

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Dow and Helen Hamm House
OWNERS: Jim and Nicole Perdue
APPLICANTS: Same
LOCATION: 3412 Piping Rock Lane - River Oaks

AGENDA ITEM: III.b
HPO FILE NO: 12L269
DATE ACCEPTED: May-8-2012
HAHC HEARING: Aug-15-2012

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 7, Block 59, River Oaks Sec. 7, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, traditional residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Dow and Helen Hamm House was designed by Moore & Lloyd in 1938 and completed in 1939. The home is designed in a 1930s interpretation of an early Louisiana home, which was described at the time in *River Oaks Magazine* as “a happy blending of the Louisiana and California Colonial styles.” The home was originally built for William Dow and Helen Hamm. Mr. Hamm was a prominent geologist for Shell Petroleum Company. Hamm later led exploration efforts for Atlantic Refining Co (ARCO), and under his leadership, the company discovered Prudhoe Bay in Alaska, the largest oil field in the United States. The house was later owned by Houston Chronicle Editor George Cottingham and his wife Mary Lee.

The Dow and Helen Hamm House meets criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6 for Landmark Designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Dow Hamm

William Dow Hamm was born in Bentonville, Arkansas, on September 2, 1900, and grew up in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma, where he excelled in geology and on the football team, where he played both offense and defense for four years. He began his career in 1922 at a small oil company and by 1925 had started working for Roxana, the predecessor of Shell Oil. He stayed with Shell for nearly twenty years, working in Dallas and Houston, and spent two years at The Hague where he was exposed to international exploration. Hamm ultimately became Shell’s Manager of Exploration. He returned from Europe to Houston in 1936, and the Hamms made their home on Milford Street near Montrose Blvd. They moved to River Oaks in 1939.

When the Hamm family moved to River Oaks, the February 1939 *River Oaks Magazine* reported:

“Mr. and Mrs. W. Dow Hamm and their two sons, Dow, Jr., age 15, and Dick, age 12, are in their beautiful new home at 3412 Piping Rock Lane. The residence is a New Orleans type of white painted brick and clapboards, built on long and low informal lines, and set in a grove of oak trees. Long verandas, lower and upper, sweep almost the full length of the house. Shutters on the doors and full-length windows are of a slate green. Brass carriage lanterns and camellia trees in little tubs on either side of the doorway add a delightful note. This home is arresting in its Old South atmosphere. Dow is a sophomore

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at Lamar High School and Dick attends Sidney Lanier. Mr. Hamm, who is a geologist with the Shell Petroleum Corporation, has just returned with his family to Houston after spending a year in Holland.”

The home was also featured in a multi-page spread of *River Oaks Magazine* which declared of the home:

“For living in Texas...and Houston in particular – a happy blending of the Louisiana and California styles results in a delightful home. The large opening allows the owners to take full advantage of our many months of mild weather while the extensive use of porches and broad eaves protects the house from the sun and rain. From the spacious entrance hall one has access into the living room, dining room or library. The library paneled in cypress, has three exposures, and an outside door leading to the garden. All the other rooms in the house which includes four bedrooms, and a breakfast room, have a south exposure.”

The Hamms moved back to Dallas in 1942, when Dow Hamm switched companies to work for Atlantic Refining Co (ARCO). Hamm led the company’s exploration efforts and under his leadership the company discovered Prudhoe Bay in Alaska, the largest oil field in the United States. He eventually rose to become Executive Vice President and a member of the Board of Directors. Hamm retired in 1967 but stayed active in the oil and gas industry. He died in Dallas on August 16, 1983.

George W. Cottingham

George Wallace Cottingham was the second owner of 3412 Piping Rock Lane, purchasing the home in 1942. At the time, Cottingham was the VP and Editor of the Houston Chronicle. Cottingham was born in Houston on May 7, 1894. His father was an auditor of the Southern Pacific Lines in Louisiana and Houston. George attended high school in Houston, and then college at the University of Chicago, where he received a degree in philosophy in 1915. He then joined the Houston Chronicle staff as a reporter, but by 1917 returned to Chicago to work for the Chicago Evening Post. Following service in the army during World War I, he returned to Houston to rejoin the Houston Chronicle in 1919. In 1920, he became the city editor and in 1936, managing editor. He remained in this position until his early death of a heart attack in 1948. He was only 53 years old.

Cottingham, who was also a devout Catholic, had an instrumental role along with Galveston-Houston Bishop C.E Byrne and Rev. T.P. O’Rourke in founding Houston’s St. Thomas University. The university opened in the fall of 1947.

When Cottingham died, numerous tributes poured forth from dignitaries, including Houston Chronicle Publisher Jesse H. Jones who said “His passing will leave a void in Houston and Texas that cannot be filled,” and from Texas Governor Beaufort Jester, who praised Cottingham as one of “Texas’ most distinguished, unselfish and effective public servants.” Cottingham served on Texas’ public safety commission. The city flags were flown at half-mast on the day of his funeral, which was held at St. Anne’s Catholic Church. Rival newspaper the Houston Post honored Cottingham as “a little man with a twinkle in his eye and a kind heart for cub reporters.” The official report of his death said the following: “Always the newspaperman, the Chronicle editor, once delivered papers on a Houston River Oaks residential section route when his son, George, Jr., was unavailable to meet an emergency call from the paper’s circulation department.”

