great grandchild of Josephine and Robert Miller, owned the house from 2015 to 2019. The current owner, Kandice Melchor, purchased the house in 2019.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY*ARCHITECTURAL STYLE**American Craftsman*

The Miller House is a Craftsman-style bungalow. Craftsman design evolved out of the popular Arts and Crafts Movement of the early 1900s, when residential architecture shifted away from the more elaborate Victorian styles. Craftsman design was the prevailing architectural style in the United States between 1900 and 1930. The Craftsman style is often associated with bungalow house forms, which were inspired by architects Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene. The Greene brothers were in practice together in Pasadena, California, from 1893 to 1914. According to Virginia McAlester, author of *A Field Guide to American Houses: Identifying and Understanding America's Domestic Architecture*, the Greenes began designing Craftsman-style houses in 1903. The defining features of Craftsman-style bungalows include low-pitched gabled roofs, wide eaves (usually with exposed brackets), partial or full-width porches supported by tapered square columns or piers, and prominent but simple decorations.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Miller House is a frame, Craftsman-style bungalow with a low-pitched, front-facing, gable-on-hipped roof with open, overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails. There is a single-pane casement window in the peak of the gable. The roof is covered in composition shingles. The house is clad in wood shingle siding and sits on a pier and beam foundation. Latticework screens the foundation.

The front façade faces Rouse Street. It is three bays wide and contains an inset, wraparound porch. The porch roof is supported by tapered wooden columns on square, brick pedestals. There are four columns across the home's front façade. The first and third (left and right) bays are wider than the central, entry bay.

The first (left) bay is recessed from the main façade. A wooden door with a simple wooden frame and a single pane of glass with wooden surround is centered in the bay. A simple wooden ledge molding is above the door. A tapered, wooden column on a brick pedestal is at the left corner of this bay.

The second (middle) bay contains the main entrance, which is centered in the bay. Concrete steps lead to the porch. The front door has a single pane of glass within a wooden frame. A simple wooden ledge molding is above the door. A decorative, Stick-style decorative element is between the two tapered columns that delineate the central bay.

The third (right) bay contains one 1-over-1 sash window with a simple wood frame and surround. There is a tapered wood column on a brick pedestal at the right corner of this bay.

The side of the house facing Hillsboro Street is four bays wide. The first (leftmost) bay contains a plate glass pane window with a thin wood frame and one 1-over-1 sash window with a simple wood frame and surround.

The front-gabled second bay projects from the side of the house. There is single-pane casement window with simple wood frame in the gable. Narrow wood siding under the window delineates the gable from the shingle siding on the body of the house. A square, Craftsman-design window is centered in the bay. The window contains a large, single pane of glass beneath a row of four, square panes of glass. The window has simple wood frame and surround.

The third bay projects forward and has a gabled roof with a single-pane casement window and narrow siding like the second bay. A pair of 1-over-1 sash windows with simple wooden frames and surrounds are centered in the third bay.

The fourth (rightmost) bay contains a section of the wraparound porch supported by three tapered wooden columns on brick pedestals. A single 1-over-1 sash window with a simple wooden frame and surround is centered on the main body of the house between the first and second columns.

RESTORATION HISTORY

Kandice Melchor undertook a restoration project on 501 Rouse Street that is still in progress. As of June 2021, she has restored the porch and columns of the front façade. The columns have also been straightened. The roof has been replaced. New lattice work has been added around the skirting of the house. The interior of the house is largely intact and is also being restored. Five original stained-glass windows, hand-cut and detailed hardwood floors and a door from the Rice Hotel are some of the unique interior features. There is also a small attic workspace that was Robert Eugene Miller's office.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Houston Chronicle Historical Archive (1905-2015). Houston Public Library, Houston and Texas Resources. Accessed March 2020.

