

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** John F. Staub House

**OWNER:** Peter S. Wareing

**APPLICANT:** Same

**LOCATION:** 3511 Del Monte Drive - River Oaks

**AGENDA ITEM:** IIa

**HPO FILE NO:** 11L258

**DATE ACCEPTED:** 1-11-2012

**HAHC HEARING:** 2-9-2012

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 5 and Tracts 4 & 6A, Block 6, River Oaks Country Club Estates, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story, brick and cypress shingle clad residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The John F. Staub House was designed by renowned Houston architect John Staub in 1925. Staub opened his Houston architectural practice in 1923 and his first independent commission in the city was the River Oaks Country Club. Staub is best known for his elegant single-family houses and is closely identified with the River Oaks neighborhood. Between 1924 and 1958, he designed thirty-one houses in River Oaks. Outside of River Oaks, Staub houses from this period were built in Broadacres, Courtlandt Place, and the Fort Worth neighborhood of River Crest. Additional Staub houses may be found in Beaumont, Dallas, and Memphis, Tennessee, some of which are open to the public as museums. In association with Birdsall Briscoe Staub designed Bayou Bend, the home of Ima Hogg, daughter of Mike Hogg, the developers of River Oaks.

In addition to residential work Staub designed the parish house of Palmer Memorial Church, the Junior League Building, and the Bayou Club in Houston. His firm designed buildings for the campuses of the University of Texas, Rice University, University of Houston, Texas Medical Center, and John Reagan High School. He was also consulting architect for the new building and planetarium for the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

Staub designed the house specifically for his family. It was designed in a Colonial New England style to honor the heritage of his wife who hailed from Massachusetts. The house design has been copied and adapted by numerous architects working in River Oaks including Hiram Salisbury, Stayton Nunn, and John Thomas Rather. Staub expanded the house in 1931 after the birth of his third child. The house remains in the family and is owned by Peter S. Wareing, Staub's grandson.

The John F. Staub House is significant both for its architecture and its architect, and meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 for Landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### *The John F. Staub House*

The John F. Staub House was constructed in 1925 as the family home for Staub, his wife Madeleine, and their three children. After completing the design of the River Oaks Country

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Club-his first commission in Houston-Staub decided to call the neighborhood home. According to Stephen Fox: “Staub told Barnstone that after he received the commission for the River Oaks Country Clubhouse he felt compelled to join the country club and buy a lot in the initial offering of house sites in Country Club Estates.” (*The Country Houses of John F. Staub*, Pg. 119) Staub chose a picturesque New England colonial design to honor his wife’s Massachusetts heritage. The New England colonial style house set the pace for numerous homes in River Oaks. According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, the Staub House was adapted by Hiram Salisbury, Stayton Nunn, John Thomas Rather and other architects both in River Oaks and the other twentieth-century elite Houston subdivisions.

In *The Architecture of John F. Staub: Houston and the South*, Howard Barnstone described the style and purposeful layout of the house:

The front elevation is characteristically un-prepossessing: embellishment is limited to a broad white doorframe beneath an unusual scrolled pediment. The colors are subdued. Steep roofs, sharp gables, and a tall, banded chimney impart vertical emphasis to the design.

In arranging the rooms, Staub consciously sought to capture even the slightest breeze. The major rooms – living room, dining room, and bedrooms – each had a triple exposure. He also used jib-headed windows, that is, double-hung windows whose sashes could be raised into wall cavities above to completely open the aperture. Pg. 84

In *The County Houses of John F. Staub*, Stephen Fox discusses the design of the house in greater depth:

Staub collected the service and circulation spaces of the house on its north-facing street front and compacted them into tight clusters...differentiating between the band of street-facing circulation and service spaces (the entry and stairs, a paired guest toilet and telephone above, the kitchen, a miniscule pantry, and a service porch and boiler room) and the larger volumes that project from the rear of the house. Staub expanded the house’s presence on Del Monte by incorporating wing walls and a freestanding two-story garage with apartments above into the street-front composition. ...the garage was brought forward from the rear corner of the site, where it might otherwise have been built, to perform narratives of service and circumstance, expanding the degrees of hierarchal gradation built into the facade and rhythmically framing the entire street front with a low-sling, shed-roof profile on the west that mirrors the pitch of the gabled entrance bay on the east. Staub gave this small house big presence by manipulating perceptions of scale with the imposing classical entrance pediment and the high-silled shuttered windows lighting the toilet and kitchen, as well as the material contrast between the white-stained gray cypress shingles (cladding the kitchen bay, the wing walls, the garage and the second floor) and the pink common brick facing of the entrance bay, the living room and the tall frontal chimney. Pg. 119-120

## *John F. Staub*

According to the *Handbook of Texas Online*, John Staub (1892-1981) began his architectural practice in New York in 1916. In 1921, he came to Houston to supervise a project in the Shadyside neighborhood, and went on to establish his own practice here in 1923. Staub is best known as an architect of single-family houses and is closely identified with the River Oaks

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neighborhood. His first independent commission in Houston was the River Oaks Country Club. As mentioned, above, he was then retained by the Hogg brothers to design two model homes for the developing River Oaks subdivision. As his career progressed, he was tapped as primary architect (with Birdsall Briscoe named associate architect) to design Bayou Bend, the home of Ima Hogg. Between 1924 and 1958, he designed thirty-one houses in River Oaks, in addition to making designs for homes that were never built, as well as designing renovations and extensions for existing homes. Outside of River Oaks, Staub homes from this period were built in Broadacres, Courtlandt Place, and the Fort Worth neighborhood of River Crest. Additional Staub homes may be found in Beaumont, Dallas, and Memphis, Tennessee, some of which are open to the public as museums.

According to Barnstone, some of the River Oaks homes designed by John F. Staub include:

- House for Country Club Estates, 3374 Chevy Chase, 1924
- Joseph H. Chew House, 3335 Inwood, 1925
- House for Country Club Estates, 3260 Chevy Chase, 1925
- Kemerton Dean House, 1912 Bellmeade, 1925 City of Houston Landmark
- John F. Staub House, 3511 Del Monte, 1925
- Hubert B. Finch House, 3407 Inwood, 1926
- Bayou Bend for Ima Hogg, 2940 Lazy Lane, 1926
- Judge Frederick C. Proctor Home, 2950 Lazy Lane, 1926 (as associate to Birdsall Briscoe), Demolished.
- Harry C. Hanszen House, 2955 Lazy Lane, 1930
- Wallace E. Pratt House, 2990 Lazy Lane, 1931, Demolished.
- J. Robert Neal House, 2960 Lazy Lane, 1931 City of Houston Landmark
- George A. Hill, Jr. House, 1604 Kirby Drive, 1931
- Hugh Roy Cullen House, 1620 River Oaks Boulevard, 1933
- David D. Bruton House, 2923 Inwood Drive, 1933 City of Houston Landmark
- Clarence M. Frost House, 2110 River Oaks Boulevard, 1933
- Ravenna for Stephen P. Farish, 2995 Lazy Lane, 1934
- William J. Crabb House, 2416 Pine Valley Drive, 1935, Demolished.
- Robert Bowles House, 3015 Inwood Drive, 1935
- George S. Heyer Home, 2909 Inwood Drive, 1935
- Oak Shadows for Ray L. Dudley, 3371 Chevy Chase, 1936
- Tom Scurry House, 1912 Larchmont, 1936
- James L. Britton House, 1824 Larchmont, 1936
- Robert D. Strauss House, 1814 Larchmont, 1937
- John M. Jennings House, 2212 Troon Road, 1937
- Dan J. Harrison House, 2975 Lazy Lane, 1938
- Claud B. Hamill House, 2124 River Oaks Boulevard, 1938
- Edward H. Andrews House, 3637 Inwood Drive, 1939, demolished
- Rienzi for Mr. and Mrs. Harris Masterson, III, 1406 Kirby Drive, 1952 (S,R&H)
- House for Mr. and Mrs. Ben M. Anderson, 3740 Willowick, 1956 (S,R&H) City of Houston Landmark
- House for Mr. and Mrs. George A. Peterkin, Senior, 2005 Claremont, 1957 (S,R&H)

