

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: William T. Campbell, Jr., House
OWNERS: Michael and Kimberly Weill
APPLICANTS: Same as above
LOCATION: 3237 Inwood Drive – River Oaks
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: III
HPO FILE NO: 09L213
DATE ACCEPTED: Jan-27-09
HAHC HEARING: Feb-12-09
PC HEARING: Feb-19-09

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 4, Block 3, River Oaks Country Club Estates, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a two-story, stucco clad house.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The William T. Campbell, Jr., House at 3237 Inwood Drive was designed by Birdsall P. Briscoe and was built in 1925 by James M. L. West. It was one of the nine speculative houses in the original River Oaks project developed by Country Club Estates. Birdsall P. Briscoe was a noted Houston architect and established his reputation as an exceptional designer with an aptitude for disciplined formal composition and correct, scholarly rendition of historic details. He worked extensively in the Houston neighborhoods of Courtlandt Place, Shadyside, Broadacres, and River Oaks, where he designed 31 houses.

The original owner of the house, William T. Campbell, Jr., was best known as a co-founder of Mission Manufacturing, a Houston company that produced equipment for the petroleum industry. The Campbell family remained in the house until the early 1990s. Campbell's sister, Sarah Campbell Blaffer, was well known for her gifts of artwork to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the University of Houston art museum that bears her name, and the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation whose goal is to bring the visual arts to people throughout the state of Texas.

The William T. Campbell, Jr., House has been featured in numerous publications, including *River Oaks, A Pictorial Presentation of Houston's Residential Park* (1929), *Houston Architectural Survey* (1980), *Houston Home and Garden* (1981), *Houston Architectural Guide* (1980), and was featured as a stop on the American Institute of Architects guided home tour of River Oaks.

The William T. Campbell, Jr., House at 3237 Inwood Drive meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6, for Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The William T. Campbell, Jr., House at 3237 Inwood Drive was designed by Birdsall P. Briscoe for Country Club Estates, Inc. in 1925. According to the Houston Architectural Survey, the contract for the house was awarded to James M. L. West for \$17,500. On June 7, 1925, the Houston Post Dispatch ran the following notice accompanied by an architectural sketch of the house: "Inwood Drive Home. This beautiful home is under construction on Inwood Drive in Country Club Estates by James M. L. West, contractor. The firm Briscoe & Dixon are architects. Construction is hollow tile and stucco."

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The William T. Campbell, Jr., House was built by River Oaks Corporation as a speculative house. At the time the nine homes were under construction, an advertisement ran in the *Houston Chronicle* stating, “In River Oaks – Nine new homes \$15,000 - \$35,000. Apply at Field Office.” On October 11, 1925 the *Houston Chronicle* featured the following article followed by a photograph of the house:

“Campbell buys French Colonial – Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Campbell have purchased one of the houses planned and constructed under the direction of the Country Club Estates organization in River Oaks. The new Campbell home is a hollow tile and stucco house, which faces north on Inwood... and is one of the finest residences in the series of homes that have been under construction this summer by Country Club Estates. It was the first home in this series of homes to be purchased before it was actually completed, and consequently it has never been shown to the property owners in the River Oaks community...The Campbell home is of French Colonial design adapted to the climate requirements of Houston by the architects, Briscoe and Dixon, whose treatment of the interior design and the Southern and eastern fenestration have given the benefits of the prevailing wind to practically every part of the house...”

The William T. Campbell, Jr., House was later used in advertisements for River Oaks Corporation. On March 6, 1927 a large photograph of the house appeared with the caption “Tomorrow, and Tomorrow and Tomorrow”, which communicated a sense of permanence for the new neighborhood.

William T. Campbell, Jr.

William T. Campbell, Jr., was born on September 29, 1895 in Lampasas, Texas to William T. and Sarah Jane Turnbull Campbell. According to the 1980 Houston Architectural Survey, Campbell Sr. was an English-born journalist involved in early oil exploration efforts in Texas. He also was an investor in the Hogg-Swayne syndicate (a partnership between James W. Swayne and James Stephen Hogg) at the Spindletop oilfield, which eventually resulted in the Texas Company (now Texaco).

William T. Campbell, Jr., attended the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Virginia. During World War I, he enlisted in First Officers Training Camp at Leon Springs, Texas. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army as a First Lieutenant. He was best known as a co-founder of Mission Manufacturing, a Houston-based company making equipment for the petroleum industry, in 1925. He remained with the company until 1955 when he retired to pursue oil and ranching interests. He was active in society, belonging to Christ Church Cathedral, Saratoga Lodge No. 546, AF&AM, River Oaks Country Club, Bayou Club and the Tejas Club.