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Mary Lee McKenzie Cottingham remained in the home with her children until 1955, when it was purchased by Calvin Soriero, an attorney, and his wife Margaret. The Sorieros lived in the home until 1971. Subsequent owners include Ann B. Cater Leonard, Robert and Holly Reedy, and Anthony Banham. The current owners purchased the home in 2009.

Moore & Lloyd

Harvin C. Moore and Hermon F. Lloyd designed 3412 Piping Rock Lane. Moore's architectural papers are kept in the Houston Public Library, where the original plans for the home remain. Harvin Moore was born in Carmona, Texas, in 1905. 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" and intended to go to medical school. After a brief stint in medical school, Moore reentered Rice to study architecture and received his BS in Architecture in 1930. Upon graduation, construction was slow due to the depression and Moore teamed up with Hermon Lloyd (1909-1989), another undergraduate in the Rice architecture program, to design party decorations and sets. The two worked well together, and in 1934, they formed the firm of Moore & Lloyd. They were first located in the Citizen's State Bank Building downtown. Several years later, they designed a building at 2006 West Alabama which became the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning. According to son 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."

Hermon Lloyd was born in Houston on October 9, 1909. His father, a notary public and a manager at an insurance firm, died in 1919, and his mother became a clerk. Hermon was brought up in a house with his mother, sister and grandmother. He attended Rice University and graduated with a B.S. in Architecture in 1931.

The firm's work continually increased during the 1930s. The commercial work was often for the same clients as their residential designs. The residences were usually traditional in style and the commercial buildings were more "Moderne." Barry Moore attributes this dichotomy to the fact that clients wished to appear "progressive in business and traditional in family values."

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

A selection of their River Oaks homes includes:

City Landmarks:

- 2404 Brentwood Drive, 1936
- 3379 Inwood, 1937
- 2440 Inwood Drive, 1937
- 2132 Troon Road, 1936

1934:

- 2228 Del Monte Drive (demolished)
- 3310 Del Monte Drive

1935:

- 1927 Bellmeade Road (demolished)
- 2125 Bellmeade Road
- 2404 Brentwood Drive
- 2940 Chevy Chase
- 3257 Ella Lee (demolished)
- 1558 Kirby Drive
- 1839 Kirby Drive (demolished),
- 2117 Looscan Lane (demolished)
- 2148 Looscan Lane
- 2133 Pine Valley Drive
- 1112 Shepherd Drive

1936:

- 2022 Chilton Road (demolished),
- 2036 Chilton Road (demolished)
- 2137 Chilton Road (demolished)
- 2216 Chilton Road (demolished)
- 1537 Kirby Drive
- 3239 Locke Lane
- 2129 Looscan Lane
- 2136 Pelham Drive

1937:

- 5 Briarwood Court
- 3215 Ella Lee
- 3324 Ella Lee Lane (demolished)
- 1801 Sharp Place
- 3068 Reba

1938:

- 7 Briarwood Court
- 2327 Claremont Lane (demolished)
- 3208 Chevy Chase Drive
- 3417 Ella Lee Lane
- 1910 Kirby Drive (demolished)
- 3412 Piping Rock Lane

1939:

- 2057 Claremont Lane
- 3689 Del Monte Drive (demolished)
- 1909 Olympia Drive

- 3413 Piping Rock Lane

1940:

- 3666 Chevy Chase Drive (demolished)
- 2033 Claremont Lane
- 3610 Meadow Lake Lane (demolished),
- 3225 Reba Drive
- 1665 Willowick (demolished)

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 house at 3412 Piping Rock was designed as "a happy blending of the Louisiana and California Colonial styles." The house is 5,630 square feet and is sited facing south on a 15,720 square foot lot. The main mass of the house has a brick façade on the first story and vertical wood siding on the second story. Two recessed side wings on either side of the main mass are faced entirely with painted brick. The entire structure is topped with a hipped roof. The front façade features a 2 story full façade porch that wraps around and terminates at the side wings. The porch has square wooden support columns along with a wooden balustrade on the second story.

The first story front façade features a center entrance with a pair of fixed pane windows with 6 lights each on either side. The windows are topped with a slightly peaked pediment of brick and all feature working shutters. The entry features a paneled wood door with 6 lights. Surrounding the door is a heavy wooden surround featuring fluted trim and bull's-eyes. The second story of the main mass features a 2-over-2 sash window centered above the main entrance; this window also features

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- (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 Dow and Helen Hamm House at 3412 Piping Rock Lane.

EXHIBIT A
PHOTO

DOW AND HELEN HAMM HOUSE
3412 PIPING ROCK LANE



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EXHIBIT B
SITE LOCATION MAP
DOW AND HELEN HAMM HOUSE
3412 PIPING ROCK LANE

