

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Egbert and Fay Spencer House

OWNERS: Glenn and Susan Ballard

APPLICANTS: Same as Owner

LOCATION: 2440 Inwood Drive, River Oaks

AGENDA ITEM: I1b

HPO FILE NO: LM235

DATE ACCEPTED: Jan-21-2011

HAHC HEARING: May-19-2011

SITE INFORMATION: Lot 17, Block 37, River Oaks Section 1, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, brick veneered residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Egbert Spencer House was constructed in 1937 and designed in the Neo-Classical style by Houston architects, Harvin C. Moore and Hermon Lloyd. The body of work created by Moore and Lloyd is substantial and includes over 84 houses in River Oaks, as well as public and commercial buildings such as the Memorial Center and Chapel at Rice University. Moore and Lloyd also designed a building at 2006 West Alabama that became the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning. After the partnership ended, Moore became architect for the U.S. Navy and designed naval bases in Houston and federal buildings in Houston and elsewhere in Texas.

Harvin C. Moore is credited with being one of Houston's earliest preservationists. In 1954, he began a foray into historic preservation by saving the Kellum-Noble house (City of Houston Protected Landmark), which stands on its original site in City Park (now Sam Houston Park). Moore was one of three who founded the Harris County Heritage Society with the mission to save the Kellum-Noble house from demolition.

Egbert and Fay Spencer, the first owners of the house, owned a company called Consolidated Tile that supplied tiles for many Moore & Lloyd homes over the years. The Spencers later owned and operated a frozen food company called Consolidated Frozen Food Lockers for many years.

The Egbert Spencer House meets Criteria 1, 4 and 6 for Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Egbert and Fay Spencer

Notable Houston architects, Harvin C. Moore and Hermon Lloyd, designed the house at 2440 Inwood Drive in 1937 for Egbert Gerald and Fay (Morrow Harris) Spencer. According to Harvin Moore: Houston Architect, Mr. Spencer owned a company called Consolidated Tile that supplied tiles for many Moore & Lloyd homes over the years.

Information on Egbert and Fay Spencer is limited; however, City Directories and census data provide some background. Census data indicates that Egbert Gerald and Fay Morrow Harris

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Spencer were both born in Illinois. Before their move to Houston in the early 1930s, they resided in Dallas. They first appear in the 1932-1933 City Directory with their business listed as “tile” and offices at 412 M&M Building. They moved to the house on 2440 Inwood after living at 2410 Kingston Drive. By 1943, their company was called Consolidated Tile with offices at 4601 Montrose. At this time, it appears that they also opened a frozen food company, later called Consolidated Frozen Food Lockers. Through the 1950s and 1960s, Egbert Spencer lists his occupation as President of Consolidated Frozen Food Lockers. In 1972, Egbert is shown as Chairman of the Board of Consolidated Food Lockers with the couple’s residence in LaGrange. In many of the City Directory listings, both Fay and Egbert Spencer are shown working at the companies.

The Spencers remained in the home for approximately five years. They sold around 1943 to Ralph W. and Clara Peters. Ralph Peters, the resident partner of Haskin & Sells, would remain in the home until the mid-1960s. Around 1966, he sold to I. C Kerridge, Jr., whose profession is listed as Senior Staff Economist for Hughes Tool. The Ballard family purchased the home in 2009 from Isaac Kerridge.

Harvin C. Moore and Hermon Lloyd

Harvin C. Moore, a well-known Houston architect, designed the home at 2440 Inwood Drive in 1937 in partnership with Hermon Lloyd. All of the papers of Moore are kept in the Houston Public Library, where the original plans for the home remain.

According to the introduction of Harvin Moore: Houston Architect, written by Moore’s son Barry, Harvin Moore (1905-1994) was born in Carmona, Texas. As a child, the family relocated to Houston and lived in a two-story frame house at 1314 Fairview. He graduated from Central High School in 1923 and began college at Rice Institute. He graduated “with distinction” with plans to attend medical school. After a brief time in medical school, Moore re-entered Rice Institute to study architecture; he received his B.S. in Architecture in 1930. Upon graduation, construction was slow due to the Depression and Moore collaborated with Hermon Lloyd (1909-1989), a fellow undergraduate in the Rice architecture program, to design party decorations and sets. The two worked well together, and in 1934, they formed the architecture firm of Moore & Lloyd. Their office was first located in the Citizen’s State Bank Building downtown. Several years later, they designed a building at 2006 West Alabama that became the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning.

