

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Scurry-Bybee House

**OWNER:** Ben Guill

**APPLICANT:** Same as Owner

**LOCATION:** 1912 Larchmont Road - River Oaks

**AGENDA ITEM:** II.b

**HPO FILE NO:** 11L250

**DATE ACCEPTED:** Jul-11-2011

**HAHC HEARING:** Aug-17-2011

### SITE INFORMATION

Lot 10, Block 6, River Oaks Country Club Estates, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story, brick veneer, single-family residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Scurry-Bybee House was constructed in 1936-37 for Mr. and Mrs. Tom Scurry. Scurry was a prominent lawyer for Baker, Botts, Andrews and Wharton. The house was designed by John F. Staub, one of Houston's most prominent residential architects, who used the 1847 Kellum-Noble House as his inspiration.

In 1960, the house was purchased by Faith and Charles Bybee, early Houston preservationists who campaigned to preserve Houston's Old Market Square and worked to restore homes and buildings at Round Top, Warrenton, Washington-on-the-Brazos, and Frelsburg. Charles Bybee was a banker and philanthropist, and Faith Bybee was a lifelong collector of American antiques who engaged in a "friendly rivalry" with Ima Hogg. In 1954, Faith Bybee co-founded the Heritage Society with her brother-in-law Harvin C. Moore and Marie Phelps in order to save the Kellum-Noble House. It is fitting that she would later live in John Staub's adaptation of this home in River Oaks. In 1974 and after a fire, Faith Bybee sold the home to her nephew and wife, Harvin Moore III and Nancy Powell Moore, who remained in the home for the next 20 years.

The Scurry-Bybee House meets Criteria 1, 4, and 6 for Landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

James Thomas Scurry, Sr. was born in 1898. He came to Houston in 1929 to work for and eventually became a partner at what was then called Baker, Botts, Andrews and Wharton. Scurry specialized in servicing oil and gas clients. In 1937, he was elected to the Board of Director of the Houston Lighting and Power Company. He and his wife, Sarah Chambers Scurry, had two sons and a daughter. The Scurry family owned the home for approximately 9 years. They sold to Willard E. Shuart, an attorney (1945), who later sold to Sami B. Symington, an oilman (1949).

The home found stability when it was purchased by Faith and Charles Bybee around 1960. Charles Bybee (1900-72) was "banker and philanthropist" according to the *Handbook of Texas*. He was the President of Houston Bank and Trust when he moved into the home on Larchmont. Bybee and his wife worked together restore "Texas homes and buildings at Round Top, Warrenton, Washington-on-the-Brazos, and Frelsburg. He also owned land in Harris, Fort Bend,

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Galveston, Washington, and Fayette counties. The couple campaigned to preserve Houston's Old Market Square and was active in the Institute of International Education.”

Faith Bybee (1900-96) was a lifelong collector of American antiques and engaged in a “friendly rivalry” with Ima Hogg. She collected fine furniture and acquired homes in which to display it. She was a preservationist and, in 1954, co-founded the Heritage Society with Harvin C. Moore (her brother-in-law) and Marie Phelps to save the 1847 Kellum-Noble House. It is fitting that she would live in John Staub’s adaptation of this home in River Oaks.

In 1974 and after a fire, Faith Bybee sold the home to her nephew and his wife, Harvin Moore III and Nancy Powell Moore. The Moores remained in the home for the next 20 years and sold to Nathaniel and Pat Gregory (1990) who later sold to James and Nancy Glanville (1991). Ben Guill purchased the home from the Glanvilles in 2002.

The home was architecturally described in the 1980 *Houston Architecture Survey*:

“The house for Mr. and Mrs. Tom Scurry is an elegant and skillful mixture of two Southern regional building types: the Charleston town house and the Louisiana plantation. John F. Staub, Houston’s best known residential architect used the Kellum-Noble house, built in Houston in 1847, as his inspiration.”

The home was designed by John F. Staub and later added on to in the rear by Harvin C. Moore, who also undertook the restoration of the Kellum-Noble House in Heritage Park.

In addition, Stephen Fox chronicles the design and construction of the home in his book *The Country Houses of John F. Staub*, in which he writes of the Scurry-Bybee House:

“As Barnstone observed, Staub, rather than reproducing the symmetrical front elevation of the Kellum-Noble House, rotated the historical model so that its L-plan, inset, two-story gallery to shade the south and east faces of the house. Views from the living and dining room are directed toward the south-facing side garden. These reception rooms and the three bedrooms on the floor above were oriented to the prevailing south-east breeze.”

According to the *Handbook of Texas Online*, John Staub (1892-1981) began his architectural practice in New York in 1916. In 1921, he came to Houston to supervise a project in the Shadyside neighborhood, and went on to establish his own practice here in 1923. Staub is best known as an architect of single-family houses and is closely identified with the River Oaks neighborhood. His first independent commission in Houston was the River Oaks Country Club. As mentioned, above, he was then retained by the Hogg brothers to design two model homes for the developing River Oaks subdivision. As his career progressed, he was tapped as primary architect (with Birdsall Briscoe named associate architect) to design Bayou Bend, the home of Ima Hogg. Between 1924 and 1958, he designed thirty-one houses in River Oaks, in addition to making designs for homes that were never built, as well as designing renovations and extensions for existing homes. Outside of River Oaks, Staub homes from this period were built in Broadacres, Courtlandt Place, and the Fort Worth neighborhood of River Crest. Additional Staub homes may be found in Beaumont, Dallas, and Memphis, Tennessee, some of which are open to the public as museums.

