

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Craig-Amburn House
OWNERS: Matthew V. Milukas and Patricia E. Butorac
APPLICANTS: Same as Owners
LOCATION: 3214 Locke Lane - River Oaks
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: II.b
HPO FILE NO: 08L207
DATE ACCEPTED: Jun-13-08
HAHC HEARING: Jul-10-08
PC HEARING: Jul-17-08

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 22, Block 23, River Oaks Section 4, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Craig-Amburn House was constructed in 1937 by builder, C. C. Bell. Sol. R. Slaughter was the architect. The Colonial Revival-style house was built as a speculative home with the original plans dated June 4, 1937. C. C. Bell, who was active in the Houston home-building business for almost 50 years, built many speculative homes that were simple in style and affordable to mid-level buyers.

Charles Craig, the original owner of the house, was a manager of a Houston shipping company. Subsequent owner, Elton Amburn, worked in the insurance business for many years. The Craig-Amburn House qualifies for Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The first mention of the home at 3214 Locke Lane comes in December 1937 with an advertisement in the *Houston Chronicle* touting, "New 8 room Early American: automatic heating, air conditioned and large recreation room third floor."

On February 5, 1938, the *Houston Press* carried the following with a photograph:

"Mr. and Mrs. C.W. Craig have bought this new \$14,500, seven room home on a 65 by 125 foot site at 3214 Locke Lane, River Oaks, built by C.C. Bell."

River Oaks Magazine followed up with more information in March 1938:

"Mr. and Mrs. Charles Craig are in their new residence at 3214 Locke Lane. The house is an attractive Early American type, painted white and has green shutters. Mr. and Mrs. Craig have three children, Ann, who is in Lamar Senior High School, Charles, who is in River Oaks Elementary School and Agnes Lee who is only four and not yet in school. Mr. Craig is manager for the Houston office of Strachan Shipping Company."

The Craig family lived in the house for only six or seven years. By 1945, the home was occupied by a renter and, by 1946, the home was purchased by Elton and Betty Amburn. Elton Amburn was born in Oklahoma on January 2, 1910, one of five children of Ellen Amber Stidham and Elmer Ethlyn Amburn. Amburn graduated from the University of Texas in 1932, and by 1946, he was a salesman with Great South Life Insurance. According to the City Directories, Amburn worked as a salesman, underwriter

and, by 1960, assistant secretary for Great South Life Insurance. Also, by 1960, it appears that he and Betty had separated, as only Betty was living at 3214 Locke Lane. Elton Amburn later moved to Kerr, Texas, and died on January 2, 2006, at the age of 96.

The Amburns owned the home for approximately 22 years or until around 1968. Betty Amburn sold the house to Larry W. Martin, Jr., of the Burroughs Corporation, who later sold it to James A. McAlister by 1972. McAlister worked as a Director of Planning and Economics for George Mitchell Oil Company. McAlister owned the home for approximately 14 years and a series of owners followed, including: Edgar and Stephanie Larsen (1986), Sonia M. Tersigne (2003), and the current owners, Patricia Butorac and Matthew Milukas (2006).

Charles Christian Bell, Jr., (1896-1975) was a builder active in Houston for almost 50 years. He was born in Boonville, Missouri, and moved to Houston in 1919. He first appears in the 1922 City Directory as president of Bell Lumber Company and Bell Construction Company, with a residence at the Rice Hotel (City of Houston Landmark). His last entry in the City Directory before retirement comes in 1972 which shows him as president of Bell Construction. According to his obituary, C. C. Bell served as a captain of heavy artillery in World War I. For many years, he was active in the Harris County Heritage Society. Additionally, he served as a President of the Houston Homebuilders Association and was a member of River Oaks Country Club. The speculative C. C. Bell homes were simple in style and affordable to a mid-level buyer. Through the River Oaks Property Owner's card file, the following C. C. Bell homes were identified in River Oaks: 3202 Locke Lane (1940), 3418 Locke Lane (1939), 3608 Locke Lane (1940), and 2232 Pelham (demolished). Bell Construction served as the builder for the Harry K. Smith home at 3605 Del Monte in 1947 (Pending Protected Landmark).

Soloman Robert ("Sol") Slaughter, the architect for the Craig-Amburn House, was born on August 31, 1902, perhaps in Erath, Texas, and graduated from Rice University in 1926. In 1927, the City Directory shows Sol Slaughter as an architect practicing with Bell Construction Company. By 1929-1930, he was practicing on his own with an office in the Home Building and Loan Association Building. In 1941, his practice was located in the First Federal Savings and Loan Association Building. It appears that Slaughter, and his wife Fay, relocated to Galveston, Texas, in 1946, where he died on July 17, 1970.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The home at 3214 Locke Lane is a two-story, brick and clapboard-sided home designed in 1937. The home features a symmetrical main façade featuring two windows down and three windows up. Originally, the home had a screened-in porch with detailed iron or woodwork on the east side of the first floor. Said porch has since been enclosed to form a sunroom. The home's appearance looks much as it did in 1937, with a slight extension on the east side of the home.

The current owners purchased the house in 2006. They have completed renovations to the house, including revamping the third floor with newly finished rooms, installing new utility equipment and wiring, updating the kitchen and bathrooms, and replacement of the clapboard siding which matched the original.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

Fox, Stephen, personal notes on Sol R. Slaughter, June 2008.

Houston Chronicle, Advertisement, December 19, 1937.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Houston Chronicle, Obituary of C.C. Bell, Jr., October 31, 1975.

Houston City Directories.

Houston Press, Photo and Caption, February 5, 1938.

River Oaks Magazine, March 1938.

River Oaks Property Owners Card File.

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); | |
| <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, 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 Craig-Amburn House at 3214 Locke Lane.

CRAIG-AMBURN HOUSE
3214 LOCKE LANE



CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

SITE LOCATION MAP
CRAIG-AMBURN HOUSE
3214 LOCKE LANE
NOT TO SCALE

