

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Arthur and Diane Fennekohl House

OWNERS: Gaye and Edward McCullough

APPLICANTS: Same

LOCATION: 3827 Inwood Drive – River Oaks

30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: VI

HPO FILE NO: 10L232

DATE ACCEPTED: 5-17-2010

HAHC HEARING: 10-21-2010

PC HEARING: 10-28-2010

SITE INFORMATION

Tracts 4 and 5A, Block 84, River Oaks Section 11, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a two-story brick veneer residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Arthur and Diane Fennekohl House at 3827 Inwood Drive was built in 1942 by Rolf Fredrikson for Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Fennekohl. It was designed by MacKie & Kamrath, a well-recognized Houston architectural firm. MacKie & Kamrath was established in 1937 by fellow University of Texas alumnus Karl Kamrath and Frederick James MacKie, Jr. Between 1937 and 1942 the firm worked in a variety of styles but Kamrath, the designer, was drawn to modern architecture. Later in the 1940s after meeting Frank Lloyd Wright, MacKie & Kamrath shifted towards a modernist style that shaped their legacy in Houston. MacKie and Kamrath were among the first Houston architects to design modernist buildings. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, MacKie & Kamrath were Houston's best-known modern architects and their work was published frequently in the national architectural press. The firm's major buildings included, Phillis Wheatley Senior High School (1949), the City of Houston Fire Alarm Building (1939, demolished), the Covington and Kivlin houses (1941, 1942), and San Felipe Courts (1942, 1944). MacKie and Kamrath also designed the Farnsworth and Chambers Building (1957), a City of Houston Protected Landmark. The Arthur and Diane Fennekohl House is an unusual example of MacKie & Kamrath's traditional residential architecture.

The Arthur and Diane Fennekohl House meets Criteria 1, 4, and 6 for landmark designation, and if approved will become the second MacKie & Kamrath City of Houston Landmark.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Fennekohl House at 3827 Inwood Drive was built in 1942 by Rolf Fredrikson and designed by MacKie & Kamrath for Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Fennekohl. On March 1, 1942, the following article appeared in the *Houston Post* announcing the construction contract:

“A.C. Fennekohl to build residence – Rolf Fredrikson has been awarded a contract to erect a spacious two-story brick veneer modified French type residence at 3827

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Inwood Drive for Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Fennekohl. The residence, designed by Mackie & Kamrath, architects, will cost approximately \$19,000.”

On May 5, 1942, articles appeared in the Houston Chronicle and the Post including the architect’s drawing of the house. The Chronicle article stated:

“Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Fennekohl are building this charming residence designed by MacKie & Kamrath, architects at 3827 Inwood Drive in River Oaks. Occupying a 90x180 foot site, the house contains a stair hall, living room with fireplace and built-in bookcases; glazed sunroom, and screened breezeway which connects the two car garage, with laundry, downstairs and four bedrooms, two tile baths and sleeping porch upstairs... It will cost approximately \$22,000.”

ARTHUR AND DIANE FENNEKOHL

Arthur Charles Fennekohl was born in 1905 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He graduated from the University of Cincinnati where he served as captain of the swimming and football teams. According to the University’s website, Fennekohl led the University of Cincinnati to a 5-0 record, placing first in at least two events during every meet and earning the team the Buckeye Athletic Association (BAA) Ohio Swimming Title. He also was a member of the undefeated relay team.

Following college, Fennekohl married Diane Ross of Chicago and moved to Des Moines, Iowa and Dallas, Texas before coming to Houston in 1938. At the time of the building of the house in 1942, the City Directory lists him as Manager of Creamix Corporation, a dairy company, with a home on Yupon. He later became owner and President of Shamrock Ice Cream and Dairy Companies, a position he held for over 20 years. Mr. Fennekohl died in Houston in 1991 at 85 years old.

KARL KAMRATH

Karl Kamrath was born on April 25, 1911, in Enid, Oklahoma to G. A. and Martha (Kreplin) Kamrath and moved to Austin as a young boy. He excelled at tennis from an early age and continued to play throughout his life. Kamrath attended the University of Texas and was awarded a Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1934. That same year he married tennis champion Eugenie Sampson. Kamrath turned down an opportunity to play tennis professionally to move to Chicago to work as an architect. Between 1934 and 1936 he worked in Chicago for the architects Pereira and Pereira, the Interior Studios of Marshall Field and Company, and the Architectural Decorating Company. Kamrath and his family moved back to Texas in 1937 when Kamrath and fellow University of Texas graduate, Fred MacKie, opened an architectural firm in Houston.

