

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey , Sr., House

OWNER: Jeffrey T. Myhra

APPLICANT: Same as Owner

LOCATION: 2136 Brentwood Drive - River Oaks

30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: IIa

HPO FILE NO.: 07L174

DATE ACCEPTED: Apr-3-07

HAHC HEARING: Apr-25-07

PC HEARING: May-10-07

SITE INFORMATION:

Lot 18, Block 47, River Oaks Section 3, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes an historic two-story, brick veneered residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey , Sr., House at 2136 Brentwood Drive was built in 1940. It is an impressive example of the Greek Revival style home, built as a speculative house by C. C. Rouse in River Oaks. It was first occupied by the Wollmer family. The home was later owned and inhabited by Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey, Sr., for many years. Dr. Kelsey is most notable as the founder of Kelsey-Seybold Clinic. Since its founding, the clinic has thrived in Houston, operating 20 neighborhood locations and serving over 300,000 patients, and through the vision of Dr. Kelsey, it developed into an institution of national and international recognition. Dr. Kelsey is also a prominent Houston benefactor as well as an educator and author. The house meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 for Landmark Designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The house at 2136 Brentwood Drive was built in 1940 by builder Claude Clay Rouse. The home's first owners, Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Wollmar, had recently moved to the United States from Switzerland in 1938. Mr. Wollmar was the vice president and treasurer of the Davis & Co., Inc. The Wollmers lived in the home for a short while with their three children. The home was subsequently purchased by Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Flaitz, who had moved to Houston from Shreveport, Louisiana. Mr. Flaitz was connected with Hudson Engineering Company and lived in the home with his wife and daughter. In 1949, Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey, Sr. purchased the house. The McGovern Library has written an extensive biography of Dr. Kelsey, which is excerpted below:

“Dr. Mavis Parrott Kelsey was born in Deport, Texas in October 1912. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M College. Mavis Kelsey was inspired to become a doctor by his grandfather, Dr. Joseph Benson Kelsey, a country doctor. He attended medical school at the University of Texas (UT) in Galveston and received his Doctor of Medicine degree in 1936. Dr. Kelsey then served a rotating internship at New York City's Bellevue Hospital. Upon completion of his internship, he returned to UT Medical Branch at Galveston to work for one year as an Instructor in Pathology. From 1938 to 1939, he served on the junior staff of Scott and White Clinic in Temple, Texas.

On September 17, 1939, Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey married Mary Randolph Wilson. In that same year he accepted a 3-year fellowship in internal medicine at the world-renowned Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. While at the Mayo Clinic, Dr. Kelsey strengthened his friendship with fellow Texan and future partner, Dr. William D. Seybold.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Dr. Kelsey's medical training at the Mayo Clinic was interrupted by the United States participation in the Pacific arena during World War II. He served in the U.S. Army Air Force, Medical Corps from 1941-1945. During this time Dr. Kelsey attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and was awarded the Legion of Merit in 1945.

Dr. Kelsey completed his medical training at the Mayo Clinic and received a Masters of Science degree in Internal Medicine from the University of Minnesota, Mayo Foundation in 1947. He was appointed to the Mayo Clinic Staff as an Instructor in Medicine of the Mayo Foundation. The Kelseys purchased a house in Rochester and made plans to make Minnesota their home.

In 1948, after much thought and many lengthy conversations with Mayo colleagues, patients and associates throughout Texas concerning the prospects for practice, the Kelseys decided to return to their native Texas. Dr. Kelsey brought with him his young family and his dream of one day establishing a clinic. They arrived in Houston on January 15, 1949.

Dr. Kelsey leased office space in the new Hermann Professional building. His practice was in the field of internal medicine with an emphasis on endocrinology. Unfortunately, with building construction running behind schedule, the office was not ready for use. Dr. E. W. Bertner and Dr. George Waldron each generously offered free office space. Dr. Kelsey divided his time between the two offices for nearly four months. In May 1949, he moved to his new office on the fourteenth floor.

In 1950, Dr. Kelsey encouraged Drs. Leary and Seybold to reconsider the prospect of establishing a clinic in Houston. Dr. William V. Leary had joined the staff of the Mayo Clinic in the section of chest diseases. Dr. Seybold had joined the Mayo staff in the department of surgery. The three doctors had previously discussed the idea while at the Mayo Clinic.

