



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Historic Assessment

Property Address: 1739 West Summit Avenue

1. Application Details

Applicant: Dana W. Kent
Type: Historic Landmark Designation
Date Received: 8 July 2023

2. Findings

The structure at 1739 West Summit Avenue is a one-story dwelling, built circa 1923. Dana W. Kent currently owns the property. The subject property is located in the Woodlawn Lake area, just southeast of the boundary for the Monticello Park Historic District. It is situated midblock on West Summit, between Zarzamora and Elmedorf Streets, about one-and-a-half blocks west of the Fredericksburg Road commercial corridor, in the Jefferson Neighborhood. The Jefferson Neighborhood is located west of Fredericksburg Road and east of St. Cloud between Donaldson and W. Woodlawn Avenues. The neighborhood features an eclectic mix of architectural styles, ranging from Art Moderne to Spanish Eclectic and Tudor Revival, including fanciful façades and a variety of styles, materials, and textures. In the 1924 City directory, 1739 West Summit Avenue is listed as the residence of Wm.R. & Lelia Wells. William ("Ralph") Wells (1885-1984) worked for the Southwestern Telephone Company, and in January 1923 he signed a Deed of Trust to the Melliff-McAllister Lumber Company to construct the house on this property.

1739 West Summit Avenue is a hidden gem, and an understated example of a "home of character" in the Woodlawn Lake District: the "Arc of Opportunity" in northwest San Antonio during the 1920s Jazz Age building boom. In December 1920, Albert Steves, Sr, head of the Ed Steves Lumber Company, was elected as one of five new members of the fifteen-member Board of Directors for the San Antonio Chamber of Commerce; two of the ten members whose terms were held over for the year were Gerald E. Melliff (1892-1966) and Walter W. McAllister (1889-1984).¹ McAllister worked in the insurance industry, and Melliff was formerly general manager of the Hillyer, Deutsch, Jarratt Lumber Company, but resigned his position after twelve years of service to become one of the active managers of the building and loan association. In July 1921, the San Antonio Building and Loan Association was chartered by "prominent business and professional men of the city" to provide \$5,000,000 in funds for the building and purchase of homes. The directors contracted Melliff and McAllister "to actively direct the operations of the association."² The new association offered two services, available to every member of the community: a monthly deposit savings plan and a loan department, providing funds for the building or purchase of homes. In a letter sent to the organization, Herbert Hoover, then U.S. Secretary of Commerce and future U.S. President, expressed his support: "Your associations, true people's banks, popularly controlled and locally managed, have sprung up voluntarily throughout the country. ... Through loans upon homes, they are an instrumentality not only in solving the housing problems, but in developing self-reliance of our citizenry."³

¹ "Stern Named as New Leader for Local Chamber," *San Antonio Evening News* (Dec. 15, 1920), p. 7.

² "Building Loan Association is Organized Here," *San Antonio Light* (July 12, 1921), p. 11.

³ "To Make Funds Available for Home Building," *San Antonio Light* (July 17, 1921), p. 37.



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Over the next few decades, Melliff and McAllister would lead the 1920s building boom in San Antonio: building thousands of homes throughout the city, setting the standard for quality workmanship in homebuilding, implementing a financing system for certain classes of homebuyers, and developing tools for salesmanship and modern media campaigns to sell the American dream of homeownership to the masses. By 1929, the S.A. Building and Loan Association would boast of “resources totaling over \$7,000,000 and over 40,000 savings, investment and loan accounts,” making it “the strongest institution of its kind in Southwest Texas.”⁴ By the end of the decade, Gerald Melliff served as President of the S.A. Chamber of Commerce, founder and Vice-President of the S.A. Building and Loan Association, founder and President of the San Antonio Building Materials Company (SABMCo), and President of the Texas Lumbermen’s Association. W.W. McAllister served as President of the S.A. Building and Loan Association from the 1930s through the 1950s.

