

## PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton House  
**OWNER:** Nancy Naschke Simonds  
**APPLICANT:** Courtney Tardy, for Preservation River Oaks  
**LOCATION:** 2144 Brentwood Drive - River Oaks

**AGENDA ITEM:** IV.A  
**HPO FILE NO:** 13PL116  
**DATE ACCEPTED:** 07/26/2013  
**HAHC HEARING:** 08/14/2013

### SITE INFORMATION

Lot 19, Block 47, River Oaks Section 3, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, brick, Tudor style, single residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Protected Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton House was owned by sisters Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton and built by the Russell Brown Company for the River Oaks Corporation in 1930. The house is designed in an English style with Tudor elements. The Russell Brown Company was founded in Houston in 1906 and built a number of stylish and important houses in Houston, San Antonio, Dallas and other Texas cities. The house remains in the family of the second owners, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Naschke, who purchased the home in the late 1950s. Both were chemical engineers, and Mrs. Naschke was the second woman to receive a degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Texas. The house is significant for its architecture, the Russell Brown Company, and its occupants.

The Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton House meets criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6 for Landmark Designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton House was built by the Russell Brown Company for the River Oaks Corporation in 1930 and first owned by sisters Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton. The sisters had inherited their brother's estate and were 68 and 66 years, respectively, when they purchased this house on Brentwood.

#### *Elena "Lena" Carlton Meredith*

Elena "Lena" Carlton Meredith was born in Henderson, Alabama in 1862. She was the daughter of a physician. An 1885 record for the maiden name of Lena Carlton and her sister Ada indicate that they were Principal and First Assistant (respectively) of the primary school in Henderson, Alabama.

Lena's family moved to Henderson, Texas by 1880. By 1900, she was living in Dallas, Texas with her children and her husband Jesse, a druggist. However, by 1904, Jesse had died and Lena Meredith began teaching school at the William B. Travis School. By 1906, she had moved to Beaumont to live with her brother Lobel Alva Carlton and their sister Ada, who never married.

#### *Ada Carlton*

Ada Carlton was born in Alabama in 1864. She became a teacher with her sister in the 1880s. She was living with her brothers in Dallas in 1900, but had moved to Beaumont with Lobel by 1906.

Lobel Carlton, also a bachelor, was a graduate of the University of Texas Law School. He practiced in Beaumont and later Houston. Mrs. Meredith and Ms. Carlton lived mainly with Lobel, except for a few years in the mid-1910s when the sisters moved to Austin to be near Mrs. Meredith's two sons, who were studying at the University of Texas.

In 1918-1919, the three siblings lived together again at the Beaconsfield, a luxury apartment building in downtown Houston. In the early 1920s, the three siblings were once again living together, this time in Lobel's home at 4007 Montrose.

According to the *Daily Court Review*, Lobel died in 1925, leaving the sisters his significant estate, valued to be \$400,000 and in April 1926, the sisters sold the Montrose property for \$38,000, a significant amount for the time. They then lived at 2169 Troon Road in 1929

The home on Brentwood was a speculative home, designed and built by the Russell Brown Company, for the River Oaks Corporation. A *Houston Chronicle* article from December 8, 1929 entitled "Houston Has Much Building Work Listed" states:

*The Russell Brown Company also is erecting a two-story, nine-room brick veneer residence at 2144 Brentwood at a cost of \$20,000.*

The River Oaks Corporation listed the home for sale in the *Houston Post* on February 23, 1930. The home was listed in the "\$25-65k" range.

A similar River Oaks Corporation advertisement in the *Houston Post* on March 23, 1930 no longer listed the home on Brentwood. On April 1, 1930, the sisters purchased the home on Brentwood for \$32,500, also a significant sum at the time, when modest homes were purchased for \$6,000-\$10,000. It was the largest real estate transaction reported in the paper that day.

