

MAUD MOLLER HOUSE

1827 Ball
Circa 1895



The story of 1827 Ball begins in March, 1895, when Maud Wilson Moller bought the parcel of land at the corner of Ball and 19th Street from her father, attorney Joseph Wilson. The lot, with two handsome houses nearing completion cost \$10,000, and was just around the corner from 1814 Sealy, the home Mr. Wilson shared with his daughter Maud and son-in-law Jens Moller.

The Jens Moller Home on Sealy was shown on the 8th Annual Historic Homes Tour in 1982. Mr. Moller was born in Skagen, Denmark and came to Galveston as a young Danish Naval officer in 1870. By 1878, he had established the shipping agency known as J. Moller & Co.

Jens Moller was a prominent member of the Galveston community. He served in the Texas Legislature and acted as commissioner for the Port of Galveston and for a time was Consul for both Denmark and Russia.

Research reveals little about Maud Moller and her life in Galveston as wife, mother and businesswoman. We do know that her father was United States Attorney, and that she and Jens Moller had one son, Jens Moller, Jr., who was a student at Yale University in 1930 when his father died.

Maud Moller was the owner of four houses constructed from 1895 to 1897, all within a few blocks of her home on Sealy Avenue. Each of the houses was built as rental property. All housing was lost in a 40 block area of the East End as a result of the 1885 fire. These houses were built in the area devastated by fire a decade earlier.

One of her early tenants in the house at 1827 Ball was Ulrich Muller, cotton broker and Swiss consul at Galveston. Muller and his family occupied the house until his death in 1911, at which time it was sold to Pauline and Asher Scudder.

The Scudders divorced two years later and Mrs. Scudder, under her reclaimed maiden name of Wilkerson, received the house in the divorce settlement. She operated a boarding house here until 1919 when she sold her home to Theo B. Kirchem and his wife Johann.

Mr. Kirchem was employed by the McCarthy Bank, and he and his wife had three children, Gloria, Helen and Theodore. The McCarthy Bank failed in the early 1930s, and Mr. Kirchem opened a beer parlor on Market Street. He soon established himself as a nightclub and bar operator in Houston.

On the night of January 5, 1936, Mr. Kirchem left

Houston and headed home with \$600 in his pocket and a passenger, Julius (Frenchy) Etie. Etie left the car at 24th and Postoffice, Galveston's "Red Light District," and Mr. Kirchem drove home, parked in his garage and headed for his front door.

According to police and witnesses, Kirchem was accosted by two men on the shell sidewalk in front of his house. There was a brief struggle. Kirchem broke away but was only able to reach the porch before being struck down by two bullets. The assailants fled by car leaving behind only a grey felt hat, dropped in the scuffle. *The Galveston Daily News* reported that, "members of Kirchem's family were awakened only when they heard him ring the doorbell. When they opened the door, Kirchem fell inward. He died at St. Mary's Infirmary a short time later without having been able to speak." Attempted robbery was given as the motive of the slaying. The murder was never solved.

Theo Kirchem's family retained ownership of the house until 1958, and it has changed hands several times in the last 30 years.

Both the interior and exterior of the house has changed little since 1895 despite its many owners. A fine selection of architectural elements has survived. The unusual curved stairway leads to the original asymmetrical front door with its leaded glass sidelight and transom. The house features many porches, typical of Queen Anne architecture. During exterior renovation, the owners removed metal shingles from the front gable, revealing the original triple window and a lovely sun burst of ornamental woodwork.

The interior abounds in arches, especially those found accenting the beautiful bay windows. Although research does not reveal the architect responsible for the design of 1827 Ball, many assume that George B. Stowe was commissioned to design the home. Stowe was the architect for major renovations done by Maud Moller at her family home at 1814 Sealy.

The current owners purchased the home in 1986 and have undertaken the complex job of all interior renovations themselves. Plastering, painting and raising two small children has been a rewarding challenge for the owners. They are proud of the successful preservation efforts including the creation of a new kitchen, do-it-yourself style.

This graceful historic home reflects the continued loving care of another generation of Galvestonians.

