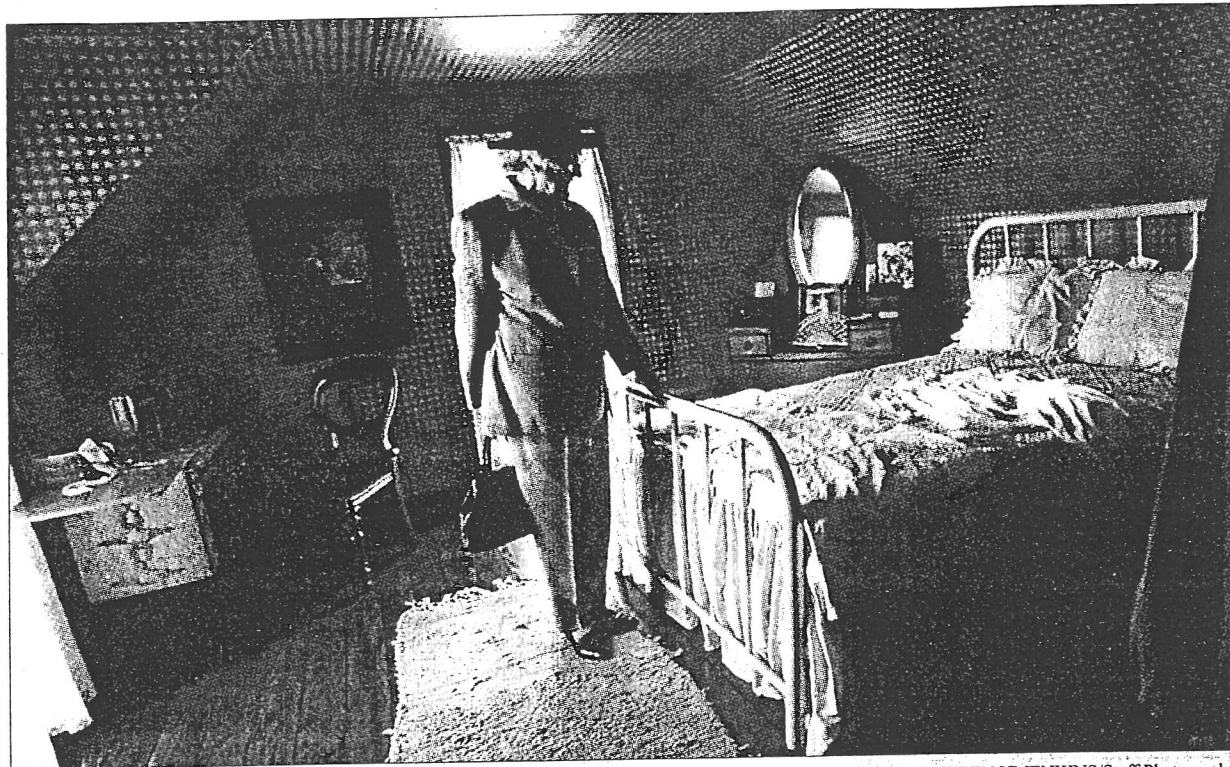


27 LH-Residence-Hill/Robberson - Miss Belle's Place

COMMUNITY

A PLACE OF HISTORY



LAWRENCE JENKINS/Staff Photographer

Billye Meyer walks through her old bedroom at Miss Belle's Place, which had been closed for renovations since 1999. Ms. Meyer, now one of the city's historians, lived in the home in the 1940s.

Former owners of city's oldest building help celebrate its renovation

By Sarah Post

Staff Writer

It was 1941. Billye and Lester Meyer bought a spinster schoolteacher's house for \$800, complete with a barn and acreage for gardens, cows and chickens. The couple sanded the home inside and out and then repainted. They installed electricity and even refurbished the lightning rods.

It is 2001. Ms. Meyer, now one of the city's historians, looks back 60 years when she looks at the home where she lived when she gave birth to her son and where she canned 1,000 jars of produce one summer

before World War II.

Miss Belle's Place, named for the woman who lived there and taught school for 40 years in its front room, reopened Monday after extensive preservation work.

"I am thrilled to my toes!" Ms. Meyer exclaimed before a small crowd gathered for a ribbon-cutting.

She is one of several proud former owners of what is now Richardson's oldest building. A 10-month, \$85,000 renovation was recently completed on Miss Belle's Place, which will soon be open for tours.

Early Richardson settler A.H. Hill

Please see MISS BELLE'S, 10R.



LAWRENCE JENKINS/Staff Photographer

Billye Meyer and her husband bought Miss Belle's place for \$800.