In October 1922, the Melliff-McAllister Lumber Company ran full-page ads in the *San Antonio Light* announcing its purchase of the Ed Steves & Sons’ lumber yard located at Buena Vista and Medina streets, and promising services to help newspaper readers to “plan a new home, to supply quality materials for its construction, and to assist in financing it.”⁵ The company adopted a slogan—“Homes of Character,” then developed a “Model Home” in the Woodlawn Place neighborhood (commonly known as the “Million-Dollar Addition”) and invited the public to “come and see it!” The Model Home was intended to showcase “representative and reliable concerns from every line and profession entering into the building of a home” (e.g., Steves Sash & Door Company – mill work and built-in features, King Furniture Company, Charles Boelhauwe – architect, Willis Ranney – construction manager, S.A. Building & Loan Association – home financing, etc.), and the company boldly claimed that “never before has such meticulous care been exercised in thoroughly co-ordinating the arts and crafts, down to the smallest details of workmanship and furnishings.”⁶

The Model Home on Huisache Avenue was such an innovative concept at the time, the *San Antonio Express* published a feature story about Melliff to coincide with its opening to the public. “Gerald Melliff appears to have a finger in every business and civic pie that's baking in the city,” the author observed. The praise for Melliff was exceptional:

“He is the type of man who has made the commercial history of America: the man who, through generations, by the very force of his personality, has carved his destiny from the materials that came to his hand. There is nothing of sham, nothing of egotism in his make-up. He has real ideas in his head, and sound judgment to back them up. He is a human dynamo of perfect health and bomb-proof nerves and inexhaustible energy. In spite of his modesty, and in spite of his youth, his is a personality to which the city looks for leadership. He is a man worth watching.”⁷

The Model Home was open for viewing for ten days, and when public viewings ended on December 20th Melliff-McAllister began accepting bids for it. In February 1923, the *San Antonio Express* reported that “thousands of Sa.n Antonians paid visits to the masterpiece of home construction,” and that it “attracted

⁴ Advertisement, *San Antonio Express* (January 01, 1929), p. 30.

⁵ Advertisement, *San Antonio Light* (October 8, 1922), p. 20.

⁶ Advertisement, *San Antonio Express* (November 8, 1922), Pg. 11.

⁷ “Gerald Melliff Behind Idea of Model Home,” *San Antonio Express* (December 10, 1922), p. 72.



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perhaps more interest than other building activity of the past year.” Harry Halff purchased the Model Home for \$13,000.⁸

Ralph Wells was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi, in 1885. In 1913, he married Lelia Adelle Bryant in Denison, Texas, and both his World War I draft registration and 1920 U.S. census records indicate that he resided in Nacogdoches, Texas, before settling in San Antonio. W.R. and Lelia Wells bought the property at 1739 Summit Avenue for \$2,170 and began paying monthly installments of \$30 in February 1923.⁹ According to their daughter, Jean Wright, the Wells family “bought 2 lots in 1922” and “moved into the house in March or April, 1923.”¹⁰ While it is unclear whether or not Wells has a personal connection to Melliff or McAllister, he was employed by Southwestern Telephone Company, which was one of the contractors for the original Model Home on Huisache, providing the modern amenity of home telephone service. On the 1924 Sanborn map, it is one of only six addresses on the block, and one of the first two on north side of the street (and the only extant structure). While this block is just outside the recognized boundaries of the Woodlawn Place Addition (between Woodlawn Ave., Fredericksburg Rd. and N. Zarzamora), the subject property was built at the very beginning of the period of significance for this neighborhood (1923 to 1940), when builders conducted a major advertising campaign to draw residents to the area.

Leland Busby, President of the Busby Building Corp., collaborated in the development of Woodlawn Place Addition, and built several stucco homes on the 1700 block of West Summit Avenue, which became known as “Stucco Row.” While seven of the 20 stucco homes remain today, 1701 West Summit Avenue—built in 1926 and featured in Busby newspaper ads for the Woodlawn District—was demolished in 2013. In December 1927, the *San Antonio Light* credited Gerald Melliff with inaugurating “what proved to be the most popular plan known to the construction industry for building homes”: “The co-operative plan to advertise and develop Woodlawn District was largely brought about through Mr. Melliff’s own idea and direction. He believes growth of Woodlawn District has just begun. The district boasts \$15,000,000 in homes, business properties, land and public improvements.” Melliff predicted that the Woodlawn District “will have 25,000 people in another five years,” and that San Antonio’s population would grow beyond 350,000 over the same period.¹¹ Of course, the city would not achieve that demographic milestone until the 1940s, but Melliff could not have foreseen that growth would be stalled by the stock market crash of 1929 and the subsequent depression era. In the 1922 City directory, Gerald Melliff’s residential address is listed as the Gunter Hotel. In 1929, Gerald and Ethel resided on Taliaferro Road, while his parents (Garrett and Annie) lived in the Woodlawn Place Addition at 1621 West Mistletoe. At the time of his death, Melliff resided at 150 Powder Horn Trail in Hill Country Village.