A photograph of the home and an accompanying caption ran in the *Houston Post* on April 20, 1930:

*"Meredith and Carlton Residence*

*This beautiful home for Mrs. Lena Meredith and Miss Ada Carlton at 2144 Brentwood Drive, in River Oaks, has just been completed by the Russell Brown Company, architects and builders. It is located on a large site 95 by 100 feet on Brentwood, just east of Chilton."*

A more detailed article about the home appeared in the paper on the same day:

*"Meredith and Carlton House Completed*

*Russell Brown company, architects and builders, have just completed a beautiful two-story English type home at 2144 Brentwood drive, in River Oaks, for Mrs. Lena Meredith and Miss Ada Carlton.*

*Arrangement consists of the following:*

*On the first floor: Entry and stair hall, large living room, breakfast room, dining room, pass pantry, kitchen, lavatory, coat closet, screened living porch.*

*Second floor consists of four bedrooms, the large main bedroom with combination dressing room and private bath and extra big closet. Three other bedrooms with connecting baths: three complete baths in all. Attic stairway and attic, with storage space, and ventilation from three directions.*

*Construction of the house is frame and brick veneer, with two-story half timbered and stuccoed bay, and leaded casement windows, carrying out an unusually attractive English design. The roof is of dipped stained red cedar shingles.*

*The interior walls are of plaster on metal lath on first floor; special palm finish in living room, hall and dining room. Keen's cement in kitchen and upper portions of bath walls. Walls of second floor bedrooms are papered with unusually attractive wall paper, featuring new floral scenic and modernistic designs.*

*The interior wood floors are of hardwood on both floors, with tile floors in entries, lavatory and bath rooms. Colored tile floor and wains-coates in all bathrooms, with colored accessories. Tile drain boards, Marble floor on living porch and slate floor and steps on entry.*

*The outstanding feature of this home is the number of carefully planned rooms, with principal rooms, including three bedrooms, facing south, all finished in harmony and correctly decorated. A great many cabinets, three vanities, all factory built. Metal medicine cabinets, with art mirror doors.*

*A guaranteed heating plant is located in the basement. The gas burning hot air furnace has thermostatic and clock control.*

*Garage and servants' house consists of a two-story frame with brick veneer, space for two cars below and laundry space with tubs, and two rooms and bath on second floor. Piped for gas."*

Ada Carlton died on March 9, 1943. Lena Meredith died on June 15, 1955. After Mrs. Meredith died, a private funeral service with the casket was held in the home.

#### *John H. and Geraldine Naschke*

The Naschke family purchased the home from Mrs. Meredith's estate.

John H. Naschke was born in Austin, Texas, on July 10, 1917. He was the son of John A. Naschke and Maude Hess Naschke. His family moved to Houston in 1919. His grandfather, Paul Naschke, was a local photographer in Galveston. He documented several events in Galveston including "The 1900 Storm" from 1890-1929. Paul Naschke's photographs are in the Special Collections of the Rosenberg Library in Galveston. John's mother Maude Hess was the daughter of A. H. Hess owner of A. H. Hess & Co. Harness, Saddles in Houston from 1900 to 1920, at which time A. H. Hess joined Stelzig's Leather Company, a Houston fixture since 1870.

John H. Naschke was a graduate of San Jacinto High School. He graduated from Rice Institute in 1939 with a Bachelors of Science in Chemical Engineering. John worked for several oil companies in Houston, and retired from the Exxon Chemical Company in 1978. He died at the age of 82 on February 1, 2000.

Geraldine Marie Campbell Naschke was born in Houston on May 3, 1918. She was the daughter of Archieball Basil Campbell and Irene Marie Schramm. She attended Southern Methodist University in the fall of 1935 and pledged Alpha Omicron Pi sorority. From 1938 to 1942 she attended the University of Texas and helped colonize the Alpha Omicron Pi sorority chapter. She was co-founder and first president of the Pi Kappa Colony. Throughout her life, Geraldine continued to be active in the Alpha Omicron Pi sorority and was President of Houston Panhellenic.

During her senior year at the University of Texas she attended Rice Institute, where she completed her final hours of work in order to receive a degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Texas. Mrs. Naschke had the distinction of being Rice's only senior woman in Chemical Engineering and the second woman to receive a degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Texas. After graduation, she went to work for the Magnolia Petroleum Company and then for the Shell Oil Company in Deer Park, where she met John Naschke. They married in 1945, and Mrs. Naschke left her work in 1947 to raise her family of three daughters. She was an active member of Christ Church Cathedral, where she chaired the Altar Guild for many years. During which time she needle-pointed the Advent Alter Hangings for the Cathedral. Mrs. Naschke died at the age of 93 in her home at 2144 Brentwood on July 12, 2011. Mrs. Naschke was honored by Christ Church Cathedral in giving us "Christmas in July" with having the Advent Alter Hangings hung at her funeral.

John and Geraldine Naschke raised three daughters in the home: Katherine Naschke Stites, Nancy Naschke Simonds and Geraldine Naschke Bielefeld. The home is now owned by Nancy Naschke Simonds.

### *Russell Brown Company*

According to Stephen Fox, the Russell Brown Company was a Houston-based architectural design and construction company. It was chartered in 1906 by Russell Brown. Brown was born on December 12, 1875, in Taylor, Texas, and came to Houston in 1902. The company was a prolific builder and designer of new houses in Houston from 1902 until the early 1940s. Brown expanded his operations by opening branch offices in Dallas by 1916, San Antonio by 1922 and Los Angeles, California in 1923. The firm specialized in house design and construction. It designed several commercial buildings in Houston in the 1920s as well as the 6-story Guaranty State Bank and Simpson Office Building in Ardmore, Oklahoma (1917), and the Schlumberger Building in Houston (1936).

The Russell Brown Company constructed numerous houses in the Westmoreland, Montrose, Boulevard Oaks, and River Oaks neighborhoods in Houston and the Dallas subdivision of Munger Place. The company was the general contractor of such notable Houston houses as the William S. Farish house in Shadyside (1925) and the Cleveland Sewall House in River Oaks (1926, N.R. listed, City of Houston Historic Landmark). The major houses it designed and built were the Herbert L. Kokernot House in Monte Vista in San Antonio (1928), the O.L. Seagraves House at the Mo-Ranch near Hunt (1929), the Talbott F. Rothwell House in Beaumont (1929), and the W.B. Morgan House in Olmos Park Estates in Olmos Park (1931). Among the architects who worked at various times for the Russell Brown Company in Houston were A.N. Dawson, Charles W. Oliver, Mike Mebane, and Gonzalo Ancira. In an indication of the quality of the Russell Brown architects, River Oaks Corporation hired one of their architects, Charles Oliver, away as in-house architect in 1926.

Additional information on the Russell Brown Company comes from a company brochure published around 1936. It boasts of:

*"The restful harmony and careful designing, the elegance imparted by graceful simplicity marks the difference between Russell Brown Company homes and the regular run of places so often built."*

Through this brochure, the *1980 Houston Architectural Survey* and River Oaks Scrapbooks, we have gathered the following list of other Russell Brown Company homes. There are many Russell Brown Company homes, and this list provides a sampling with an emphasis on River Oaks:

- 1805 Kirby Drive, Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Roy G. Cullen
- Home of Mr. and Mrs. Jack R. Tenison (corner of Kirby and Brentwood)
- 3258 Avalon Drive
- 2131 Pelham Drive (demolished)
- 3235 Reba Drive (demolished)
- 3238 Ella Lee Lane (demolished)
- 1216 South Shepherd Drive
- Home of Captain A.S. Hansen, Port Arthur, Texas
- Home for Dr. and Mrs. John Foster at 1708 River Oaks Boulevard (demolished), 1980 Architectural Survey
- Home for Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Smith at 3217 Inwood Drive, 1980 Architectural Survey
- 2144 Brentwood Drive, 1929
- 2224 Brentwood Drive, 1929
- 2510 Inwood Drive, 1929
- 2125 Pine Valley Drive, 1930
- 2240 Looscan Lane, 1931 (demolished)
- 2940 Del Monte Drive, 1930
- 1517 Kirby Drive, 1931
- 3016 Chevy Chase, 1931
- 2514 Brentwood, 1931
- 2235 Brentwood, 1937
- 2247 Del Monte, 1937
- 2235 Brentwood, 1937
- 2419 Del Monte, 1937
- 2153 Pelham, 1938
- 3235 Reba, 1938 (demolished)

