

DARLING'S BIRDCAGE

The Storied History of 1301 Broadway Street

Galveston, Texas

A 19th-Century Galveston Home With a Remarkable Story

At the corner of Broadway and 13th Street stands a residence whose history reaches back to Galveston's remarkable 19th century. Long known as **"Darling's Birdcage,"** the home has survived storms, relocation, generations of residents and more than a century of change on the island.

Today, 1301 Broadway is a contributing property within Galveston's celebrated **East End Historic District**, where its distinctive architecture remains part of one of Texas' most important collections of historic residential buildings.

THE DARLING YEARS

Historical research published by Galveston Monthly dates the house to **1878**, when **Curtis Ames Darling and his wife, Sarah Anne Curtis Lubbock Darling**, built their new residence at **1416 Ball Street**.

Curtis Darling was a merchant with P.J. Willis & Brothers Dry Goods, part of the commercial world that helped make Galveston one of Texas' most important cities during the late 19th century.

The home reportedly cost **\$1,700 to construct**.

Its architecture immediately set it apart. The prominent mansard roof was reportedly an unusual sight in Galveston and may have reflected architectural influences from Darling's native Massachusetts. The distinctive appearance helped inspire the nickname that has followed the house through generations:

"Darling's Birdcage"

AN ARCHITECTURAL ORIGINAL

The City of Galveston's historic resources survey identifies 1301 Broadway as a **high-priority contributing property** in the East End Historic District.

The survey notes a remarkable combination of architectural influences, including:

Second Empire • Queen Anne • Italianate • Stick

Among the exterior elements identified by the historic survey are its mansard and flat roof forms, horizontal wood siding, double-hung windows, wood double-door entrance with transom, full-width front porch, chamfered posts, jig-sawn brackets, squared wood balusters and cast-iron fencing.

Inside, the home continues that sense of individuality. Rich wood floors, substantial doors and trim, decorative and stained glass, soaring ceilings, an elegant staircase, intricate millwork and distinctive period-inspired details give the rooms a character that could not easily be recreated today.

THE GREAT STORM OF 1900

Darling's Birdcage was still standing at its original Ball Street location when the catastrophic **Galveston Hurricane of 1900** struck the island.

Historical research recounts that Joseph Henry Hawley, then living in the house, wrote to his family after the storm.

The residence had suffered damage—the weather vane was bent, a chimney fell and damaged the porch roof, debris struck the east side and portions of the roof leaked—but the structure survived one of the deadliest natural disasters in American history.

Its survival became another chapter in an already remarkable Galveston story.

THE HOUSE THAT MOVED

In **1908**, the story took an extraordinary turn.

The Ball Street property was destined for a new residence, but Darling's Birdcage was not demolished. Instead, **Peterson B. Goodwyn and his wife, Emily Lucas Goodwyn**, acquired the frame house for the cost of moving it—reported as **\$500**.

The entire residence was relocated from **1416 Ball Street to 1301 Broadway**, where it was placed on a new foundation.

The Seller's Disclosure for the property independently records the home's relocation to its present site in 1908.

After the move, repairs were made to its chimneys and masonry. Historical research indicates that Goodwyn had the residence wired for electricity in **1911**, bringing a house born in Victorian Galveston into the electrical age.

More than a century later, it remains at the Broadway location to which it was moved.

GENERATIONS WITHIN ITS WALLS

Darling's Birdcage has been connected to an extraordinary succession of Galvestonians.

Its residents and owners included merchants, bankers, educators and families whose lives intersected with the island's commercial and social history.

Among them was **William Byrd Wallis**, who became a Galveston banker and was the uncle of Galveston-born filmmaker **King Vidor**.

The home was also associated with the Willis and Hawley families. Historical research notes a connection through Short Adam Willis to the family associated with what is now Galveston's famous **Moody Mansion**.

During the 1910s and 1920s, multiple generations of the Crain family called the house home.

In 1925, owners James Daniel and Ora Claitor raised the house and made repairs. When offered for sale several years later, it was advertised with three fireplaces, ivory woodwork, seven rooms, a garage and garden.

Eugene Cecil Arnold and his family eventually became some of the home's longest residents, occupying it for more than two decades.

Each generation added another layer to the history of Darling's Birdcage.

PART OF GALVESTON'S EAST END

The setting is nearly as significant as the house itself.

Galveston's **East End Historic District** developed as the island's first residential neighborhood. The City of Galveston notes that it became the city's first locally designated historic district in **1971**.

The district is also recognized through the National Register of Historic Places and as a **National Historic Landmark district**, reflecting the national importance of its architecture and social history.

Its streets contain an exceptional collection of 19th- and early-20th-century residences representing the prosperity, craftsmanship and architectural ambition of historic Galveston.

At 1301 Broadway, Darling's Birdcage contributes its own unmistakable silhouette to that streetscape.

A HOME THAT CONTINUES TO EVOLVE

Today the residence contains approximately **2,177 square feet with three bedrooms and two full baths**, according to current MLS information.

Its historic personality remains evident throughout—from its wood floors, decorative glass and substantial millwork to its staircase, fireplace, distinctive kitchen and highly individual interior spaces.

Modern conveniences have been incorporated alongside that historic character, including central HVAC, a tankless water heater and an equipped kitchen. Outside are a fenced yard, deck, mature landscaping and detached two-car garage.

The result is not a reproduction of historic Galveston.

It is an authentic house that has evolved with Galveston.

MORE THAN A HOUSE

Few residences can tell a story quite like 1301 Broadway.

It began on another Galveston street in the 19th century. It witnessed the Great Storm of 1900. It was lifted from its original site and transported to Broadway in 1908. It welcomed generations of island families and adapted as electricity, automobiles, air conditioning and modern life transformed the city around it.

And through it all, the house endured.

Darling's Birdcage is more than an architectural curiosity. It is a tangible chapter of Galveston history—and an opportunity for its next steward to become part of that continuing story.

A NOTE ON HISTORICAL DATES

Historical sources do not agree on a single construction date for the residence. Current MLS and syndicated property records report **1875**. Historical research published by Galveston Monthly identifies **1878**, while the City of Galveston's 2015 historic resources survey estimates the building at approximately **1890**.

Because historical buildings frequently have conflicting dates among tax, survey and archival records, this history presents those differences rather than treating one date as conclusively established.

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

Galveston Monthly — Kathleen Maca, *From 1878 to Today: The Storied Past of 1301 Broadway: Exploring the individuals who called Darling's Birdcage their home.*

City of Galveston Historic Sites Inventory — East End Neighborhood survey, 1301 Broadway, identifying the property as a high-priority contributing resource and documenting its architectural characteristics.

City of Galveston — History of the East End Historic District.

National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places — East End Historic District, National Register Information System ID 75001979.

2026 Houston-area MLS property record — Property specifications and current physical characteristics.

2026 Seller's Disclosure Notice — 1301 Broadway Street, including the documented 1908 relocation and additional property history.

Prepared as a historical overview of 1301 Broadway Street, Galveston, Texas. Historical information has been compiled from the sources identified above. Dates and details may vary among historical and public records.