

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Lester L. Neuhaus House
OWNERS: John C. and Margaret Ale
APPLICANTS: Same as Owners
LOCATION: 2227 Brentwood Drive - River Oaks
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: II.b
HPO FILE NO: 08L204
DATE ACCEPTED: May-21-08
HAHC HEARING: Jun-12-08
PC HEARING: Jun-19-08

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 2, Block 46, River Oaks Section 1, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story, brick veneer residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Lester L. Neuhaus House was constructed in 1931. The French Eclectic house was designed by the prolific Houston architects, Hiram A. Salisbury and T. George McHale, for Lester Neuhaus and his family. Lester L. Neuhaus was a lifelong Houstonian who spent most of his career in the oil industry. The two-story red brick house has an asymmetrical facade, steeply pitched hipped roof, and unusual brick detailing framing the front entry.

Among Salisbury & McHale's more notable projects are St. Stephen's Episcopal Church at 1805 W. Alabama, St. John's School at 2401 Claremont, and many of the homes located in River Oaks, Southampton, and other affluent Houston neighborhoods. Brentwood Drive is one of the most architecturally intact streets in River Oaks and has seven other houses already designated as City of Houston Landmarks, including two located in the 2200 block. The Lester L. Neuhaus House qualifies for Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Lester L. Neuhaus House at 2227 Brentwood Drive was built in 1931. The first mention of the house comes in August 1931 in "Home for All Times," the River Oaks Corporation publication:

"Mr. and Mrs. Lester Neuhaus have begun construction of their new home in River Oaks at 2227 Brentwood Drive. H. A. Salisbury is the architect and Benson-Hall are the contractors. The home will be completed in October."

The same publication ran the following in December 1931:

"Mr. and Mrs. Lester L. Neuhaus have moved into their recently completed home at 2227 Brentwood. The attractive colonial design is the work of H. A. Salisbury..."

Lester and Carolyn Neuhaus lived in the home until the mid-1960s. Lester L. Neuhaus was born on February 19, 1893, and was a lifelong resident of Houston. At the time of the building of the home, the City Directory lists him as serving as Treasurer for South Texas Grain Company with an office at 1604 Sawyer. He would later spend most of his career in the oil industry, with later City Directory entries showing his career as "oil leases." At his death in March 1977, his obituary lists him as a member of St. John's Church, survived by his wife and two daughters, Mrs. Ted Belmont and Mrs. E. Glenn McMillan.

Around 1965, Mr. and Mrs. Neuhaus sold the house to Lyon L. Brinsmade. Brinsmade, an attorney with Butler Binion Cook & Knapp, lived in the home for about ten years. Brinsmade then sold the house to Robert T. Sakowitz, who at the time was president and chief executive officer of Sakowitz Inc., a Houston institution. Robert Sakowitz was the son of Bernard Sakowitz (1907-1981), best known as a civic leader and president of Sakowitz Brothers stores. Robert Sakowitz graduated from Harvard *cum laude* and entered the family business in 1963, becoming president in 1975. Robert Sakowitz owned the home for about ten years before selling it to Thomas and Sandra Wilson in 1987. In 1989, the Wilsons sold the home to the current owners, John and Dede Ale.

Hiram A. Salisbury (1892-1973), one of the architects of the Neuhaus House, was born in Omaha, Nebraska. Salisbury studied architecture under a fellowship from the American Institute of Architects and later graduated from the School of Architecture at New York's Columbia University (1913-1914). He worked as a draftsman for Thomas R. Kimball from 1910-1923 and George B. Prinz from 1923-1926. Salisbury established his own architectural firm in Houston in 1926, and he is first listed in the 1927 Houston City Directory with an office in the Post-Dispatch (subsequently Shell) Building until 1937. Salisbury served as president of the American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter, in 1954.

Beginning in 1928, Salisbury collaborated on many projects with fellow architect, T. George McHale. Salisbury and McHale's projects included residential, commercial, and church buildings. Among their more notable projects are St. Stephen's Episcopal Church at 1805 W. Alabama (1941); St. John's School at 2401 Claremont (1945-49); and many of the homes located in River Oaks, Southampton, and other affluent Houston neighborhoods. Salisbury and McHale relocated their offices to the River Oaks Community Center at 2017 W. Gray in 1938-39, and moved to 3501 Allen Parkway in 1945.

Thomas George McHale (1903-1975) was also born in Omaha, Nebraska, and attended school at the University of Notre Dame. After receiving his architecture degree, McHale became a draftsman for John Latenzer & Sons, where he worked from 1919 until 1923. In 1924, he worked for James A. Allen and Leo A. Daly. Starting in 1925, he worked for George B. Prinz for several years before joining Salisbury.

Beginning in 1930, Hiram A. Salisbury and his wife lived at 3412 Yupon between Hawthorne and Harold. By 1953, the Salisburys were living at 610 Saddlewood Lane. Salisbury continued his practice in Houston until approximately 1962, when he retired to Medford, Oregon. McHale was married to Inez P. McHale, a celebrated Houston interior decorator. The McHales lived at 1106 Palm Avenue before moving to 2 Courtlandt Place.

Brentwood Drive is one of the most architecturally intact streets in River Oaks and has seven other homes already designated as City of Houston Landmarks:

- Dr H.J. and Emerence Ehlers House, 2112 Brentwood (1934, Cameron Fairchild)
- Dr Culver M Griswold House, 2121 Brentwood (1929, Stayton Nunn)
- Colonel W.B. Bates House, 2128 Brentwood (1936-37, Stayton Nunn)
- Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey Sr. House, 2136 Brentwood (1940, C. C. Rouse, builder)
- John B. Hines House 2219 Brentwood (LM pending), (1927-28, Joseph Northrop Jr.)
- Joseph H. Russell House, 2232 Brentwood (1929, Russell Brown Co.)
- Maurice and Virginia Brown Angly House, 2514 Brentwood (1934, Russell Brown Co.)

Brentwood Drive also has two other Salisbury & McHale houses, the Dow House at 2211 Brentwood and the Turner House at 2521 Brentwood.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The house at 2227 Brentwood is a French Eclectic two-story, brick veneered home built in 1931. The home is asymmetrical with a steeply pitched roof. On the east side of the home is a prominent chimney. The elegant paneled door, believed to be original to the home, is surrounded by intricate brickwork topped by an iron lantern with curling arms. Above the iron light fixture is an oblong octagonal window. The home maintains its original sash windows upstairs and the original 10x10 paned windows downstairs. Part of the beauty of this home is its scale on its lot. The home is approximately 3,500 square feet and sits upon a 15,000 square foot lot with mature plantings.

The home has been owned for almost the last 20 years by the Ale family, who were drawn to the home by its charm and gracious presence. Although some changes have been made to the house over the years, such as updating the kitchen and adding a family room, the original facade has been maintained.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fox, Stephen, personal notes and research about Hiram A. Salisbury and T. George McHale, August, 2006.

Fox, Stephen, *Houston Architectural Guide*, 2nd ed., American Institute of Architects, 1999.

Home for All Times, August and December, 1931.

Houston Chronicle, Obituary of Lester L. Neuhaus, Senior, March 27, 1977.

Houston City Directories.

Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. ", " <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/fsatg.html> (accessed May 13, 2008).

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

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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);	

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- (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);
- (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);
- (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7);
- (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).
- (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 the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark Designation of the Lester L. Neuhaus House at 2227 Brentwood Drive.

LESTER L. NEUHAUS HOUSE
2227 BRENTWOOD DRIVE