Russell Brown retired from the building business around the time of World War II. He lived in retirement at a ranch near Juliff, Texas, south of Houston, where he died in 1963.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY**

2144 Brentwood features 3,147 square feet sited facing south on a 14,250 square foot lot. The home is designed in an English style, with Tudor elements. The home is faced in multi colored brick, and is two stories tall. The house features sash windows with square panes. A side gabled roof with two front facing gables is covered with asphalt shingles.

The westernmost part of the house features a tri-part wood casement window on the first story façade and a tri-part casement glass window on the second story façade. The windows on the second story feature diamond shaped, leaded glass panes. The hipped roof slightly overhangs the façade.

Moving east, the next part of the house features a tri-part casement glass window on the first story façade. The windows feature diamond shaped, leaded glass panes. Above the window, but slightly offset on the second story façade, is a small, casement window of diagonal panes. The hipped roof hangs over this portion of the house.

The entrance to the home is slightly offset from the center of the main mass. The home's entrance door is inset under a massive wood decoration, and between curved brick walls which create the inset. The door is solid wood, with a small window. Above the entrance on the second story façade is a large tri-part window with a wood overhang. Oversized sills surround the windows.

To the east of the entry is a projecting bay under a tall, front gabled roof. The first story façade features a five-part bay window of leaded rectangular glass with diamond shaped panes between the rectangular panels. The window features a transom with the same configuration of glass. Above this bay window is a stucco and wooden half-timber detail, and above this, another five-part bay window. This windows features diamond-shaped, leaded glass panes.

To the east of this bay is a two-story shingled addition, set back from the main part of the house. This was originally the screened porch but has been in-filled to accommodate an elevator (c. 2000) that allowed Mrs. Naschke to remain in the house.

The house is in excellent condition. The home is in almost complete original condition; updates to the screened porch and to the kitchen were executed by noted Houston builder C.C. Rouse when the Naschke family purchased the home.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Daily Court Review*, September 17, 1925

*Daily Court Review*, April 2, 1926.

*Galveston Daily News*, April 6, 1930

*Houston Chronicle*, "John Hess Naschke," c. February 3, 2000. (Provided by family without date indicated).

*Houston Post*, "Mrs. Lena Carlton Meredith," June 16, 1955.

"Geraldine Marie Campbell Naschke", c. July 14, 2011. (Provided by family without date indicated).

Houston City Directories, various publishers

River Oaks Scrapbooks, River Oaks Collection, Houston Public Library

Texas General Contractors' Association Bulletin

Various resources from Ancestry.com

*The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Matthew Kriegl, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.*

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The HAHC shall review each application for designation of a protected landmark that is included in an application for designation of a landmark at the same time and in the same manner as it reviews and considers the application for a landmark. The HAHC and the Planning Commission, in making recommendations with respect to a protected landmark designation, and the City Council, in making a designation, shall consider whether the building, structure, site, or area meets at least three of the criteria in Section 33-224, or one of the criteria in Section 33-229, as follows:

**S NA**

**S - satisfies NA - not applicable**

Meets at least three of the following (Sec. 33-229(a)(1):

- (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).

**OR**

- The property was constructed before 1905 (Sec. 33-229(a)(2);

**OR**

- The property is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a "contributing structure" in an historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Sec. 33-229(a)(3);

**OR**

- The property is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark (Sec. 33-229(a)(4).

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation of the Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton House at 2144 Brentwood Drive.

**HAHC ACTION**

Recommended that City Council approve the Landmark and Protected Landmark Designation of the Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton House at 2144 Brentwood Drive.

