

THE VISITOR

September 2023

The Congregational Church of Austin United Church of Christ

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Rev. Ginny Brown Daniel, Interim Pastor

Greetings, Congregational UCC of Austin! I am so excited to begin our interim ministry together! I have known about you for more than 20 years throughout my time in the South Central Conference. Your faithful witness to stand with the most vulnerable in Austin has made a lasting impression on so many people. Thank you! This is such an exciting time to be a part of the CCA community! You have courageously voted to do something different with your church building that will continue your legacy of standing with the most vulnerable in Austin for many decades to come. Thank you!

One of my favorite times of ministry is at the very beginning when we get to share our lives with one another and commit to supporting each other through our journey together. I imagine the early church did this exceptionally well as they met in people's homes. As they ate food and worshipped together, they learned more about each other so that in moments of crisis, they could care for one another more deeply. And in the moments of conflict, it was their strong relationship that enabled them to work through their challenges with love and respect. That is what excites me as we begin our ministry together: getting to know each other and develop relationships so that when we face challenges and conflict, we can build on what we have already cultivated as we share and learn more about one another. And of course, we can't forget to do so over food like Pat's delicious cakes or a meal together.

I am aware that we may be creating a new interim ministry model as I live in Spring (north of Houston) and will work with a hybrid of remote virtual meetings/conversations along with travelling to Austin for worship on Sundays and one day during the week. I am always available via my cell phone which is 832-326-3582. Please feel free to text me any time! As we get to know one another, I thought I would share a list of 10 things about me that stretch beyond my role as your Interim Pastor! Enjoy!

1. I have been practicing yoga since 1999! It is my spiritual nourishment. I recently started doing hot yoga, which I love (except in 100+ degree weather).
2. My husband, David, owns a business that makes computerized Christmas lights (think of the tv show, Christmas Lights Fight). And no, we don't have elaborate Christmas light displays every year!
3. I have 2 dogs that have taught me how different dogs can be in their personalities: Titan is a chihuahua, who loves people and chasing lasers; Sissy is a mix who is a wonderful guard dog and skittish around new people. She has lots of energy in the morning and Titan is definitely a night-owl dog!
4. I love Auburn football! When I grew up in Auburn, my grandmother was a professor and had season tickets so we would go to all the games. My dad still has season tickets, and we are going to the Auburn-Texas A&M game next month!
5. My husband and I are hosting an exchange student this year from Milan, Italy. His name is Gabriele and he loves fashion and cooking us his favorite pasta dishes!
6. I love to binge watch tv! Gabriele, David, and I are currently watching Glee together. David and I have been watching MASH from the beginning (we're in season 10!)
7. When I was a candidate for the Texas House of Representatives, my spiritual mantra was Philippians 4:13: *I can do all things through Sophia Wisdom, who strengthens me* (I choose Jesus' expression of Sophia Wisdom to help me campaign). This was my grandmother's favorite passage. I found strength from this verse that on my hardest moments that I was not alone!

8. I have a younger sister, Amanda, and wonderful 12-year old niece, Mattie Anne, and amazing 7-year old nephew, Russell Conner. Mattie is a wonderful artist and Russ and I love to read! They all live in Auburn, Alabama, across town from my dad.
9. For my birthday a few weeks ago, I treated myself to stained glass art classes. I have found that I love the creativity and problem solving that comes in this art form!
10. My mother, Judie Brown, died earlier this year, and I am in the midst of grieving her death and celebrating God's image in her life and all of creation. I have had beautiful moments with my dad, sister, and her children. She loved her family, playing scrabble, and a wonderful antique sale (she once owned an antique mall).

October Visitor Deadline September 23, 2023

Church Leadership

Trustee's Chair	Kevin Dietz
Deacon's Chair	John Goff
Moderator	Liz Nash
Treasurer	Pam Tucker
Financial Secretary	Jaime Hadley
Children's Sunday School	Kay Pruett
Youth Sunday School	Open
Clerk	Reuel Nash
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Member-at-Large	Bill Beardall
Pastor	Ginny Brown Daniel
Dir. of Online Ministries	Britt Hicks
Director of Music	Laura Martin

Personals by Pat Oakes

A farewell to transitional Pastor **Amelia Fulbright** and her family was held on Sunday, August 20, after 2 years of hard work and dedication to the transition process as we move forward. Particularly inspiring was her work with important issues during the recent legislative session. During the service, **CJ Wood** on behalf of the Deacons and the congregation presented gifts to **Vivienne** and **George** and gift cards to **Jonathan** and **Amelia**.



