

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Donig House

**OWNERS:** Oliver and Beverly Pennington

**APPLICANTS:** Same

**LOCATION:** 3626 Overbrook Lane – River Oaks

**AGENDA ITEM:** II.e

**HPO FILE NO:** 11L253

**DATE ACCEPTED:** Jul-22-2011

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

### SITE INFORMATION

Tracts 18 and 19A, Block 70, River Oaks Section 8, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a two-story single-family residence

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The residence at 3626 Overbrook Lane in River Oaks was built in 1948 by builder W.D. Peck for Howard and Myrtle Donig. The two-story brick and wood shingle house was built after plans originally conceived by Myrtle Donig. She was enamored with Amish style residences she had seen in Pennsylvania, and designed the home to bring this style to River Oaks.

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

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The lot at 3626 Overbrook Lane was purchased by Harold and Myrtle Donig for \$3300 on June 30, 1948. After their purchase, the *River Oaks Times* ran the following on July 23, 1948:

“New Home on Overbrook Planned by Howard Donig – Construction of a \$25,000 home for Howard Donig on Overbrook Lane has been authorized by the signing of a contract between the owner and W.D. Peck & Company. The two story home will be of brick and shingle construction with wallboard interiors and facilities for the installation of air conditioning.”

Due to the unique nature of the home, there was a large story and photograph that appeared in the *Houston Post* on December 5, 1948.

“Home Patterned after Farmhouse – About 5 years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Donig were travelling in Pennsylvania. Mrs. Donig saw an Amish farmhouse that took her fancy, so she snapped a photograph of it. Mrs. Donig, who likes to do such things, started designing a home to look like the Amish farm house. She worked out a floor plan to suit the needs of her family.

T.H. Hewitt, professional designer, was called in to work out the technical details. In collaboration with Mrs. Donig, he completed the drawings. Construction started and Mrs. Donig suffered all of the pangs of a builder as she spent more than five months supervising the job.

Recently, the house was completed by W.D. Peck, the contractor, and the Donigs moved into their Amish farm house. “It looks just like the original except for the

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bright blue door,” Mrs. Donig said. “We didn’t make the door blue because we don’t have a marriageable daughter.”

Built of second hand bricks and cedar shakes, the house is on a wooded lot at 3624 Overbrook Lane, River Oaks. Its cost was placed at \$35,000.

It is completely air conditioned and has an all-electric kitchen paneled in knotty pine. An inter-communication system connects every room.

The living room has a fireplace with a five foot opening. The dining room has a gypsum board dado, above which is hand-painted wallpaper. The master bedroom dressing room and bath are on the first floor. The entrance hall includes a stairway to the second floor where there are a den, a guest room and bath. The den is paneled in knotty pine and has a dumb waiter connected with the kitchen.

Mr. Donig is with the Big Three Welding Company and Houston Oxygen Company Inc.”

Myrtle Donig was a native of Orange, Texas, and a member of River Oaks Baptist Church, the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the Daughters of 1812, and the Tuesday Music Club. She died in 1979.

The Donigs lived in their Amish style home for only four years. By 1952, the home had been sold to Ella H. Greenwood. She was in the home for the next 16 years and sold to Dosset McCullough around 1968. Dosset McCullough then sold to his brother and sister-in-law, Edward and Gaye McCullough. Oliver and Beverly Pennington purchased the home from the McCulloughs in 1989.

Ella Harris Greenwood was born in 1882 in Gonzalez, Texas, and died in 1970. She came to Houston in the early 1910s. She was a member of Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church, Southern Garden Club, John McKnitt Alexander Chapter of the DAR, Milford House, and Harris County Medical Auxiliary. She had five children.

Very little information is known about the designer of the house, T.H. Hewitt. However, because the conception and design of the house were very much Mrs. Donig’s own, the house can stand on its own merits alone.

The home is currently owned by Houston Councilmember Oliver Pennington and Mrs. Beverly Pennington. They have maintained the home, which is in excellent condition. Beverly Pennington is a former President of Greater Houston Preservation Alliance.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY**

As mentioned above, the Donig House was a River Oaks adaptation of an Amish farmhouse. The home has a larger first floor mass and smaller second story above. The house faces south and is sited in the middle of its lot. It is faced with red brick veneer on the first story and shingle siding on the second story. There are side gabled roof on both stories that slightly overhang the facades on both stories.

The first story features a larger room to the west that protrudes from the rest of the mass. This features an 8-over-8 wood sash window with shutters. This window is placed directly under the roof ridge. The further three sections of the first floor are situated to the east of this bay and are



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- (3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;
- (4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;
- (5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;
- (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;
- (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
- (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.

**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 Donig House at 3626 Overbrook Lane.

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**EXHIBIT A**  
DONIG HOUSE  
3626 OVERBROOK LANE



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**EXHIBIT B**  
**SITE LOCATION MAP**  
**DONIG HOUSE**  
**3626 OVERBROOK LANE**  
**NOT TO SCALE**