W.R. Wells sold the property to Mike and Viola Gonzales in October 1973. Dana Kent purchased the property in August 1987.

⁸ “Model Home is Sold to Halff,” *San Antonio Express* (February 18, 1923), p. 34.

⁹ Bexar County 1923 Deed of Trust.

¹⁰ Letter from Jean Wright to Dana Kent (Sep. 1, 1993).

¹¹ “S.A. of 350,000 is Predicted,” *San Antonio Light* (December 11, 1927), p. 62.



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3. Architectural Description

The subject property is a single-story Craftsman cottage built circa 1923, with a low-pitched, cross-gabled roof with two front-facing gables, a side gable covering the partial-width front entry porch, and wide unenclosed eaves with exposed rafters. The front porch features floor-to-ceiling square columns, and in the rear is a raised wooden deck with latticed skirting, covered by a pergola with gabled rafters. (Historical photos show the porch was originally supported by three high, battered piers topped with short, sloping columns, which were removed and replaced by the classical style columns at a later date.)

The front façade features a group of three single-sash wooden windows centered under the overhanging eave of the leftmost front-facing gable. The left façade includes a group of three centered single-sash wooden windows, and three separate, smaller high windows. A rear wing was added with a cross-gable on the right side to extend the home for an additional room, including corner entry door, a grouped pair of single-sash windows on the right façade, and one single-sash window on the rear façade. Triangular braces join the front and rear façades to the roof, as well as the side-facing gables at the porch columns and right façade of the rear extension. The walls of each façade include distinctive wooden clapboard siding. The rear deck can be accessed by a single-pane glass door on the right side of the extension, or via a rear door with 15 glass panels with two sidelights of 5 glass panels.

The Southwestern style landscaping includes a concrete and brick paver driveway and walkways, rock and gravel beds, and drought-tolerant shrubs. There is a rear accessory dwelling unit near the back property line. This single-story casita has a high-pitched, side-gabled roof, topped with corrugated metal panels.

Character-defining features of 1739 W. Summit include:

- Low-pitched roof with overhanging eaves
- Exposed beams, rafters, and triangular braces
- Wooden clapboard siding
- Rear accessory dwelling unit (casita)

4. Landmark Criteria

The property meets six criteria under UDC 35-607(b):

- **5: Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;** for its association with prolific home builders Gerald Melliff and W.W. McAllister.
- **8: Its historical, architectural, or cultural integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship;** as an example of an early Craftsman cottage in the Woodlawn Lake District, with low-pitched roof with overhanging eaves, exposed beams, rafters, and triangular braces, clapboard wood siding.
- **13: It bears an important and significant relationship to other distinctive structures, sites, or areas, either as an important collection of properties or architectural style or craftsmanship with few intrusions, or by contributing to the overall character of the area according to the plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif;** it is one of the first six addresses on the block, and one of the first two on north side of the street (and the only extant

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structure), built at the very beginning of the period of significance for the Woodlawn Place Addition.

5. Staff Recommendation

A property must meet at least three of the 16 criteria used to evaluate eligibility for landmark designation, and this assessment determines that 1739 W. Summit Ave meets this threshold. Further research may reveal additional significance associated with this property.



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1. 1739 West Summit Avenue - Front

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2. 1739 West Summit Avenue - Right side (East)



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3. 1739 West Summit Avenue - Left side (West)

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4. 1739 West Summit Avenue - Rear



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5. 1739 West Summit Avenue - Casita, right side (South)



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6. 1739 West Summit Avenue - Casita, front (West)

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7. 1739 West Summit Avenue - Casita, left side (North)



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8. 1739 West Summit Avenue - Casita, rear (East)



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9. Sanborn Map (1924), Vol. 5, Sheet 505

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10. 1739 West Summit Avenue (original home, date unknown). Photo courtesy Dana Kent.