According to Barry Moore, “Moore and Lloyd were soon very popular and very busy. The reputation of the firm rested largely on their works in River Oaks.” The firm’s work continually increased during the 1930s. The commercial work was often for the same clients as their residential designs. Their residences were usually traditional in style and the commercial buildings were more “Moderne.” Barry Moore attributes this to the fact that clients wished to appear “progressive in business and traditional in family values.”

During their partnership, Moore and Lloyd designed many commercial, civic and military buildings, including over 84 homes in River Oaks. The catalogue of Moore and Lloyd works put together by Michael Wilson for the Houston Public Library is extensive.

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A selection of Moore and Lloyd's River Oaks homes includes:

- 3379 Inwood (Hamman House, City Landmark)
- 2132 Troon (Kendall-Levine House, City Landmark)
- 3310 Del Monte Drive (1934) (demolished)
- 2228 Del Monte Drive (1934) (demolished)
- 2133 Pine Valley (1935) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 1839 Kirby Drive (1935) (demolished)
- 1927 Bellmeade Road (1935) (demolished) "*Architectural Forum: 101 Finest Small Homes*"
- 2125 Bellmeade Road (1935)
- 3257 Ella Lee (1935) (demolished)
- 2940 Chevy Chase (1935)
- 1558 Kirby Drive (1935)
- 2148 Looscan Lane (1935)
- 2117 Looscan Lane (1935) (demolished) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 2129 Looscan Lane (1936) (demolished)
- 1112 Shepherd Drive (1935)
- 2404 Brentwood Drive (1935)
- 2216 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 2137 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 2132 Troon Road (1936)
- 1801 Sharp Place (1937)
- 3239 Locke Lane (1936)
- 1537 Kirby Drive (1936)
- 2022 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 2136 Pelham Drive (1936)
- 3215 Ella Lee (1937)
- 2036 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 3324 Ella Lee Lane (1937) (demolished)
- 3068 Reba (1937)
- 5 Briarwood Court (1937)
- 2440 Inwood Drive (1937)
- 3417 Ella Lee Lane (1938)
- 3412 Piping Rock Lane (1938)
- 7 Briarwood Court (1938)
- 3208 Chevy Chase Drive (1938)
- 1910 Kirby Drive (1938) (demolished)
- 2327 Claremont Lane (1938) (demolished)
- 2057 Claremont Lane (1939)
- 3689 Del Monte Drive (1939) (demolished)
- 3413 Piping Rock Lane (1939)
- 2033 Claremont Lane (1940)
- 1909 Olympia Drive (1939)
- 3610 Meadow Lake Lane (1940) (demolished)
- 3225 Reba Drive (1940)
- 1665 Willowick (1940) (demolished)
- 3666 Chevy Chase Drive (1940) (demolished)

By the end of the 1930s, Moore and Lloyd began to move in different directions and, by the entry of the U.S. into World War II, the firm had dissolved. After Pearl Harbor, Moore applied to Congressman Albert Thomas to gain entrance to the Naval Officers Candidate School. The Congressman convinced Moore that he would better serve the government in his capacity as an experienced architect. Thus started a twenty-year relationship where Moore received military commissions for naval bases in Texas, and later, for federal projects in Houston and elsewhere in Texas. During this phase of his career, he also received commissions for churches, small buildings and industrial buildings.