8/20/23 Jonathan and Pastor Amelia looking on while CJ as a Deacon presented Bibles to Vivienne and George

each line. For example," **This is the day our God has made! So come let us rejoice throughout our worship and be glad in it! Woohoo!**" Sarah Darter was the usher and liturgist, **Bill Beardall, Warinda Harris,** and Rev. **Ginny** led the liturgy for the blessing of the interim pastor and teacher. The choir led by **Laura Martin** sang a beautiful arrangement of "Abide With Me," and **Lucy Erda** sang "The Prayer of St. Francis" as the offertory. **Ginny's** sermon titled "Identity of the Courageous Kind" spoke to the issues we face as we go through our continuing transition. Following the service and joys and concerns there was a lovely reception in the fellowship room.



8/27/23 New interim pastor Ginny Brown Daniel leading her first service at the church



8/20/23 Stephen Russell and Pastor Amelia, Roberto Hernandez - Geer with Sebastian, Pam Tucker, Jaime Hadley, Laura Martin enjoying goodies during the farewell coffee hour for Amelia

On Sunday, August 27th, it was time to welcome our new interim pastor, Rev. Dr. **Ginny Brown Daniel**, to the church. We had a lively start with the call to worship which included the pastor and congregation cheering "Woohoo" at the end of



8/27/23 Interim pastor Ginny having an animated conversation with Jonathan Geer, Sara Ross, and Roberto Hernandez after the service

Personals by Pat Oakes

Anya Toskey reports, "On a nice, windy, 105 degree-at-the-peak-of-the-day, Saturday, 8/12/23 some seven CCA folks plus a CCA alum showed up to table pride for the first time in CCA history! In chronological order, **Lynn Chavarria**, **Stephen Russell**, **Salvatore Loverno** (Stephen's professor friend visiting from Italy), **Anya Toskey**, **Liz** and **Reuel Nash**, **Sarah Darter**, and **Warinda Harris** all held down the fort. Together, they helped to "Keep Austin Queer'd" and planted some seeds with **Britt's** fan favorite dinosaur sticker/shirt, Another Evangelical Podcast stickers, rainbow bracelet kits (**Sarah's** idea), and some sneaky papers about where folks can find a certain "quirky" church 'round these parts.



8/12/23 Stephen Russell, Lynn Chavarria, Salvatore Loverno (all the way from Italy), and Anya Toskey at the CCA PRIDE booth at Festival Gardens. Britt designed the t-shirts that Stephen and Anya are wearing



8/12/23 Lynn Chavarria looking fresh as a daisy at the PRIDE celebration at Festival Gardens



8/12/23 Warinda Harris and Sarah Darter working hard at the PRIDE celebration at Festival Gardens

Kay Pruett retired on July 31, 2023, after teaching for 22 years at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Exploring what comes next in her life, she spent 10 days at Community First! Village here in Austin. She first heard about Community First! Village about 1 1/2 years ago during her spring break. She went with a group from St. James Episcopal Church which had set up a tour—and found that she was impressed by how they created community there and how at home and comfortable she felt there. Like so many of us, she was just out of COVID and felt done with living alone. She really was interested in the community aspect. Her family was all grown and gone, and she loved the emphasis on acceptance and the family feel. She wished she could live there, too, and was surprised to learn that some people live there as “missional” neighbors. Missionals are folks who have never been homeless but who live at Community First! Village as neighbors, buying their own homes to locate there. To get more involved, Kay started going to the Friday night movies which provided more tours. One of the tour guides invited the whole tour to his community-wide birthday party the following week, and **Kay** decided to go. There she met a missional neighbor who invited her to a prospective missionals meeting. The next step was to attend missional-led activities, such as Thursday evening pickleball and submit an application. She put in her application last fall, had an interview in December, and has a mentor who is working with her now—answering questions and showing her the ropes. Kay felt she was treated like a queen during her stay and was excited to invite friends to come out

Personals
by Pat Oakes

to see her and the community. While there she stayed in a park model recreational vehicle which had a living room, kitchen, bathroom, a bedroom and a split loft (not tall enough to stand in, but good sleeping space). Several friends, including our own **Joy Penticuff**, did come out during the 10 days and **Kay** enjoyed showing them around. During her visit, there was a community wide summer music festival that happened to fall on **Kay's** birthday. It felt very special to have the whole gathered community sing happy birthday to her.

