

WALKING TOUR



CHARTERSVILLE

In Memory of

PAULINE BROWN

“Looking back over my life, I can see that many people in Clarksville have caused things to change for the better. I’m proud to be one of those people. What some people might call hell raising I call getting things done for my community.”

Pauline Brown

Pauline Stewart Brown passed away on August 27th, 2009. Only days before, her joyous voice rang from the choir loft of Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church.

Pauline was born to Archie and Clara Carrington Stewart July 29, 1928. Originally from Austin's Wheatville community, she moved to Clarksville in 1942. She married a Clarksville man, Eugene "Bubba" Brown, on October 23, 1946 at Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church. They had four children, Pumpkin (a nickname given to Paulette because of her Halloween birthday), Jackie, Archie, and RuthAnn. Pauline's world changed forever in 1964 when Bubba Brown died of a massive heart attack, five months before RuthAnn's birth.

In the 1970's, she lost her home to the construction of MoPac, but she built another one in the neighborhood. When she found that home in the path of a proposed cross-town expressway, Pauline became a community leader and spent countless hours working with neighbors to protect her beloved Clarksville. Due in large part to her efforts, the cross-town expressway plan was canceled, and long overdue help finally came to the neighborhood. She traveled to Washington, D.C., to secure government funding for desperately needed paving and drainage work.

Pauline was a founder of the Clarksville Community Development Corporation, established in 1978 to provide affordable housing for former Clarksville residents displaced by encroaching gentrification. The Heritage Society of Austin honored her in 2002 with a Preservation Merit Award for Advocacy.

Pauline Brown embodied the spirit of Clarksville - its past struggles, as well as its successes. It is with deep love and affection that this brochure is dedicated to her memory.

“I WANT
THE COMING
GENERATION TO
KNOW WHAT
HAPPENED.”

THE LATE REV. H. J. CARRINGTON

SWEET HOME MISSIONARY
BAPTIST CHURCH

Welcome to Clarksville,

a monument to tenacity, family, and faith. As you walk the winding streets, some barely wide enough for two cars to pass, imagine what life was like here over a hundred years ago when the founding African-Americans experienced freedom for the first time.

Clarksville, one of the first freedmen's communities west of the Mississippi and one of the oldest neighborhoods in Austin, was founded at a time when its residents had reason to feel great hope for their future. Only a few years before they had been slaves, separated from their families; in Clarksville, they were able to reunite with family members and friends, control their own lives, and openly practice their religion for the first time. It is no accident that the neighborhood's church is near the geographic center of the community. Its name, Sweet Home, reflects the early settlers' attitudes toward their religion and their community. Throughout the neighborhood's struggles to survive, Sweet Home has been the heart and soul of Clarksville.

Believed to have been the location of the slave quarters of Woodlawn, Governor Elisha M. and Lucadia Niles Pease's plantation, this area was settled by freed African-Americans soon after the end of the Civil War. Governor Pease gave some of this land away and sold other parcels to his former slaves, many of whom continued to work at Woodlawn after their emancipation. In 1871, Charles Clark bought two acres of land on what is now West 10th Street, and sold some of his property to others. The community began to thrive, and residents prided themselves on their self-sufficiency.

Well into the 1940s and 1950s, chickens, hogs, and cows were abundant in Clarksville, and the surrounding woods, so thick a stranger to the neighborhood could easily get lost in them, provided plenty of wild game. The local fishing hole, the nearby Colorado River, supplied a never-ending source of fresh fish.



THE CHALLENGES OF PROGRESS

The spirit of hope that surrounded Clarksville's early days unfortunately gave way to severe challenges. To help achieve the vision set out in the City of Austin's 1928 Master Plan, which called for all African-Americans to be relocated to the city's east side, local government officials denied Clarksville fundamental public services. City sewer lines ended just outside the neighborhood, dumping their contents into Clarksville's ditches and creek beds, and the roads were little more than dirt paths.



The construction of the MoPac Expressway, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was the beginning of a series of radical changes that would have a tremendous impact on Clarksville. Before the expressway was built, the community extended farther westward, stretching beyond the Missouri-Pacific railroad tracks. MoPac wiped out one-third of historic Clarksville, leaving less than ten square blocks of the original settlement. To make matters worse, City plans for a cross-town freeway promised to obliterate the portion that remained.

Unwilling to sit back and let their homes and history be destroyed, the people of Clarksville mobilized. They successfully fought the City's cross-town freeway proposal and lobbied for increased public services in the neighborhood. The Clarksville Community Development Corporation (CCDC), a non-profit, neighborhood-based organization, grew out of these efforts. Founded in 1978, it continues to work to preserve the historic character of Clarksville, in part by providing low-income housing for displaced Clarksville residents and others.

20TH CENTURY SERVICES

were finally committed to Clarksville in 1976, providing money for housing, rehabilitation, parks, streets, and drainage improvements. A newspaper article at the time noted that prior to this action, six stop signs and some playground equipment were the only visible symbols of what had long been denied. For the first time, residents enjoyed paved streets and municipal services.



But with these services came new problems – the low density of the almost rural land attracted investors looking for development opportunities close to the heart of town. Residents rallied to fight the new development and ensuing gentrification. T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan “Clarksville: One Hundred Years of Struggle and It Ain’t Over Yet” were common sights, but “progress” was hard to stop.

CLARKSVILLE TODAY

Today, what remains differs dramatically from the quiet, bucolic Clarksville of the past. Added to the sounds of roosters crowing, the occasional train whistle now coexists with the rhythmic pounding of hammers and the whirring of power saws at homes under construction. The determination of residents to maintain their neighborhood, traditions, and values, however, holds steadfast.

Clarksville's rich oral tradition includes the story of how in its early days, Mary Smith would step out of her back door every morning at dawn and sing the opening verse of the spiritual "Give Me Jesus."



Her neighbor, Mrs. Jim Haynes, would step outside and answer with the second verse. Soon women from all over the neighborhood would join in on the chorus. Listen closely and perhaps you can hear their voices on the wind.

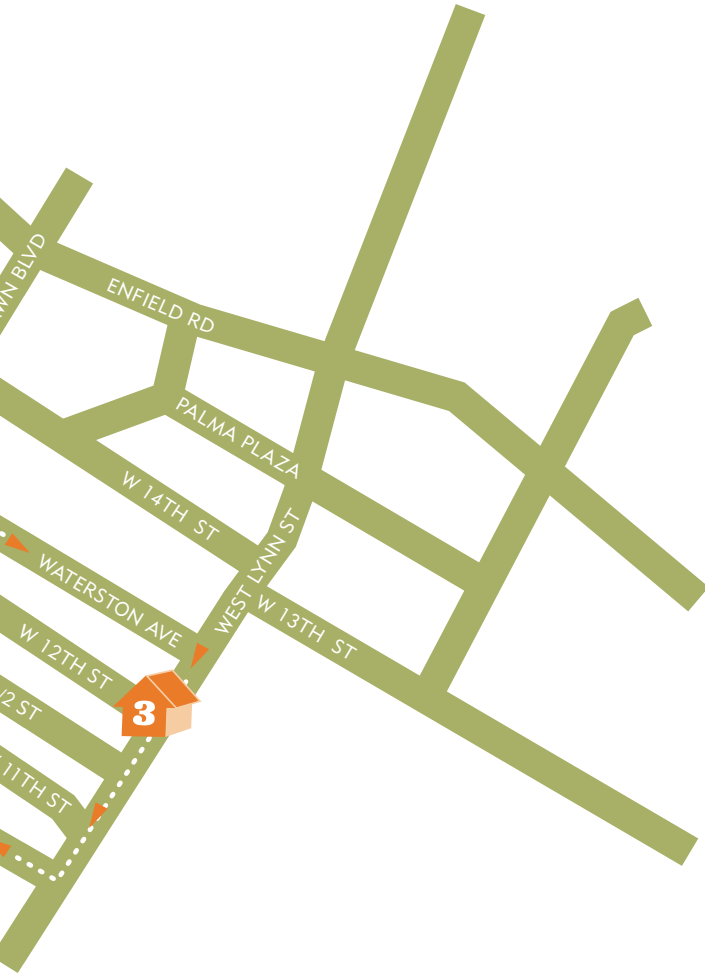
Enjoy the time you spend in Clarksville, a National Register Historic District, and celebrate the spirit of its founders. Their strength and resolve continue to thrive in this inner-city jewel.



CLARKSVILLE



WALKING TOUR



1**HASKELL HOUSE****1703 Waterston Avenue**

This property was purchased by former slave, Peter Tucker on New Year's Day, 1875. Tucker bought the property from the Pease family for \$100. It is not known when the original house was built. Sometime between 1879 and 1887, Tucker sold the property to Mary and Edwin Smith. Prior to construction of the first Sweet Home church building, the Smiths held religious meetings in this home. In 1892, the Smiths moved to a new house behind the Haskell House and deeded the property to their daughter, Kate, and her husband, Hezekiah Haskell (in some records referred to as "Haskins"), who at one time boarded with the Smiths. Haskell had served in the Union Army in both the Civil and Indian Wars.

Hezekiah and Kate's son, Kye, lived in the house until his death in 1976 at the age of 93. Following his death, the Haskell heirs donated the property to the City of Austin. In poor condition, the home was reconstructed to resemble its original state. Indoor plumbing and a window air conditioning unit were added so the house could serve the neighborhood as a senior luncheon site.

The Cumberland-style house is an example of Clarksville's earliest architecture. Simple board and batten shacks such as this were built to provide the most basic shelter. A distinctive feature is its two front doors – a family could rent one of the front rooms for extra income.

The Haskell House has been designated a historic landmark by the state of Texas and a historic structure by the City of Austin. After making much needed repairs to the building in 2005, the Clarksville Community Development Corporation turned the Haskell House into a museum detailing Clarksville's history and a community meeting and event space. The organization also established the Clarksville Community Garden behind the Haskell House.



Above: Haskell House today

Below: Back of Haskell House, circa 1970



2**INDIAN TRADING POST****Northeast corner of Waterston Avenue and Woodlawn Boulevard**

According to Kye Haskell, a log building that once stood on this property was used as an Indian trading post. Oral history is the only record of the trading post's existence; however, there are many recorded instances of Native Americans living in the area. It is possible that they could have traded goods for livestock raised in Clarksville.

3**WEST LYNN BUSINESSES**

West Lynn has long been a bustling commercial district. A vibrant Italian-American community grew in the area in the 1930s and became the nucleus for much of the street's commercial activity. Andrew and Josephine Perrone Viscardi purchased the property at the north-west corner of West Lynn and West 12th Street in the early 1930s. They built a building which housed a variety of businesses on the street level, with a home for their growing family upstairs. Jeffrey's, long one of Austin's finest restaurants, opened in part of the downstairs space in 1975. Mrs. Viscardi eventually sold the property to Jeffrey's original owners and the restaurant grew to fill the entire building. The Josephine House, a restaurant at the corner of Waterston and West Lynn, is named in honor of Mrs. Viscardi.

Anthony's Cleaners, located on the southeast corner of West Lynn and West 12th Streets, was opened by Anthony and Alice Pontallo Colanetta in 1950. Nau's Drug Store, located next door, opened in 1951 and still boasts its original soda fountain.



Site of Indian Trading Post, Woodlawn & Waterston



Jeffrey's Restaurant, Josephine House (not shown)



Nau's Enfield Drug, Anthony's Cleaners

4 CHARLES CLARK HOMESTEAD **1618 West 10th Street**

This is the approximate location of Charles Clark's original homestead. On August 11, 1871, Clark, using his slave surname Griffin, bought two acres of land from former Confederate general and former mayor of Austin, N.G. Shelley. The land Clark purchased was a dense cane thicket. He cleared part of it and built his home. Later Clark began to divide his two acres and sell portions of it to other freedmen. His goal was to "found a community where his people can be together." The community was named for him.

5 ELIAS MAYES HOMESTEAD **1620 West 10th Street**

Elias Mayes, an African-American state legislator from Brazos County, built his home here on land he bought from Charles Clark in 1884. Mayes was born in Conecuh County, Alabama, on February 13, 1831, the son of African parents. He served as a member of the House of Representatives in the Sixteenth (1879) and Twenty-First (1889) Legislative Sessions. Mayes' wife, Maggie, founded the first school in Clarksville. Classes at the "Pay School" were held at the Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church.

6 BEN MAYS HOUSE **1624 West 10th Street**

Elias and Maggie Mayes' son, Ben Mays [sic Mayes], was born in 1884. After a childhood in Clarksville, he moved away and worked in a number of different jobs, including that of the state's first black motion picture operator. He returned to Clarksville in the 1930s, building his home at this address, where he lived with his third wife, Lenore. Mays often showed movies at the home for the neighborhood children.

Around the 1920s, Clarksville residents became a bit more affluent and began to build homes with architectural styles more popular with the general population. This bungalow, with its stoop, shingled roof, and wood siding, reflects that period.



1618 West 10th, not original home



Above: 1620 West 10th, not original home

Below: 1624 West 10



7 TEXAS CONFEDERATE HOME FOR MEN

South side of West 10th Street (behind the stone wall)

Texas' home for Confederate Civil War veterans stood on this wooded property from 1891 until it was razed in 1970. The property's twenty-six acres stretched south to West 6th Street and had a commanding view of the Colorado River. At one time, hundreds of veterans lived at the home, but by 1943 only six remained and elderly patients were transferred from mental hospitals around the state to live at the facility. The last veteran died in 1954. Jean Taber Sutherland and Marjorie Ann Taber, whose father was superintendent of the facility from 1925-1930, remembered how "occasionally two might differ on details concerning war history and would attempt to settle the argument with their walking canes." The presence of the home adjacent to their community was unsettling to the residents of Clarksville, providing an everyday physical reminder of the legacy of slavery.

8 EXAMPLE OF EARLY ARCHITECTURE

1710 West 10th Street

These cottages represent a variant of the Haskell House's Cumberland-style architecture. They share the same board and batten, pier and beam construction, but their roofs are corrugated tin rather than wood shingles. Also, although tiny, these cottages contain porches, a feature absent at the Haskell House.

Early Clarksville residents made the most of very little. Homes were built with scrap wood and undersized beams sometimes and property lines were often marked with whatever was available. Some of the discarded items used, like rusted bed springs and old ice-boxes, remain today.



Texas Confederate Home for Men, behind wall



Remains of steps of Texas Confederate Home for Men



1710 West 10th Street (relocated to face West 11th Street)

9**PAULINE BROWN CLARKSVILLE
NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER****1807 West 11th Street**

Named for the neighborhood activist and long-time resident, Pauline Brown, this old home serves as the neighborhood center for Clarksville and as home to the Clarksville Community Development Corporation (CCDC). Established in 1978, at a time when Clarksville's existence was threatened by a proposed cross-town expressway, encroaching development, and gentrification, the CCDC exists to preserve and maintain the historic character of Clarksville. Additionally, the CCDC owns and manages fifteen affordable rental units in the neighborhood. The neighborhood center is used for meetings and community events. A previous neighborhood center once stood at the northeast corner of Toyath and West 11th Street.

10**MARY FREEMAN BAYLOR
CLARKSVILLE PARK****Site of the Clarksville
Colored School****1811 West 11th Street**

The Clarksville Colored School stood at this site from 1916 until 1965. Originally this one room school-house offered first through fourth grade classes for African-American children. Prior to construction of the school, Clarksville children were educated at Sweet Home Church. Moving slowly following the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 ruling to desegregate schools, the Austin School Board took eleven years to integrate its elementary schools. The Clarksville School was closed in 1965, and Clarksville's children began attending nearby Mathews School. Old-time residents told stories of the ghost of a young woman dressed in her wedding gown who occasionally could be seen walking across the old school campus, searching in vain for the groom who had left her at the altar. Mary Freeman Baylor, for whom the park is named, was a descendant of early Clarksville settlers. A leading activist in the fight for Clarksville's survival in the 1970's, Mary Baylor lived at 1607 West 10th Street.



Pauline Brown Clarksville Neighborhood Center



Clarksville Colored School (located in what is now Mary Freeman Baylor Clarksville Park)

11**LOST @ CLARKSVILLE****Looking west toward
Mopac Expressway**

The railroad tracks at the center of this highway were laid by the International and Great Northern Railroad in the 1870s. Clarksville originally stretched beyond the tracks, extending blocks farther west. In the late 1960s the state highway department began construction of the MoPac Expressway (named for the Missouri-Pacific Line which now operates the tracks), a multi-lane thoroughfare built on both sides of the existing railway. The road project destroyed a large swath of Clarksville, dislocating as many as a quarter of its residents. Some were able to find other homes in the neighborhood, but most were forced to move elsewhere.

In 1924, Italian immigrant Arturo Casiraghi opened a general mercantile store at 1910 West 10th Street, and added a popular restaurant thirty-four years later. It was torn down to make way for the highway.





Above: Modern boundary of Clarksville to the west by Mopac Left: Pease Plantation wall remains, 1616 Waterston Avenue

12

PEASE PLANTATION BOUNDARY WALL

North of Waterston Avenue

A stone wall once stood along the north side of Waterston Avenue. This wall marked the boundary of Governor E. M. Pease's plantation. According to legend, following the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of the slaves, Governor Pease gave land in what would become Clarksville to some of his former slaves "for good and loyal service." A Union sympathizer, Governor Pease and his family maintained close ties to Clarksville. Many Clarksville residents worked for the Pease family and each Christmas they were invited to the Pease mansion, located a few blocks north of Enfield Road (6 Niles Road) for a celebration. A portion of the wall remains and can be seen at 1616 Waterston Avenue.

13

LAWSON HOUSE

1106 Toyath Street

Another Cumberland style home, this structure was built around 1909 by Albert Lawson, a porter for a local bank. He later worked at the Crescent Theatre, and the Dunbar Theatre. The home remained in the Lawson family for over eighty years. The Lawson House has been designated a historic structure by the City of Austin.



Lawson House then (above) and now (below)



14**SWEET HOME MISSIONARY
BAPTIST CHURCH****1725 West 11th Street**

The heart and soul of Clarksville, Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church sits on property purchased on July 1, 1882. Prior to that, services were held at the Haskell House and later under a brush arbor at this site before the first church building was constructed. The present building – the third – was built in 1935 by Clarksville resident W.S. Edmerson, faces north. The two previous church buildings had faced east. Clarksville's oral tradition recalls that the current building was originally intended to face east, but the congregation felt this new church building should face north.



This is the second structure of Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church



Choir singing inside current Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church.



Photo believed to have been taken of school students in front of church



Woodlawn, Home of Governor and Mrs. Elisha Pease



*Much of this publication is adapted from
"A Short History and Historic Tour" (1978)
by John Henneberger*

NOTES:





CLARKSVILLE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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