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## The Houston Post Liendo - A house and a legend

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# Liendo: A house and a legend

*They couldn't restore it to the time of its most famous mistress, because among her eccentricities was the fact she owned precious little furniture...*

By GAY McFARLAND  
Post Homefurnishings Writer

Elisabet Ney, famous and eccentric sculptor (she refused to be called a sculptress) stood on the balcony of Liendo in 1873. She gazed out at the hundreds and hundreds of acres of rolling lush, green land, raised her arms heavenward and proclaimed, "This is where I'll live and die."

It was. She lived most of her life there and is buried on the grounds.

Liendo is part and parcel of a legend. A place where history lived. Every day.

It is the land four miles from Hempstead which Justo Liendo received as a landgrant in the 1820s.

It is the house which Col. Leonard W. Groce built in 1853, with imported-from-Georgia longleaf pine and made-on-the-plantation-by-slaves Brazos bricks. The name Liendo was retained because of its melodic sound.

It is the house in which Dr. Edmund Montgomery and his wife Elisabet Ney lived. The site on which

a confederate recruiting camp was located. A campsite for Gen. Custer. A place for sumptuous parties and a place where Texas patriots like Sam Houston came to call.

The home now belongs to Phyllis and Carl Detering. They bought the property 14 years ago "without any grand plans for restoration. We weren't looking for a house to restore.

We needed a place for our cattle. But we certainly weren't going to tear the house down and we decided to restore it to its grand period—the ante-bellum period."

The home was opened for a private party Wednesday evening for people attending the Texans Associated for Nutrition Advance workshop so "some of the immigrants to Texas could share in the cultural and scientific roots of Texas," said Dr. Buford Nichols, president of TANA, associate professor of pediatrics and physiology at Baylor College of Medicine and chief of nutrition and gastroenterology of Texas Children's Hospital. Nichols is also a "disciple" of Dr. Montgomery's work.

Please see Liendo/page 3B



Things you should know about those  
'worthless' old stocks you have

# Liendo...

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The Deterings have used incredible furnishings in the house. Furniture which complements the 11-foot ceilings and the graciously restored curves and architectural interests of the house. The documented Steinway piano is solid rosewood. The harp in the music room has been proclaimed by experts as "one of the finest." The headboards in the bedrooms stretch toward the high ceilings—but even as massive as they are—they don't touch the ceilings. Much of the hardware is original although some of it was carefully duplicated. Even the shutters on the house are original. The Deterings have been careful. They haven't replaced the fine old windows with sheets of plate glass. Indeed, they tried to replace it with old glass (because many of the windows were broken) but had to resort to newer glass because the "old glass has no resiliency." They did air-condition and heat the house "which is acceptable because the furniture and wood inside would deteriorate if we didn't — not to mention the people!" said Phyllis Detering. "We have come under fire from some people," she said of the designated Texas historical landmark "because we didn't restore the house to the period of Elisabeth Ney and Dr. Montgomery. That would have been almost impossible because they had very little furniture. Besides, we felt it much more important to restore the house to its original, happy period—the 1853 era."

Phyllis Detering and Buford Nichols spoke to the group who had gathered at the house about the two most famous people who had lived there, Ney and Montgomery. And the tales are wonderful.

Ney was a forerunner of the liberated woman. She was never known as Mrs. Mont-

gomery. She retained her maiden name ("Although they WERE married—I like to make that clear," said Phyllis Detering) and was referred to by Dr. Montgomery as 'Miss Ney' or 'My best friend.' She did the sculpture of Arthur Schopenhauer (a German philosopher who wasn't, to say the least, wild about women) and a lifesize sculpting of Ludwig of Bavaria. She maintained a studio in Austin. And it is said, named one of her sons Arthur after Schopenhauer.

Her son Arthur died as a child of diphtheria. And Ney took his body upstairs, did a plaster mold of his lifeless body and then cremated him. In the downstairs living room fireplace. She also dressed her son Lorne in "a toga—which didn't make him altogether popular in six Shooter Junction as Hempstead was called," said Phyllis Detering. "Poor Lorne wanted to be somebody big. So he joined Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. But before he could storm San Juan, he got the measles. He was buried in a pauper's grave. But as his children learned the importance of their grandparents and consequently of their father they had his body exhumed from the pauper's grave in Austin and had him buried in Arlington.

