

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Roswell W. Moreland House

OWNER: Dan and Eleanor Gilbane

APPLICANT: Same as Owner

LOCATION: 2147 Pelham Drive – River Oaks

30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: IIb

HPO FILE NO.: 07L175

DATE ACCEPTED: Feb-28-07

HAHC HEARING: Apr-25-07

PC HEARING: May-10-07

SITE INFORMATION:

Lot 12, Block 43, River Oaks Section 3, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a historic, two-story residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The house at 2147 Pelham Drive was built as a speculative home in 1935 by W. J. Goggan, a builder and contractor. It was designed by Robert D. McCready, an architect, who would later become an active builder in River Oaks. The home was owned for its first 33 years by the Roswell W. Moreland family. Roswell W. Moreland was Vice President and General Manager of Clarke & Courts, one of the largest printers and lithographers in the Southwest. He was prominent and respected in his field, serving as President of Graphic Arts of Houston as well as being a member of the Houston Chamber of Commerce and Lithographers National Association. The house qualifies under Criteria 1, 4, and 6 for Landmark Designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The home at 2147 Pelham Drive was built as a speculative home by W. J. Goggan with Robert D. McCready as architect. It was completed in May 1935 during the Great Depression and sold in April 1936. During this time, construction was active in River Oaks. An August 1935 article listed 23 homes completed in River Oaks for the first 8 months of the year costing a total of \$446,500, with an additional 30 homes under construction. The River Oaks Corporation actively marketed the homes for the builder. Their advertisements were clever and designed to appeal to the mid-level buyer. The first advertisements appeared in the Houston Post and Houston Chronicle in May 1935. The headline reads: “Here’s as livable a home as you’ll find in a year of hunting.” It goes on to say, “the architecture is that of a colonial townhouse—good in America for over 300 years.” Another advertisement lays out the floor plans of the home and says, “for only \$12,000, you get:

- A living room with plenty of space for a large piano,
- A screened porch on the southeast,
- A dining room done in a colonial manner,
- A two car garage with servant’s quarters and bath,
- A master bedroom which has a dressing room with its private bath.”

In April 1936, Roswell William Moreland purchased the home for \$11,500 as noted in the Houston Post. The article states:

“The newly constructed colonial residence has been purchased by Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Moreland for \$11,500 cash. It was built by W.J. Goggan. Mr. Moreland is the manager of Clarke & Courts, which are moving their publishing plant from Galveston to Houston. The home faces north on an oversized lot.”

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Roswell William Moreland (1883-1941) and his wife Norine lived in the home from 1936 until circa 1968. The 1937-38 City Directory lists Mr. Moreland as Vice President and General Manager of Clarke & Courts located at 1210 West Clay. The company advertised lithography, printing and engraving services, as well as office furniture and stationery. Mr. Moreland would spend his entire career with Clarke and Courts. When he died, the Houston Chronicle described his many activities: President of Graphic Arts of Houston, member of Holy Name Society of St. Anne's Church, Houston Council No. 803, Knights of Columbus, Houston Rotary Club, Salesmanship Club, Houston Chamber of Commerce, Typothetae of America and the Lithographers National Association. He left behind two daughters, Edith and Mary Moreland, and a son, Richard William, who was serving as an Ensign in the Navy. His wife would live in the house for another 25 years after her husband's death.

Robert DeClarke McCready (1900-1974) was an architect and builder active from 1925 until the early 1940s. He first appears in the Houston City Directory in 1922 with his home listed as 1619 Cortlandt. From the years 1925 through 1931, he appears as a draftsman for Henry F. Jonas & Tabor, R.D. Steele, and the River Oaks Corporation. Starting in 1934, he is listed as a sole proprietor in the architectural section of the City Directory. In 1935, when he designed the plans for 2147 Pelham Drive, he is listed as an architect with an office at 2506 River Oaks Boulevard.

It appears that McCready's career shifted over time from architecture to remodeling and then to building speculative homes. In the first issue of River Oaks Magazine in February 1937, he advertises home repairing, remodeling and "concealed lawn – sprinkling systems" services. By 1938, McCready began to expand his business to include the construction of speculative homes. In many cases, he used the exact same floor plans for separate homes. McCready also appeared to adapt plans from other cities. An April 1939 advertisement for 3404 Meadow Lake Lane talks about adapting a plan from a Los Angeles, California, home that had won the American Gas Association All-Gas Home Architectural Competition. Through the years, McCready's office locations included 2506 River Oaks Boulevard, 4524 Kirby Drive, 3812 Revere Street, and 2031 West Gray (the River Oaks Shopping Center at the corner of West Gray and Shepherd).

The McCready homes were simple in style, generally three bedroom and two bath in size, and affordable to a mid-level buyer. Through the River Oaks Magazine advertisements, we have been able to identify the following homes that he designed and built:

- 3457 Locke Lane, 1939
- 2041 Claremont, 1939
- 3452 Ella Lee, 1939
- 3404 Meadow Lake Lane, 1939
- 3448 Wickersham, 1939
- 3424 Wickersham (shows under construction in Feb 1939)
- 2146 Pelham, 1939
- 3453 Meadow Lake Lane, 1939
- 3112 Revere, 1939
- 2203 Claremont, 1939
- 2203 Stanmore, 1939
- 2204 Nebraska, 1939
- 2212 Mimososa, 1939
- 2206 Mimososa, 1939
- 2202 Mimososa, 1939

- 2208 Mimosa, 1939
- 2445 Stanmore, 1940
- 3420 Meadow Lake Lane, 1940
- 2345 Stanmore, 1940
- 2328 Timber Lane, 1940
- 3650 Meadow Lake Lane, 1940

At the end of 1939, McCready started to advertise his services as a consultant. In fact, he advertised a “home building clinic” helping people with carpentry, painting, plumbing and other home services. By the late 1940s, McCready no longer appeared in the City Directory. He died in October 1974 in Fort Davis, Texas.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The 1935 Robert D. McCready home built by W. J. Goggan located at 2147 Pelham is designed in the Colonial Revival style with Georgian influences. The façade of the home is very true to its 1935 appearance. The red brick home is two stories in height with a gable roof whose main roof ridge is parallel to the street. The home features double-hung, six-over-six pane wood sash windows on the second floor and six-over-nine pane double-hung wood sash windows on the first floor. An ornate pedimented entry with pilasters is located above the entry door.

In 1977, Preston Bolton, a well-known Houston architect, was hired to complete an addition for subsequent owners, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Huebsch. The addition included the conversion of the screened-in porch and breakfast room into a large den and utility room.

The current owners, Dan and Eleanor Gilbane, are currently updating the home. The plans call for the renovation of the kitchen, breakfast room, upstairs bathrooms, and garage; reinforcement of the foundation; and plumbing and electrical repairs. None of the proposed work will impact the façade as seen from the public right of way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

River Oaks Magazine, Volumes 1 through 6 for information on Robert McCready.

U.S. Social Security Death Index, Robert McCready and Roswell Moreland.

Houston Chronicle, Roswell Moreland Obituary, November 30, 1944, page A30.

Houston Chronicle, Advertisement, July 14, 1935, page D9.

Houston Post, April 19, 1936, “Clarke and Courts Manager Purchases Home.”

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

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- (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);
- (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);
- (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);
- (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);
- (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);
- (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);
- (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7);
- (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).
- (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 Roswell W. Moreland House at 2147 Pelham.

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SITE LOCATION MAP
ROSSELL W. MORELAND HOUSE
2147 PELHAM
NOT TO SCALE