Soon thereafter, the three Mayo-trained physicians founded the Kelsey-Leary-Seybold Clinic. The clinic first resided on the fourteenth and eighth floors of the Hermann. After two years, Dr. Seybold withdrew from the group. Other members of the Kelsey-Leary Clinic were Dr. John R. Kelsey, Jr., Dr. Mavis Kelsey's brother, from the Mayo Clinic and Dr. Albert O. Owens, psychiatrist from the Menninger Clinic. Dr. Seybold rejoined the Kelsey-Leary Clinic in 1961, serving as Chief of the General and Thoracic Surgery Department. The physicians continued to practice together as the Kelsey-Leary-Seybold Clinic up until 1965 at which time Dr. Leary resigned to join M. D. Anderson. Subsequently, the clinic was renamed the Kelsey-Seybold Clinic.

Through the years, the clinic changed its location, expanded its services, established satellite clinics, operated branches through the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, headed programs for the armed services and opened an innovative Fitness Center. At the Kelsey-Seybold Clinic, Dr. Kelsey not only actively practiced medicine but was the Chief of the Department of Occupational Medicine, directed a number of medical contracts for NASA and the U.S. Navy, and advised the Kelsey-Seybold Foundation. The Foundation is a chartered, charitable foundation that fosters the advancement of medicine by sponsoring medical research and education, especially cancer research and child care. The Kelsey-Seybold Clinic also provides services ranging from specialized, in depth treatment, comprehensive fitness health maintenance programs, and the promotion of scientific research.

In addition to his clinic practice, Dr. Kelsey held many teaching and administrative posts. Among them were: Instructor of Medicine, Mayo Foundation in the University of Minnesota; Acting Dean, the UT Postgraduate School of Medicine; Clinical Professor of Medicine, UT School of Biomedical Sciences; Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine. Dr. Kelsey also served on the staff of St. Luke's Hospital (Consulting Staff and Vice Chief of Staff), Methodist Hospital and M.D. Anderson Hospital for Cancer Research. Dr. Kelsey also acted as Medical Advisor for many corporations including the Pennzoil Corporation, Roy M. Huffington, Inc. and United Energy Resources.

Over the years Dr. Kelsey has been an active member in many professional associations and organizations. They include: Alpha Omega Alpha, Alpha Kappa Kappa, Sigma Xi, he was elected to the Philosophical Society of Texas, Fellowship in the American College of Physicians, Aerospace Medical Association, American Thyroid Association, Harris County Medical Association, Texas Medical Association, The Endocrine Society, American Medical Association, Mayo Alumni Association, American and Texas Diabetes & Endocrine Association, American Cancer Society (Board of Directors, Harris County Unit), Yearbook of Cancer (Editorial Consultant), Kelsey-Seybold Foundation member of the Board of Trustees and Grants Committee, Member of the President's Council for Texas A&M Medical College and the Sterling C. Evans Library, First City National Bank Medical Center (Board of Directors), Development Board of UT Medical School-Galveston.

Dr. Kelsey's participation in civic and social organizations reflects his interest in the fine arts, history and genealogy and nature. He has devoted time and resources to the Houston Country Club, A&M Association of Former Students, Friends of the A&M University Library, UT Health Science Center-Presidents Club, Allegro, UT Alumni Association, Texas Nurseryman's Association, Texas Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, ASIA Society, Friends of Bayou Bend, American Book Collector's Society, Beaumont Art Museum, Harris County Heritage Society, Southwestern Cattleman's Association, and the Houston Committee on Foreign Relations, a charter member of the American Historical Print Society. Dr. Kelsey is a Distinguished Alumnus of Texas A & M and an Ashbel Smith Distinguished Alumnus of the U.T. Medical School -- Galveston.

Dr. Kelsey and his wife, Mary, have a great love for American art and Americana. They have donated their collections to several museums and university libraries. The Mavis and Mary Kelsey Collection of Winslow Homer Prints is housed in the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas. Dr. Kelsey wrote the catalog for this collection, named "Winslow Homer Graphics", which is an authoritative reference work used by Homer scholars nationwide. The United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland received their collection of Naval Prints. The Kelsey Collection of Thomas Nast Illustrations was donated to Pepperdine University. The University of Houston was given a collection of wood engravings on Social Life and War. The Kelseys collection of the letters of John Quincy Adams was given to Bryn Mawr College. Dr. and Mrs. Kelsey gave their collection of Americana to the Sterling C. Evans Library of Texas A&M University. Several thousand books, art works and prints make up this outstanding collection. He and his wife have traveled extensively and studied their respective family histories.

They have written six books of genealogy. Dr. Kelsey has been an active farmer and rancher for many years and has participated in a number of other business activities including oil exploration and apartment building. Since retiring, with his wife Mary he has devoted his time in writing genealogy, cataloging and writing about their extensive collection of historical and art prints, painting and rare books, investing and philanthropy. In 1985, Dr. Kelsey retired from the Kelsey-Seybold Clinic after thirty-seven years of practice in Houston. From his vision and with his determination, leadership and guidance the Kelsey-Seybold Clinic has developed into an institution of national and international recognition. Dr. Kelsey has had eighty one published medical articles. He continues to consult and raise funds for the Clinic and the Kelsey-Seybold Foundation.”

Dr. Kelsey is now 94 years old. He continues to maintain a strong sense of humor as shown by the quote on the Kelsey-Seybold web site, “Forever attributing the clinic’s success to others, he joked, ‘I’ve been retired 16 years and the clinic has about tripled in size in that time. It may be that the quicker they got rid of me, the better it grew!’”

Dr. Kelsey visited 2136 Brentwood on January 27, 2007. At that time he delivered a signed copy of the book he published in 1996, “Doctoring in Houston and My Story of the Kelsey-Seybold Clinic and the Kelsey-Seybold Foundation.” In this book, he disclosed that 2136 Brentwood was purchased in 1949 from Jack Flaitz for a sum of \$50,000. He goes on further to discuss the home:

“Our home at 2136 Brentwood was a white Greek Revival, Southern style structure with two-story columns on the front porch. We had a window air conditioner in the master bedroom and a big attic fan. There was very little central air-conditioning in those days. There was a gas fired central heater in the small basement. The first floor had a foyer, power room, large living and play room, dining and breakfast rooms, kitchen and pantry and a screened veranda. There was a two car garage, servant’s quarters and a very comfortable backyard. There were four upstairs bedrooms with two baths.”

During a personal interview with Dr. Kelsey, he said that he and his wife fell in love with the home and the location was perfect. It was a 10-minute drive to the Texas Medical Center or to the downtown hotels where he made night calls.

During his January 2007 visit, Dr. Kelsey walked through the house, took pictures and shared fond family memories and discussed how each room had been furnished and/or how the room had changed from when he owned the home. One fond memory Dr. Kelsey shared was of a friend and contemporary of the family, Miss Ima Hogg. Dr. Kelsey stated that Miss Hogg still lived at Bayou Bend when she first invited the family to dinner. He stated that she showed them a mark on the wall where the floodwaters from the Houston flood of 1935 had come into the house. Dr. Kelsey told many stories about the house, including several stories about Miss Ima Hogg who visited 2136 Brentwood on several occasions. Another funny story revolved around a Kelsey dinner party during which the Kelsey family was entertaining a doctor from the Mayo Clinic and his wife. Dr. Kelsey was very pleased to see the home had been well maintained and he was honored to learn that an application for historic landmark designation was being submitted in his honor.

Claude Clay Rouse, the builder of the home at 2136 Brentwood Drive, was born in Pleasant Valley, Oklahoma, in February 1897. He resided in Houston for sixty years and founded the C. C. Rouse Company, which survives today as Tynes Sparks Building Corporation. The company started as Rouse Lumber & Building Company on Montrose Street. According to the Tynes Sparks website, “Rouse was confident in his idea for building a spec home in River Oaks. One of the company’s business mottos was to take the party out of the country club and bring it home to a mansion. Floor plans of C. C. Rouse homes were designed so that 100 people at a time could gather and circulate in the home with ease. Bedrooms were separated from the main living areas for privacy. Kitchens were built to handle the preparation of major social events. Living rooms featured palatial detailing.”