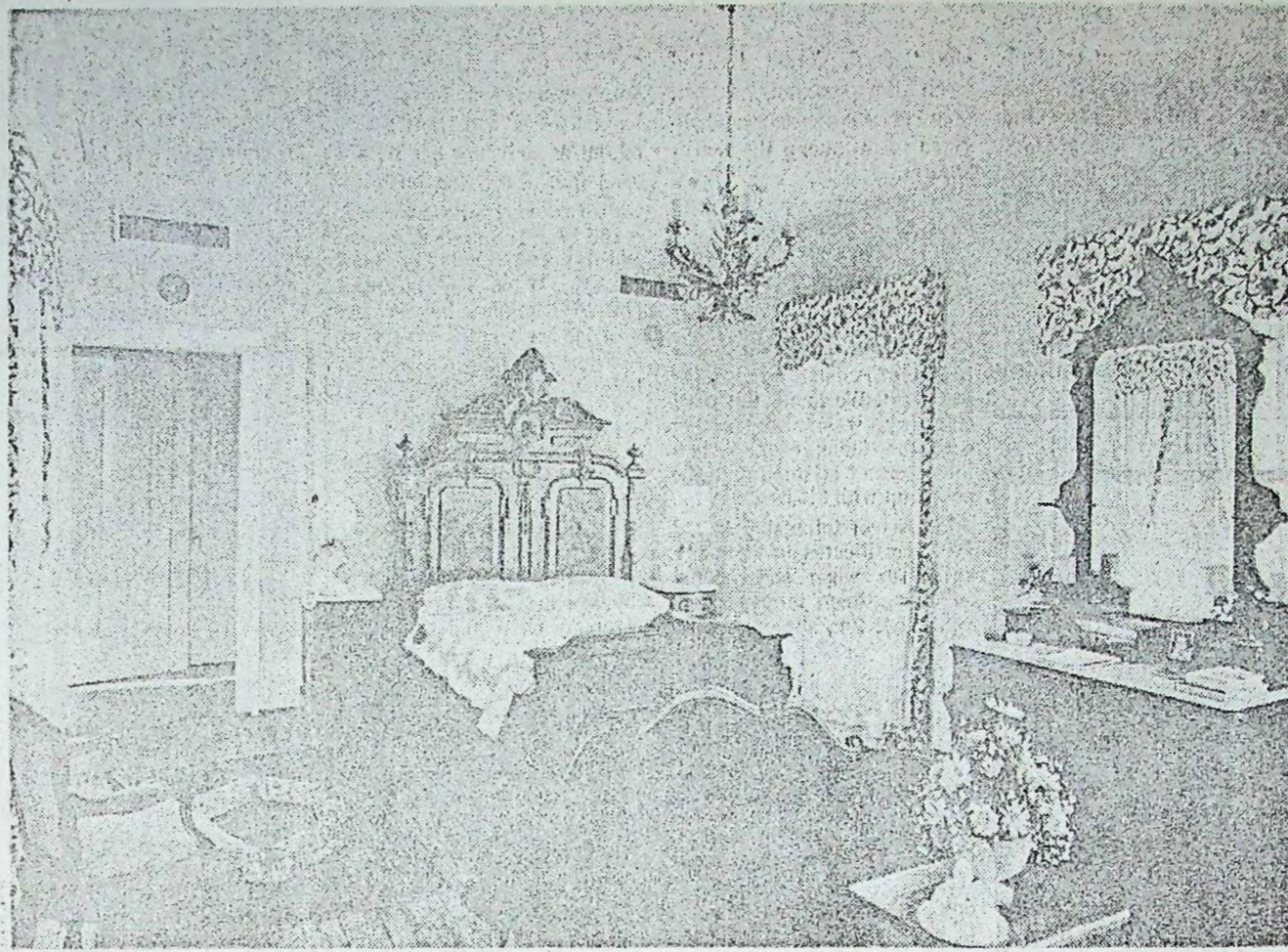
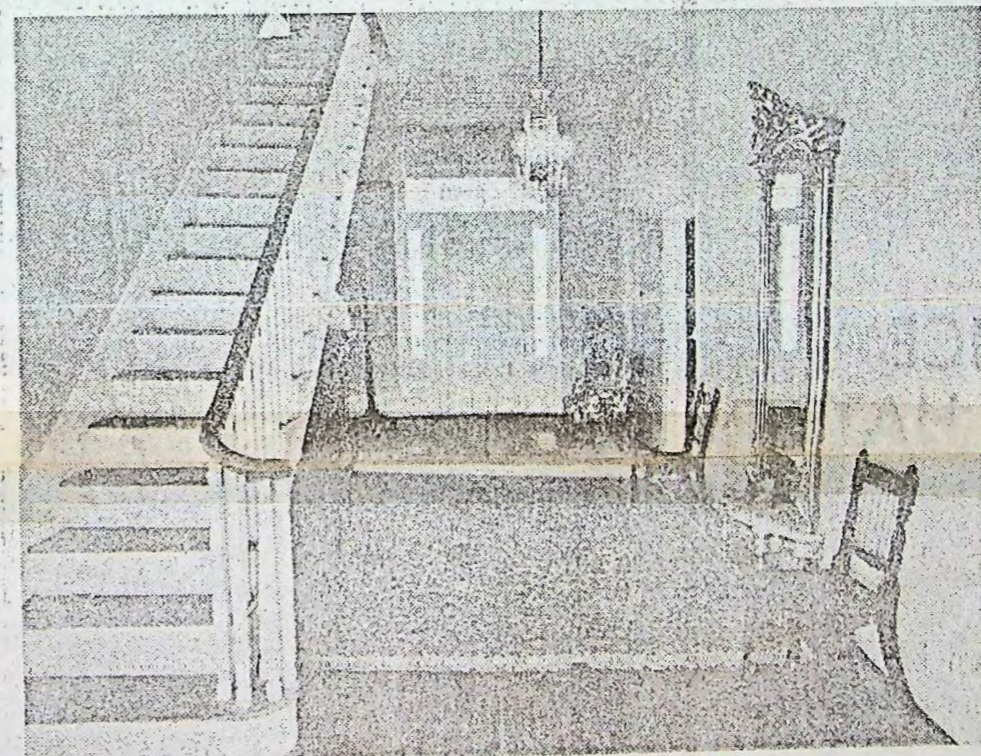
Dr. Edmund Montgomery was both a "hermit philosopher" and a medical doctor. "He studied Greek and Latin in his childhood," said Nichols, "and made the circuit of the leading medical schools in Europe. He met Elisabeth Ney in 1852 and they married in 1863. Dr. Montgomery contracted TB from a cut he received when he was doing an autopsy. And for that reason they moved to Texas eventually. Dr. Montgomery studied the cell for 20 years and it is well known that he and Charles Darwin had numerous conversations. Besides his medical and philosophical achievements, Dr. Montgomery helped to found

Prairie View A & M in 1887, was the road commissioner in this area from 1894 to 1898 and was a member of the melon growers association."

One can easily understand why the couple wanted to live at Liendo. The fountain outside, known as "Groce's Folly" was part of a lily pond right before the Civil War. Just as Groce completed it, "all the piping had to be taken up and made into bullets for the war," said Phyllis Detering. The workmanship is so fine, so delicate for a house built at that time. "It is a house built in the grand manner," said Phyllis Detering. And the house has been restored so that people can actually live in it. "We have one rule here," said Carl Detering. "And that is make yourself at home and do what you like."

As Carl and Phyllis Detering and their son Carl Jr. showed their guests around the house, people commented about it. "I can't possibly tell my wife that I got to come," said one guest. "She would be so jealous because she loves historical places."

"This house," said Frances Heyck, community affairs coordinator for Texas Chil-



The master bedroom, left, the entry, below, and the Deterings with Carl Jr. beside a self-portrait of Elisabeth Ney.

Post photos by E. Joseph Deering

dren's, "is one of the most magnificent examples I've seen. It is honestly a part of the Texas history that is so rich."

And when one of the guests inquired further about Elisabeth Ney, Phyllis Detering said, "She was the Katharine Hepburn or Marlene Dietrich of her time."



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