

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Kendall-Harris House  
**OWNERS:** Susan T. and David R. Lummis  
**APPLICANTS:** Susan T. and David R. Lummis  
**LOCATION:** 2175 Troon Road – River Oaks  
**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** N/A

**AGENDA ITEM:** II.c  
**HPO FILE NO:** 08L197  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** Jan-31-08  
**HAHC HEARING:** Feb-21-08  
**PC HEARING:** Mar-13-08

### SITE INFORMATION

Tract 5, Block 52, River Oaks Section 3, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes an historic two-story residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Kendall-Harris House at 2175 Troon Road was built in 1937-1938 for Clarence and Eugenia Kendall by the Russell Brown Company, a noted Houston building firm. The Russell Brown Company was founded in Houston in 1906 and built a number of important houses in Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, and other Texas cities. The two-story red brick house, designed in the Georgian Revival style, was featured in the Houston Post upon its construction. The home was later occupied by David B. Harris, a director, vice president and treasurer of Humble Oil. The Kendall-Harris House qualifies for Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 4, and 6.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The house at 2175 Troon Road was built by the Russell Brown Company for Clarence and Eugenia Kendall. On February 6, 1938, the Houston Post ran a large photograph of the home with the following:

*“This dignified French Colonial residence at 2175 Troon Road was recently completed for Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Kendall. The home, designed by Russell Brown Company, contains three bedrooms, three baths, living room, dining room, kitchen and an unusually large study. The house and lot cost approximately \$26,000.”*

Also in February 1938, River Oaks Magazine ran the following:

*“Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Kendall are in their new home at 2175 Troon Road. Mrs. Kendall was formerly Eugenia Dabney, daughter of Judge and Mrs. S.B. Dabney, who were residents of River Oaks for many years. Mr. Kendall is an attorney with offices in the Second National Bank Building. Their residence is of French architecture with an emphasis on the entrance features. It has a white stone facing which terminates above the double doors in a small balcony with a wrought iron railing. Leaded decorative windows above the railing add a note of color. Another beautiful feature of this home is the treatment of the windows. They are French with black grill work trim and white blinds.”*

After the first three or four years of ownership, Clarence and Eugenia Kendall divorced. Eugenia later married David B. Harris, and the couple lived in the home together from 1942 until the mid 1970s.

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David B. Harris had an illustrious career with Humble Oil. He was born in August 1888 to Frederick and Elizabeth Catherine Dabney Harris of Virginia. He was raised in Dallas and received a civil engineering degree from Texas A&M University. After a short stint with a Dallas bank, he joined the Army and served as a captain in France during World War I. Upon returning home from the war, he joined Humble as a laborer at Ranger, Texas, in 1919. This was the beginning of a 34-year-long career that would eventually earn him a place on the Humble Board of Directors. The trajectory of Harris' career is chronicled by the book, *History of Humble Oil and Refining Company*. He worked for two years as a roustabout and farm boss. In 1921, he was promoted to assistant district superintendent, followed by a promotion to assistant division superintendent the following year, and four years later to division superintendent.

By 1934, he had worked his way up to the position of industrial relations manager. This position was complicated by the Great Depression years and the necessity of dealing with the unions. The following quotes reflect his personality:

*“He had a reputation for never asking a man to do anything he had not done himself or would not do, and the men had confidence in him and believed that he had their interests genuinely at heart.”*

*“Harris had a special talent for personal relations with employees. It is impossible to measure the influence that he came to have among the employees in the later 1930s and 1940s, but there is no question about the affection and confidence with which the rank-and-file employees regarded him.”*

Harris' success as head of the Industrial Relations Department made his elevation to a director position on the Board in 1941 the “next logical step.” In 1942, he was appointed as treasurer upon the retirement of James Anderson. In 1947, he was appointed as a vice president of Humble. He would serve in all of these capacities until his retirement in 1953. The career path of David Harris with Humble is truly remarkable. In the span of 22 years, he worked himself up from a laborer at Ranger to a director in the boardroom.

Upon his death, the Houston Chronicle traced his career in an article, “DB Harris, Former Humble VP, Buried,” which listed his involvement outside of Humble Oil as Christ Church Cathedral, Ramada Club, Houston Country Club, Bayou Club, and the Petroleum Club. He had no surviving children, and left only his wife, Eugenia Harris. Mrs. Harris continued to live in the home until she died. In the mid-1970s, her estate sold the home to Charles King, III. In 2005, the Lummis family purchased the home from King.

According to Stephen Fox, the Russell Brown Company was a Houston-based architectural design and construction company. It was chartered in 1906 by Russell Brown, who was born on December 12, 1875, in Taylor, Texas, and came to Houston in 1902. The company was a prolific builder and designer of new houses in Houston from 1902 until the early 1940s. Brown expanded his operations by opening branch offices in Dallas in 1916, San Antonio in 1922, and Los Angeles in 1923. The firm specialized in house design and construction, but also designed several commercial buildings in Houston in the 1920s and 1930s, such as the first Jefferson Davis Hospital and the Schlumberger Building, as well as the six-story Guaranty State Bank and Simpson Office Building in Ardmore, Oklahoma in 1917.

The Russell Brown Company constructed numerous houses in the Avondale, Westmoreland, Montrose, Boulevard Oaks, and River Oaks neighborhoods in Houston and in the Dallas subdivision of Munger Place. The company was the general contractor of such notable Houston houses as the William S. Farish House in Shadyside (1925) and the Cleveland Sewall House in River Oaks (1926, N.R.). Notable

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houses the company built outside of Houston include the Herbert L. Kokernot House in Monte Vista in San Antonio (1928); the O. L. Seagraves House at the Mo Ranch near Hunt, Texas (1929); the Talbott F. Rothwell House in Beaumont (1929); and the W. B. Morgan House in Olmos Park Estates in Olmos Park (1931). Among the architects who worked at various times for the Russell Brown Company in Houston were A. N. Dawson, Charles W. Oliver, Mike Mebane, and Gonzalo Ancira. In an indication of the quality of the Russell Brown architects, the River Oaks Corporation hired one of Russell Brown's architects, Charles Oliver, as in-house architect in 1926.

Additional information on the Russell Brown Company comes from a company brochure published circa 1936 which notes the following:

“The restful harmony and careful designing, the elegance imparted by graceful simplicity marks the difference between Russell Brown Company homes and the regular run of places so often built.”

Russell Brown retired from the building business in the mid 1940s. He lived out his retirement at his ranch near Juliff, Texas, south of Houston, where he died in 1963.

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The Kendall-Harris House was designed and built in 1937-1938 by the Russell Brown Company. The home, designed in the Georgian Revival style, was featured in the Houston Post upon its construction.

The house is two stories in height with a medium pitched hip roof. The home is three bays in width and is symmetrical with a centralized entry bay. The central two-story front entry bay protrudes slightly from the main body of the house and is also covered by a low hipped roof which intersects with that of the main body of the house.

The exterior is clad in a light red brick veneer. Exterior embellishments were achieved through the use of brick quoins and pierced detailing created with the systematic omission of bricks in certain areas of the building's façade. The entry is comprised of wooden paneled double doors and matching double screen doors. The screen doors were found in the attic by the current owners, who restored the doors and replaced the original screen with glass. The doorway is surrounded by detailed stonework that culminates in an upstairs balcony made of wrought iron. A decorative iron lighting fixture with curved arms is centered over the front door. A small non-functional balcony is centered above the front entry, which is trimmed with a decorative iron railing.

Windows on the principle façade are of a multi-lite wood casement variety on the first floor and double-hung 6/6 lite wood-sash windows on the second floor. The windows of both the first and second floors are capped by decorative arched brickwork headers.

The Lummis family purchased the home in 2005. They completely updated the electrical, plumbing and HVAC in the home, as well as restoring and replacing some of the original special 12-piece moldings and plaster walls. The original French marble fireplace mantel, which had been cracked, was removed, structurally repaired, cleaned, and re-installed. Additionally, due to structural problems with the original garage/servants' quarters, they removed it and replaced it with an almost identical structure housing a family room and upstairs bedroom and bath. Special care was taken to preserve the original breezeway between the two structures and to matching the original brick and brickwork, complete with the arches over the windows. The restoration also returned the glassed-in back porch to its original screened state.

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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 Thomas McWhorter, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.*

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Houston Post, February 6, 1938.

Houston Chronicle, Obituary of David Harris, January 26, 1972.

Houston Chronicle, "DB Harris, Former Humble VP, Buried", January 26, 1972.

Houston Chronicle, Obituary of Russell Brown, April 9, 1963.

History of Humble Oil and Refining Company, Henrietta M. Lawson and Kenneth Wiggins Porter, 1953 and reprinted in 1993, Ayer Company Publishers.

River Oaks Magazine, February 1938, "Neighbors" column.

### APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The HAHC and the Planning Commission, 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	NA - not applicable
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation (Sec. 33-224(a)(1);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event (Sec. 33-224(a)(2);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(3);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(4);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(5);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(6);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride (Sec. 33-224(a)(8).		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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,		

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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 Planning Commission accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Kendall-Harris House at 2175 Troon Road.

SITE LOCATION MAP  
KENDALL-HARRIS HOUSE  
2175 TROON ROAD  
NOT TO SCALE