Jen Howicz is pleased to share, "**Jim** and I drove up to Columbia, Missouri, the first weekend of August to help **Tess** move into her new dorm for her junior year at University of Missouri. It never ceases to amaze the amount of stuff a college student can fit into a small dorm room... We had a great weekend together and had the opportunity to attend services at the Missouri United Methodist Church where **Tess** works as a nursery assistant and as an intern for The Crew/Neighborhood, MUMC's group supporting LGBTQIA students (very similar to UBC's The Labyrinth, founded by **Amelia** and currently led by Rev. **Shelby Nowland**). Needless to say, the weather was heavenly - in the 80's, and we got to enjoy a few rain showers along the way."



8/5/23 Jen and Jim Howicz getting their daughter Tess installed in her dorm at Mizzou

In early August, **Bill Campbell** and **Victoria Li** joined the **Li's** family of 28 (including Victoria's brother and two sisters) in Palo Alto, CA, to celebrate two special birthdays -- **Victoria's** father's 100th birthday and her mother's 90th birthday, along with Mr. and Mrs. **Li's** close friends from their church

Fellowship. A wonderful moment occurred when Mr. **Li**, the centenarian, walked into the party to the music of "Rocky." He was using a cane, but he gets around quite well. **Lillian** could only be there for about 30 hours as she in doing her surgery rotation in medical school on the East coast. They all had a wonderful time.



8/5/23 Great-grandson Lucas on the left was holding the Happy Birthday banner for Great-grandfather Li.



8/5/23 Celebrants at a noteworthy birthday party 1-4, back to front—Sid, Flynn, and Kimberly, Lillian, Bill and Victoria, Evelyn, Jocelyn, and Andy, Mr. and Mrs. Li

Photos cont. on next page

Personals by Pat Oakes



8/5/23 The youngest person at the party greeting the oldest

August 17th and says he loves it and the professors do not spend any time trying to make sure people are paying attention, so the lectures are much more interesting. My fingers are crossed for him!" Ours are, too, **Pam!**



8/16/23 Harrison Tucker (right) and his friend Atticus from Austin who is also a freshman at ASU

Pam Tucker took **Harrison** to Arizona State University in Tempe on August 12th to start his freshman year. He was so excited he did not think he would be able to sleep the first night. **Pam** says, "We flew to Phoenix for his move in at 3 pm and took a ride share to campus with two large suitcases and one duffle. He checked in and we found his dorm and got him settled in. I made his bed while he unpacked. I noticed that he just stuffed things from his suitcase into the drawers, so nothing ended up being folded! That's his choice and I didn't say a thing. As we were starting to leave the dorm to find food, his good friend, Atticus, from St. Francis School showed up looking for **Harrison**. They are both freshman and both love Ultimate Frisbee. They are the same height, have the same body build, and the same hair color, but their faces look very different (see picture). Last spring, I went to see **Harrison** play an Ultimate game and I saw him on the sideline wearing his jersey with **Tucker** on the back. I walked up to him to say hello and was surprised to see that it was **Atticus**. They look so much alike from the back. From the dorm we went to the closest cafeteria for some food. Previously, I had asked Harrison if he wanted me to stay to explore campus with him or if he wanted me to leave after getting him settled in. He chose the latter, so after eating, I headed back to the airport to come home. In the summer he was in contact with the players on the ASU Ultimate team and getting to know them a little bit. I'm sure he has gotten together with them to practice, so he should be meeting some new people. He started classes on

It is hard to believe that **Isabella Dietz** is already a senior Trinity University in San Antonio. On Saturday, August 19th, her parents **Kevin** and **Rachel Dietz** delivered **Rachel** to her dorm at Trinity. It was a week of both sorrow and pride as **Rachel's** mom, **Ellen Rasche Pecoul**, who had been quite ill, died on Thursday morning, August 17th. Her service will be held on September 23rd at Central St. Matthew's UCC in New Orleans, LA.