During World War II, Kamrath served as captain in the United States Corps of Engineers. After his release from duty in the military, MacKie and Kamrath reopened their Houston firm in 1946. In June of 1946, Kamrath had an opportunity to meet Frank Lloyd Wright when he visited Taliesin, Wright’s house and studio in Spring Green, Wisconsin. This encounter had a profound effect on Kamrath’s architectural designs as he committed himself to creating organic architecture following Wright’s Usonian principles. Organic architecture “...involves a respect for the properties of the materials and the harmonious relationship between the design and the function of the building. Organic architecture is also an attempt to integrate the site and structure and a union between the

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context and the structure. The core of this ideology is the belief that architecture has an inherent relationship with both its site and its time.” (<http://www.pbs.org/flw/legacy/essay1.html>). Usonian principles include an emphasis on spaciousness, integrating a building to its site, and affordability. Usonian architecture rejects box-like rooms, opting for one-story horizontal plans, open kitchens, carports, window walls, and patios.

Kamrath became a member of the American Institute of Architects in 1939 and was elected an AIA Fellow in 1955. He served a term as president of the Houston Chapter of the AIA in 1960 and was chairman of the AIA's Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Committee (1960-62). From 1949 to 1955 he served as a visiting critic at several universities, including the University of Oklahoma, the University of Texas, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas (now Texas A&M University), and the University of Oregon. Kamrath was a founder and board member of Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum from 1948 through 1952. He also was a member of St. Luke's United Methodist Church and the River Oaks Country Club.

From his childhood Kamrath played tennis competitively, and from the age of sixteen he ranked nationally in United States Lawn Tennis Association events; he won in boys' doubles (1927), intercollegiate doubles (1931), and father-and-son doubles (1952). He was a member of numerous local, regional, and national tennis organizations and was a founding member of the Houston Racquet Club. He was elected to the University of Texas Longhorn Hall of Fame (1978) and the Texas Tennis Hall of Fame (1984).

Karl Kamrath and his first wife Eugenie, had four children; they divorced in 1975. He married Gardina McCarthy in 1977. Karl Kamrath died on January 29, 1988 in Houston, Texas.

FREDERICK JAMES MACKIE, JR.

Frederick MacKie Jr. was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming on August 13, 1905 to Fred MacKie Sr. and Mayme Beacher. While his family moved several times during his childhood, by high school years he settled in San Antonio, Texas. In 1924, MacKie entered the School of Architecture at the University of Texas. He earned his Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1928 and moved to Chicago to work in the design department of the architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White. In 1936, MacKie left Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White to become the chief designer at the Architectural Decorating Company, where he met Karl Kamrath. Fred MacKie moved his family to Houston, where he opened the MacKie & Kamrath firm with Kamrath in 1937.

During World War II, Fred MacKie served as a lieutenant colonel in the United States Army Corps of Engineers. He was stationed in Alamogordo, New Mexico from 1942 through 1946. The firm was closed during this time. At the end of the war, MacKie and Kamrath returned to Houston to reopen their architectural partnership. Fred MacKie was an American Institute of Architects Fellow and served as the Texas Society of Architects President in 1957. In 1977, MacKie entered a period of semi-retirement due to health problems. Shortly thereafter, Fred MacKie and his wife, Helen, moved to Palm Desert. He died in 1984.

MACKIE & KAMRATH

In 1937, fellow University of Texas alumnus, Karl Kamrath and Frederick James MacKie, Jr., moved from Chicago to Houston to open their own architectural firm, MacKie and Kamrath. Houston was the best option for a new architecture firm, given its larger size and wealth from the oil and gas industry. Fred MacKie and Karl Kamrath each had their strengths and roles in the firm. Kamrath was in charge of design, while MacKie was primarily responsible for planning and business.

Between 1937 and 1942 the firm worked in a variety of styles but Kamrath, the designer, was drawn to modern architecture. In 1946, Kamrath met the Wisconsin architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Kamrath was so moved by this meeting that he devoted himself to Wright's Usonian architecture. Usonian architecture MacKie and Kamrath were among the first Houston architects to design modernist buildings, and they quickly obtained national recognition with such projects as a small house for Kamrath's family (1939), the City of Houston Fire Alarm Building (1939, demolished), the Covington and Kivlin houses (1941, 1942), and San Felipe Courts (1942, 1944), the largest federal public-housing complex built in Texas. MacKie and Kamrath's buildings were consistently Wrightian in character; they displayed a predilection for horizontal alignment, dramatic structural engineering, and finely executed material and ornamental detailing. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, MacKie & Kamrath were Houston's best-known modern architects and their work was published frequently in the national architectural press. Lloyd Borget, a graduate of the University of Michigan, joined the firm in 1949 and became an associate in 1954. Borget was primarily in charge of planning and production. In 1977, when Fred MacKie went into partial retirement, Lloyd Borget became a partner, along with Ross Belle Gillette, Pete Brunson, and Vincent Hughes.

The work of MacKie and Kamrath is a testament to one individual's singular belief in the philosophy and principles of Frank Lloyd Wright. Though never a member of the Taliesin Fellowship (now the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture), Karl Kamrath faithfully explored the precepts of Organic Architecture as few disciples did. MacKie and Kamrath introduced Wright's style of modernism to Houston during a period of intense urban growth in the 1940s and 50s. The breadth and quality of this work earned the firm numerous awards and extensive local and national recognition. Kamrath employed the vocabulary of Organic Architecture with great skill and expanded its use to large and diverse buildings such as the M. D. Anderson Cancer and Research Hospital, Temple Emanu El, and First Pasedena State Bank. Their work, while relying heavily on the style established by Wright, succeeded in articulating the optimism and cultural imagination of post-war Houston.

The firm's major buildings included,

- Phillis Wheatley Senior High School (1949),
- Temple Emanu-El (1949, with Lenard R. Gabert),
- Contemporary Arts Association Museum (1949, demolished),
- Dow Chemical Company complex, Freeport (1953),
- Schlumberger Well Surveying Corporation complex (1953),
- Humble Research Center (1954),
- St. John the Divine Church (1954, with H. A. Salisbury),

- University of Texas M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute (1954, with Schmidt, Garden, and Eriksen, altered),
- Champlin Oil Company Building, Fort Worth (1956),
- Commercial Standard Insurance Company Building, Fort Worth (1956),
- Farnsworth and Chambers Building (1957),
- Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church, Bunker Hill Village (1957, 1973),
- Temple Rodef Shalom, Waco (1962),
- Pasadena State Bank Building, Pasadena (1962, with Doughtie and Porterfield),
- Science and Research Building, University of Houston (1968),
- Big Three Industries Building (1974),
- University of Texas School of Public Health Building, Houston (1975).

Kamrath's houses were especially compelling demonstrations of Usonian design principles. These included a second house for his family on Tiel Way in River Oaks (1953), where he also designed the Keating (1951), Gonzalez (1957), and Ballantyne (1961) houses. Elsewhere he designed the George P. Mitchell house, Piney Point Village (1963), the Walsh house, Bunker Hill Village (1965), the Campbell house, Hunters Creek Village (1970), and the Lott house, Sugar Land (1976).

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The Arthur and Diane Fennekohl House exhibits elements of the French Manorial and Colonial Revival styles. The French Manorial design has its origins in the style of rural manor homes, or chateaus, built by the French nobles during the reign of Louis XIV in the mid-1600s. The design was a popular Revival style in the 1920s and again in the 1960s. The French Manorial style often features brick cladding with detailing in copper or slate. Windows and chimneys are symmetrical and perfectly balanced, at least in original versions of the style. Defining features include a steep, high, hipped roof; balcony and porch balustrades; rectangle doors set in arched openings; and double French windows with shutters. Second-story windows usually have a curved head that breaks through the cornice.

The Colonial Revival style was a popular design in the United States between 1890 and 1935. The Colonial Revival style resulted from a rejection of the Queen Anne Revival style, and a desire to return to a more "traditional" American building type. The style took on added popularity with the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in the 1920s. This style draws from the simple building forms typical of early American colonial structures, and elements of classical or Georgian architecture. It is closely related to the Neoclassical Revival and Georgian Revival styles. Colonial Revival residential structures are typically one or two stories, with hipped or gabled roofs and symmetrical facades. The entryway or porch is the primary focus, often highlighted with a decorative crown or pediment.

The Arthur and Diane Fennekohl House features a steeply-pitched, side-gabled roof and asymmetrical façade dominated by a steeply-pitched, cross-gable. On the front elevation a flared eave overhangs the entrance. A double hung window with 6/6 glass lights and flanked by shutters is featured prominently in the cross-gable. The house is constructed of wood frame and concrete block and is clad with brick on all facades. The first floor of the front elevation features one bay window capped with copper clad hood. The second floor of the front elevation features rectangular, double

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- (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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Arthur and Diane Fennekohl House at 3827 Inwood Drive.

HAHC AND PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

Recommended to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Arthur and Diane Fennekohl House at 3827 Inwood Drive.

EXHIBIT A
ARTHUR AND DIANE FENNEKOHL HOUSE
3827 INWOOD DRIVE



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EXHIBIT B
SITE LOCATION MAP
ARTHUR AND DIANE FENNEKOHL HOUSE
3827 INWOOD DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE