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According to Howard Barnstone's book, some of the River Oaks homes designed by John F. Staub include:

- House for Country Club Estates, 3374 Chevy Chase, 1924
- Joseph H. Chew House, 3335 Inwood, 1925
- House for Country Club Estates, 3260 Chevy Chase, 1925
- Kemerton Dean House, 1912 Bellmeade, 1925 City of Houston Landmark
- John F. Staub House, 3511 Del Monte, 1925
- Hubert B. Finch House, 3407 Inwood, 1926
- Bayou Bend for Ima Hogg, 2940 Lazy Lane, 1926
- Judge Frederick C. Proctor Home, 2950 Lazy Lane, 1926 (as associate to Birdsall Briscoe), Demolished.
- Harry C. Hanszen House, 2955 Lazy Lane, 1930
- Wallace E. Pratt House, 2990 Lazy Lane, 1931, Demolished.
- J. Robert Neal House, 2960 Lazy Lane, 1931 City of Houston Landmark
- George A. Hill, Jr. House, 1604 Kirby Drive, 1931
- Hugh Roy Cullen House, 1620 River Oaks Boulevard, 1933
- David D. Bruton House, 2923 Inwood Drive, 1933 City of Houston Landmark
- Clarence M. Frost House, 2110 River Oaks Boulevard, 1933
- Ravenna for Stephen P. Farish, 2995 Lazy Lane, 1934
- William J. Crabb House, 2416 Pine Valley Drive, 1935, Demolished.
- Robert Bowles House, 3015 Inwood Drive, 1935
- George S. Heyer Home, 2909 Inwood Drive, 1935
- Oak Shadows for Ray L. Dudley, 3371 Chevy Chase, 1936
- Tom Scurry House, 1912 Larchmont, 1936
- James L. Britton House, 1824 Larchmont, 1936
- Robert D. Strauss House, 1814 Larchmont, 1937
- John M. Jennings House, 2212 Troon Road, 1937
- Dan J. Harrison House, 2975 Lazy Lane, 1938
- Claud B. Hamill House, 2124 River Oaks Boulevard, 1938
- Edward H. Andrews House, 3637 Inwood Drive, 1939, demolished
- Rienzi for Mr. and Mrs. Harris Masterson, III, 1406 Kirby Drive, 1952 (S,R&H)
- House for Mr. and Mrs. Ben M. Anderson, 3740 Willowick, 1956 (S,R&H) City of Houston Landmark
- House for Mr. and Mrs. George A. Peterkin, Senior, 2005 Claremont, 1957 (S,R&H)

In addition to residential work, Staub designed the parish house of Palmer Memorial Church, the Junior League Building, and the Bayou Club in Houston. His firm designed buildings for the campuses of the University of Texas, Rice University, University of Houston, and the Texas Medical Center. He was the primary architect on the John Reagan High School project as well. Staub, Rather, and Howze also consulted with Jim Goodwin of Pierce and Pierce in the new building and planetarium for the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The Scurry-Bybee House was designed in a Louisiana French Plantation style, but its model was the Kellum-Noble House in Houston. The Kellum-Noble House is an early Houston home that certainly used models from Louisiana and the South in its own design. The house faces east and is sited on the north end of a double lot, thus leaving the southern lawn open. The lot was purchased for \$4,500 in 1936.

The Scurry-Bybee House features an L-shaped plan, and is two stories tall. It is faced in red brick. The south façade features two-story verandah with brick piers on the first story and wooden piers on the second story. Both the tops of the brick and the wooden piers feature capitals. The banisters are square.

The roof of the house is hipped and covered in composite shingles. The eastern or front façade of the house features two 9-over-9 floor level wooden sash windows with shutters on the first story and two 6-over-6 wood sash windows with shutters on the second floor. The front entrance of the house is accessed at the junction of the “L”, under the gallery.

A second entrance of the house is on the north façade and is only partially visible from the street. It is in a two-story section of the house that projects north from the “long L” of the house’s plan. The entry features a wooden paneled door with sidelights. A large window is above on the second story.

As mentioned above, Faith and Charles Bybee engaged Harvin C. Moore, prominent Houston architect, to design a rear addition. Harvin Moore was a natural choice as he had been instrumental in saving the Kellum-Noble House. According to Nancy Powell Moore, there was a fire in 1974 that impacted the rear of the home during the Bybee’s ownership. She and her husband, Harvin Moore III, purchased the home from the Bybees, completed a restoration and moved in in early 1975.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*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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**EXHIBIT A**  
SCURRY-BYBEE HOUSE  
1912 LARCHMONT ROAD



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**EXHIBIT B**  
**SITE LOCATION MAP**  
**SCURRY-BYBEE HOUSE**  
**1912 LARCHMONT ROAD**  
**NOT TO SCALE**