Mr. Rouse groomed his son-in-law, Tynes Sparks, to eventually take over the business in 1966 when C. C. Rouse retired. In October 1979, C. C. Rouse passed away in Houston. According to Tynes Sparks and the River Oaks scrapbooks, some of the C. C. Rouse homes built in River Oaks include:

- 3014 Del Monte Drive
- 3215 Locke Lane
- 3602 Wickersham
- 3612 Ella Lee
- 2429 Brentwood Drive
- 3663 Del Monte Drive
- 3719 Inwood Drive
- 3814 Chevy Chase
- 3023 Ella Lee
- 3469 Piping Rock Lane
- 3646 Piping Rock Lane
- 3627 Del Monte Drive
- 3637 Olympia

- 2504 Brentwood Drive
- 3671 Inwood Drive
- 3609 Inwood Drive

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey, Sr., House located at 2136 Brentwood Drive was designed in the Greek Revival style. This style, which had been extremely popular in the United States from the 1820s until the end of the Civil War, enjoyed a resurgence during the first half of the 20th century. In 1941, River Oaks Magazine described the home as: “beautiful Southern Colonial of white painted brick with bright green shutters. Tall columns, wide chimneys and a wooded site are features which aid the coveted atmosphere of the old south.” When the home was originally sold, newspaper articles appeared in the Chronicle on February 16, 1941 and the Houston Post on January 16, 1941. The home was in the Houston Post again on November 23, 1941 when the home was sold to the J. M. Flaitz family.

The original cost summary prepared by C. C. Rouse and dated October 9, 1940 estimated the cost of building at \$11,486. Records show that the actual cost was \$12,241. The home’s first owners, the Wollmar family, purchased the home for \$24,500. The sale was made by George P. Wright of the River Oaks Corporation.

The architectural style of the house was interpreted in a number of other River Oaks houses. C. C. Rouse re-used the same basic design for his homes and customized them by either adding or subtracting elements according to the owner’s desires and financial ability. An example of this practice can be seen in the Dr. Denton and Louise Cooley home, located at 3014 Del Monte Drive. The home is an enhanced version of the 2136 Brentwood Drive home.

Some of the notable architectural elements of the home include two story columns on the front porch, original leaded glass details around the front door with matching glass details in the powder room and coat closet windows, original light fixtures in many interior rooms, windows placed on every wall originally planned for ample ventilation on hot summer days, balcony off master bath, breakfast room with original built in corner cabinets.

Since its construction in 1940, the house at 2136 Brentwood Drive has undergone only minor alterations that have not impacted the essential architectural integrity of the home. The few alterations which have occurred include an alteration to the original screen porch that originally ran the length spanning the kitchen and den at the back of the residence and which has now been enclosed. The porch space located behind the kitchen was converted to a mud room / laundry room with a full bath. The portion located behind the den was enclosed to enlarge the room. The large screen porch located adjacent to the formal living room at the rear of the residence was enclosed to make a sunroom that is accessible through French doors from both the den and the formal living room. The original exterior window shutters were removed from the residence but a plan is in place to re-install them. A covered porch was also constructed to the rear of the house, which leads from the mud room/laundry room to the detached garage. The original quarters were demolished after Dr. Kelsey sold the property. The exterior color was changed from white to gray, but the columns and porch trim remain the original white color.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Houston Chronicle, “S.C. Wollmar buys River Oaks Residence” February 16, 1941.

Houston Chronicle, C.C. Rouse obituary, October 28, 1979.

Houston Post, “Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Wollmar buy River Oaks Home”, January 16, 1941.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Houston Post, "J.M. Flaitz buys home on Brentwood Drive", November 23, 1941

Interview of Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey, Sr. by Jeff Myhra, January 27, 2007

Interview of Tynes Sparks by Jeff Myhra, February 1, 2007.

Doctoring in Houston and My Story of the Kelsey-Seybold Clinic and the Kelsey-Seybold Foundation, Mavis Parrott Kelsey, Sr. Memories from 1949 to 1996, Copyright 1996, Library of Congress No. 96-80022, ISBN No. 0-9613308-6-4

Kelsey-Seybold web site: http://www.kelsey-seybold.com/About_Us/HistoryTimeline.cfm

McGovern Library web site:

http://mcgovern.library.tmc.edu/data/www/html/collect/manuscript/Kelsey/Kelsey_bio.htm

River Oaks Magazine, April 1941 and January 1942.

Tynes Sparks web site: <http://www.tynessparksbuildingcorp.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 Thomas McWhorter, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

The HAHC and the Planning 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(1));		
<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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(2));		
<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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(3));		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(4));		
<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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(5));		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(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 (Sec. 33-224(a)(6));		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7));		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride (Sec. 33-224(a)(8)).		

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

- (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 Planning Commission accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Dr. Mavis P. Kelsey, Sr., House at 2136 Brentwood Drive.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

SITE LOCATION MAP
DR. MAVIS P. KELSEY, SR., HOUSE
2136 BRENTWOOD DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE