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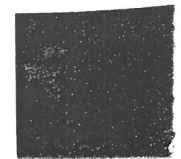
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Local festival to feature

Fair feather
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Miss Belle's Place gets a makeover

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built the house in about 1886 at 206 Sherman St. in downtown Richardson. In 1902, Margaret Robberson bought it for her daughter, Virginia Bell Robberson, or "Miss Belle."

Miss Belle operated a private school in the home for nearly 40 years.

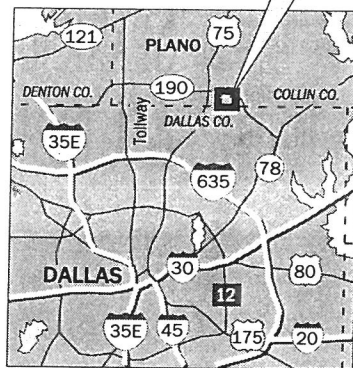
Ms. Meyer described her as a tiny, red-haired lady whose students went on to lead the city. "When she passed away, it left a big hole in this community, because that little lady was a dynamo," she said.

When visitors enter Miss Belle's small two-story house today, the front room has replicas of the small benches her 40 students sat upon. A wood-burning stove and an icebox grace the kitchen. A steep flight of stairs leads to two bedrooms under a pitched roof.

Ms. Meyer said she was tickled that the house could be restored to reflect its history.

The home had another owner, Sterling Couch, who purchased the land for investment purposes. His heirs donated the home to the city in his name in 1979, and it was moved to the Owens Spring Creek Farms on Plano Road north of Greenville Road.

In 1982, the home was

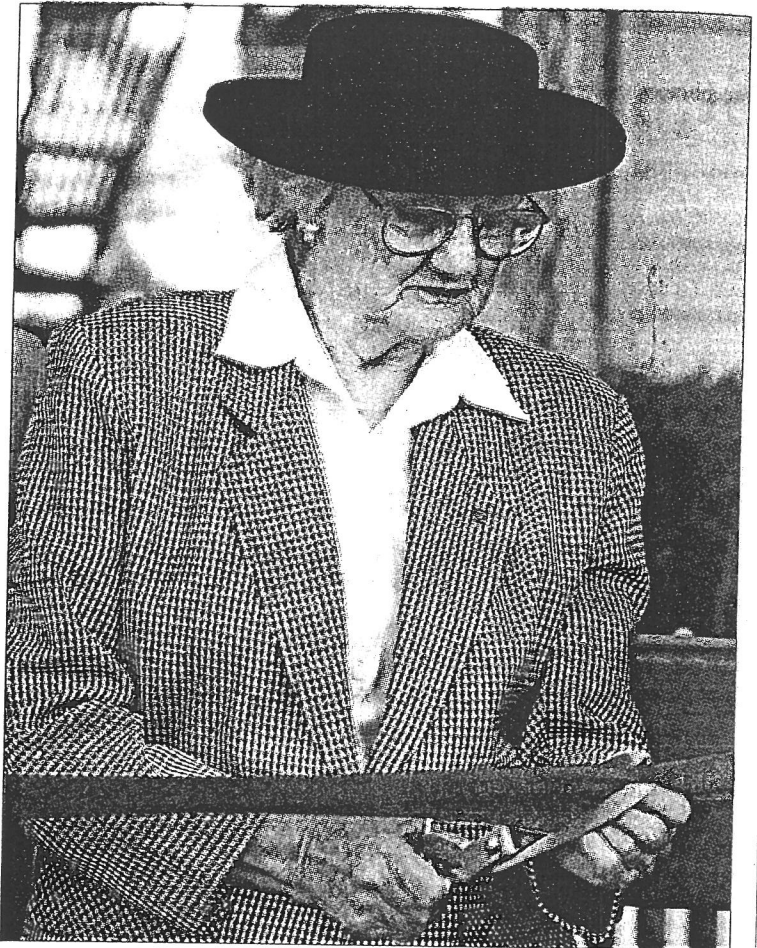


Staff Graphic

designated a Texas Historic Landmark. Since then, the Junior League of Richardson has maintained it and provided tours.

City officials, with the help of the Junior League, determined in 1998 that the structure's deterioration could jeopardize the home in a few years.

The city undertook major renovations to correct the effects



LAWRENCE JENKINS/Staff Photographer

Billye Meyer cuts the ribbon at the reopening of Miss Belle's Place. The house has stood since about 1886.

of aging and weather and restore it to its period condition.

With the repairs complete, crews with the city and the Junior League worked on details inside and out. The service organization will continue to focus on minor

interior projects and on maintaining the historical aspects of Miss Belle's Place.

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