

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Fore-Blaine House  
**OWNERS:** Minnette and Peter Boesel  
**APPLICANTS:** Courtney Tardy, GHPA  
**LOCATION:** 2504 Stanmore Drive – River Oaks

**AGENDA ITEM:** II.a  
**HPO FILE NO:** 11L257  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** Feb-11-2011  
**HAHC HEARING DATE:** Oct-20-11

### SITE INFORMATION

Lot 24, Block 40, River Oaks Section 1, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes an historic wood frame and brick veneer two-story residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Fore-Blaine House at 2504 Stanmore Drive was designed by local architect Fred Gray, and built in 1935 by Jack and Lois Fore. Building houses was the couple's hobby and the house at 2504 Stanmore was the first of three houses that they built. Jack Fore was an insurance executive for his entire career; he owned Jack Fore Agency and was Vice President of Texas-Fore Associates. The Fores lived in the house only until 1940. The house was purchased in 1941 by Robert and Elizabeth Blaine and remained in the Blaine family until 1988. The Fore-Blaine House is located in the first platted section of River Oaks, is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style, and retains most of its original exterior features.

The Fore-Blaine House meets Criteria 1, 4, and 6 for Landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The house at 2504 Stanmore Drive was built in 1935 by Jack and Lois Fore. On October 27, 1935, the following appeared in the *Houston Post*.

“Jack Fore Builds \$9500 Residence – Construction was started last week on a two story New England colonial residence on Stanmore Drive in River Oaks for Jack E. Fore, manager of the local office of the Employers Casualty Company...Plans and specifications were prepared by Fred Gray, local architect with offices at the March Lumber Company.

The Fore residence will contain seven rooms, including three bedrooms and two baths. Mr. Fore bought the homesite last week from W. J. Rollins for \$2500...”

Jack and Lois Fore's daughter, Mary Ellen Fore Wright, is age 91 and still lives in Houston. According to Mrs. Fore Wright, building houses was her parents' hobby. She was an only child and remembers sitting in the backseat of her parents' car on trips to look at her their latest projects. She remembered that the Stanmore lot was purchased from Dr. Rollins simply because he had found a house that “suited him better.” At the time of moving into the house at 2504 Stanmore, she was a freshman at Lamar High School.

According to Mrs. Fore Wright, her parents completed three projects: 2504 Stanmore (1935-36), 2220 Pelham (1937), and 3445 Wickersham (1940). Upon the completion of the Wickersham house, World War II made obtaining building supplies difficult and the Fores ended their house-building ventures.

## *Jack E. Fore*

Jack E. Fore (1900- 1975) was the son of Eugene and Ellen C. Fore. He resided in Houston for 45 years and was married to Lois Wathen Fore. According to his obituary, he attended Mercersburg Academy and the University of Texas. He was an insurance executive for his entire career; he owned Jack Fore Agency and was Vice President of Texas-Fore Associates. At the time of the building of the house in 1935, he was the assistant district manager of Employers Casualty Company. He was active within the community and a member of River Oaks Country Club, Houston Club, Rotary Club, Masonic Lodge, and the Order of the Constantine (the highest fraternity honor for alumni of Sigma Chi). The Fore family lived in the house for two or three years and by 1940 had moved to the house they built at 3445 Wickersham.

In 1940, Jack Ferguson, an assistant department manager for HO&R Co., was living in the house. In 1941, the house was purchased by Robert and Elizabeth Blaine. Robert M. Blaine was an insurance agent with W. Tucker Blaine located in the Cotton Exchange Building. Mr. Blaine lived in the house eleven years before his death circa 1950. Mrs. Blaine remained in the house until 1982, making her the longest resident of the house. Elizabeth Baker Blaine was born in 1903 and died on October 9, 1982. According to her obituary, she was involved in many organizations in the community, including First Presbyterian Church, National Society of Colonial Dames of America, Junior League of Houston and Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority. After her death in 1982, the house remained in the Blaine family until 1988 when it was sold to Judith Chapman. In 1998, it was purchased by Peter and Minnette Boesel. Minnette Boesel is the Mayor's Liaison to Cultural Affairs and was one of the developers of Houston's first historic preservation ordinance.

## *William Fred Gray*

William Fred Gray was a member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) from 1947-1952. According to the River Oaks Card Files, he was also the architect of 2220 Pelham Drive, also designed for Jack Fore, and 3239 Ella Lee Lane designed for Carter Cavitt.

## *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 Fore-Blaine House at 2504 Stanmore is a faithful interpretation of the 1930s Colonial Revival 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. 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 3,326 square foot Fore-Blaine House sits in the middle of an 8,125 square foot lot on Stanmore Drive facing south. It is two stories tall, with a side gabled roof punctuated by a chimney at the east end. The roof slightly overhangs the second story. The first floor of the house is faced with painted brick and the second floor features horizontal wooden siding and slightly overhangs the first. This common feature of Colonial Revival houses is called a jetty. The entrance features a four-paneled wooden door with two lights surrounded by fluted pilasters to the sides of the door and a pediment above. The molding decoration is composed but restrained. Wooden pendants are symmetrically placed and accent the second floor overhang at the ends and to either side of the front entrance. These pendants were also common features of Colonial Revival houses.

To either side of the door are 8-over-8 wood sash windows on the first floor. On the second floor are three 4-over-4 wood sash windows, one over each downstairs window and one over the front entrance. Every window on the front façade features working shutters.

A one-story side room is set back from the front façade on the east façade of the house. It looks to be original and was probably a sunroom or porch. It features a single 8-over-8 wood sash window with a hipped roof that meets the chimney.

*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

City Directories, 1935-1983.

*Houston Chronicle*, obituary of Elizabeth Baker Blaine, October 10, 1982.

*Houston Chronicle*, obituary of Jack E. Fore, November 19, 1975.

*Houston Post*, "Jack Fore Builds \$9500 Residence," October 27, 1935.

Johnston, Marguerite, *Houston: The Unknown City 1836-1946*, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 1991.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *Field Guide to American Houses*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984.

River Oaks Property Owners card file.

Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Houston, 1924-February 1951, Volume 11, Sheet 1127.

Wright, Mary Ellen Fore. Personal Communication, Houston, January 28, 2011.

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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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- (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;
- (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;
- (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;
- (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.

### 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 Fore-Blaine House at 2504 Stanmore Drive.

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**EXHIBIT A**  
Fore-Blaine House  
2504 Stanmore Drive



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## EXHIBIT B SITE LOCATION MAP Fore-Blaine House 2504 Stanmore Drive

NOT TO SCALE

