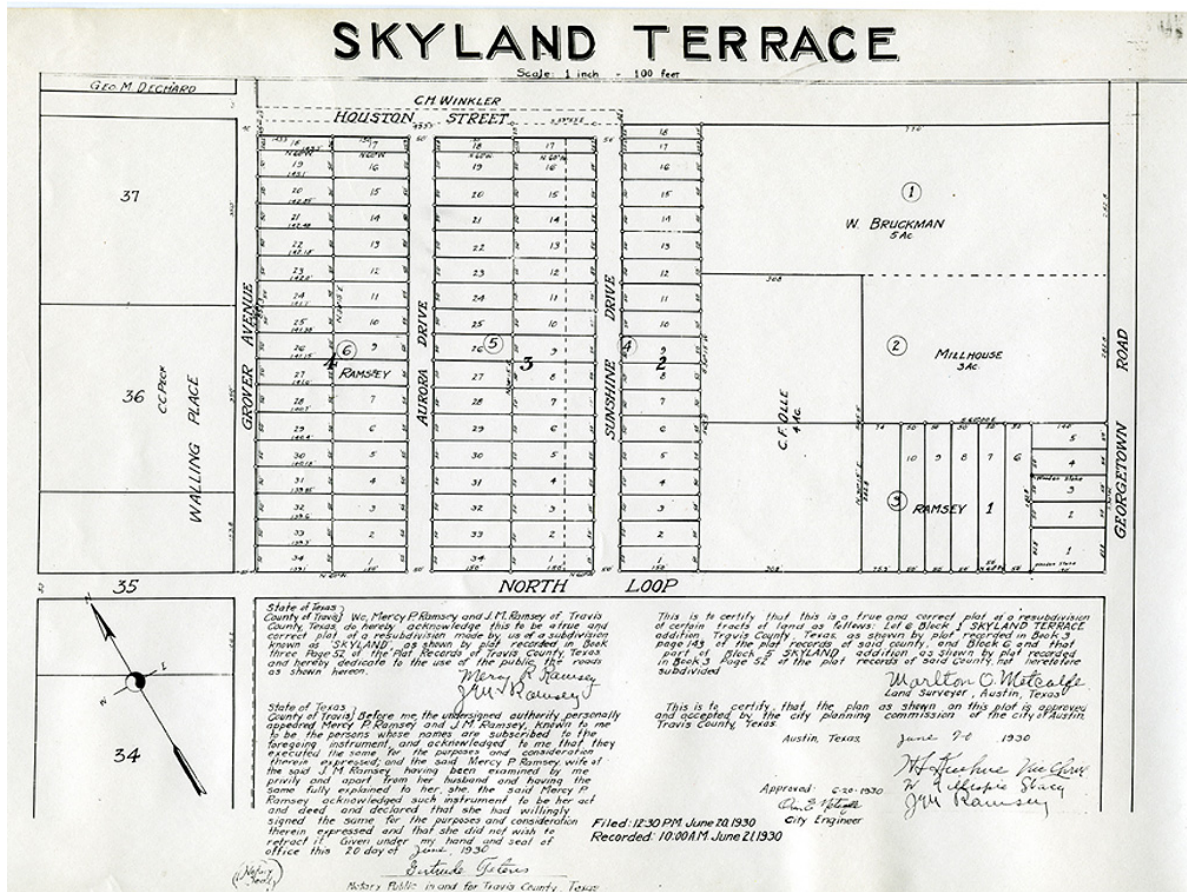


# The History of Our House at 5409 Aurora Drive, Austin, Texas

by Charlotte Carl-Mitchell

1940s



The map of Skyland Terrace, the subdivision being developed by JM and Mercy Ramsey.



Aurora Drive in 1941



STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF TRAVIS

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS: That Mercy P. Ramsey, joined by her husband, J. M. Ramsey of Travis County, Texas, for and in consideration of \$10.00 (ten dollars) cash in hand paid and other valuable considerations fully paid by E. M. Carl, Jr. and Wife Mercy R. Carl, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged.

HAVE BARGAINED, GRANTED, SOLD, AND CONVEYED, and by these presents do BARGAIN, GRANT, SELL, AND CONVEY unto the said E. M. Carl, Jr. and Wife Mercy R. Carl a certain tract or parcel of land described as follows:

Lots 20 and 21, Block 3 in Skyland Terrace, an addition in the City of Austin, Texas, as shown by plat recorded in Book 3, Page 170, of the plat records of Travis County, Texas.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above described premises together with all and singular the rights and appurtenances thereto in any wise belonging unto the said E. M. Carl, Jr. and Wife Mercy R. Carl, their heirs and assigns forever. And we do bind ourselves, our heirs, executors, and administrators to WARRANT AND FOREVER DEFEND the said premises unto the said E. M. Carl, Jr. and Wife Mercy R. Carl, their heirs and assigns against any persons whomsoever lawfully claiming or to claim the same or any part thereof.

PROVIDED, HOWEVER, and it is hereby expressly agreed on the part of the purchasers of the above described tract for their heirs, assigns, and legal representatives that:

(A) A reservation is hereby made of an easement of five feet (5 feet) off the rear or East end of said lots for the purpose of placing, laying, or installing and maintaining electric light poles and lines, water pipes, gas pipes, sewer pipes, or other public utilities.

(B) Said property or premises shall never be sold to a negro or any person of African descent.

(C) Nor shall same ever be used for conducting any mercantile business, nor for a church building, nor for any other purpose except that of a residence unless there first be obtained the written consent of all owners of lots or premises within this addition within a radius of two hundred feet (200) feet of the lots or premises herein conveyed.

(D) No house or residence shall be built, barns, garages, and outhouses excepted, consisting of less than five (5) rooms exclusive of halls, bath rooms, and porches, and said house shall be of double wall frame construction or better.

AND THAT in case of the violation of any of the above conditions or covenants by the said purchasers, their heirs, assigns, or legal representatives, this deed shall be null and void and said lot or parcel of land shall revert to the grantors herein;

PROVIDED, HOWEVER, that should any person, firm, or corporation take, own, or hold any deed of trust or lien of any kind against the property conveyed by this deed, and the said vendee or their heirs, assigns, or legal representatives should ignore any of said conditions or covenants so that this deed might be declared null and void and the property revert to the grantor herein, said lien shall not be affected by such forfeiture.

WITNESS OUR HANDS at Austin, Texas, this 12<sup>th</sup> day of June A. D. 1941.