He was married to Lula Key and the two did not have children. His sister, Sarah Campbell Blaffer, was well known for her gifts of artwork to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the University of Houston art museum that bears her name, and the Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation whose goal is to bring the visual arts to people throughout the State of Texas. William T. Campbell died in 1987 at the age of 91 while still owning the house at 3237 Inwood Drive.

Birdsall P. Briscoe

Birdsall P. Briscoe was born in Harrisburg, Texas on June 10, 1876. He was the son of Andrew Birdsall and Annie Frances (Paine) Briscoe, the grandson of Andrew Briscoe and the great-grandson of John R. Harris, founder of Harrisburg, Texas. During the Spanish-American War, Briscoe served in the United States Army Infantry as a sergeant and subsequently as a major in the army during World War I. He was educated at Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Texas A&M University), and the University of Texas, where he was a classmate of Will Hogg. He began his architectural career in 1904 in Houston as an apprentice with architects Lewis Wilson and Lewis Sterling Green. During this time,

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the firm designed the original Blessed Sacrament Church (circa 1910), an East End landmark demolished in 2005. After a brief partnership with Green (1909-11), Briscoe started his own firm in 1912. He designed the W. L. Clayton house on Caroline Street in 1916 in the Georgian Revival style and construction was completed in 1917. The house is now open to the public as the Clayton Genealogical Library and is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. From 1922 until 1926, he was in partnership with Sam H. Dixon, Jr. From 1919 until his retirement in 1955, Briscoe shared an office with Maurice J. Sullivan. Although from time to time he collaborated with both Dixon and Sullivan on nonresidential commissions, Briscoe was best known for his elegantly composed and detailed houses.

Briscoe established his reputation as an exceptional designer at the outset of his career. His aptitude for disciplined formal composition and correct, scholarly rendition of historic detail placed him at the forefront of the eclectic trend in Houston architecture during the second decade of the twentieth century. Briscoe's finest houses, designed between 1926 and 1940, exhibit the array of historical architectural styles characteristic of American eclectic architecture and are distinguished by the architect's gift for harmonious proportion and full-bodied ornamental detail.

Briscoe worked extensively in the Houston neighborhoods of Courtlandt Place, Shadyside, Broadacres, and River Oaks. Among his clients for houses were: William Lockhart Clayton (1917), W. T. Carter (1920), R. Lee Blaffer (1920), Walter H. Walne (1925), Burdine Clayton Anderson (1928), Robert W. Wier (1928), Milton R. Underwood (1934), Wirt A. Paddock (1936), I. H. Kempner, Jr. (1936), and Dillon Anderson (1938). Outside Houston, Briscoe's best-known project was the remodeling of the Patton-Varner House near West Columbia (see Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Park) for Ima and William Clifford Hogg in 1920.

Briscoe married Ruth Dillman in 1927. He joined the American Institute of Architects in 1921 and was elected a fellow of the institute in 1949. From 1934 until 1941, he served as district officer for South Texas of the Historic American Buildings Survey. He was the author of two western adventure novels, *In the Face of the Sun* (1934) and *Spurs from San Isidro* (1951). He was a parishioner of Christ Church. He died in Houston on September 18, 1971, and is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in Goliad, Texas.

According to Stephen Fox, the Briscoe houses in River Oaks include:

1. 1829 Sharp Place, Briscoe House #1 (1936)
2. 2227 Chilton Road, Kempner House (1937)
3. 2950 Lazy Lane, Dogwoods (1928-demolished)
4. 3196 Del Monte Drive, Harry L. Mott speculative house (1931)
5. 3023 Del Monte Drive, Bullington House (1937)
6. 2923 Del Monte Drive, Underwood House (1934)
7. 2920 San Felipe Road, Speculative house for River Oaks Corporation (1931)
8. 2938 San Felipe Road, Speculative house for River Oaks Corporation (1931)
9. 2308 River Oaks Boulevard, Fountain House (1938)
10. 3127 Avalon Place, Speculative house for River Oaks Corporation (1931)
11. 2113 Bellmeade Road, Speculative house for River Oaks Corporation (1931)
12. 3015 Chevy Chase Drive, Speculative house for River Oaks Corporation (1930)
13. 2929 Chevy Chase Drive, Speculative house for River Oaks Corporation (1931)
14. 3229 Chevy Chase Drive (now 3229 Groveland), Paddock House (1936) – Registered Landmark
15. 3249 Chevy Chase Drive, Frost House (1937)
16. 3376 Inwood Drive, Clayton Summer House (1924) – Registered Landmark