**EXHIBIT A  
PHOTOS**

Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton House  
2144 Brentwood Drive



**EXHIBIT B**  
**NEWSPAPER ARTICLE**

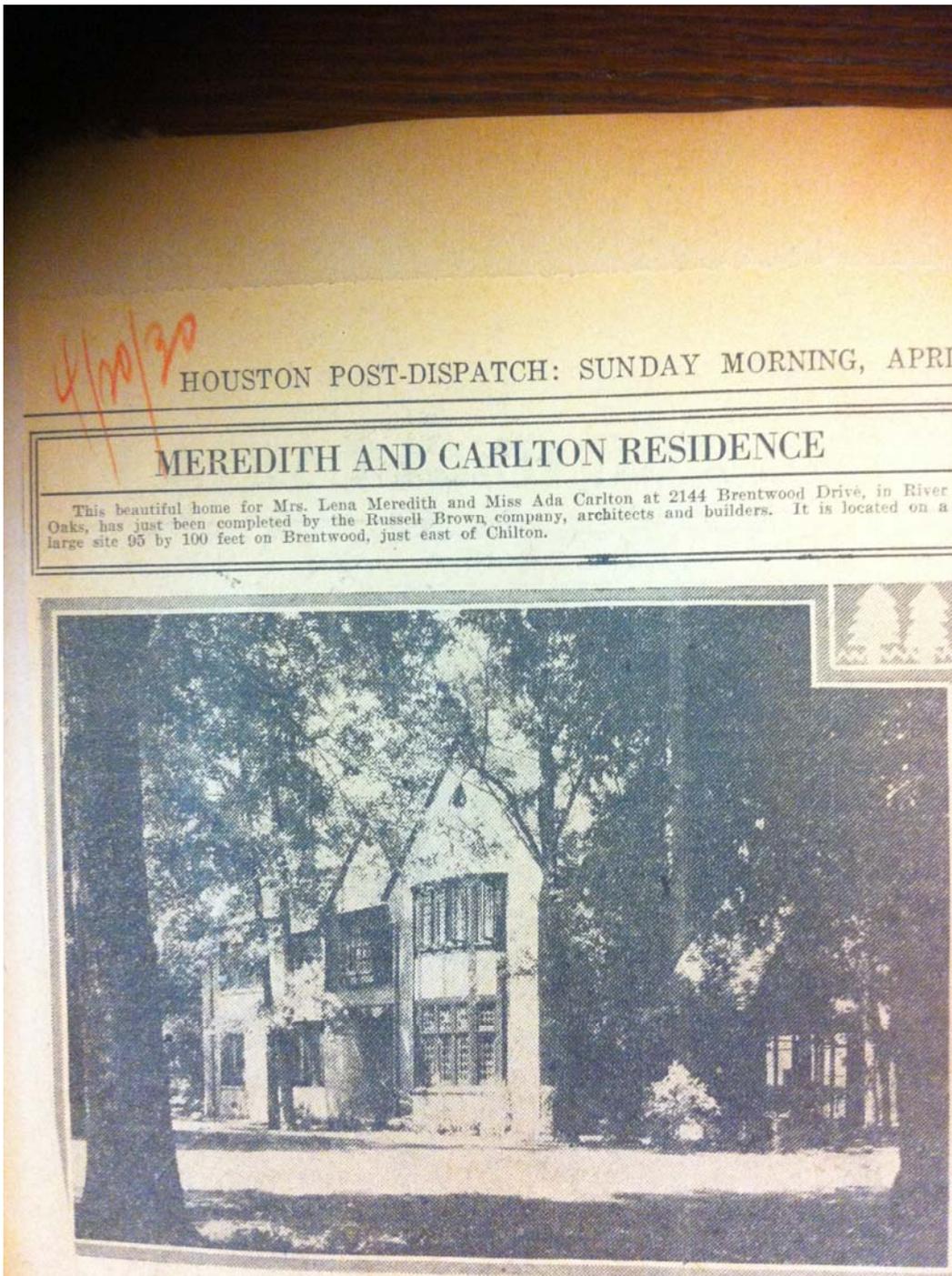