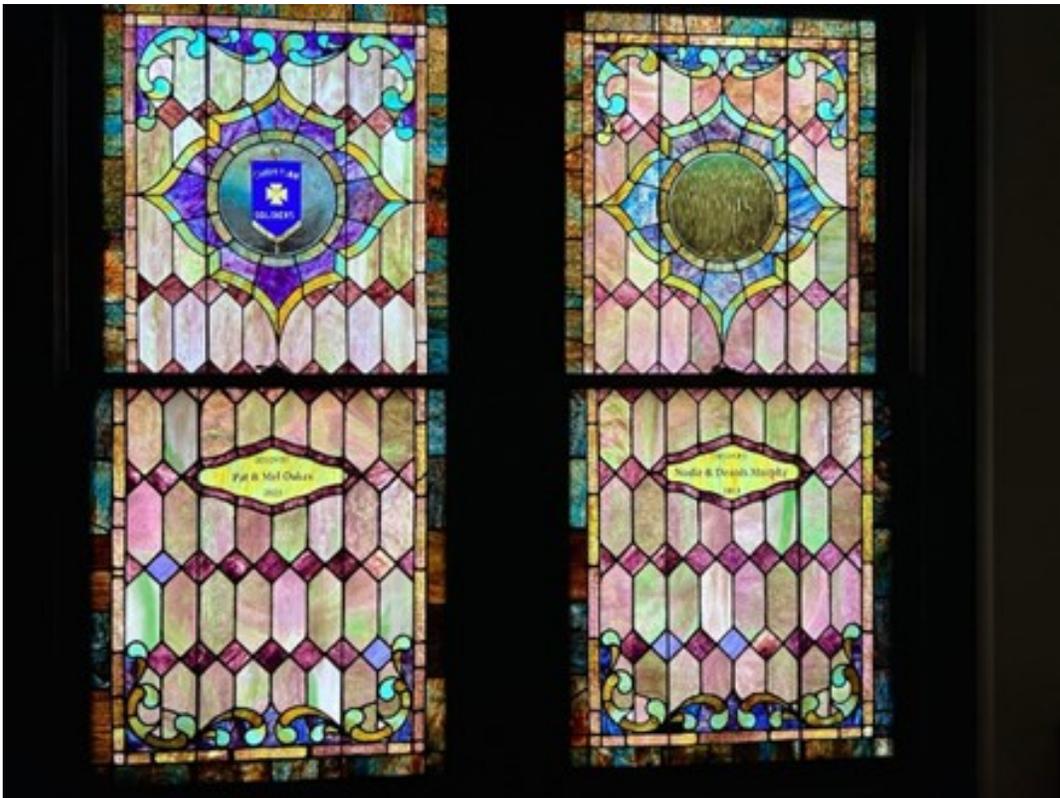


8/19/2023 Isabella Dietz with her parents Rachel and Kevin as Isabella was getting moved into her dorm at Trinity University in San Antonio

Personals by Pat Oakes

Nodie Murphy, as of July 27th, has now officially moved to San Antonio where she is living with her daughter **Sarah** and son-in-law **Larbi**, her granddaughter **Dehbia** and her grandson **Ryan**. It has been a hard time for her to move from the home where she and much-mourned **Dennis** lived in Round Rock for so many years, but she is gradually getting settled in. Offspring **Sarah**, **Seth** and **Ned** and other family members helped in the whole process as **Nodie** has had to downsize a great deal. She has been able to join us online for the church services and for joys and concerns and has also come to the August Zoom Women's Book Club. We had all hoped to see Nodie in person on Sunday, July 23rd, just before she moved, but she was not feeling well that day. She did not know that a great celebration had been planned for her recognizing her many contributions to the church over the years as choir director, music chair, talent show organizer and memorable song creator honoring birthdays, anniversaries, and other special events in the lives of our church members. The late **Ruth Koenig** called these events "being **Nodied**"- the perfect verb. Nodie would love to hear

from you. Her new address is 1430 Triple Crown Lane, San Antonio, TX 78248 and her e-mail address is nodienice@gmail.com. Actually, a funny thing happened on the way to July 23rd. Months before, **Mel Oakes** had had the idea that **Nodie** and **Pat** should be honored by the church for all their contributions. He made the recommendation to **Pam Tucker** who presented it to Trustees and Deacons who agreed. **Mel** reported this to **Dennis** and he was very pleased. With **Dennis's** sudden death in early **December**, the Deacons decided to honor **Dennis** for all of his many contributions, too, and very much unbeknownst to **Mel**, to honor him, too. The **Oakeses** arrived at the church in 1964, the **Murphy** family in 1980 and quickly became involved with the whole congregation. You can see the beautiful medallions on the trio side of the sanctuary. **Mel**, **Pat** (who boo-hoed through the rest of the service) and **Nodie** express their great appreciation to the Trustees and Deacons for this great honor and to **Barbara Burnham**, **Dave Ross** and **Pam Tucker** who spoke at the presentation. It is a joy to know that the **Murphys** and the **Oakeses**, longtime dear friends, will be side by side for many years to come.



7/23/23 Pat and Mel Oakes and Nodie and Dennis Murphy were honored at church with their names being added to medallions on two stained glass windows at the church

Personals by Pat Oakes

Joy Penticuff writes, “**Michael** and I were married on August 11th, 1973, at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Norman, Oklahoma. **Michael’s** father, The Rev. **David Penticuff**, conducted the marriage ceremony. At the time, we were graduate students. Our graduate school friends were deeply skeptical that the marriage would last beyond six months. My sisters, **Gloria**, from Columbia SC, **Beth**, from Summerton SC, and **Ann**, from Mooresville, NC, came. Also, my Aunt **May** from Manning and Sullivan’s Island, SC, came. Our daughter **Rachel** arranged the 50th anniversary event, which was a brunch on Saturday, August 12th, at Mattie’s (formerly Green Pastures). **Michael** and I were totally shocked that **Rachel** had arranged such a wonderful celebration. Friends who attended included **Larry Wolfe**, our best man, and people with whom we’ve been close for many decades. **Michael** wore the tuxedo his parents gave him as a high school graduation present. I tried to get into my wedding dress but just couldn’t get it to zip up—no way. We were all quite miffed that **Michael’s** old tuxedo fit him perfectly. It was a lovely event and the venue was kept secret from us—as was the guest list—and we followed as **Rachel** drove to Matt’s El Rancho. She called us and said something was wrong and she’d have to check with her friend **Sophie** (who helped make arrangements). Then she said that she had made a mistake and we needed to go elsewhere. (I would have been perfectly content for the venue to have been Matt’s). Then we followed her to the former Green Pastures — Mattie’s. Oh my goodness!!!! There were about 30 old friends we’ve been close to for years. A seated brunch and open bar. A good time was had by all. An additional highlight was when Aunt **May** and my sisters (and sister **Ann’s** friend Greg also from Mooresville) came out with me to the barn and met Teddy.”



8/23 Ann, Greg, Beth, Gloria, Aunt May, and Joy holding Teddy, Joy’s new horse



8/12/23 Michael and Joy Penticuff looking particularly elegant at their 50th wedding anniversary party at Mattie’s

Once again, the amazing **Debby Kohrt**, a mostly retired nurse, participated in the Smiles International Association work for the 8th time in Cabo San Lucas from August 5th-12th. That week marked the one-year anniversary of her son **Jarod’s** death in a terrible automobile accident. **Debby**, who learned the dreadful news aboard the ship, thought about not going, but she has such wonderful friends in the in the Smiles group, she decided she would go, knowing she would be surrounded by the loving care of her friends. The group works on all sorts of facial surgeries. They treated 21 children involving 38 procedures—some children having more than one issue to be dealt with. The only drawback was the oppressive humidity when they were out and about.



8/6/23 Debby Kohrt (front row left) and the staff for the Smiles International project in Cabo san Lucas

Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes



8/6/23 The nursing staff for children who need surgery to fix issues like cleft palate—Debby Kohrt standing between the sign and the tall man on the right

Rich Thompson was pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church of Austin from 1986 to 1995 and was an interim pastor for us twice after he retired September – December 1995 and again from January – June 2001. He and his wife **Jane** retired to Ft. Collins, CO, several years ago. **Rich** celebrated his 90th birthday with a big party -- 73 folks in attendance—on Saturday, August 12th. They live in a senior community and reserved the party pavilion and hired a band. **Jane's** daughter did the organizing and **Rich's** cousin **Rick Ormsby** from Ohio was an invaluable help. **Rick** visits often as **Rich** needs a lot of help these days—he uses a walker and a wheelchair to get around nowadays.



8/12/23 Rich Thompson on his 90th birthday with granddaughter Milena visiting from Germany on her 25th birthday!

Mel Oakes and **Pam Tucker** recently spent a very warm Saturday morning working on getting a sump pump in the lower stairwell of the TOWERY wing to work properly. **Mel** could not resist taking a picture of “sump pump **Pam**” hard at work, both continuing the tradition of the Congregational Construction Company. Looking forward to a progress report next month.



8/19/23 Sump Pump Pam in the stairwell at church working on the sump pump with Mel Oakes

It was great to see **René Slataper** at church on the 27th, the day before he was to leave for New York City—Brooklyn to be more precise. He will be job hunting but knows that there are UCC folks in that area. We wish you well, **René!**



8/27/23 René Slataper

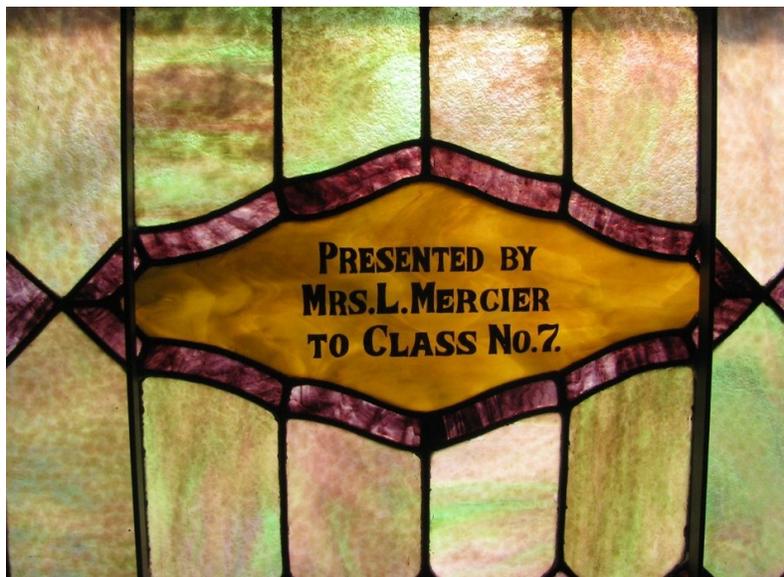
Personals (cont)
by Pat Oakes

Don Miles, clearly the patriarch of this group, reports that he really enjoyed being at the wedding of one of his grandsons. The reception was held at the home of President **Woodrow Wilson** (next door to **Jeff Bezos**) in Washington, DC, on August 19. We miss you, **Don**, but thanks for keeping in touch from Liberty, Missouri!



History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes

When the new medallions honoring the **Murphys** and the **Oakeses** were unveiled on July 24th, I couldn't remember who had been occupying that space and where the old medallions are located now. The 2 Mercier medallions have a new home and are located in the Fellowship Hall--easy to find if you look at the fireplace and then look to your right.



Cont. on next page

History Corner by Pat & Mel Oakes, cont.

The Mrs. L. Mercier, Class No. 7 Window

Mrs. L. Mercier was the wife of Louis Mercier. She was Virginia “Virgie” A. Peck Mercier. The A. may have been Antoinette after her mother.

Louis was born May 15, 1852, in Buckingham, Quebec, Canada (?). In 1891, he was a grocer in Austin. See his ad at right.

In 1910, he was a carpenter and contractor. In a census record, Louis said he immigrated to the US in 1856. If true, he would have come at the age of four. On his death certificate, it says Louis had lived 30 years in Austin. This is not correct, as he appears in an 1887 Austin directory.



L. MERCIER,
DEALER IN
Staple and Fancy Groceries
COUNTRY PRODUCE, BUTTER, POULTRY AND EGGS,
CROCKERY, GLASSWARE, Etc.
Free and Prompt Delivery. 205 WEST SIXTH STREET.

Virginia was born in Pennsylvania on August 5, 1860. She was the daughter of Alfred and Marie Antoinette White Peck. Alfred was born in Pennsylvania, and Marie in New York. In 1870, the family was in Binghamton Ward 1, Broome, New York. Alfred was a house builder. They had two daughters, Jennie T. and Virginia A. Jennie is seven years older than Virgie. Both daughters are listed as being born in New York, however, all later records report Virgie born in Pennsylvania.

The Peck family came to Austin about 1871. They are in the 1880 census, where Alfred is listed as a carpenter. Jennie was a dressmaker. Alfred died in 1896. Jennie married contractor, R. C. Lambie (1852–1931). After her marriage, she was always listed as Emogene T. Lambie (1853–1927). Virginia and Louis were married about 1881. They had a daughter, Jennie Marie, who was born March, 1891, in Austin. One census shows a cousin of Louis', Lucile Phelps, living with them. Their home was 96 Red River. Jennie married David Woods, a postal carrier. They continued to live in the family home. Virginia died June 19, 1925, at the age of 64. Her death certificate informant was Mrs. J. D. Miller. Louis lived eight years longer, dying December 26, 1933. They were both buried in Oak Wood Cemetery in Austin, Texas. It is likely that Louis was a Catholic.