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17. 3439 Del Monte Drive, Pinckney House (1937)
18. 3434 Del Monte Drive, Schneider House (1941)
19. 3414 Del Monte Drive, Anderson House (1938) – Registered Landmark
20. 3334 Chevy Chase Drive, Wilson House (1938)
21. 3425 Sleepyhollow Court, McKallip House (1938)
22. 3401 Sleepyhollow Court, Johnson House (1936)
23. 3606 Chevy Chase Drive, Austin House (1951)
24. 3707 Inwood Drive, Vaughan House (1949)
25. 3601 Inverness Drive, Hutcheson House (1948)
26. 3606 Knollwood Drive, Britton House (1942, demolished)
27. 3707 Knollwood Drive, White House (1940, in association with George W. Rustay)
28. 3820 Willowick Road, Davis House (1940)
29. 3880 Willowick Road, Schuhmacher House (1941)
30. 4019 Inverness Drive, Dupree House "Legend" (1959)
31. 2317 Claremont Lane., Briscoe House #2 (1939)

River Oaks

In 1923, Will C. Hogg, Mike Hogg, and Hugh Potter purchased 200 acres surrounding the River Oaks Country Club. In 1924, Hogg organized Country Club Estates to promote the development. When the three men began the development of their new community, River Oaks, it was with the intention of making it into a demonstration of the highest standards of modern community planning; a role model for the rest of Houston to follow. Will Hogg's ambitiousness and Hugh Potter's skillful management of River Oaks during its first thirty years made the community known nation-wide as a symbol of Houston. Encouraging homeowners to retain the most talented architects in Houston (as well as several architects of national reputation) to design new houses, Hogg and Potter succeeded in creating a large, professionally-administered residential community that demonstrated the potential for beauty in a raw and often raucous city. During the 1920s and 1930s, River Oaks was often published in national news, real estate, and design media, highlighting its planning standards, its residential architecture, and its landscape design. Since the 1970s, River Oaks has also been the focus of scholarly analysis, in recognition of its significant contributions to the history of Houston and twentieth-century American elite suburban community development.

The creation of this type of subdivision was unique for Houston in many respects. The subdivision was laid out at, what was then, the far western edge of Houston. Prior to 1923, the majority of Houston's residential developments had occurred in a tight girdle around the downtown business district. As the sheer size of Houston increased, the demand for more neighborhoods grew along with it. Beginning in the early 20th century, the development followed a generally westerly and southwesterly expansion. The newer, more fashionable neighborhoods, such as Westmoreland (1902), Avondale (1907), Montrose (1911), Audubon Place (1906), Cherryhurst (1908), Binz, Southmore (1914), and Courtland Place (1906), developed along the Main Street corridor and to the southwest of downtown. River Oaks, however, was situated at the western city limits far away from other developments.

In addition, the developers broke with convention by laying out an organic pattern of roadways which lent a sense of spaciousness to the neighborhood, which was very different from the traditional Houston neighborhoods that followed a more rigid approach to development. These traditional neighborhoods

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used street grids which carved the land up into predictable square or rectangular blocks. The Texas State History Association's Handbook of Texas described the features of the new community:

Deed restrictions and centralized community control assured exclusivity; approval of house designs by a panel of architects and citizens and a purchase price of at least \$7,000 were required. A "gentleman's agreement" excluded blacks, Jews, and other minorities. The first home in the area, built by Will and Sue Clayton, is now listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Among the other notable houses is Ima Hogg's family home Bayou Bend [City of Houston Landmark], designed by John F. Staub and Birdsall P. Briscoe. In the late 1920s the development lost money, but by the late 1930s developers had invested \$3 million in the project, and the community had begun to influence development patterns downtown. In the 1990s River Oaks was at the geographic center of Houston. The community operated independently for three years, after which it was annexed by the city of Houston.

The creation and implementation of the River Oaks plan went far beyond the layout of the neighborhood itself. The developers also needed to devise a clever way of drawing prospective buyers away from the more traditional neighborhoods located closer to the downtown business district. This was achieved in two ways. The first was to insure that proper roads connected River Oaks with downtown Houston. The second was to bring the amenities to the residents. The design called for underground utility lines, eliminated alleys, allowed only three intersecting streets, provided rigid building codes, and eventually banned all commercial traffic.