HAHC RECOMMENDATION

EXHIBIT A
CURRENT PHOTOS
THE MILLER HOUSE
501 ROUSE STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77020



FRONT FAÇADE FACING ROUSE STREET



SIDE FAÇADE FACING HILLSBORO STREET
PHOTOS BY PRESERVATION HOUSTON

EXHIBIT B
SITE MAP

THE MILLER HOUSE
501 ROUSE STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77020

CITY OF HOUSTON

Houston Archaeological & Historical Commission
Department

Planning and Development

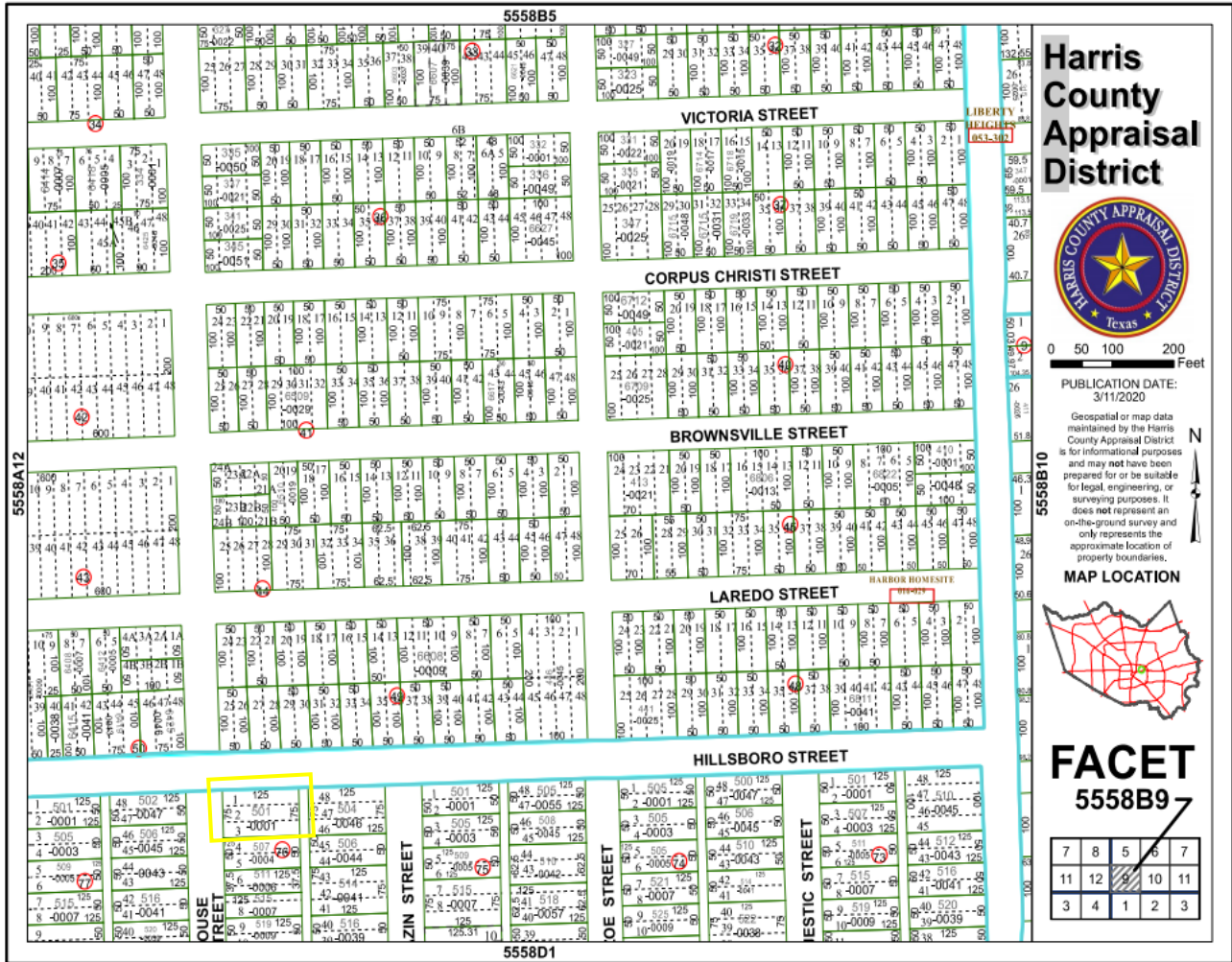


EXHIBIT C
DENVER ADDITION ADVERTISEMENT (1923)
THE MILLER HOUSE
501 ROUSE STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77020

Sunday, September 30, 1923 THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE

*From Now On—
Pay Rent to Yourself*



*—or Pick an Investment
Midst Growing Realty Values*



DENVER ADDITION

IN THE PATHWAY OF NORTH SIDE INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

A FEW TYPICAL HOMES IN THE DENVER ADDITION

Ideal Homesites and Location

Denver is an exclusive restricted residence subdivision, situated about 2 1/2 miles from Main Street, on Lyons Avenue, 1/4 mile north of the Turning Basin. It is 1/2 to 20 minutes ride from Main Street by car line, or 15 to 18 minutes by automobile. Lyons Avenue, a gravelled highway, leads on to brick-paved streets and places DENVER HOMESITES within easy reach of the city proper, yet far enough beyond the congested business and residence districts to offer cleanliness, quiet and an abundance of fresh air.

PRICES—TERMS

Lots 50x125 Feet

As Large as Two Ordinary City Lots

\$375 UP TO \$900

For Inside Lots—Costs Slightly More

A Lot 80x110 Feet in Denver Subdivision Can Be Purchased On Small Cash Payment, Balance Monthly Installments



Lyons Avenue Street Car Line Runs Right Through Denver Addition to Heart of City

The Houston Electric Company, restoring the development in this great northern section of Houston, and in line with their "effluent service" policy, have given this section a new car service, routing Lyons Avenue car lines to the territory, terminating the transfer at Schwartz Street to the shuttle line.

Shelled Streets, Cement Walks, Fire Protection, City Water, Electric Lights, Drainage, Shade Trees

Lot and Building FINANCED With One Contract on Very EASY TERMS

The owners of Denver Addition are in position to finance your purchase of house and lot complete for one price and one contract for deed. Some prefer this plan who are interested in a home.

At present there are a few homes already built and ready for immediate occupancy.

A home will be planned and built on your own ideas and location made in any section of Denver Addition that may please your fancy.

Drive Out or Take the Lyons Avenue Car to Denver Addition Today

It is not wise to delay your visit. An attractive ready offer like this can't last long. If you have no car, we will arrange to have a car come and get you. However, the Lyons Avenue car line runs on through service from Main and Franklin. Ask for transfer to Lyons Avenue.

If you drive out, turn to the right at north end of viaduct and follow street car line that runs out paved street. This will take you through center of addition.



ABOVE, TYPICAL DENVER ADDITION HOME

Fortune Follows in the Trend of Industrial Development

Part development on north side of the Turning Basin: New Trackage, Munitions Plant, Proposed Bridge across bayou above and near Turning Basin, enlarged Englewood Yards and proposed Railroad Shops adjoining Denver Addition are only a few examples of industrial development that will most surely enhance realty values in Denver Addition.

AGENTS ON THE GROUND

SOURCE: HOUSTON CHRONICLE DIGITAL ARCHIVES

EXHIBIT D
BUILDING ASSESSMENT RECORD
THE MILLER HOUSE
501 ROUSE STREET, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77020

CITY OF HOUSTON

Houston Archaeological & Historical Commission
Department

Planning and Development

Harris County
BUILDING ASSESSMENT 18-35550
Houston, Texas

Vol. 12 Page 78 Permit No. _____
Inspector _____
Date 12-4-56 19____

Owner _____
No. _____ Street _____
Survey or Addition Denver
Abst. _____ Lot or Tr. 1-2-3 Blk. 76
Type _____ Residential _____ Commercial _____
Industrial _____ Pre-Fab. _____

Exterior: PermaStone — Rock — Brick Veneer — Frame — Stucco — Concrete Tile — Claytile — Cedar Shakes — Composition — Shingle — Redwood.
Interior: Sheetrock — Plastered — Paneled — Cellotex — Plywood — None.
Floors: Oak — Plywood — Cement — Tile — Pine — Azrock — Higgins — Terrazzo — None.
Roofing: Shingle — Asbestos — Terra-Cotta — Tile — Composition — Slate — Copper — C-Iron, Tar and Gravel.
Foundation: Concrete Slab — Piers — Blocks, Beams — Brick — Piers-Wood.
Plumbing: 1 Tile—2 Tile—3 Tile—Other: None.
Climatizers: Dual. Temp. Ac—Tons, Attic Ventilation—Central Heat Unit—Gas Stoves—None.
Electrical Equipment: Part—All—Sprinklers.
Condition: New — Good — Fair — Poor — Obsolete.

Permit Val. _____
Year Built _____

Remarks: house moved from
lots 14-15-16 blk 3
Nashville

Moved here _____ From _____
No. Sq. Ft. _____ Per Sq. Ft. _____
No. Sq. Ft. _____ Per Sq. Ft. _____
1957 new Assessed Value of Building 240
Miller, Mrs Josephine

SOURCE: HARRIS COUNTY ARCHIVES