

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT**LANDMARK NAME:** Dr. Benjamin Weems Turner House**OWNER:** Nancy D. McGregor and Neal S. Manne**APPLICANT:** Same as Owner**LOCATION:** 2947 Inwood Drive - River Oaks**30-DAY HEARING NOTICE:** N/A**AGENDA ITEM:** II.b**HPO FILE NO:** 06L169**DATE ACCEPTED:** Nov-28-2006**HAHC HEARING DATE:** Dec-21-2006**PC HEARING DATE:** Jan-4-2007**SITE INFORMATION:**

Lot 5 and Track 4, Block 32, River Oaks Section 1, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story Tudor style residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:**

The Dr. Benjamin Weems Turner House at 2947 Inwood was constructed in 1930 by Katharine Mott. The house represents one of her largest and most expensive speculative homes. The first owner of the home, Dr. Benjamin Weems Turner, was a prominent Houston urologist. Mrs. Mott's body of work includes over 20 homes built in River Oaks, Riverside Terrace, Edgemont, and Devonshire Place. Katharine Mott's contribution to Houston was recognized in 1998 with a tour sponsored by The Rice Design Alliance. The Turner house was also noted in the '1980 Houston Architectural Survey' prepared by Rice University. The property qualifies for Landmark Designation under criteria 3, 5, and 6.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Benjamin Weems Turner (1889-1972), the first owner of the house, was an innovator and leader in the field of urology in Texas. He was born in March 1889 in Bonney, Texas, and obtained a bachelor's degree at Sam Houston State University. He then studied medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, and graduated in 1911. He completed his residency in urological surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, and established a Houston practice in 1913.

In 1923, Turner established the Turner Urological Institute, a twenty-two-bed hospital and clinic. According to the Handbook of Texas, "Turner's institute was unique in the Southwest for its focus on patients with urological ailments. He was considered by many urologists an authority on the surgical repair of male urethral strictures, a frustrating and difficult urological problem." The institute closed in 1953 and Turner continued to practice in the Texas Medical Center until he retired. Turner was chief of urology at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute. The Handbook also mentions that "his humanitarian nature was exemplified by his care of the indigent of Harris County."

Professionally, Turner was a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and president of the Houston Surgical Society and the South Central Section of the American Urological Association, as well as a charter member of the American Board of Urology. In 1960, he was elected an honorary member of the Texas Medical Association in recognition of his outstanding contributions to medicine in Texas. He died in Angleton, Texas, on July 5, 1972.

Notable Houston builder, Katharine Mott, designed the home at 2947 Inwood with Indianapolis architects Burns and James in 1930. This was the largest and most expensive of the Mott speculative homes.

The Houston Architectural Survey contains a comprehensive biography of Mrs. Mott as follows:

“Katharine B. Mott and her husband, Harry L. Mott moved to Houston from Indianapolis in 1930. After visits to the west coast and Texas in search of a warmer climate in which to live, the Motts settled on Houston as the friendliest place with the greatest business potential. In Indianapolis, Mrs. Mott had begun designing houses after the last of her three daughters started school. The first three houses she designed were all for her own family, but each was subsequently sold to an admirer. Mr. Mott, a real estate developer, realized his wife’s talent and commissioned her to design houses for an entire block in one of his Indianapolis developments. In 12 months, Mrs. Mott saw twelve of her designs constructed. She completed 18 more before leaving Indianapolis.

Because Mrs. Mott had no formal training in architecture, she worked with Edward James of the Indianapolis architectural firm, Burns and James. The partners, Lee Burns (1872-1957) and Edward D. James (1897-c. 1965) worked together from 1926 to 1949. Edward James, F.A.I.A. was an Indianapolis native who received his architecture training at Cornell University after attending classes at Butler University in his home state. James worked with firms in New York, Philadelphia and Orlando from 1923 until 1926 when he returned to Indianapolis as a partner of Lee James who had been in practice then with William Osler for several years. In 1949, the partnership was dissolved when Burns took his son and formed Burns & Burns. Edward James organized his own firm in 1949 in which he practiced until his death in the 1960s. His most notable works were modern institutional projects including several buildings for Indiana University (1947-1953) and the Indianapolis Airport (1955).

Burns & James’ published houses were generally in the Colonial style rather than in the Old English styles preferred by the Motts. This stylistic difference reinforces reports that Mrs. Mott herself was primarily responsible for the designs. Between 1928 and 1932, Katharine and Harry Mott built over 20 houses in the Houston subdivisions of Riverside Terrace, Edgemont, Devonshire Place and River Oaks. These houses were formularized to a certain extent, although each was unique in elevation and plan. They are all of tapestry brick with casement windows; their plans are asymmetrical with the main entrance off center, and their scale is large. Some are Tudor in character, some contain half timbering in the Elizabethan tradition, others have more Norman elements such as a round tower with a conical roof. Mrs. Mott brought with her from Indianapolis her carpenter and brick mason, both of whom were very skilled craftsmen. The unusual brickwork, although it is never the same, is a recognizable feature of the Mott houses.

Katharine Mott developed cancer which brought her involvement in speculative real estate to an abrupt halt. The economic depression of the 1930s slowed all building in Houston and Mr. Mott, in 1932, became a sales representative of the River Oaks Corporation which did manage to continue its aggressive sales campaign throughout the 1930s. He remained in this capacity until 1950 when he opened his own real estate office where he worked until his death in 1958.

The Motts did build their own home at 11527 Memorial Drive in Piney Point Village in the 1950s and Katharine Mott continued to live there until her death in 1979.”

It should be noted that Mrs. Mott received notice early on from Hugh Potter, one of the developers of River Oaks. The Houston Business Journal quotes Mr. Potter as saying to Will C. Hogg, “the houses built by Mrs. Mott and her husband in Riverside Terrace and Edgemont have done more to attract prospects than any other one thing. They are, by all odds, the most attractive structures in those additions.” Her contribution to architecture in Houston was recognized in later years by a 1998 Rice Design Alliance Architectural Tour and Lecture “Modern Homecraft: the Houses of Katharine B. Mott and Harry L. Mott.”

According to various sources including the Rice Design Alliance, the Houston Survey and Stephen Fox's Houston Architectural Guide, Katharine Mott was responsible for the following homes in Houston:

- 1635 South Boulevard, with Burns and James, 1928.
- 1659 South Boulevard, with Burns and James, 1928.
- 2612 Riverside Drive, 1928.
- 2620 Riverside Drive, 1928.
- 2627 Riverside Drive, 1928 (demolished).
- 1660 South Boulevard, with Burns and James, 1929.
- 2421 Brentwood Drive, with Burns and James, 1929.
- 2513 MacGregor, 1929 (demolished).
- 2555 North MacGregor Way, with Burns and James, 1929.
- 2591 MacGregor, 1929.
- 2413 Brentwood Drive, 1929 (demolished).
- 3335 Del Monte Drive, 1929 (demolished).
- 3263 Del Monte Drive, with Burns and James, 1930 (demolished).
- 3325 Inwood, with Burns and James, 1930.
- 1920 Woodbury, with Burns and James, 1930.
- 2947 Inwood, with Burns and James, 1930.
- 3027 Inwood, with Burns and James, 1930.
- 3196 Del Monte Drive, with Birdsall Briscoe, 1931.
- 1419 Kirby Drive, with Burns and James, 1931.

The home at 2947 Inwood was constructed in 1930 with Burns & James acting as architects. It is described by the Houston Architectural Survey as “Tudor style in character with dark red brick, casement windows, high pitched roof, half timbering and a prominent chimney.” The house faces north and “rambles over a large site... hidden from view by tall hedges and trees.” The Motts acted as general contractors and employed their own carpenters and brick laborers for the project as is evident by the highly crafted ornamental brickwork. The floor plan is modified rectangular and the house is one-room deep in most places. There are six bays across the principal façade and the entry is stone trimmed with a projecting entry bay. Inside, the home offers plastered walls and a distinctive iron balcony. The house was completed in 1931 at a cost of \$63,000.

The Turners occupied the home until the 1950s and, after a brief second owner, the home was sold to the Weingarten family. The Mannes purchased the home from the Weingartens.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The historic home located at 2947 Inwood is in the process of an extensive restoration and sensitive expansion. The current owners, Nancy McGregor and Neal Manne, have gone to extensive efforts to maintain the original character of the home. On the façade, they will add a new chimney, with two flues, on the east side of the front elevation to match the existing chimney on the front northern elevation. The brick used in the addition will be original brick from the original guest cottage. The new chimney will include a copy of the limestone medallion on the face of the original chimney. Additionally, the new owners will perform maintenance work including: replacement of the original copper gutters with new copper replacements. During the same renovation work rusted and non-functioning casement windows will be replaced with new copies of the originals. The original diamond paned leaded glass will be removed from the original windows and re-used in the new replacements. The front and rear, limestone, entry step will be repaired and re-set as well. A new, free standing garage building will be constructed to the west of the house. The new garage will be constructed with reclaimed brick, and a slate roof to match the existing house. The breakfast room, located to the rear of the house, will be

expanded by 4 feet to the rear and will not be visible from the street. During this same phase of construction the old interior garage will be converted into a family room by replacing the old garage door with windows and doors. Finally, a non-original iron fence that runs along the front of the house to the east, and chain link fence on the east side of the house, will be replaced with a brick wall.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. "," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/TT/ftu15.html> (accessed November 16, 2006).

Fox, Stephen, Houston Architectural Guide, American Institute of Architects, 1999

Rice Design Alliance, “Modern Homecraft: The Houses of Katharine B. Mott and Harry L. Mott”, April 1998

Houston Architectural Survey, Volume 3, Southwest Center for Urban Research and the School of Architecture, Rice University, 1980

Sabota, Danni, Houston Business Journal, “Houses by Katharine Mott,” February 24, 1992.

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

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation of a Landmark.

(a) The HAHC and the commission, 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	NA - not applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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;		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(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;		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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;		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark Designation of the Dr. Benjamin Weems Turner House at 2947 Inwood Drive.