Beginning in 1925, work began in earnest on Buffalo Bayou Drive, which would later become Allen Parkway. The two developers retained Kansas City landscape architects Hare and Hare to provide a master plan that would protect the environmental integrity and natural beauty of the area. Hare and Hare designed Buffalo Bayou Drive. The thoroughfare, atypical for its time, was built to provide a reliable route by which River Oaks residents could get to their jobs in downtown Houston while simultaneously providing a pleasant driving experience. The street was designed to follow the meanders of nearby Buffalo Bayou and originated at the north entry to the River Oaks neighborhood. The entry was marked by grand entry gates designed by Houston architect John F. Staub in 1926. They also hired J. C. Nichols, who built one of the first major shopping centers in the United States, to serve as a design consultant. The master plan included homesites, a fifteen-acre campus for River Oaks Elementary School, two shopping centers, and esplanades planted with flowers.

The plan for the scenic drive of Buffalo Bayou Drive began more than a decade before its implementation with the Arthur Comey Plan for Houston in 1912. The Comey Plan was a progressive and ambitious plan to guide the future of Houston's development, with quality of life issues as a major component. Parts of the Comey plan called for the creation of scenic drives, considerable park space, and linear parks along the city's bayous. Ultimately, only a small proportion of the components of Comey's plan came to fruition. Among these realized elements were the layout of South Main at Hermann Park with its prominent traffic circles, and Allen Parkway Drive with its adjacent linear park space situated between the drive and Buffalo Bayou Drive.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The William T. Campbell, Jr., House at 3237 Inwood Drive is two stories and is clad with stucco with a rectangular plan with wings to the south and west. The entry features a wrought iron portico and a raised seam copper roof. The first floor has French door windows prefaced with ornamental ironwork panels. Shutters frame three paned casement windows on the second floor. Stephen Fox described the house located at 3237 Inwood Drive as Briscoe "transcribing details from the architecture of 18th century Charleston onto a suburban neo-Regency house." He also states that the "combination of Southern detail

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and English domestic type” appealed to Ima Hogg who influenced the design of the original nine speculative houses. The house at 3237 Inwood Drive has also been referred to as the Redbird House because a bird is the centerpiece in the window grilles (See Exhibit B).

The house has had three owners since its construction 84 year ago. The Campbell family remained in the house until the early 1990s and the house then stood vacant for several years. In 1993, John and Patricia Laurent purchased and restored the house. Patricia Laurent stated: “The only part of Briscoe’s house we reconfigured was the kitchen – and it was no longer original having been ‘redone’ sometime in the 1950s. We remade it and joined it to a new family room [located at the rear of the house] for wonderful casual living space.” Their restoration garnered the attention of the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance and they were awarded a Good Brick Award in 1998. Shortly thereafter, the Weill’s purchased the house and have made minimal changes since, none of which have impacted the house’s façade. They restored the existing 1925 carriage house, added a pool and a pool house. The pool house was built in the style of the original house and the grill work from the house’s front door was reproduced for the pool house entrance.

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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Handbook of Texas Online, “Sarah Campbell Blaffer,”

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/BB/fbl51.html>, accessed January 15, 2009.

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Houston Architectural Survey, 1980, prepared by Southwest Center for Urban Research and the School of Architecture, Rice University.

Houston Chronicle, “Obituary of William T. Campbell,” August 22, 1987.

Houston Chronicle, “Rites Saturday for William T. Campbell,” August 21, 1987.

Houston Chronicle, October 11, 1925.

Houston Chronicle, “Living History,” Real Estate Section, October 2007.

Houston Post Dispatch, June 7, 1925.

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APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation of a Landmark.

(a) The HAHC and the 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 | D - does not satisfy | 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; | | | |
| <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; | | | |
| <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; | | | |
| <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; | | | |
| <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; | | | |
| <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; | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present; | | | |
| <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. | | | |

AND

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <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 Planning Commission accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the William T. Campbell, Jr. House at 3237 Inwood Drive.

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EXHIBIT A

THE WILLIAM T. CAMPBELL, JR., HOUSE
3237 INWOOD DRIVE



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EXHIBIT B

THE WILLIAM T. CAMPBELL, JR., HOUSE
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EXHIBIT C
SITE LOCATION MAP
THE WILLIAM T. CAMPBELL, JR. HOUSE
3237 INWOOD DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE