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In addition to residential work, Staub designed the parish house of Palmer Memorial Church, the Junior League Building, and the Bayou Club in Houston. His firm designed buildings for the campuses of the University of Texas, Rice University, University of Houston, and the Texas Medical Center. He was the primary architect on the John Reagan High School project as well. Staub, Rather, and Howze also consulted with Jim Goodwin of Pierce and Pierce in the new building and planetarium for the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

## *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 John F. Staub House is sited facing north on Del Monte Drive with the east-side façade facing Larchmont. The house is faced with pink brick and cypress shingles, and is composed under a series of intersecting gable roofed bays.

The east bay of the front façade contains an 8-over-12 wood sash window on the first floor and a 6-over-6 wood sash window on the second floor façade. The windows are trimmed plainly and the second story window has working wood shutters. The first floor façade is faced with brick and the second story is façade with cypress shingles that slightly overhand the first floor façade. This bay is under the side gabled main roof.

The second bay, clad in brick, contains a massive chimney and the entry and is set forward from the east bay. A long low front gabled roof extends from the height of the second story to the first floor, framing the entry of the house. The entry features a heavily paneled wood front door with

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a wide surround decorated with fluted pilasters, a tall and heavily carved entablature, and an unusual broken pediment. This pediment is set in relief and so is not as bold as a fully broken pediment. Above the door on the second story façade is a 6 pane wood window.

The third bay of the house is clad in cypress shingles and is set forward from the entrance bay. It features two 9 pane wood sash windows with wood shutters on the first floor façade, and two 6-over-6 wood sash windows with wood shutters on the second floor façade. A 2 pane window is set in the attic story. This bay features the tallest front gables roof on the house.

The fourth bay is set back from the third bay and is under a side gabled roof. It is clad in cypress shingles. It features two 9 pane wood windows with shutters on the first floor and two 6-over-6 wood sash windows with wood shutters on the second story façade. A short shingle clad wall projects west from this bay several feet and terminates at the driveway.

A driveway bisects the house from the garage, which is set directly west of the house. The garage is clad in cypress shingles. The car bays do not face North and are not visible from the front façade. On this first floor of the garage wing is a single pane window with wood shutters on the first floor façade and directly above it is a 6-over-6 wood sash window with wood shutters on the second story façade. The garage bay features a side gables roof that extends on the west side from the top of the roof to the first floor. In a way, it mirrors the entry bay of the house.

The side façade facing Larchmont features two 8-over-12 wood sash windows on the first floor and two 6-over-6 wood sash windows on the second floor. The first floor is clad in brick and the second floor is clad in cypress shingles. A 2-pane window is set in the attic story.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Barnstone, Howard, *The Architecture of John F. Staub: Houston and the South*, University of Texas Press, 1979.

Barnstone, Howard, "John Fanz Staub", *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fst94>), accessed December 05, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Fox, Stephen, *The Country Houses of John F. Staub*, Texas A&M University Press, 2007.

Fox, Stephen, *Houston Architectural Guide*, Second Edition, American Institute of Architects/Houston Chapter and Herring Press, Houston, 1990.

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

Houston City Directories.

*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.*

**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:

- | <b>S</b>                            | <b>NA</b>                           | <b>S - satisfies</b>     | <b>D - does not satisfy</b> | <b>NA - not applicable</b> |
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| <b>AND</b>                          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input 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;
- (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.
- (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 John F. Staub House at 3511 Del Monte Drive.

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**EXHIBIT A**  
JOHN F. STAUB HOUSE  
3511 DEL MONTE DRIVE





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**EXHIBIT B**  
**SITE LOCATION MAP**  
**JOHN F. STAUB HOUSE**  
**3511 DEL MONTE DRIVE**  
**NOT TO SCALE**