11. William R. ("Ralph") Wells, original owner (date unknown). Photo courtesy Dana Kent.



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HELPS BUILD SAN ANTONIO

Gerald Melliff, lumber dealer, financier and "the man who has given San Antonians thousands of homes," is a principal builder of this city. He predicts a city of 350,000 here in another five years.



12. San Antonio Light (December 11, 1927), Pg. 58

MELLIFF

Gerald E. Melliff, age 73, of 150 Powder Horn Trail, died Wednesday at a local hospital. He was a member of Christ Episcopal Church, Scottish Rite Mason and active in Texas Lumberman's Association of Texas. He was past president of San Antonio Chamber of Commerce. Survivors: Wife, Mrs. Vera W. Melliff; sisters, Mrs. Mary Underwood, New Orleans, La.; Mrs. Roberta M. Killgore, San Antonio; brother, James R. Melliff, San Antonio; numerous nieces and nephews. Service Saturday at 1:30 in the Georgian Chapel of the Porter Loring Mortuary, the Rev. Henry Burton and Canon Gerald N. McAllister officiating. Pallbearers: Louis W. Lipscomb, William Selpel, Sam C. Bennett, John A. Bertelli, W. S. Watson, Gerald M. Becher. Entombment Sunset Memorial Park. Direction by PORTER LORING McCullough of Elmira

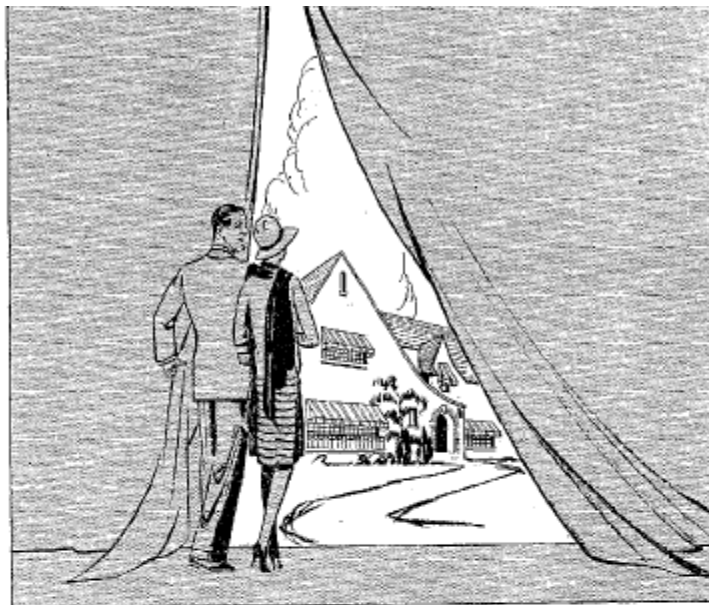
13. San Antonio Light (August 05, 1966), Pg. 36

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What to Look for When Buying a Home!

—A district in which increasing property values are fully protected by building restrictions.

—A choice location amid beautiful surroundings, away from the noise and traffic of town.

—A section boasting complete public improvements and adequate transportation facilities.

—A place where other home owners are progressive and imbued with community spirit.

All these advantages—and many more—you will find in Woodlawn District.

Alamo Development Co.
American Building Co.
Beverly Hills, Inc.
Busby Building Corporation

N. S. Dickinson & Co.
L. E. Fite & Co., Inc.
C. M. Furr Co.
G. & C. Hagelstein
Woodlawn Park Development Co.

S. A. Bldg. Materials Co.
H. J. Shearer
West End Lumber Co.
Woodlawn Terrace Co.

14. San Antonio Light (January 08, 1928), Pg. 53

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7½ Years of Service

RESOURCES

August, 1921	\$ 90.00
January 1, 1922	40,896.65
January 1, 1923	261,707.77
January 1, 1924	519,979.93
January 1, 1925	1,067,383.55
January 1, 1926	1,962,982.80
January 1, 1927	3,126,587.86
January 1, 1928	4,765,205.25
January 1, 1929	7,014,658.29

