



Scan this QR code with your smart phone to see more information about Lera Millard Thomas.

If you do not have a QR code scanner, you may visit the following website for more information:

<http://www.sfasu.edu/heritagecenter/7041.asp>



Lera Millard Thomas is significant as a politician and for relocating historic structures to Millard's Crossing Historic Village.



Misty Hurley, a Graduate Student in Public History at Stephen F. Austin State University, created this brochure as part of her thesis on cemetery preservation and creation of interpretive materials connecting Oak Grove Cemetery of Nacogdoches with historic sites, museums, artifacts, and archival records.



This project has been created in conjunction with the Center for Regional Heritage Research at SFASU. Photograph courtesy of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Lera
Millard
Thomas



Politician and
Preservationist



Lera Millard was born on August 3, 1900, in the Old North Church Community of Nacogdoches, Texas. Lera graduated from Nacogdoches High School and went on to attend Brenau College in Gainesville and the University of Alabama. Lera left college halfway through her senior year to marry her sweetheart Albert Thomas on October 2, 1922.

The couple moved to Houston in 1930, where Albert was a district attorney. Mr. Thomas's political career began in 1936 as a Texas Representative. In 1961, he became a US Representative in Congress. Lera mingled with some of the most prominent politicians and their families in the country, such as Lyndon B. and Lady Bird Johnson, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry and Bess Truman, and John F. and Jackie Kennedy.

Upon the death of her husband, Lera was elected to fill Albert's unexpired term. She became the first Congresswoman from Texas, serving from March 26, 1966, until January 3, 1967. After her term was completed, Mrs. Thomas worked for the Agency for International Development and served as a special liaison for *The Houston Chronicle* to Vietnam until 1968. During her tour of Vietnam, Mrs. Thomas delivered letters to the soldiers as well as met locals and witnessed their struggles.

After her work in Vietnam ended in 1968, Mrs. Thomas returned to Nacogdoches where she developed Millard's Crossing Historic

Village. The site was named for its location on the property owned by the Millard family since 1830, and the rail line that crosses the property

Mrs. Thomas's work in creating the village saved many historic homes and structures from destruction and deterioration, and it also became home to her extensive antique collection. The private, non-profit Village now contains fifteen nineteenth and twentieth century structures including a dogtrot cabin, a train caboose, a log office, a church, and several other homes. Lera joined Lady Bird Johnson and Ima Hogg as the three pioneering leaders in historic preservation in Texas. She remained active until her death in 1993 and received many awards and honors.



Visit these sites associated with Lera Millard Thomas

- Millard's Crossing Historic Village - 6020 North St.

Visit Millard's Crossing Historic Village online at www.millardscrossing.org

- Lera Millard Thomas's grave at Oak Grove Cemetery - North Lanana St.