LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Miller-Tunks House
OWNER: Randall S. and Ruth Daly Riepe
APPLICANT: Same as Owner
LOCATION: 2117 Chilton Road - River Oaks
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: III.a
HPO FILE NO.: 07L172
DATE ACCEPTED: Feb-02-07
HAHC HEARING: Mar-14-07
PC HEARING: Mar-29-07

SITE INFORMATION:

Lot 8, Block 51, River Oaks Section 3, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, brick and wood veneered residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Miller-Tunks House at 2117 Chilton Road was constructed in 1933 for Jesse G. Miller. However, the home is associated with a notable Houston judge and attorney, Bert H. Tunks. Judge Tunks is perhaps best known as one of the founding partners of Bracewell & Tunks which survives today as Bracewell & Giuliani. The home was designed by the prolific Houston architects, Hiram Salisbury and George McHale. The body of work created by these architects is substantial and includes many of the iconic homes in River Oaks and Southampton, as well as St. Johns School and the St. John's Chapel, designed in association with Mackie and Kamrath Architects. The home at 2117 Chilton Road is designed in the Tudor style, which is enhanced by the use of undulating bricks and half-timbering on the exterior. To date, there are no other known examples of Salisbury and McHale designs that possess the undulating brick pattern. The house qualifies for Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Notable Houston architects, Hiram A. Salisbury and T. G. McHale, designed the house at 2117 Chilton Road in 1934. The first owners were Jesse G. and Marcelle Miller. Jesse Miller was in the real estate business. Miller's long time office was located in the Citizens Bank building from 1936 until the 1950s. Jesse and Marcelle Miller owned the home until 1974 when it was sold.

In 1974, the house at 2117 Chilton Road was purchased by Judge Bert H. Tunks and his wife Annelle. The Tunks lived there from 1974 until Judge Tunks' death in 1988. Annelle Tunks kept the home until 1999 when it was sold to a new owner who owned the home for a short while before selling to the current owners, Randall and Ruth Riepe.

Judge Bert H. Tunks (1911-1988) was born in Durant, Oklahoma. He attended Oklahoma State University and graduated from the University of Texas Law School in 1940. His academic honors include membership in the Order of the Coif and Law Review. On November 1, 1945, Tunks joined with J. S. Bracewell and his two sons, Searcy and Fentress, to open the law firm, Bracewell & Tunks. The firm continues today as Bracewell & Giuliani and maintains a strong presence in Houston. While practicing with Bracewell, Tunks represented a variety of clients including the Houston Independent School District.

In 1957, after practicing law for 17 years, Tunks was appointed to the 113th Civil District Court, beginning a long career as a judge. From 1967 until his retirement in 1975, he served as Chief Justice of the 14th Court of Civil Appeals. During his career as a judge, Judge Tunks was ranked twice (1973 and 1975) as the most outstanding judge in Harris County by the Houston Bar Association. Interestingly, he was appointed in 1977 after his retirement to preside over the disbarment lawsuit against Texas Supreme Court Justice Don Yarbrough.

Judge Tunks maintained a close relationship with the South Texas College of Law, serving as Adjunct Professor of Corporations for about 20 years. He also served as a member of the school's Board of Trustees. According to his obituary, "One of Judge Tunks' greatest joys was his association with the many potential young lawyers he came in contact with during his involvement with the law school."

Judge Tunks was active in the legal community; he was a member of the Houston Bar Association, the State Bar of Texas, the American Judicature Society, the American Bar Association, and was a charter member of the Texas Bar Foundation. When he passed away in 1988, his pallbearers included a diverse group: Joe Jamail, Dahr Jamail, Searcy Bracewell, Fentress Bracewell, Judge Curtis Brown, Judge Sam Johnson and others.

According to architectural historian Stephen Fox, Hiram A. Salisbury (1892-1973), the architect for the Judge Tunks Home, was born in Omaha, Nebraska. Salisbury studied architecture under a fellowship from the American Institute of Architects and later graduated from the School of Architecture at New York's Columbia University (1913-1914). He worked as a draftsman for Thomas R. Kimball from 1910-1923 and George B. Prinz from 1923-1926. Salisbury established his own architectural firm in Houston in 1926, and he is first listed in the 1927 Houston City Directory with his office in the Post-Dispatch (subsequently Shell) Building where he had his office until 1937.

Beginning in 1928, according to Fox, Salisbury collaborated on many projects with fellow architect, T. George McHale. Their projects included both residential, commercial, and churches. Among their more notable projects are the St. John's School located at 2401 Claremont, St. Stephens Episcopal Church located at 1805 W. Alabama, as well as many of the homes located in River Oaks, Southampton and other upscale Houston neighborhoods. In 1938-39, Hiram A. Salisbury and T. George McHale relocated their office to the River Oaks Community Center, located at 2017 W. Gray. Salisbury and McHale later moved their offices to 3501 Allen Parkway in 1945.

Per Stephen Fox, Thomas George McHale (1903-1975) was also born in Omaha, Nebraska, and attended school at the University of Notre Dame. Following the receipt of his architectural degree, McHale became a draftsman for John Latenzer & Sons, where he worked from 1919 until 1923. In 1924 he worked for James A. Allen and Leo A. Daly. Interestingly it is speculated that Leo Daly is the great uncle of Ruth Daly Riepe, one of the current owners of the home. In 1925, he began working for George B. Prinz where he joined Salisbury there. They both left that firm to form their own firm in 1927. The wife of T. George McHale was Inez P. McHale, who was a celebrated Houston interior decorator. The lived first at 1106 Palm Avenue and then moved to No. 2 Courtlandt Place.

Beginning in 1930, Hiram A. Salisbury and his wife lived at 3412 Yupon, between Hawthorne and Harold. By 1953, Hiram A. Salisbury and his wife were living at 610 Saddlewood Lane. Salisbury continued his practice in Houston until approximately 1962, when he retired to Medford, Oregon. He had served as the President of The American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter in 1954.

A list of identified works of Salisbury (HAS) in association with McHale (TGMcH) and others, which was researched and provided by Stephen Fox, includes: Masonic Temple, 118 N. 11th St., Mc Allen TX, 1926; Southampton Home Sensible, 2218 Dunstan Rd, 1927; W. L. Pearson House, Corpus Christi TX, 1927; Ironcraft Studio Building (altered), 3901-07 Main St., 1927; H. Q. Rickman House, 2223 Stanmore, 1927

(American Architect 5 Jan 1928); Nelms Building (H. S. Tucker & Co. Oakland-Pontiac dealership) (demolished), 2310 Main St., 1927; E. E. Johnson House, 949 S. Ohio Ave., Mercedes TX, 1927; Emergency Clinic and Hospital Unit 2 (demolished), 1316 75th St., 1928; Mrs. H. F. Lawson Building (demolished), 1010 Holman Ave., 1929; Robert H. Pentz House, 2159 Inwood Dr., 1930; Speculative House (Paul Weaver House), 3443 Inwood Dr., 1930; Benson-Hall Construction Co. House (A. E. Kerr, Jr., House), 2005 Bellmeade Rd., 1931; Frank L. Webb House, 2935 Chevy Chase Dr.. 1931; W. E. Sampson House (demolished), 984 Kirby Drive, 1932, with Cameron Fairchild; Charles A. Perlitz House (demolished 2005), 1005 Sul Ross Ave., c. 1932; Stewart P. Coleman House, 6 Shadowlawn Circle, 1933; W. E. Montieth House, 5 Shadowlawn Circle, 1934; James Anderson House, 5216 Dunlavy St., 1934; C. Milby Dow Bay House "Raven Moor", near Baytown, 1935; Henry A. Sauer House, 2229 Inwood Dr., 1935, HAS & TGMcH; Damon Wells House, 1659 North Blvd., 1935, HAS; Larry J. Langdon House, 2131 Troon Rd., c. 1936; Elwood Fouts House (altered), 3470 Inwood Dr., 1936, HAS & TGMcH; Francis G. Coates House, 3417 Del Monte Dr., 1936, HAS & TGMcH; J. E. Cooper House, 2247 Dryden Rd., 1936, HAS with H. Edward Maddox, and Claude E. Hooton; Pfeiffer House, River Oaks Boulevard (demolished May 2004); George B. Corless House, 1936 Larchmont Rd., 1936, HAS & TGMcH; H. F. Junker House, 2226 Shakespeare Rd., 1936, HAS & TGMcH; St. James Episcopal Church, 1500 N. Thompson St., Conroe TX, 1936-37, HAS & TGMcH; J. Sayles Leach House (demolished), 2207 River Oaks Blvd., 1937, HAS & TGMcH (*House & Garden*); Royston H. Patterson House, 7370 Sims Dr., 1937, HAS & TGMcH; John S. Bonner House, 1705 North Blvd., 1938, HAS & TGMcH; Lucien L. Powell House, 2111 Pine Valley Dr., 1938, HAS & TGMcH; Wheeler Nazro House, 3400 Piping Rock Lane, 1938, HAS & TGMcH; P. L. Williams House, 3612 Rio Vista Dr., 1938, HAS & TGMcH; Katrina Byram House, 2135 University Blvd., 1939, HAS & TGMcH; Jack Roach House, 3001 Del Monte, 1939, HAS & TGMcH , Ned Gill House, 949 Kirby Dr., c. 1940; Harry J. Kuhn House (demolished), 22 N. West Oaks, 1940, HAS & TGMcH; William S. Bonner House, 1412 North Blvd., 1940, HAS & TGMcH; E. H. Lorehn House (altered), 2198 Troon Rd., 1940, HAS & TGMcH; W. Leland Anderson House, 1519 South Blvd., 1940, HAS & TGMcH; George C. Schmidt House (demolished), 21 Westlane Place, 1940, HAS & TGMcH; Dr. Paul Ledbetter House, 3508 Inwood Dr., 1941, HAS & TGMcH; Thomas D. Anderson House (attribution but not proven), 3929 Del Monte Dr., 1941; Chapel, St. John The Divine Episcopal Church, 2450 River Oaks Blvd.,1941, HAS & TGMcH and MacKie & Kamrath, Birdsall P. Briscoe, consulting architects; St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 W. Alabama Ave., 1941, HAS & TGMcH; Jack Roach Building, 6000 Block of Harrisburg Blvd., 1941, HAS & TGMcH; Adolph Pfeffer House, 2109 River Oaks Blvd., 1930s, HAS & TGMcH; W. E. Parry House, 2407 Pelham Dr., 1930s, HAS & TGMcH; Russell L. Jolley House, 2527 Pelham Dr., 1930s, HAS & TGMcH; Jack Roach House, 3001 Del Monte Dr., 1939, HAS & TGMcH; Donald Kolp House, 3434 Wickersham Lane, 1940s, HAS & TGMcH; Parish House, Christ the King Lutheran Church, 2353 Rice Blvd., 1946-49, HAS & TGMcH; St. John's School, 2401 Claremont Lane, 1945-49, HAS & TGMcH and MacKie & Kamrath; St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, 6720 Bertner Ave., Texas Medical Center, 1946-54, Staub & Rather and HAS; St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 7843 Park Place Blvd., 1946-48, HAS & TGMcH; North Side State Bank Building, 2010 N. Main St., 1947-48, HAS & TGMcH; Wyatt Metal & Boiler Works Building addition, 6100 Kansas, 1948, HAS & TGMcH; Dr. Blume House, Houston, 1948, HAS & TGMcH; Condit Elementary School addition, 7000 S. Third St., Bellaire TX, 1949, HAS & TGMcH; Trinity Presbyterian Church, 7000 Lawndale Ave., 1949, HAS & TGMcH; St. John's Episcopal Church, 514 Carter St., Marlin TX, 1949, HAS & TGMcH; Blue Triangle YWCA Building, 3005 Mc Gowen Ave., 1951, HAS and Birdsall P. Briscoe; St. George's Episcopal Church (demolished), 510 13th Ave. N., Texas City TX, 1950, HAS & TGMcH; St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1208 5th St., Rosenberg TX, 1950, HAS & TGMcH; St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 207 Bob-O-Link Lane, Wharton TX, 1951, HAS & TGMcH; Wheeler Nazro House "Doe Run Farm," Washington-on-the-Brazos TX vicinity, 1951, HAS & TGMcH; St. John The Divine Episcopal Church, 2450 River Oaks Blvd., 1952-54, MacKie & Kamrath and HAS; Retreat House, 1952-53, TGMcH; St. John's Lutheran Church, 3920 Ave. L, Galveston TX, 1953-54, HAS & TGMcH; St. Michael's Episcopal

Church, 1601 Lake Rd., La Marque TX, 1953, HAS & TGMcH; Parish buildings, St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church, 1801 Sage Rd., 1955, TGMcH; and the Walter Shult House, 500 Hillcrest Dr., Richmond TX, 1957, HAS & TGMcH.

Chilton Road is host to a significant number of homes designed by noted Houston architects. Among these are one example designed by John Staub, two homes designed by Birdsall Briscoe, and at least one other Hiram Salisbury design. In recent years the area has been the target of new development. The historic homes of Chilton road and nearby, which average 3,000 square feet, are being replaced by 5,000 to 6,000 square foot homes.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The home at 2117 Chilton Road is a two-story brick veneered home built in 1933. The house is designed in the Tudor style, which was very popular at the time. A similar example of this style in River Oaks is the Hal and Iley Nunn Davis House at 1915 Bellmeade Drive (Protected Landmark 2006) designed by Charles Oliver in 1929. The Tudor style is enhanced by the use of undulating bricks and half-timbering on the exterior. To date, there are no other known examples of Salisbury and McHale designs that possess the undulating brick pattern.

The home utilizes multiple intersecting gables in the roofline, which contribute to the Tudor influence of the home. Windows used throughout the home are of a six-pane wood sash casement window type with the exception of a prominent leaded glass window which is centrally located on the second story of the primary façade.

The Riepes purchased the home located at 2117 Chilton Road in 2002. At this time, the home had been gutted by the previous owner who had begun the initial phases of a renovation. The Riepes rehabilitated the home and expanded the existing kitchen, added a family room, and extensively re-landscaped. The new addition to the home was subtly executed by closely matching the original undulating brick pattern. The home retains many of its original interior elements like original exposed beams in the formal living room and two leaded glass windows, and thick plaster walls.

The façade of the home has undergone some alterations from its 1933 appearance that are reversible and do not impact the significance. After 1935, as evidenced on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, modifications were made to the main entry way, which are stylistically compatible. The original plans specified a door with half-timbering for trim. After 1935, a small gabled entry was built forward of the entry door which is open on its sides and is supported by massive wood timbers. In addition, an attached porte-cochere, which is situated approximately five feet forward from the west elevation of the main building, was enclosed on the Chilton Street side with matching brick, and three casement windows were installed like those utilized elsewhere on the house.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Fox, Stephen, personal notes and research about Hiram A. Salisbury and T. George McHale, August, 2006.
Fox, Stephen, Houston Architectural Guide, American Institute of Architects, 1999.
Houston Chronicle, Tunks obituary, May 10, 1988.
Houston Chronicle, Staff report on Tunks death, May 10, 1988.
San Antonio Business Journal, "Former New York Mayor to join Texas Based Law Firm", March 30, 2005.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Randy Pace, Historic Preservation Officer, and 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
☑	☐	(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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark Designation of the Miller-Tunks House at 2117 Chilton Road.

SITE LOCATION MAP
MILLER-TUNKS HOUSE
2117 CHILTON ROAD
NOT TO SCALE