

News Release



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William L. Clayton House designated a City Protected Historic Landmark

HOUSTON, August 19, 2009 – Houston City Council designated the William L. Clayton House, site of the Houston Public Library's Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research, as a protected historic landmark.

The house and outbuildings at 5300 Caroline Street were built for Houston businessman, public servant, author, and philanthropist, William Lockhart Clayton and his family. Clayton was co-founder of Anderson, Clayton and Company, one of the world's largest cotton brokerage firms, which secured Houston as the regional capitol of the cotton industry. William L. Clayton served in several high profile government positions during his lifetime, including member of the Committee of Cotton Distribution of the War Industries Board during World War I and principal architect of the Marshall Plan for economic recovery in Europe after World War II.

The William L. Clayton House and a garage/stable were built in 1917. The garage and stable were remodeled into a guest house in 1932. In 1936, a new garage was built (now called the carriage house). They were designed by Houston architect, Birdsall P. Briscoe, one of Houston's foremost architects. Briscoe also designed the Claytons' summer house in River Oaks, as well as many of the grand homes located in Courtlandt Place, Broadacres, and Riverside Terrace. Briscoe engaged the master Austin craftsman, Peter Mansbendel, who embellished the interior of the home with his masterful wood carvings, which celebrate iconographically the source of Clayton's wealth.



The house for Mr. and Mrs. William L. Clayton was the largest and most architecturally distinguished house built in the south end subdivision of Southmore during the late 1910s. The two-story brick house is designed in the Georgian Revival style, and features Tuscan columns, paneled pilasters, an elliptical fanlight over the front door, and fanlight-shaped dormers on the roof. Since 1968, the William L. Clayton House has housed the Clayton Library, one of the top nine genealogical research facilities in the country. Genealogy ranks as the second largest and among the fastest growing hobbies in the United States, and every month, the Clayton Library draws thousands of researchers.

In 2006, a \$6.8 million renovation project broke ground to restore the Clayton home site. The project is an excellent example of a partnership between public and private entities. Mayor Bill White, the City of Houston Library, City Administration and General Services Departments partnered with the Clayton family, Clayton Library Friends, and the Houston Public Library Foundation to make this project happen. The renovation of the Clayton House is an excellent example of how the City of Houston seeks to preserve historic buildings while at the same time pursuing environmentally-conscious structures. The project has been submitted for the U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver certification, the second-highest ranking obtainable under the system. The Clayton House was voted “Best Historic Renovation” by *Houston Business Journal* (2009). The Clayton family was also honored by the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, which presented them with the ‘President’s Award’ in 2009, for their long support and public service. The Clayton House renovation is one of three significant City of Houston projects aimed at expanding Houston Public Library’s Special Collections while at the same time preserving and renovating important buildings to the history of Houston.

Houston’s Historic Preservation Ordinance, adopted by City Council in 1995, recognizes and protects the city’s historic sites. The ordinance allows Council to designate buildings, structures, objects or sites that have historical, cultural, architectural or archaeological significance. By preserving the city’s valuable historic resources, residents and visitors are visibly reminded of our culture and heritage, boosting civic pride and economic prosperity. More information is available online at the Planning Department web site at www.houstonplanning.com under Historic Preservation.

About the Houston Public Library

The Houston Public Library (HPL) operates 35 neighborhood libraries, three HPL Express Libraries, a Central Library, the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research, and the Parent Resource Library located in the Children’s Museum of Houston. Serving more than 4 million customers per year, HPL is committed to excellent customer service and equitable access to information and programs by providing library customers with free use of a diverse collection of printed materials and electronic resources, Internet, laptop and computer use, and a variety of database and reference resources with live assistance online 24/7.

For further information, visit the Houston Public Library at www.houstonlibrary.org or call 832-393-1313.