

THE ROMACK'S

Living Legacy

ONE OF KATY'S FIRST ELECTED OFFICIALS AND LONG-TIME SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS CONTINUES TO IMPACT GENERATIONS

Written by Anna-Catherine Rose | Select photography by Anetrius Wallace

Ed Romack's granddaughter Cheryl Peschke (right) with her son Chad and his son Boone in front of the historic Romack home located at 5806 4th Street. The home is now Cottage Charm, an event venue in Historic Katy.



THE ROMACK HOME

THIS HOME WAS BUILT IN 1905 BY GILES ELAM ROMACK AND HIS WIFE EPHILUS ELIZABETH MILNOR ROMACK. AFTER THE DEATH OF EPHILUS ROMACK IN 1913 HARVEY EDWIN ROMACK MOVED INTO THIS HOME AND LIVED HERE UNTIL HIS DEATH IN JUNE, 1967. THIS HOME HAS NEVER BEEN MOVED. THE ONLY REMODELING DONE TO THIS HOME INCLUDES THE ENCLOSING OF A PORCH AND THE ADDITION OF TWO BATHS.

1988

Despite the sound of cars whizzing by on Grand Parkway, the Romack family remembers a time when rice fields and dirt roads abounded, bikes were the main method of transportation, and cars were only used for special occasions. And even though we are blessed with a multitude of high-achieving schools today, they recall a time when there was just one high school with a graduating class of 23.

AN EARLY KATY SETTLER

One of Katy's earliest settlers was Giles Romack, a carpenter who left Illinois in 1900 to explore farming in Katy. In 1905, Giles built the "Romack House" at 5806 4th Street. The Romack home still stands and is now the location of Cottage Charm, a well-known event venue in Katy. In addition, he also owned a furniture store downtown on 2nd Street with an undertaking business in the back. The furniture store was eventually passed down to Giles' son Harvey Edwin "H.E." or Ed Romack, who became a pillar of the Katy community.

A CORNERSTONE OF KATY

Ed Romack was heavily involved in giving back to Katy and served on the Katy ISD school board for 25 years, which is still the longest service record to date. During this time, he fought to keep the district open when they were threatened to close, working with officials to ensure state standards were met. When Katy was incorporated in 1945, Ed was one of the first three elected officials. He also served on the Katy City Council, Katy Rotary Club as Justice of the Peace, and as a charter member of the Katy Volunteer Fire Department in 1947.

Ed was the U.S. Selective Service Registrar (an unpaid position) for Western Harris County and all of Waller and Fort Bend counties, during WWI and again from 1940 (WWII) to 1962. President Kennedy honored Ed with a Presidential Proclamation in 1963 for his service to the U.S. He was also a member of distinction at First United Methodist Church of Katy for 36 years, helping construct its first brick sanctuary in 1939.

The Romack family in the 1890s. Pictured around their parents (from left to right) Eldon, Mary, Leroy, Rolland, Frank, Lucy, Ed, and Elmer.



Courtesy of the historical book, *Katy*, by Carol Adams



The city officially declared Ed Romack Day January 23, 1963. An oak tree was planted in the Katy VFW Park in his honor. Romack died in 1967 at the age of 84.

A FATHER'S PRESENCE

Despite the multitude of hats Ed Romack wore, family always took priority. Carol V. Romack Read, Ed's daughter, vividly remembers the consistency of her father's presence in her life. "He was always home when the kids were home, and he made sure I was doing my lessons," Carol says.

Ed's granddaughter, Cheryl G. Peschke, recalls them mowing the lawn together and him sitting down beside her under an oak tree at their home to play straight dominoes and checkers.

Ed remarried twice following the death of his first wife: to Buelah Dale in 1925 and then to Nellie Cliett in 1942, following Buelah's death in 1940. Altogether, the family grew to include five children and four grandchildren. Carol smiles and reflects, "We never use the word 'step.' We were all family, and I'm proud of the ways we bonded together."

A VISION REALIZED

It's said that the black coat and hat Ed wore when working at his funeral home were found hanging just as he left them when the business was eventually sold. People also say that up until his death in 1967, he still stopped and directed traffic for the Fire Department when a call came in.

A plaque near the oak tree planted in his honor will always remind Katyites that living with intention, for something bigger than ourselves, can have an impact that ripples throughout generations. **KM**

ANNA-CATHERINE ROSE graduated from Baylor University, and has lived in Katy for seven years with her husband and son.