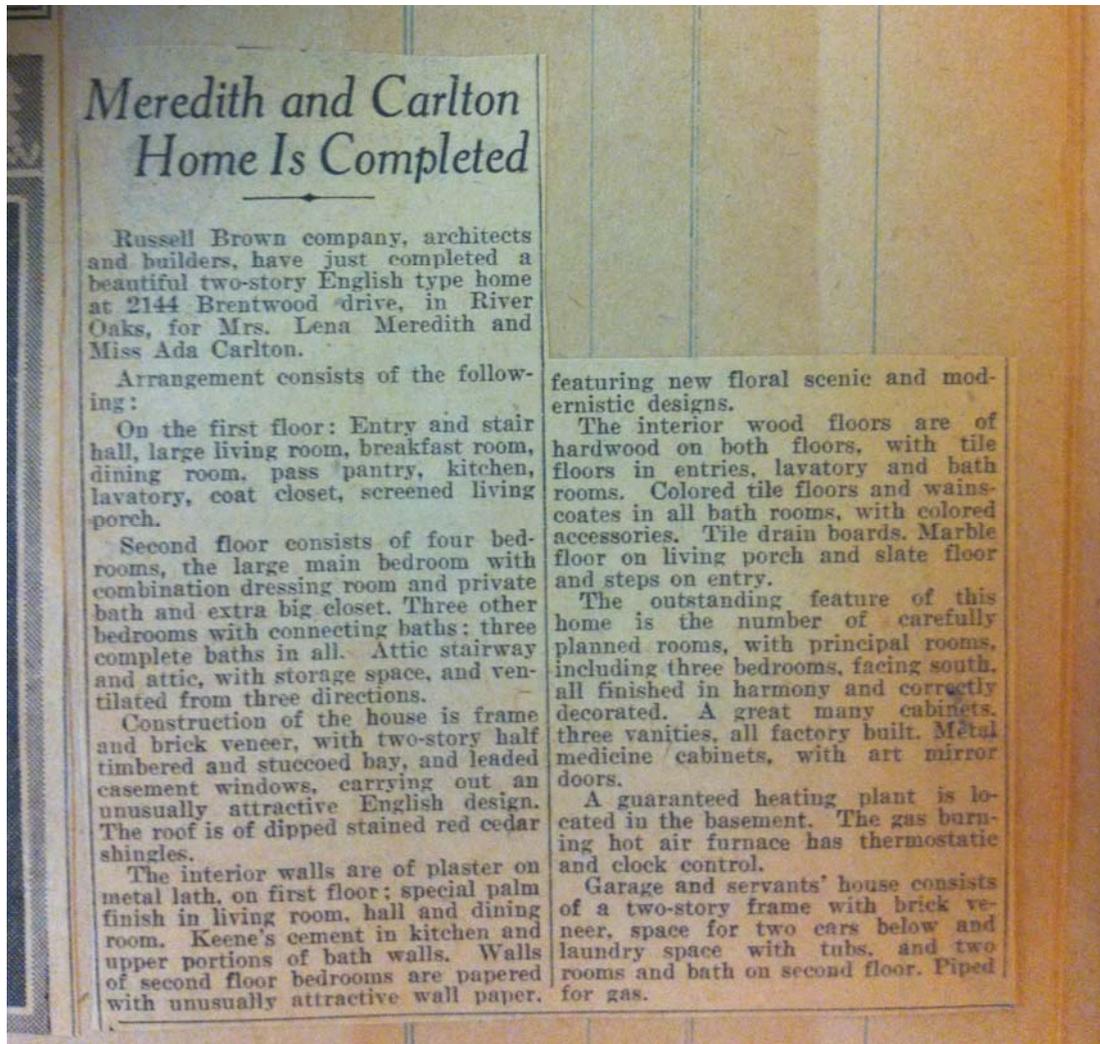


EXHIBIT C  
NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

**EXHIBIT D**  
**SITE LOCATION MAP**  
Lena Meredith and Ada Carlton House  
2144 Brentwood Drive

