

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: George D. Stevens House

OWNERS: Anna and Harold E. Holliday, Jr.

APPLICANTS: Same as Owner

LOCATION: 2404 Brentwood Drive – River Oaks

AGENDA ITEM: IIC

HPO FILE NO: 11L237

DATE ACCEPTED: Apr-1-2011

HAHC HEARING: May-19-2011

SITE INFORMATION: Lot 13, Block 36, River Oaks Section 1, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, brick veneered residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The George D. Stevens House, located at 2404 Brentwood Drive, was constructed in 1935 and designed by Houston architects, Harvin C. Moore and Hermon Lloyd. Moore and Lloyd created a substantial body of work, which includes over 84 houses in River Oaks, as well as public and commercial buildings such as the Memorial Center and Chapel at Rice University. Moore and Lloyd also designed a building at 2006 West Alabama that became the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning. After the partnership ended, Moore became architect for the U.S. Navy and designed naval bases in Houston and federal buildings in Houston and elsewhere in Texas.

Harvin C. Moore is also credited with being one of Houston's earliest preservationists. In 1954, Moore was one of three who founded the Heritage Society in order to save the 1847 Kellum-Noble House from demolition.

George Stevens, the first owner of the house, was a geologist. The two-story house is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style and features a full-length portico on the front façade. The George D. Stevens House at 2404 Brentwood Drive meets Criteria 1, 4, and 6 for Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Houston architects, Harvin C. Moore and Hermon Lloyd, designed the house at 2404 Brentwood Drive in 1935 for George D. and Peggy Stevens. According to Harvin Moore: Houston Architect, the house cost \$20,000 at building and was chosen as one of 36 outstanding houses in House and Garden's special home building issue of February 1936. Also, on February 16, 1936, a sketch of the house was featured in the Houston Post with the caption, "George D. Stevens Home on Brentwood."

Moore and Lloyd's client, George D. Stevens, was a geologist with Goldsten and Stevens. He and his wife, Peggy, kept the house until 1938 when they sold to Paul G. Benedum. The sale made the Houston Post (with photo) on November 6, 1938.

"Typical Southern Colonial Home Purchased – This picture, which have been lifted from a leaf of 'Gone with the Wind,' is a typical Southern colonial at Brentwood and Chilton Road in River Oaks, purchased by Paul G. Benedum of Benedum and Trees, oil operators for \$25,000. It was bought from G.D. Stevens."

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In December 1940, the house was featured in River Oaks Magazine with a four-page photographic spread. The piece entitled “Colonial: The Traditional Home of Hospitality – Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Benedum, 2440 Brentwood Drive... Harvin Moore and Hermon Lloyd, Architects; Interiors by Don Cave Company” is excerpted below:

“An atmosphere of graciousness and welcome is a built-in feature of this home. Hospitality is expressed in the broad veranda and in the warmth of the entrance hall...”

“In the living room, the architect again has given the perfect backdrop for graciousness – proportion, simple beauty of millwork, a fireplace exquisitely designed, its opening faced in marble.

“In the dining room, floor-length windows and good proportion are the beginnings of a room which combines simplicity and dignity.”

The Benedums remained in the house for seven years. They sold around 1945 to Edward James, who was associated with Consolidated Venetian Blinds. In the following years, the house passed through a series of owners and renters including: Thomas P. Hull, Jr., lawyer (1952); John H. Lollar, Jr., Vice President/Treasurer Triangle Refineries (1959), J. Barry York (possible renter), President Masory Paint Company (1968); Larry P. and Janice Schumann (1996); Karl and Jennifer Knapp (1998); and now, Harold and Anna Holliday who purchased in 2002.

Harvin C. Moore and Hermon Lloyd

Harvin C. Moore, a well-known Houston architect, designed the home at 2440 Inwood Drive in 1937 in partnership with Hermon Lloyd. All of the papers of Moore are kept in the Houston Public Library, where the original plans for the home remain.