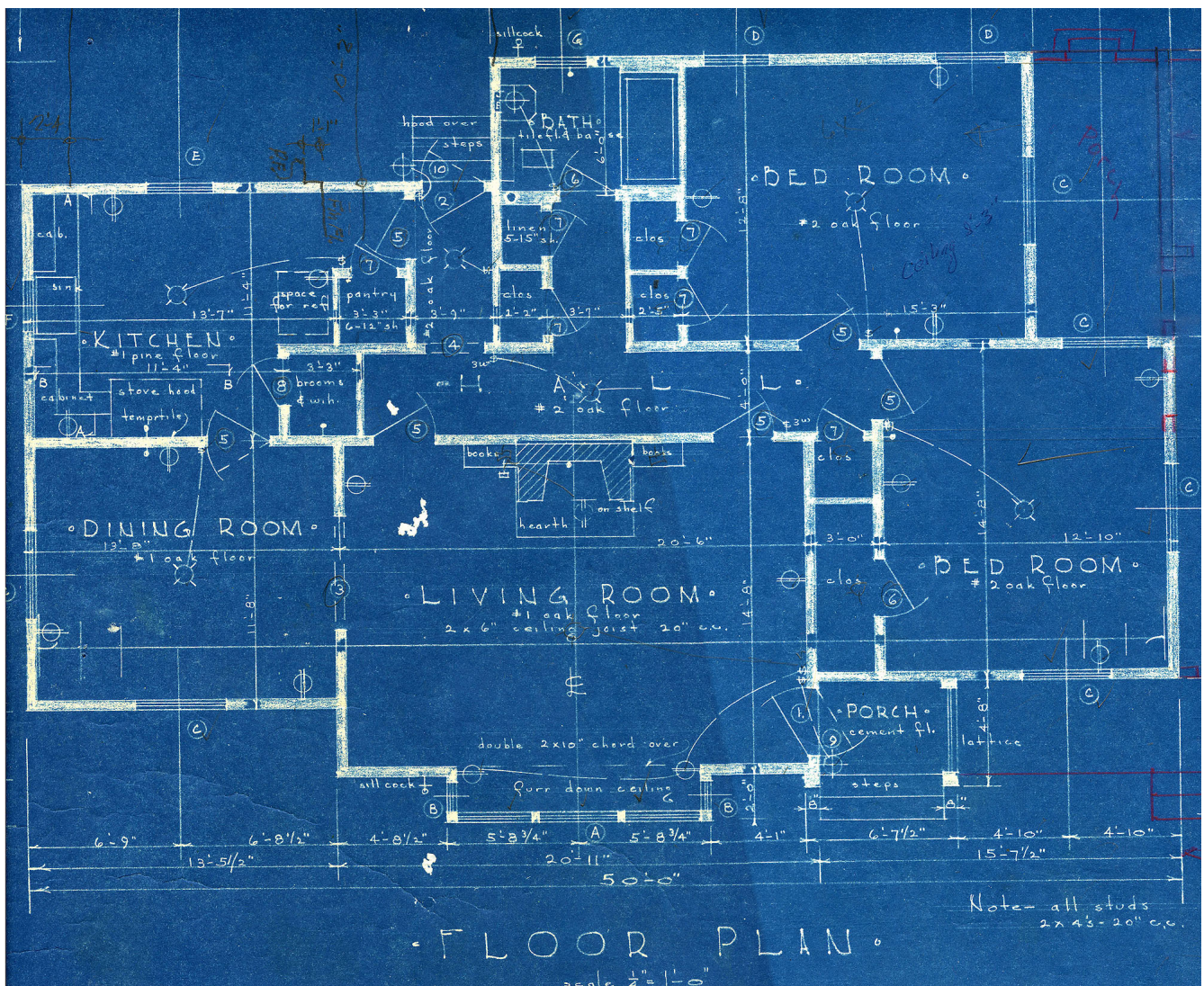
*Mercy P. Ramsey.*  
*J. M. Ramsey*

The deed to lots 20 and 21, block 3 given to Ed and Mercy Ramsey Carl by Mercy and JM Ramsey on June 2, 1941 for \$10. One of the stipulations was that the property would never be sold to a negro or someone of African descent, This was a common part of deeds in those racist days.





Mercy with Grandma Ramsey, left and with Julian and Charlie Cate, right, in front of the house under construction.



The floor-plan



THE STATE OF TEXAS }  
County of Travis } KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That the undersigned, of said County and State, for and in consideration of the delivery to us by Swann-Schulle Furniture Company of Austin, in said County, and the sale on credit on installment plan, of the following personal property:

14151-3 Table	\$ 54.50
14151-0 Buffet	\$ 43.50
16151 China closet	\$ 59.00
14151-85 set of chairs	\$ 64.00
(22 <sup>20</sup> on balance 1948 net)	\$ 222.00

do hereby sell and convey to said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company all our right, title and interest in and to said above described property, to have and to hold unto said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company, or its assigns, forever, hereby warranting the title thereto against any lawful claim made by, through or under us. The undersigned further agrees that all goods purchased by us from Swann-Schulle Furniture Company after this date and not mentioned in this contract, shall be subject to the above agreement.

It is further agreed and understood that acceptance of the initial payment and signatures of the purchasers or agents of the purchasers on this instrument does not make this transaction final as Swann-Schulle Furniture Co. reserves the right to refund initial payments and reject orders when credit ratings are procured after the execution of this instrument.

This conveyance, however, is intended as a mortgage on said personal property to secure the payment of the purchase price of said property this day sold to the undersigned by said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company, as evidenced by the following promissory note:

\$ 222.00 Austin, Texas, 9-30, 1941

The undersigned having this day bought and received the said property from said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company and having this day paid the sum of \$ 24.00 as a first payment thereon, hereby promise to pay to the order of said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company at its office in Austin, Texas, One Hundred Twenty Eight Dollars (\$ 128.00) being the balance of the purchase price of said property in regular payments of \$ 54.00

dollars on the 5th day of each successive month thereafter, with interest at the rate of 10% after the maturity of each unpaid installment. The undersigned further agree that in the event any installment herein shall fail to be paid at maturity, then in that event, the entire note shall become due and payable at the option of said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company, and if this note shall be placed in the hands of an attorney for collection, or if collected through the probate court, then a reasonable fee shall be paid by the undersigned thereon as attorney's fees.

(add 6% to balance  
9-30-42)  
X M. C. M. Carl, Jr.  
Purchasers.

If this note shall be paid in full, then this mortgage shall become null and void, otherwise to remain in full force and effect. The undersigned further agree not to remove said property from the address to which it was delivered by said Swann-

Schulle Furniture Company at the time of said sale to the undersigned, to-wit: 5409 Aurora Drive Street,

Austin Texas, without the written consent of said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company, and agree at any time to notify said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company of the location of said property while under said mortgage, and not to sell or dispose of, or hide or conceal the same.

If any of said installments are unpaid at maturity, then said Swann-Schulle Furniture Company may seize the said property for its debt, and may take possession thereof with or without process of law, and may sell the same at either public or private sale to satisfy said debt.

Witness my hand this the 30th day of September, 1941.

Witnesses:  
X M. C. M. Carl, Jr.  
Purchasers.

The receipt for the purchase of a table, buffet, china closet and set of chairs for a total of \$222.00. The first payment was for \$24. The cost may sound low but when a monthly salary was \$100, \$54.50 for a table was half a month's salary. Ed was making \$150 a month as a civil engineer in the Texas Highway Dept and Mercy \$100 a month as a teacher.





It was a two bedroom, one bath home with a detached garage and cost \$4,008.62 to build.



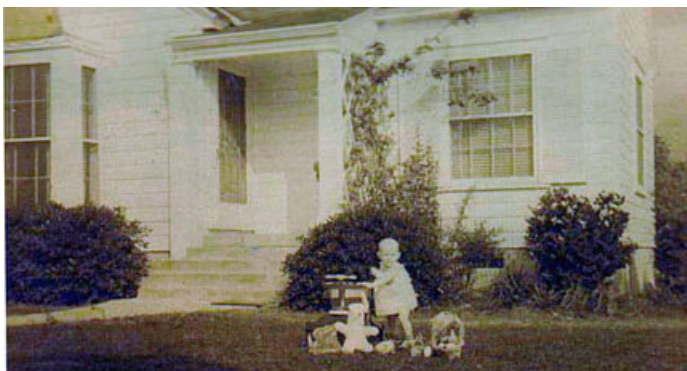




The earliest photos I've found that show the inside of the house are from August 1944. Above left shows the fireplace with a screen and the rug, and Mercy holding infant Madeline. The photo on the right is from Christmas 1944 and shows the rug, the secretary cabinet and its accompanying chair.



The photo above left is also from Christmas 1944 and shows the couch and wallpaper along with Madeline and her grandparents Ramsey. Above right, Ed on the back porch in the snow. The photo shows the porch before the kitchen was extended. The wall to the left of the door was the bathroom, but after the kitchen was extended it went beyond the bathroom and had walls of windows. The photo of the rear of the entire house and the floor-plan on the previous pages show more clearly how the back originally looked.



The photo on the left, from Madeline's first birthday in July 1945 shows the landscaping around the house. The photo on the right from 1946 is the earliest photo that shows the fence in the backyard.





The 1948 Easter picture on the left shows how the fence attached to the house. The 1948 snow picture shows the fence from the front. The Christmas 1948 photo with Murray and Alice shows a new couch.

## 1950s



These two pictures from 1950, the year I arrived, show the new carpets on the floor and the heater, affectionately known as the diaper dryer, that was the heat source for the living and dining room before the wall unit was installed. Our set of encyclopedias are in the shelves on the left in the picture on the right. Also shown is the rocker that I was told had belonged to Ed's grandmother Mary Carl.



Above left, our original kitchen in 1951. I used to think the middle photo from 1950 was taken at Grandma Ramsey's or Mr. Carl's but now I realize it shows our kitchen before the expansion. I recognize the refrigerator and the table but I didn't recognize the room layout. It turns out, from the floor-plan, that there was a door off the kitchen that led to a hall that went to the back door. This picture shows that sliver of door just to the left of the frig. It also shows how small the kitchen was. Grandma was sitting in the same place in both photos. The photo on the right shows me in my crib in the kitchen next to the stove and up against the swinging door to the dining room.





The photo on the left from Thanksgiving 1950 shows the Rays and the Pyburns at our table and the china cabinet in the left corner. The center photo, from Grandma's birthday in Nov 1951, shows the other part of the dining room with a painting. The picture on the right from Mercy and Ed's 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1951 shows the other side of the dining room with the painting above the buffet.



The photo above left shows me along with the flowery couch and Mother's sewing machine in the living room. Just barely visible in the upper left corner is the portrait of Madeline at one year. The photo on the right is also from the June 1951 anniversary and shows the portraits, Catherine at one, Madeline at five in her gown and on the right at one year. It looks like the cedar chest was beside the sewing machine.

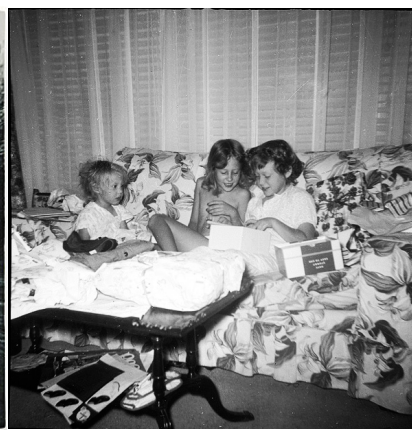


The 1951 photo on the left shows the dining room buffet and a better view of the encyclopedias. But the photos center and right, from Christmas 1951, show an upright piano on that wall.





The left photo from 1951, with M & C topless!, shows the mantle and one of the built in book shelves that were on either side of the fireplace. The center photo shows the painting above the mantle as well as Catherine, Madeline and Patty in dress-up. The photo above right has a development date of Feb 1952. It shows me playing with the phone in Mother and Daddy's bedroom with the spindle bed that eventually became Madeline and Catherine's beds.

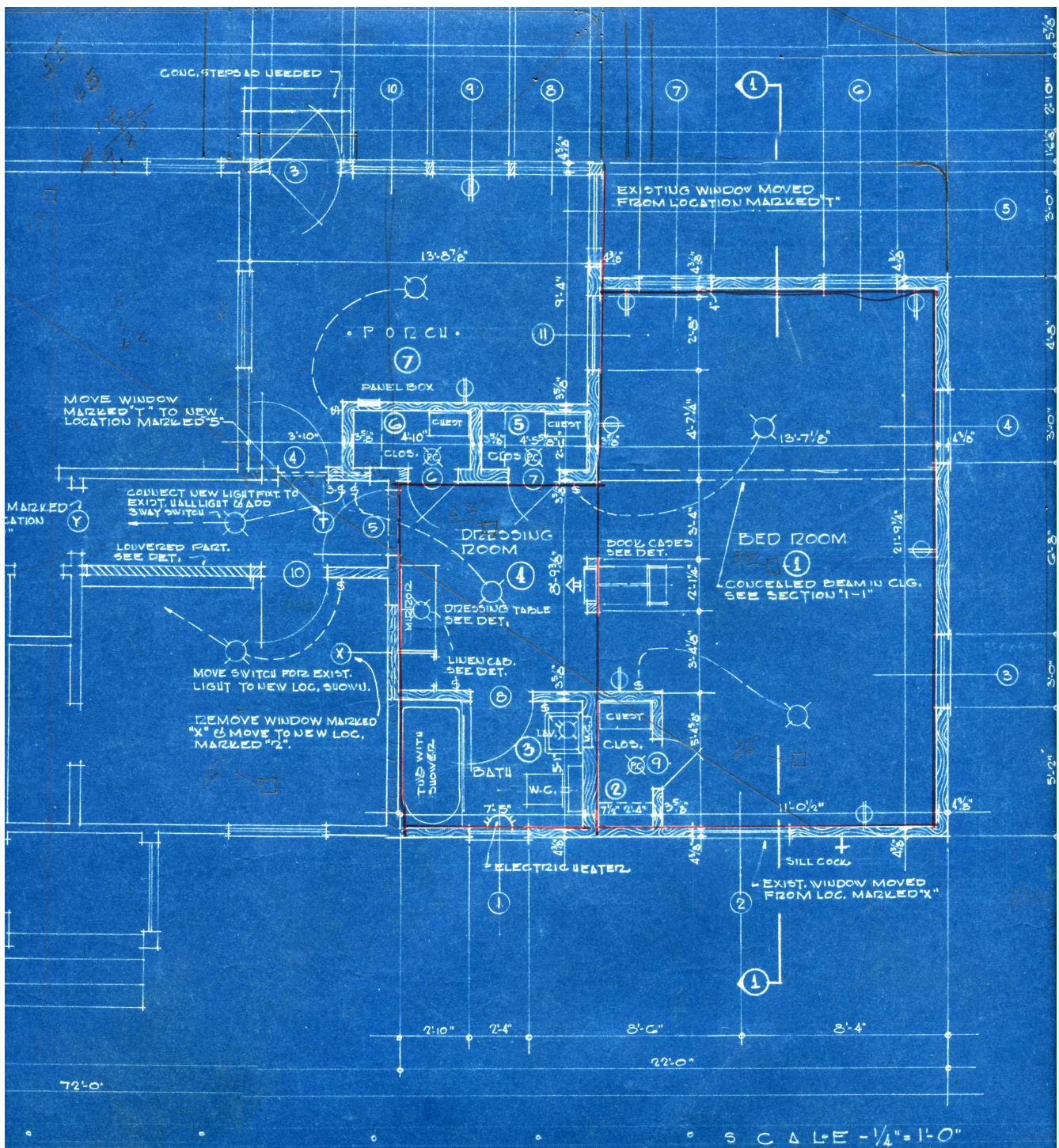


The photo above left from May 1952 shows our slide and the wooden swing set. Catherine's birthday picture, with M being topless again, shows what looks like a new cover on the couch and the coffee table. The photo on the right, from Grandma Ramsey's Nov birthday celebration in 1952, shows the china cabinet and new drapes.



In 1953, the additions to the house were made. This floor-plan shows the new bedroom, bath and closets that would eventually be called the dormitory. I wish we could each have had a room of our own but my memory was that Daddy thought if something happened to him, Mother could rent out the space as a separate apartment. That was kind of him but left me always wanting a room of my own.





The floor-plan for the bedroom addition.









Two photos from 1953 show the closet that held our water heater, brooms and old newspapers, probably not a safe combination. The picture of Catherine shows the wallpaper and the one of me shows the proximity of the refrigerator. (I've always thought this was a cute picture of me with Harry Wilder. I was an ugly baby and toddler but got cuter as I got older!) The photo of me with the cat shows that the painting over the mantle had been replaced with the gold framed mirror.



The photos from Catherine's birthday in 1953 show that we'd gotten central heating put in the wall in place of the diaper dryer and that oddly the secretary had been moved to the dining room along with the china cabinet making movement a bit tight. The 1953 Christmas photo clearly shows the upright piano.



In the 1954 photo above left, the finished new addition still has stickers on the windows and no porch. And there is a railing on the roof. Was that meant to surround a viewing platform or was it fenced just for show? The middle picture shows that we only had wooden steps for the door until the concrete porch was built. The photo on the right shows more clearly the wooden swing set. In a letter Mercy wrote her sisters in June 1954 she said she'd gotten a new clothesline, 300 feet long. The clothesline was located to the left of the swing set in the southeast part of the yard.

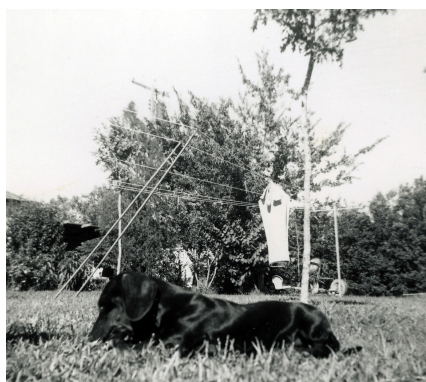




The fence was covered with flowers in 1954, up against the new addition. We had a wooden porch off the kitchen, the concrete one having been removed and the larger concrete one not yet built. The Easter 1954 picture with Madeline, Catherine and Marsha Ray shows how the kitchen addition now extended beyond the bathroom.



The photo above left from Grandma's Nov birthday celebration in 1954 shows the wall heater on the living room side and that we still had the flowery couch and upright piano. But by Christmas 1954 we had new living room furniture and our first TV! The portraits on the wall had been reordered. Madeline's one year was still on the right, but Catherine's had been moved to the middle where Madeline's recital photo had been. My one year portrait might have been on the left.



The photo on the left from Madeline's birthday in 1955 shows a sliver of the playhouse. This is the earliest photo I've seen that shows it. It might have been built of leftover material from the addition or purchased already made. The picture also shows our two dogs, Strudel the dachshund and another I don't remember. The middle picture shows our new puppy, Strudel with the clothesline in the background. On the line is the pants frame that Mother used to stretch Daddy's slacks to dry and not need to be ironed. Catherine's 1955 birthday picture shows the painting and the balance and silver tray on the buffet.





The photo above left from my birthday in Aug 1956 shows the kitchen extension, the kitchen table and the diaper dryer that was relocated from the living room. The middle picture from Catherine's Oct birthday shows that Madeline's recital portrait was still on the wall. My one year portrait must be behind Madeline's head. A white kitchen chair is also visible. My memory was that our chairs were red. The photo on the right has a development date of Mar 1957 but could have been taken in late 1956. I guess I was using the bed in the middle bedroom while Madeline and Catherine were in the 'dorm.'



In the background of the 1957 picture of me and Strudel you can see a hobby horse next to the slide and another view of the playhouse. A going away party for the Kratts show the kitchen windows still don't have curtains. Catherine's 1957 birthday picture shows the 'dorm' with our three beds lined up on the east wall, mine being a new one, M&C's were Mother & Daddy's. The flowery curtains and matching bedspreads were pink, as I recall. I had moved from the middle bedroom.



The backyard in the snow also shows that the concrete porch had replaced the wooden one outside the kitchen by the winter of 1957-58. The middle picture from 1958 shows the sewing machine had been moved to the kitchen where it stayed. The picture from my birthday in 1958 shows the round porch.



