

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Norman D. Adams House

OWNER: James D. Counce

APPLICANT: Same as Owner

LOCATION: 2116 Chilton Road - River Oaks

30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: II.a

DATE ACCEPTED: Mar-28-2008

HPO FILE NO.: 08L200

HAHC HEARING: May-15-2008

PC HEARING: May-22-2008

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 24, Block 52, River Oaks Section 3, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story, brick residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Norman D. Adams House at 2116 Chilton Road was built as a speculative home in 1935. The two-story, brick Colonial Revival-style home was designed by well-known Houston architects, Hiram Salisbury and T. George McHale. The substantial body of work created by these architects includes many homes in River Oaks and Southampton, as well as St. John's School and St. John's Chapel (designed in association with MacKie and Kamrath Architects), and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on West Alabama. For the first fifty years, the home was occupied by the family of Norman D. Adams, a prominent Houston businessman and insurance executive with Adams & Porter Associates. The Norman D. Adams House qualifies for Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4 and 6.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Houston architects, Hiram A. Salisbury and T. G. McHale, designed the house built at 2116 Chilton Road. The house was completed in September 1935, when the first advertisement appeared in the *Houston Chronicle* and *Houston Post*. The ad included a floor plan of the home and described, "An eminently livable home which must be seen to be appreciated." An ad appearing in November 1935 listed the price as \$14,500. Finally, a large ad that appeared in the *Houston Chronicle* on December 15, 1935 described:

"Available in River Oaks: First Class Opportunities for Home Seekers -- The site, 80 by 150 feet, faces south. Downstairs: living room, paneled morning room, dining room, screened porch, lavette. Upstairs: three bedrooms, sleeping porch, two baths. Two car garage with servant room and bath. Gas burning floor furnaces. Rock wool insulation in attic. Rigid asbestos shingle roof."

The house remained on the market for seven months. On July 19, 1936, the *Houston Post* announced the purchase of the home by Norman D. Adams.

"Insurance Men Buy in River Oaks – Two officials at the marine insurance firm Adams and Porter last week paid a total of \$46,500 cash for homes in River Oaks, but neither knew the other was making a purchase of a house... Norman D. Adams, member of the same firm, paid \$14,000 cash for a painted brick veneer colonial at 2116 Chilton Road."

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Norman DeGraaf Adams was born in New Orleans in 1908 and came to Houston as a teenager. He had a long and active career in the Houston business community. He worked in marine insurance for about 40 years, starting with Adams & Porter Associates in the 1930s. According to his grandson, Norman DeGraaf Adams, III (“DeGraaf”), Adams & Porter was founded by Norman D. Adams’ father, Henry, in the early 1900s. At the height of his career, Norman Adams served as chairman of the board for Adams & Porter. At the time he purchased the house, his offices with Adams & Porter Associates were located at the Cotton Exchange Building. Adams & Porter survived until 1987 when it was acquired by AON, a large insurance conglomerate. During his career, Adams helped found, and was president and director of Citadel Insurance Company. He also was an owner of a dredging concern, barge transportation business, and the Bloomfield Steamship Company that operated out of Houston in the 1950s.

During World War II, Norman D. Adams served as a captain in the Transportation Corps. He was active in the Houston community, serving as a director of the Bank of Texas, and as a member of First Presbyterian Church, Houston Rotary Club, and River Oaks Country Club. When Adams died in 1971 at the age of 63, the Houston Chronicle featured an article with his photo entitled “Final Rites for Adams on Thursday” in addition to his obituary. After Norman D. Adams’ death, his wife Mary continued to live in the Chilton house for the next fifteen years. The home was subsequently owned by the Kerensky family, the Hoelscher family, and is now owned by James Counce.

Hiram A. Salisbury (1892-1973), architect of 2116 Chilton Road, 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 an office in the Post-Dispatch (subsequently Shell) Building until 1937. Salisbury served as president of the American Institute of Architects, Houston Chapter, in 1954.

Beginning in 1928, Salisbury collaborated on many projects with fellow architect, T. George McHale. Salisbury and McHale's projects included residential, commercial, and church buildings. Among their more notable projects are St. Stephen's Episcopal Church at 1805 W. Alabama (1941); St. John's School at 2401 Claremont (1945-49); and many of the homes located in River Oaks, Southampton, and other affluent Houston neighborhoods. Salisbury and McHale relocated their offices to the River Oaks Community Center at 2017 W. Gray in 1938-39, and moved to 3501 Allen Parkway in 1945.

Thomas George McHale (1903-1975) was also born in Omaha, Nebraska, and attended school at the University of Notre Dame. After receiving his architecture 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. Starting in 1925, he worked for George B. Prinz for several years.

Beginning in 1930, Hiram A. Salisbury and his wife lived at 3412 Yupon between Hawthorne and Harold. By 1953, the Salisburys were living at 610 Saddlewood Lane. Salisbury continued his practice in Houston until approximately 1962, when he retired to Medford, Oregon. McHale was married to Inez P. McHale, a celebrated Houston interior decorator. The McHales lived at 1106 Palm Avenue before moving to 2 Courtlandt Place.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The Norman D. Adams House, built in 1935, is a two-story painted brick home in the Colonial Revival style. The first floor of the house features bay windows on each side of the centered front entryway. The main body of the home is perfectly symmetrical, with three six-over-six windows on the second floor over each bay window and a window over the main entry. The front entrance is framed by a gable-

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fronted portico with a curved underside supported by two columns. Above the front door and sidelights is woodworking in a fan pattern. It is unclear whether the columned entryway is original or adapted from a previous doorway, as it appears that the original doorway was replaced with a newer one in the 1980s.

The house is located on Chilton Road, which has a number of homes designed by noted Houston architects, including Staub, Briscoe, and at least two others by Salisbury. Two other houses on Chilton are designated as City of Houston Landmarks: the Miller-Tunks House across the street at 2117 Chilton Road, and the George V. Rotan House at 2300 Pine Valley at the corner of Chilton and Pine Valley.

The home has been renovated three times: in the 1950s, the 1980s and in 2006. The original screened in porch on the east side of the home has been bricked in. French doors and a pergola have been added where there was once the solid brick wall. The house has been connected to the garage/servants quarters by a two-story addition, making the home into an “L” shape. The addition was covered with shingles in keeping with the architecture of the home.

The current owner made the following changes after purchasing the house in 2005: updated the kitchen, extended the backyard deck, added a porch off the master bedroom, updated electrical and plumbing systems, and added a circular drive to provide off-street parking.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fox, Stephen, personal notes and research about Hiram A. Salisbury and T. George McHale, August, 2006.

Fox, Stephen, *Houston Architectural Guide*, 2nd ed., American Institute of Architects, 1999.

Houston Chronicle, Norman D. Adams, Senior, Obituary, December 15, 1971.

Houston Chronicle, “Final Rites for Adams on Thursday,” December 15, 1971.

Interview of DeGraaf Adams (grandson of Norman D. Adams) by Kelley Trammell on June 14, 2007.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Diana DuCroz, 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);		

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- (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 Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to the Houston Planning Commission the Landmark Designation of Norman D. Adams House at 2116 Chilton Road.

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NORMAN D. ADAMS HOUSE
2116 CHILTON ROAD



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SITE LOCATION MAP
NORMAN D. ADAMS HOUSE
2116 CHILTON ROAD
NOT TO SCALE

