



## IDENTIFICATION

Street Address: 425 Second Street, N. E.  
 Map and Parcel: 33-85  
 Census Track & Block:  
 Present Owner: Nellie Herrmon Robinson  
 Address: 425 Second Street, N.E.  
 Present Use: Residence  
 Original Owner: R. Merritte Robinson  
 Original Use: Residence

## BASE DATA

Historic Name: R. Merritte Robinson House  
 Date/Period: 1911  
 Style: Victorian  
 Height to Cornice:  
 Height in Stories: 2  
 Present Zoning: R-3  
 Land Area (sq.ft.): 45.9' x 90' (4095 sp. ft.)  
 Assessed Value (land + imp.):

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

This handsome 2-storey house with its curved veranda is beautifully adapted to its corner lot. It is two bays wide and double pile, built of brick laid in 5-course American-with-Flemish bond, and set on a high foundation. It has a medium-pitched slate hip roof with planes of the roof continuing into gables over projecting bays on the facade and both sides of the house. Each gable has a small segmental-arched casement window at the attic level. There is a hip-roofed extension over a shall projection at the rear. The roof has projecting eaves and verges, and a boxed cornice with returns, with modillions and a plain frieze. A T-shaped capped interior chimney is centered on the rear wall. Windows are double-sash, 1-over-1 light, with wooden sills, moulded surrounds, and louvered shutters. Those at the first level and at the second level under the gables are segmental-arched; others at the second level are flat-arched. The projecting bay on the facade is semi-octagonal with a pair of windows in the center and single ones at the sides. There are 2-light, segmental-arched casement windows at the basement level. A one-storey veranda extends across the facade and curves gracefully around each side to a side entrance in the projecting bay. It has a nearly flat hip roof covered with standing-seam tin with matching cornice and plain frieze, supported by eight Ionic columns with Colonial Revival balustrade. The double entrance doors in the northern bay have one light over a low panel, with one-light sidelights and rectangular transom under a segmental arch. All have beveled glass. A 2-flight open stair with square newels and turned balusters rises from the

entrance hall in the NE corner of the house. The back porch with spool balustrade has been enclosed.

## HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

R. Merritte Robinson purchased this lot in 1910 (City DB 21-164) and built the house the next year. It was designed and built by Via. Mr. Robinson still lives in the house which has been her home for 68 years.  
 Additional Reference: City WB 12-58.

## GRAPHICS

## CONDITIONS

Good

## SOURCES

City Records  
 Mrs. R. Merritte Robinson (Nellie Herrmon Robinson)



425 NE 2nd St



**MRS. NELLIE ROBINSON IN HER GARDEN BEHIND SECOND STREET HOME**  
She Has Stuck to Flowers over the Years, Vegetables 'Take Up Too Much Room'

Progress Photos by John Atkins

## City Woman Tends 'Friendship' Garden For Nearly 70 Years

By Lenny Ganger  
of The Progress Staff

In this age of throw-away technology with its none-too-pleasing reputation for sterility, there's something to be said for things that last. Especially living things.

Mrs. Nellie Robinson, who will be 88 next April, has been tending her garden downtown on Second Street for 67 years, small and enclosed behind the house her husband built to bring her home to after their honeymoon in 1911.

She started a garden right away, probably because her mother of German descent had kept a lovely array of flowers all around the porch on their Garret Street home in picturesque pots she repainted every spring, a glorious bouquet Mrs. Robinson remembers well.

"I have a little bit of everything... zinnias, marigolds, roses mostly," she said in an interview on her gracious porch

one hazy summer morning this week.

Her eyes sparkle as she speaks about "magic lillies," which come up just after the first hard rain in August.

"You look out and you don't see a thing. The next morning they're up that high," she says, indicating about half a foot with her agile hands.

In the first years of her marriage, she and her husband kept fruit trees and a grape arbor, until her husband's grocery business on Main Street (before it was East Main) kept them too busy to do the necessary pruning.

Since then, she's kept mostly flowers in her full, small garden. "I like to keep something blooming all year round."

Last summer, she experimented with her first vegetable, and had tremendous success with a hefty tomato plant in the corner of her rose bed.

With humility, she gives credit not to her obvious green thumb, but to the "Big Boy" plant itself.

"It was a good variety, I think. It grew in little clusters, like.

"I usually don't fool with vegetables because they take up too much room," she said.

**'I hate to see the weeds destroy the look of the flowers.'**

"But this one tomato plant... it grew clear above my head."

Mrs. Robinson appears a good deal younger than her 87

"friendship garden" for so long.

The flowers give her great pleasure indoors as well.

"Whenever I need a bouquet, I always have something to fall back on."

Mrs. Robinson's front porch is a great achievement, with its joyous array of hanging plants which makes for a peaceful setting for quiet summer get-togethers with family and friends.

Each fall, after the first frost, Mrs. Robinson marks the coming season by bringing the plants into a small porch off the kitchen which she and her husband had enclosed with glass for maximum light from the sun. It contains a small heater which keeps the plants protected during winter's freezing temperatures.

Their choice to so protect these living, growing "friends" reflects a continuity of concern which touches back to Mrs. Robinson's childhood, when she remembers her mother planting her plants in a pit in the yard, covered with six panes of glass.

On especially bitter days, the family would carpets or rugs over the to keep the plants alive.

Mrs. Robinson's garden home is a generous, quiet place that has seen many changes over the years.

There was a time when she feared for the neighborhood's quiet integrity, and says she is overjoyed that the action she signed to maintain lower residential density in the First Street neighborhood through the City Planning Commission.







**PORCH SWEEPS AROUND HOUSE**  
It Makes a Peaceful Setting for Family, Friends

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Mrs. Robinson appears a good deal younger than her 87 years. Both she and her doctor are sure her exemplary health are due in part to the exercise she has gotten in her garden over the years, and still continues (with more rests in between) today.

"I do a little every day. I'll go out and start sweeping the walk out back, and before you know it I'll start pulling up weeds until I have a whole basketful!" she laughs.

"I hate to see the weeds destroy the look of the flowers," many of which originally were given to her by friends, whose presence constantly come to mind whenever she plucks the choking weeds.

Which is why she called it her

Mrs. Robinson's garden. Her home is a generous, quiet place that has seen many changes over the years.

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During the years she worked as a cashier and bookkeeper at the Southern Market with her husband, Mrs. Robinson says that the street she lives on housed the Presbyterian minister until his very old age, a schoolteacher who taught her, and Robinson for many years was growing up.

Her two sisters and their families lived next door and in the house behind her, making a very pleasant community family of sorts, for her.

"I like to see things grow. We've always been blessed with nice neighbors," she said.

"This is a nice, quiet neighborhood. They respect one another," she said.