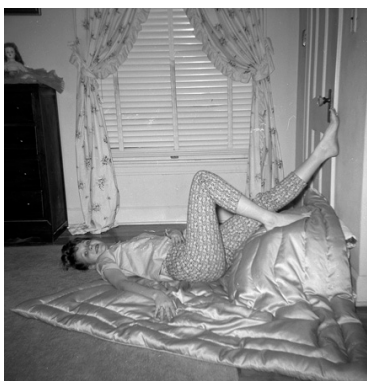


The photo on the left shows that by 1958 we had the whirligig. The other two pictures from my birthday in Aug 1959 show that our TV was still on the south wall and my one year portrait was indeed next to Catherine's on that wall. The photo above right shows that by 1959 a washing machine had taken the place of the diaper dryer in the kitchen and the table was elliptical not rectangular.

## 1960s



Madeline had her friends over and they vamped it up. The development date was Mar 1960. You can see that the portraits had been moved from the living room and the couch moved to the south wall where the TV had been and a slipcover put on it. The silly middle picture shows the middle bedroom door with the cedar chest on the right. The picture of April and Madeline shows the door from the middle room to the 'dorm' behind them with M&C's closets and the door to the den on the left.



The photo above left shows the southeast part of the dorm with Madeline and Catherine's recital portraits on the west wall. The middle photo shows the rest of the room with the big west window. Sharon Paulson has her foot by my closet door. The photo on the right of Madeline has a different development date and must have been taken in the bathroom hall with the door to the bathroom behind her and the doors to the linen closet and dirty clothes hamper closet counter-clockwise from that.





The photo above left shows more of the porch and the back door (along with Mother and our car). The other photos are from my birthday in Aug 1960. The middle one shows the inside of the den with its big window and linoleum flooring. The other shows more of our dorm. The sliver of frame in the upper right is probably our one year old portraits that had been moved there.



The photos from Christmas 1960 show our new piano on the south wall and a painting where our portraits had been. The TV was moved to the west wall. The photos above left and right show the door to the hall and beyond it the door to Mother and Daddy's room. The middle bedroom was down the hall to the right and the dorm beyond that.



The cute photo of Strudel in 1961 shows him on one of the couches in the kitchen with the record player behind it. There were now valences and venetian blinds on the windows. The indent in the wall on the left eventually had a dishwasher. (It would be considered abuse now that Strudel was chained up not only outside but inside too but animals were treated more harshly back then.) The middle picture from Grandma Ramsey's birthday celebration in Nov 1961 shows that the couch was now back in the bay window on the west side of the house. The photo above right shows the pull-down chain for the attic stair that was in the hallway. (And is a nice picture of Mother on the violin and Catherine on piano as part of Grandma's birthday gathering.)





The photo above left from Christmas 1961 shows that the secretary had moved to its permanent location in the living room from its odd placement in the dining room. The middle picture from my birthday in 1962 shows our new umbrella table. The nice color photo on the right from Christmas 1962 shows our new burgundy couch.



In the Christmas 1962 picture of Billy and Madeline you can see the TV cabinet open. The snow picture from the winter of 1962-63 shows the evaporative cooler we got for the dormitory. It helped cool but because of Austin humidity, it led to mold growing on things so we had to get rid of it and eventually replace it with an air conditioner. The photo on the right shows that by July 1964, in time for Madeline and Billy's wedding, we had gotten new furniture in the living room.



The photo above left from after the wedding on July 4, 1964 shows Catherine, Aunt Helen, our maid, Ruby Ward and Grandma Ramsey in the kitchen. I think that's the only photo I've seen of Ruby sitting with us like a family member. For Mother and Daddy's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in June 1965 we sisters gave them the portrait of us made from the University Studios ad for the 1961 McCallum yearbook. We three sisters tried on Mother's wedding dress. The portrait stayed over the piano until we sold the house after Mother's death in 1996. The photo above right from Christmas 1966 shows more of the bedroom.





This photo from Christmas 1967 shows that the clock was not yet there but does show the hall and the window in Mother and Daddy's room.

## 1970s



The snow scene from 1972 shows the back porches without railing or awning. Middle, the kitchen in 1974. The photo on the right, after Uncle Murray Ramsey's funeral in 1975, shows the cousins and the sisters' one year old portraits on the south wall.



The cute picture of Holly on the phone in 1975 shows the phone nook built into the wall in the main hall. The other pictures from a Dalferes visit in March 1976 shows the kitchen, wall phone and the doors off the short hall.





Left, the picture shows the swing and whirligig in the back yard during a visit from the Dalfereses in 1976.

Right, Christmas 1976, the first picture that includes the clock. Mother inherited it from Grandma Ramsey and had it repaired. I now have it.