According to the introduction of Harvin Moore: Houston Architect, written by Moore’s son Barry, Harvin Moore (1905-1994) was born in Carmona, Texas. As a child, the family relocated to Houston and lived in a two-story frame house at 1314 Fairview. He graduated from Central High School in 1923 and began college at Rice Institute. He graduated “with distinction” with plans to attend medical school. After a brief time in medical school, Moore re-entered Rice Institute to study architecture; he received his B.S. in Architecture in 1930. Upon graduation, construction was slow due to the Depression and Moore collaborated with Hermon Lloyd (1909-1989), a fellow undergraduate in the Rice architecture program, to design party decorations and sets. The two worked well together, and in 1934, they formed the architecture firm of Moore & Lloyd. Their office was first located in the Citizen’s State Bank Building downtown. Several years later, they designed a building at 2006 West Alabama that became the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning.

According to Barry Moore, “Moore and Lloyd were soon very popular and very busy. The reputation of the firm rested largely on their works in River Oaks.” The firm’s work continually increased during the 1930s. The commercial work was often for the same clients as their residential designs. Their residences were usually traditional in style and the commercial buildings were more “Moderne.” Barry Moore attributes this to the fact that clients wished to appear “progressive in business and traditional in family values.”

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During their partnership, Moore and Lloyd designed many commercial, civic and military buildings, including over 84 homes in River Oaks. The catalogue of Moore and Lloyd works put together by Michael Wilson for the Houston Public Library is extensive.

A selection of Moore and Lloyd's River Oaks homes includes:

- 3379 Inwood (Hamman House, City Landmark)
- 2132 Troon (Kendall-Levine House, City Landmark)
- 3310 Del Monte Drive (1934) (demolished)
- 2228 Del Monte Drive (1934) (demolished)
- 2133 Pine Valley (1935) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 1839 Kirby Drive (1935) (demolished)
- 1927 Bellmeade Road (1935) (demolished) "*Architectural Forum: 101 Finest Small Homes*"
- 2125 Bellmeade Road (1935)
- 3257 Ella Lee (1935) (demolished)
- 2940 Chevy Chase (1935)
- 1558 Kirby Drive (1935)
- 2148 Looscan Lane (1935)
- 2117 Looscan Lane (1935) (demolished) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 2129 Looscan Lane (1936) (demolished)
- 1112 Shepherd Drive (1935)
- 2404 Brentwood Drive (1935)
- 2216 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 2137 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 2132 Troon Road (1936)
- 1801 Sharp Place (1937)
- 3239 Locke Lane (1936)
- 1537 Kirby Drive (1936)
- 2022 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 2136 Pelham Drive (1936)
- 3215 Ella Lee (1937)
- 2036 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 3324 Ella Lee Lane (1937) (demolished)
- 3068 Reba (1937)
- 5 Briarwood Court (1937)
- 2440 Inwood Drive (1937)
- 3417 Ella Lee Lane (1938)
- 3412 Piping Rock Lane (1938)
- 7 Briarwood Court (1938)
- 3208 Chevy Chase Drive (1938)
- 1910 Kirby Drive (1938) (demolished)
- 2327 Claremont Lane (1938) (demolished)
- 2057 Claremont Lane (1939)
- 3689 Del Monte Drive (1939) (demolished)
- 3413 Piping Rock Lane (1939)
- 2033 Claremont Lane (1940)
- 1909 Olympia Drive (1939)
- 3610 Meadow Lake Lane (1940) (demolished)
- 3225 Reba Drive (1940)
- 1665 Willowick (1940) (demolished)
- 3666 Chevy Chase Drive (1940) (demolished)

By the end of the 1930s, Moore and Lloyd began to move in different directions and, by the entry of the U.S. into World War II, the firm had dissolved. After Pearl Harbor, Moore applied to Congressman Albert Thomas to gain entrance to the Naval Officers Candidate School. The Congressman convinced Moore that he would better serve the government in his capacity as an experienced architect. Thus started a twenty-year relationship where Moore received military commissions for naval bases in Texas, and later, for federal projects in Houston and elsewhere in Texas. During this phase of his career, he also received commissions for churches, small buildings and industrial buildings.

In 1954, Moore became one of Houston's earliest preservationists by saving the Kellum-Noble house (City of Houston Protected Landmark), which stands on its original site in City Park (now

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Sam Houston Park) and which had fallen into disrepair after many years of use as a City of Houston Parks Department facility. Moore was one of three who started the Harris County Heritage Society with the mission to save the Kellum-Noble house from demolition. According to Barry Moore, “Moore was one of the few practicing architects of the time who did not see a concern with historic preservation as incompatible with an interest in modern architecture. With the Heritage Society, he worked to locate worthy historic structures, raise funds for their restoration, and move them to Sam Houston Park. Moore restored the Nichols-Rice-Cherry House (c.1850) and the San Felipe Cottage, among others, during his years with the Society.”

According to Barry Moore, Harvin Moore considered the preservation works among his favorite projects. The other buildings that he particularly liked were: 1537 Kirby (Hamaker House), 3239 Locke Lane (Childress House), Rice Memorial Chapel and Student Center, and the Houston Casket Company (1717 Live Oak).

River Oaks

When Will C. Hogg, Mike Hogg, and Hugh Potter began the development of River Oaks in 1923, 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. Since its creation, River Oaks has been published in national news, real estate, and design media, and has 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, such as Westmoreland (1902), Avondale (1907), Montrose (1911), Audubon Place (1906), Cherryhurst (1908), Binz, Southmore (1914), and Courtland Place (1906). 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 used street grids which carved the land up into predictable square or rectangular blocks.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The George D. Stevens House at 2404 Brentwood Drive is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style, a style popular 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.

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The entryway or porch is the primary focus, often highlighted with a decorative crown or pediment. Other areas of elaboration are the cornice and windows.

The George D. Stevens House comprises 5,111 square feet on a 16,233 square foot corner lot and faces south on Brentwood; Chilton is the cross street. The house is sited in the middle of the lot, and is constructed of brick veneer that has been painted. It has a three part façade that is dominated by a full-height, full-length portico supported by six thin columns.

The entry is in the center of the house and consists of a large, paneled wood door with four upper lights. The door is topped with a transom window and fanlight above, and by wood paneling to either side. Above the entry on the second floor is a single wood-sash windows with working shutters. To the left and right of the entry bay are pairs of 9-over-12 wood-sash windows on the first floor and pairs of 6-over-6 wood-sash windows on the second floor. All windows have working shutters.

The house caught fire in October 2010. The owners, Anna and Harold Holliday, are working to restore the house from the damage sustained during the fire. Their restoration will not include changes to the original façade.

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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 Courtney Spillane, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

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APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, 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 |
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- AND**
- (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 City Council the Landmark Designation of the George D. Stevens House at 2404 Brentwood Drive.

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EXHIBIT A
GEORGE D. STEVENS HOUSE
2404 BRENTWOOD DRIVE

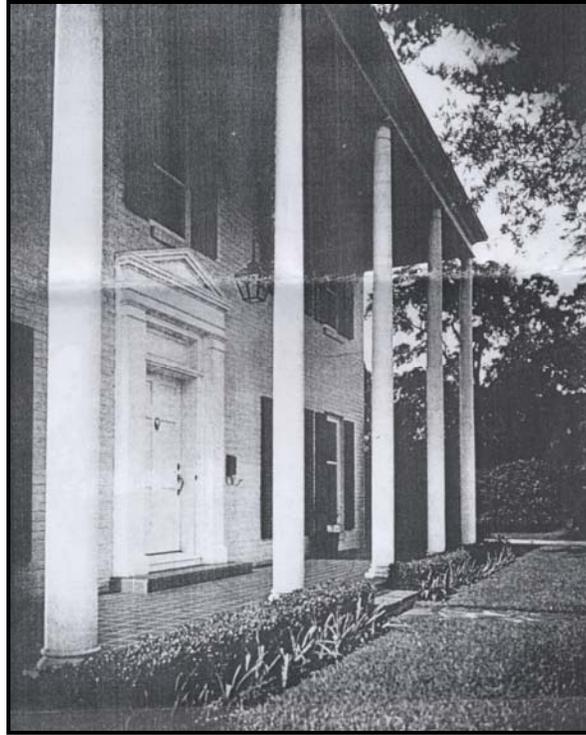


Figure 1. River Oaks Magazine, December 1940



Figure 2. May 2011, during restoration from fire damage

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EXHIBIT B SITE LOCATION MAP GEORGE D. STEVENS HOUSE 2404 BRENTWOOD DRIVE NOT TO SCALE