EARNINGS DISTRIBUTED

December 31, 1921, 6 mos.	\$ 783.75
December 31, 1922, 1 yr.	14,371.06
December 31, 1923, 1 yr.	36,363.14
December 31, 1924, 1 yr.	61,029.94
December 31, 1925, 1 yr.	94,587.20
December 31, 1926, 1 yr.	164,379.23
December 31, 1927, 1 yr.	247,505.74
December 31, 1928, 1 yr.	353,844.09

OFFICERS:

FRANZ C. GROOS	President
ROBERT D. BARCLAY	Vice-Pres.
GERALD E. MELLIFF	Vice-Pres.
W. W. McALLISTER	Secy-Mgr.
L. R. CARY	Asst. Mgr.
CAREY TOWELL	Mgr. Savings Dept.
PHIL T. BLACK	Asst. Secy.

DIRECTORS:

FRANZ C. GROOS	(President Groos National Bank)
ROBT. D. BARCLAY	(Vice-Pres. National Bank of Commerce)
GERALD E. MELLIFF	(Pres. San Antonio Building Materials Co.)
W. W. McALLISTER	(San Antonio Building & Loan Assn.)
ERNEST STEVES	(President Alamo National Bank)
GEO. T. ALLENSWORTH	(President Allensworth-Carnahan Co.)
ROY R. CAMPBELL	(President Campbell Lumber Co.)
N. H. KING	(King Furniture Co.)
H. C. THORMAN	(Realtor)
P. H. SWEARINGEN, Attorney	

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

San Antonio Building & Loan Ass'n DECEMBER 31st 1928

RESOURCES

First Mortgage Loans	\$6,599,826.37
On Improved Real Estate on the monthly payment plan, security being increased by each payment.	
Stock Loans	157,360.53
Made members with their Certificates as security.	
Interest Due and Collectable in January	75,936.31
Prepaid Interest	1,131.67
Taxes and Insurance Advanced	1,637.43
Being advances to pay taxes and insurance for borrowing members.	
Cash in Banks	178,715.78
Represents checking accounts in banks to be applied on loans pending. Building and Loan Associations are not required by law to keep reserves in cash, as the normal monthly income exceeds all withdrawal demands.	

\$7,014,658.29

LIABILITIES

Installment Shares	\$2,339,365.62
Represents all monthly payments and dividends credited thereto.	
Advance Payment Shares	1,282,506.81
Represents shares upon which 50% is paid in advance and includes dividends credited thereto.	
Investment Stock	2,771,800.00
On which semi-annual dividends are payable in cash each six months.	
School Savings	109,335.05
Represents deposits made by 29,423 pupils in the public schools.	
Total Capital Invested	\$6,503,007.48
Due on Incomplete Loans	97,466.76
Notes Payable	304,226.57
Semi-Annual Dividends Due July 1st on Investment Stock	64,185.66
Reserves and Undivided Profits	45,791.82

\$7,014,658.29

15. San Antonio Express (January 01, 1929), Pg. 30

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opportunity seems to have passed on to younger.

For material success in this profession, says, only one thing is necessary, to work hard from year to year. Never be lulled by get-rich-quick

PLAN HUGE S. A. FIRM

Combined to keep abreast of S. A.'s rapid growth, five lumber and building material concerns have consolidated to form largest company in South.

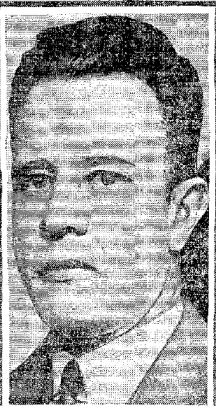
5 S. A. Lumber Companies Merge



Gerald Meliff, above, is president of the new concern known as the San Antonio Building Materials company.



The new concern will be capitalized at \$1,000,000, fully paid. Alex Thomas is vice president.



Walter Steves has been named treasurer of the company, organized to meet S. A.'s development.



Here is William Seigel, secretary of the concern that will be the third largest of its kind in the United States.

VOICES IN APARTMENT SAME DAY OF MURDER NEW CLUE IN PROBE

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 31.—Reports to authorities that a woman's voice was heard in the apartment of William Edward Hickman on the night before he killed 29-year-old Marian Parker created a new stir in the case today.

These reports were attributed to a man and a woman, tenants of the apartment house.

The woman was said to have been talking with Hickman. "Let's get out of here. Talk to me here's still time," she was declared to have said.

NOTHING DEFINITE.
The names of the tenants furnish no information were withheld by authorities.

A scientist continues to follow up all clues in the case of the renowned kidnaper and slayer of the Parker girl, looking to link who participated in the crime. That far, how-

POLICE FOIL EXTORTION ATTEMPT

FIVE S. A. LUMBER COMPANIES MERGE INTO \$1,000,000 FIRM

Indicating the growth and development which San Antonio is expected to enjoy during the next few years, and ranking the city with Los Angeles and Chicago so far as expansion is concerned, plans for the creation here of the third largest lumber and building material firm in the United States have been announced.

Moody Approves Plan Which Limits Hunters to 1 Deer

AUSTIN, Tex., Dec. 31.—Governor Moody today announced his approval of a recent plan introduced by Caesar Klueberg, assistant general manager of the million-acre King ranch of reducing the present open season for killing deer by fifteen days, and limiting the bag to one buck a year for each hunter instead of two. The present deer season extends from Nov. 16 to Dec. 31. Governor Moody would limit the season to from Nov. 31 to Dec. 31, or from Nov. 16 to Dec. 16.

Dan Moody Grants Clemency to Three

AUSTIN, Tex., Dec. 31.—Governor Dan Moody Saturday granted a general pardon to Percy Echols, Frank Drummond and Walter Hyman, each convicted of burglary in Caldwell county in April, 1927, and sentenced to two years imprisonment.

With a capitalization of \$1,000,000 fully paid, five of the largest lumber and building material interests in the city have consolidated to form the San Antonio Building Materials company.

Companies consolidating are the lumber merchandising interests of Ed Steves and Sons, the lumber merchandising interests of Hilkey-Douglas-Jarrett company, Meliff-McAllister Lumber company, Travis Lumber company, and the Woodlawn Lumber company.

MELIFF HEADS FIRM.
Los Angeles at present is said to have the largest lumber company in the country; Chicago the second largest. The new company here, it is said, will be the third largest.

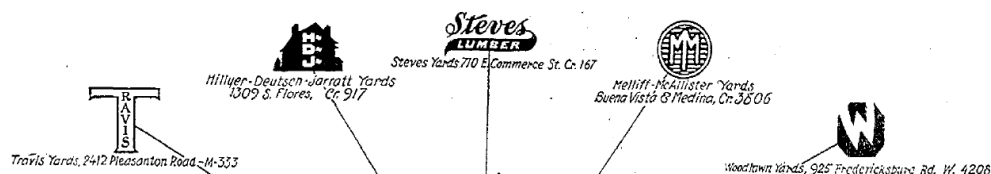
The San Antonio Building Materials company is headed by Gerald E. Meliff, its president. Other officers are: A. R. Thomas, vice president; Walter Steves, treasurer; William Seigel, secretary. The directors include Gerald E. Meliff, A. R. Thomas, Walter Steves, William Seigel, W. W. McAllister, Harry H. Rogers and Thurman Barrett.



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SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS: SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 1, 1928.

C 3



The Building Materials Co.

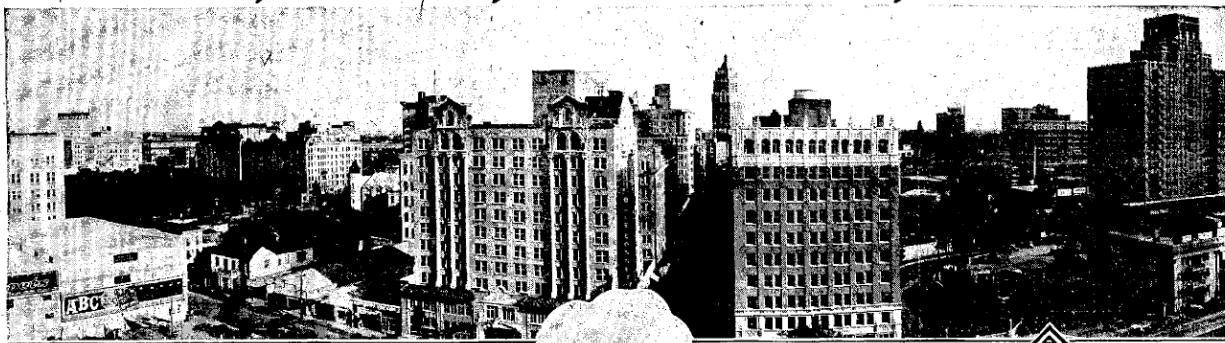
Serving Every Building Need

NOVEMBER 26, 1928.

THE SAN ANTONIO LIGHT

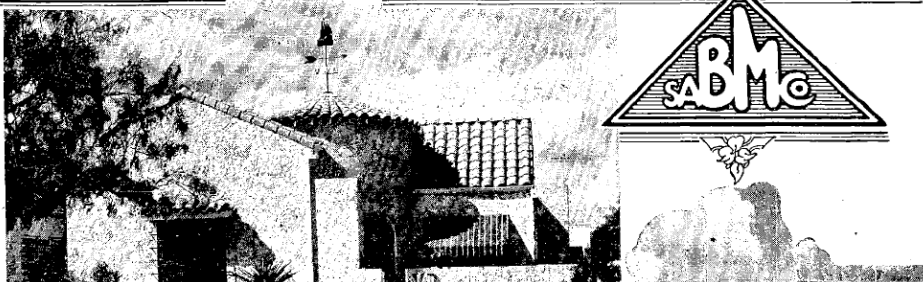
NOVEMBER 26, 1928.

Serving Every Building Need!



San Antonio Building Materials Company
Takes the Lead in Supplying Standard
Materials and Placing Its Resources at
the Command of Those Engaged in
Building Greater San Antonio.

When, on January 1, 1928, the San Antonio Building Materials Company was formed to carry on the combined business of five of San Antonio's largest and most important building material yards, this city became the home of one of the biggest establishments of its kind in the United States. For, at the time of its organization, the company was exceeded in size by only two other corporations engaged in the same line of endeavor.




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**You Can
SAVE
MONEY
If You....**



and can take 20 YEARS to repay your

F. H. A. LOAN

Build your own home with a 20-years-to-pay FHA Loan and the payments are as low as \$7.43 per thousand dollars! These loans available for new construction and also for houses built since April, 1935, on FHA specifications.

Arrangements can be made for advances during construction. This applies to residential property only, in San Antonio and other Southwest Texas cities.

Existing mortgages also refinanced on Easy Monthly Payments

**San Antonio
Building & Loan Assn.**

W. W. McAllister, Pres.

BUILDERS' EXCHANGE BLDG. G-8311

17. *San Antonio Express* (December 06, 1936), Pg. 34



**We'll help you
make her happy**

We'll show you how, through our plans, we can aid you in the selection or building of a home for her . . . the surest way in the world to increase her happiness. We'd like to tell you about some of the homes we have to offer or how we can help you finance the purchase of a home.

**SAN ANTONIO
BUILDING & LOAN ASSN.**

W. W. McAllister, Pres. Phone G-8311

18. *San Antonio Express* (June 06, 1937), Pg. 38

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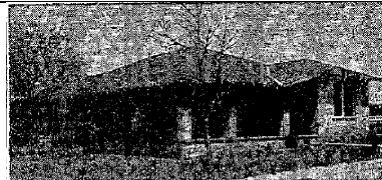
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LENDING LEADER Ben H. Hazen, left, Portland, Ore., president of the United States Savings and Loan League, is welcomed to San Antonio by W. W. McAllister, Sr., heading the San Antonio Building and Loan Assn.



Rock House on a Hillside!

Hungering for a lot of elbow room just a few minutes' drive from downtown?—this is it! Everything about it is big—three big bedrooms . . . two baths . . . huge living room . . . modern kitchen, big enough for the family to live in . . . spacious dining room . . . plenty of roomy storage space . . . big porches . . . and city comforts! You'll just have to see it to believe it!

Open Today — 10 a.m. 'til Dark

Conveniently located on U.S. 281, just seven-tenths of a mile north of Coker School—opposite the roadside park. The gate will be open and flags fluttering on the fence will direct you into the three-acre tract. Liberal terms will make it easy to own. Drive out TODAY—keeping north from San Pedro Avenue underpass.

GERALD E. MELLIFF
BROKER

OFFICE: HILL COUNTRY VILLAGE . . . U-61772

2. San Antonio Express (April 20, 1952), Pg. 30

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