In 1954, Moore became one of Houston's earliest preservationists by saving the Kellum-Noble house (City of Houston Protected Landmark), which stands on its original site in City Park (now

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Sam Houston Park) and which had fallen into disrepair after many years of use as a City of Houston Parks Department facility. Moore was one of three who started the Harris County Heritage Society with the mission to save the Kellum-Noble house from demolition. According to Barry Moore, “Moore was one of the few practicing architects of the time who did not see a concern with historic preservation as incompatible with an interest in modern architecture. With the Heritage Society, he worked to locate worthy historic structures, raise funds for their restoration, and move them to Sam Houston Park. Moore restored the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House (c.1850) and the San Felipe Cottage, among others, during his years with the Society.”

According to Barry Moore, Harvin Moore considered the preservation works among his favorite projects. The other buildings that he particularly liked were: 1537 Kirby (Hamaker House), 3239 Locke Lane (Childress House), Rice Memorial Chapel and Student Center, and the Houston Casket Company (1717 Live Oak).

River Oaks

When Will C. Hogg, Mike Hogg, and Hugh Potter began the development of River Oaks in 1923, it was with the intention of making it into a demonstration of the highest standards of modern community planning, a role model for the rest of Houston to follow. Will Hogg’s ambitiousness and Hugh Potter’s skillful management of River Oaks during its first thirty years made the community known nation-wide as a symbol of Houston. Since its creation, River Oaks has been published in national news, real estate, and design media, and has been the focus of scholarly analysis, in recognition of its significant contributions to the history of Houston and twentieth-century American elite suburban community development.

The creation of this type of subdivision was unique for Houston in many respects. The subdivision was laid out at what was then the far western edge of Houston. Prior to 1923, the majority of Houston’s residential developments had occurred in a tight girdle around the downtown business district, such as Westmoreland (1902), Avondale (1907), Montrose (1911), Audubon Place (1906), Cherryhurst (1908), Binz, Southmore (1914), and Courtland Place (1906). River Oaks, however, was situated at the western city limits far away from other developments.

In addition, the developers broke with convention by laying out an organic pattern of roadways which lent a sense of spaciousness to the neighborhood, which was very different from the traditional Houston neighborhoods that followed a more rigid approach to development. These traditional neighborhoods used street grids which carved the land up into predictable square or rectangular blocks.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The house at 2440 Inwood is designed in a Neo-Classical style. The 3,100 square foot house faces south and is sited in the middle of an 11,460 square foot lot. The house is brick veneer that has been painted white. The home features a three part façade. The entry is sited in the center of the house and features a full-height portico supported by four columns featuring Egyptian capitals. Atop the columns and entablature is a triangular pediment. The entry door is wood-paneled with side and transom lights with decorative multi-pane detailing. Above the entry door is an arched Palladian

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window on the second floor. To both the right and left of the central bay are pairs of wood-sash windows with a 9-over-12 pattern on the first floor and wood-sash 6-over-6 light windows on the second floor. Working shutters flank each window. An entablature continues around the house above the second story windows. There is a side gabled roof with a large chimney on the east façade of the house.

The home was recently renovated by the current owners and is in very good condition. The renovations included:

- Updating the kitchen
- Installation of mahogany hardwood floors on first floor
- Remodeling of master bath and second bath upstairs
- Expansion of closets
- Addition of a laundry room on second floor

None of these changes impacted the façade.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

City Directories.

Wilson, Michael C. Harvin C. Moore: Houston Architect, Houston Public Library 1987.

Interview with Barry Moore by Kelley Trammell, September, 2006

Fox, Stephen, Houston Architectural Guide, Second Edition, American Institute of Architects/Houston Chapter and Herring Press, Houston, 1990.

Handbook of Texas Online.

Johnston, Marguerite, Houston: The Unknown City 1836-1946, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 1991.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, Field Guide to American Houses, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984.

Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Houston, 1924-February 1951, Volume 11, Sheet 1105.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Courtney Spillane, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

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APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

- | S | NA | S - satisfies | D - does not satisfy | NA - not applicable |
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- AND**
- (9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Egbert Spencer House at 2440 Inwood Drive.

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EXHIBIT A
EGBERT SPENCER HOUSE
2440 INWOOD DRIVE



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EXHIBIT B
SITE LOCATION MAP
EGBERT SPENCER HOUSE
2440 INWOOD DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE

