

# **Rosedale Rambles**

**1993 through 1999**

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# 1993 ROSEDALE RAMBLE

Map and notes prepared by Karen Collins and Forrest Preece for the Rosedale Neighborhood Association.

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## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ROSEDALE NEIGHBORHOOD

Most of the Rosedale neighborhood was in a league of land granted by the Republic of Texas to George Spier in 1838. But Spier, a hog-farmer near La Grange, sold his land immediately. One fourth (1,237 acres) of the Spier league was purchased by Gideon White, and the White family built a log house near Seiders Springs in 1839 or 1840. When Gideon White was killed by Indians in 1842 along Shoal Creek, his daughters inherited his land. Three daughters, Louisa Seiders, Cornelia Johnson, and Elizabeth Moore, each had a homestead and ranching operation in the Rosedale area until the Civil War period.

The Hancock families, George and John, owned much of Rosedale during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when a large part of the neighborhood was dairy land.

Shortly after 1900, Ramsey Nursery purchased a large tract for their nursery stock. What was not planted in nursery stock was still dairyland (McGuire, Jung, Thiele, Shipperse, and Wallis dairies). Only a few houses existed in the Rosedale area until 1900. Then several homes were built along Alice Avenue (now Medical Parkway) and side streets south of 40<sup>th</sup> Street. The Rosedale Subdivision, initiated in 1931 by three Ramsey sisters and their husbands, was the first major development in northwest Austin.

**1. Ramsey Park** – The city dedicated the park in 1934. Earlier, this area was owned by Ramsey Nursery and was the location of the caretaker's house and China Row, a long double row of chinaberry trees extending south. China Row was a favorite strolling path for early residents. Ripe chinaberries fermented, and were eaten by birds who became so drunk that they allowed people to pet them. Numerous china berry trees left over from nursery stock were transplanted to other parks. The swimming pool was added about 1940.

**2. 4101 Medical Parkway (Alice Avenue)** – The small rock building in front was probably built about 1848 by Cornelia and Enoch Johnson. It was purchased by George Hancock (using Abner Cook as a go-between) in 1858. It is now a dentist office.

**3. 1105 West 40<sup>th</sup> Street** – Probably built about the turn of the century by the J.H. Harrison family, the house faced east and sat directly behind their grocery store. The J.D. Costley family took over the store and probably the house from about 1917 to about 1924. In 1937, the house was purchased by Arley Peterson (who, with his brother, Alvin, ran the Peterson grocery store across 40<sup>th</sup> Street) and was turned to face north. The Peterson family lived here until 1971. The interior of this house was somewhat damaged by a fire in 1992.

**4. 1208 West 39<sup>th</sup> Street** – Built about 1893 for Bob Lawson, this house was home to the Lawson's cousins, the L.F. George family from 1895 to 1982. Mrs. Cassie George, widowed

with five children (two sets of twin boys and one girl) had a seriously disabled arm. The house has a well on the front porch.

**5. Austin State Hospital** – Formerly called the Lunatic Asylum, the mail building was built in 1857 and the hospital provided employment for many early Rosedale residents; for example, the Seiders family sold meat to the hospital and Arthur Seiders landscaped the grounds in the 1890s creating several small lakes to handle a drainage problem.

**6. West side of Shoal Creek between 38<sup>th</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Streets** – Here stands a historical marker for the demolished Gideon White log house and still active Seiders Springs. Gideon White owned 1,237 acres covering much of present-day Rosedale; he was killed by Indians along Shoal Creek in 1842. His daughters, Louisa Seiders, Cornelia Johnson, and Elizabeth Moore inherited and lived on most of the area we call Rosedale, each of them having a log or rock home with several outbuildings.

**7. 4304 Ramsey** – This recent remodeling received the Austin Board of Realtors Community Revitalization Award in 1991 and the Xeriscape Award in 1992.

**8. 4012 Rosedale** – This house was built in the early 1920s on 28<sup>th</sup> Street between Guadalupe and Nueces and was moved to Rosedale in 1964.

**9. 4408 Medical Parkway (Alice Avenue)** - Built about 1932, this two story structure housed the Seth Grocery Store below and family living quarters above.

**10. 4115 Rosedale** – This was the first house built in the Rosedale Subdivision (a housing addition initiated by three Ramsey sisters and their husbands from land inherited from the old Ramsey Nursery). This first house was built by Forrest Preece, his father J.S. and brother Calvin, in January, 1932, from plans in a magazine. Unfortunately, the plans had a 12” mistake, and the Preeces had to adjust the framing on the spot. The piers of their house are cedar posts. The upstairs room was added in the 1970s.

**11. 1407 West 40<sup>th</sup> Street** – This house was built by Eugene McGuire, son of the McGuire Dairy owners, before 1926. It was sold out of the McGuire family in the late 1980s.

**12. 1502 West 40<sup>th</sup> Street** – The west one-story portion of this house was built between 1902 and 1909 in the area of Ramsey Park for the caretaker of Ramsey nursery fields. It was moved to 40<sup>th</sup> Street in the 1930s and added onto in the 1970s.

**13. 1707 West 41<sup>st</sup> Street** – This house was built on the southeast corner of 45<sup>th</sup> Street and Burnet Road in the early 1920s for Joseph and Laura E. Krebs. Joseph was blind and taught broom-making at the Blind School. The house was moved to its present location when the filling station was built. It has recently been completely remodeled.

**14. 4312 Ramsey** – The “Castle” was built in 1935 or 1936 by A.B. Conlisk as his home though he only lived here a short time. The house has round corners and a bath halfway up the stairs. It was dubbed Castle Carney Crow by one of the Rosedale Subdivision developers, Mrs. Winnie Ramsey Nitschke. Conlisk built several notable hotels, churches, and schools elsewhere, but in Austin he is especially remembered for the front of the University of Texas Music Building. Conlisk and his son, “Speedy” Conlisk, built many homes in Rosedale, most of them with rock.

**15. 4010 and 4012 Lewis Lane** – The lush ground cover on these two yards is Texas native Straggler Daisy, a common well-adapted plant in this area.

**16. 1703 West 44<sup>th</sup> Street** – The jujube trees in the front yard are remnants of Ramsey nursery stock. About the turn of the century, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials asked F.T. Ramsey to try to grow seeds from China and find a commercial use for the fruit. He successfully grew and sold jujube trees but never figured out an economical use for the fruit, which tastes like a cross between an apple and a date (pronounced Ju ju bee). There is also a jujube tree and numerous sprouts at 4900 Lynnwood.

**17. Texas School for the Blind** – The school, opened in 1857 and temporarily housed in what is now called Little Campus, was moved in 1917 to permanent quarters on 45<sup>th</sup> Street between Burnet Road and Lamar. The only building with its original 1917 appearance is on the southwest corner. The exterior of other 1917 buildings was “updated” with stucco. Many Rosedale residents have worked at the school, and school students relax in Ramsey Park.

**18. 4300 block Medical Parkway (Alice Avenue)** - Houses on the west side were built in the 1920s. The brick one was built about 1929 as home for the Derr family and the frame one next door, built about 1921, contained blind Mr. Derr’s broom factory. Mr. Derr taught physical education at the Blind School while his wife taught Latin and English at Austin High School.

**19. 4506 and 4508 Burnet Road** – The south section of this commercial building was built for the Rosedale Cleaners who occupied this location for many years. The second section was built for a grocery store (Stark’s, Model, Wood’s, and Warren’s). The building was built about 1939. It is now the home of Upper Crust Bakery.

**20. 4704 Burnet Road** – Built in 1938-1939 by Forrest, J.S. and Calvin Preece for Hilliare Nitschke, this building was for many years a drugstore (Kirk’s, Thompson’s, and for many years, Beck’s) complete with soda fountain. It was enlarged in 1950, and neighborhood children were allowed to sit on the floor and read the comic books. The building is now occupied by D&R TV Service.

**21. 4636 Burnet Road** – This building was built about 1940 as a grocery store (first Brown’s and by 1944, Plemon’s Rosedale Grocery, and later Naumann’s Grocery).

**22. Rosedale Elementary School, 2117 West 49<sup>th</sup> Street** - This school was built in 1939 and enlarged in 1948. In the mid-1980s, the facility was adapted for seriously handicapped children.

**23. 4811 Sinclair Avenue** – This dog-run log house was built about 1849 for Martin and Elizabeth Moore, who raised horses. It was purchased by John Hancock in 1866 and served as a residence for Hancock’s Dairy, the Enterprise Dairy, and the Wallis Dairy. It is the only known log house in Austin on its original site still used as a residence. The yard has native buffalo grass and wildflowers and vines.

**24. Footbridge over Hancock’s Branch of Shoal Creek** – This footbridge dates from sometime during the 1950s.

- 25. Fiset's Dam** – This dam was built in 1900 by Arthur Seiders for Franz Fiset who purchased much of former Hancock farmland. It is on private land and cannot be visited.
- 26. 4715 Sinclair** – This stucco home was built in 1941 by builder Robert Pickle for his home. Pickle also built 4713, 4808, and 4810 Sinclair and others in the neighborhood. Pickle's houses have double brick walls with an air space between and stucco outside and inside. Notice stucco "shutters" beside the front windows. The house at 4810 has columns from the Zilker home on East 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and a very old gnarled possum persimmon tree in the front yard.
- 27. 4703 Sinclair** – This home was built in 1939-1940 by builder Forrest Preece for his home; he and wife, Florence, still occupy the house. Preece and his father and brother built or partly built many houses in Rosedale Subdivision, including the first house.
- 28. 4314 Ramsey** – Rumors circulated in the neighborhood in 1942 that the FBI had raided this house and found shortwave espionage-capable equipment. This incident apparently was not in the newspapers: Do you know anything about it?
- 29. 4612 Rosedale** – Both the front and back yards of this home are beautifully landscaped with more than 200 varieties of domestic and foreign herbs.
- 30. 4611 Rosedale** – This home was built in the early 1940s entirely of hollow ceramic tiles, even the flat roof, to demonstrate the use of this building material.
- 31. 4507 Rosedale** – One of the rosebushes in this yard may be the Rosedale arbor vitae rose for which the neighborhood was named. Ramsey nursery secured a cutting from Brenham, Texas, and had hundreds of Rosedale roses growing just south of 44<sup>th</sup> Street between Rosedale and Shoalmont. These were bush roses with a small pink flower.
- 32. 4211 Sinclair** – Originally built in the 1800s (possibly as early as the 1850s) in the 100 block of East 17<sup>th</sup> Street, this house was moved to Sinclair in 1937. The original house had vertical boxing but two layers of siding have been added since 1937. Only the porch has been added to the original house. The lot was purchased from Forrest Preece.
- 33. 4215 Ramsey and 4501 Rosedale** – Both houses have Normandy cottages in the rear. The name is derived from the roof style. 4501 Rosedale was built in the mid-1930s by Walter H. Dittrich, and at least three generations of his family have lived in the house.
- 34. 4408 Ramsey** – This house has a copper roof.
- 35. 4414 to 4504 Rosedale** – Growing in the front yards of these houses are walnut trees which are remnants of the Ramsey nursery stock. This grove of walnut trees was a favorite "parking" spot for lovers before most of the trees were cleared for houses.

If you notice mistakes in the notes or if you can add other information about the houses, flora, streets, or fences in our neighborhood, please call the Collins at 323-2470.

1993 Rosedale Ramble Map