Left, another view of the back yard in 1977. Middle, stair-step kids and a view of the dormitory in 1978. Right, a better view of the clock in 1978.

## 1980s



Left, Holly and Rusty with Ed on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1979 showing the knick knacks behind them and the comfy green recliner. Middle, the grandkids bunking on the floor during a visit for Ed & Mercy's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1980 shows the toys and crib around the wall. Holly shows off her new dress next to the water heater closet in 1982.



Left, the pantry is visible in this photo celebrating Holly's birthday in 1982. Center and right, views of the kitchen and living room in 1983.

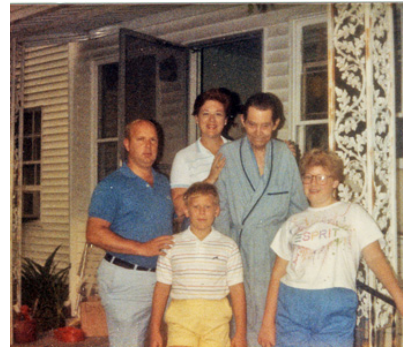




Left, another view of the living room in 1983.

Right, a view in 1984 of the back porch awning and the siding that had been put on the house.

Dadders died in 1987. Not many changes happened to the house after that.



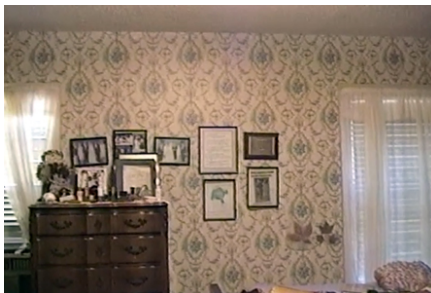
## 1990s



Photos from 1996. The images below are screen grabs from a video I made that year documenting Neon's last day at 5409 and the way the house looked at that time.

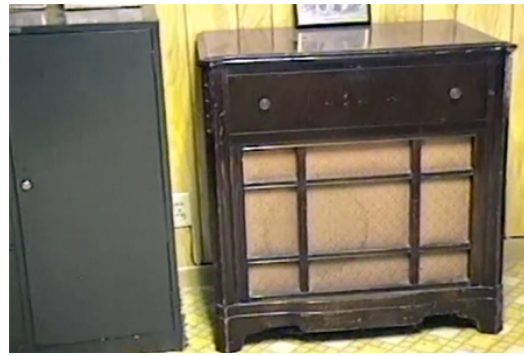


Left, a gathering of neighbors, Mrs. Clark, Bertha's sisters and Bertha, to say goodbye. The Growing Year montages in the hall.



Neon and Dadders' bedroom





Dadders' study and den with family photos and the victrola

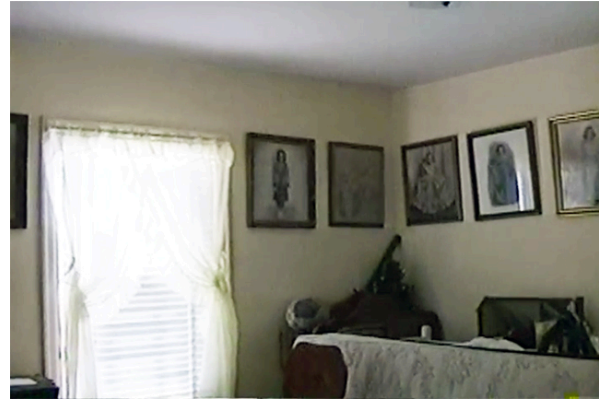


The middle bedroom with Neon's old bed, vanity (with me in mirror) and bureau



The hall to the 'dormitory' and the vanity area outside the bathroom





We sisters sold the house in 1996 after Neon's death. It went through other owners after that. The photos below were posted on Zillow and probably show the house when it was for sale in **2009 and 2010.**

There were two sets of photos that showed the rooms with slightly different looks from the two years.







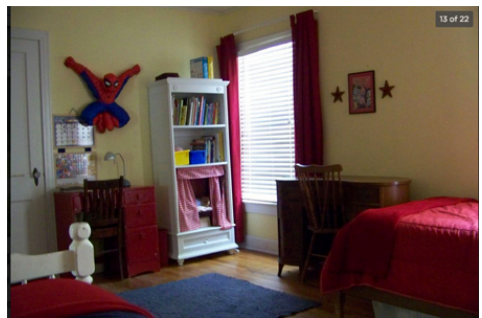
4 of 22



21 of 22



16 of 22



13 of 22



