

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: John and Marie Etta Garrow House

OWNERS: Kenneth F. Schwenke and Sallie Gordon

APPLICANTS: Kenneth F. Schwenke and Sallie Gordon

LOCATION: 19 Courtlandt Place-Courtlandt Place Historic District

30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: VI.a

HPO FILE NO: 09L219

DATE ACCEPTED: Jul-7-09

HAHC HEARING: Oct-22-09

PC HEARING: Oct-29-09

SITE INFORMATION: East 50 feet of Lot 15, West 70 feet of Lot 16, Courtlandt Place Subdivision, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a two-story masonry, stucco clad residence and a two-story carriage house.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The John and Marie Etta Garrow House at 19 Courtlandt Place was built in 1913 and designed by renowned Houston architect, Birdsall P. Briscoe, a long-term friend of the Garrows. The house is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style, which was popular in the United States between 1890 and 1935. Briscoe established his reputation as an exceptional designer at the outset of his career and became the favored architect of residents of Courtlandt Place. The Garrow House is listed in the *Houston Architectural Guide* and *1980 Houston Architectural Survey*.

John Wanroy Garrow was active in the cotton business in Houston. He was a director and president of the Texas Cotton Association and in 1929 of the Houston Cotton Exchange. John Garrow's father, H. W. Garrow, was one of the founders of the Houston Cotton Exchange in 1882, and served as president and a director of the Exchange for many years.

Marie Etta Brady Garrow was herself a member of a well-known Houston family. Her grandfather was General Sidney Sherman, a hero of the Battle of San Jacinto. Her father was John Thomas Brady, a lawyer and Texas legislator, who was instrumental in the creation of the Houston Ship Channel. Magnolia Park, one of Houston's oldest neighborhoods was laid out in 1890 on a 1,374-acre site owned by John Thomas Brady.

Marie Etta's half-brother was Sidney Sherman Brady, president of the Sherman Brady Brick Company, Brady Hamilton Land Company, and Sherman Brady Brick Works, and one of the largest personal holders of real estate in the city. He also served as Secretary and Treasurer of the Courtlandt Improvement Company, which developed the Courtlandt Place subdivision. His home at 3805 Wilmer Street in Houston's East End is a City of Houston Protected Landmark.

Later prominent residents of 19 Courtlandt Place were Pierre and Leslie Schlumberger. Pierre was the only son of Marcel Schlumberger who, along with brother Conrad and father Paul, founded Schlumberger in France in 1919. Pierre was named president of Schlumberger Limited in 1956. Pierre's aunt, Dominique de Menil, established the Menil Collection which opened in Houston in 1987.

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Courtlandt Place is one of Houston's earliest elite residential subdivisions. The first houses in Courtlandt Place were built in 1909, and many of the houses were designed by celebrated Houston architects, including Sanguinet and Staats, John F. Staub, and Warren and Wetmore. Early residents were the old elite of Houston, and were frequently related. Marie Etta Garrow's sister, Lucy Brady, also owned a home in Courtlandt Place with her husband, Wilmer Sperry Hunt. Courtlandt Place was designated a National Register of Historic Places Historic District in 1979, received a Texas Historical Commission marker in 1989, and was designated a City of Houston Historic District in 1996.

The John and Marie Etta Garrow House meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 for Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The John and Marie Etta Garrow House was designed by the Garrows' long-time friend, Birdsall P. Briscoe, and was built in 1913. The house reflects the elegance and architectural quality characteristic of Courtlandt Place, one of Houston's earliest and most exclusive subdivisions. Birdsall P. Briscoe worked in independent practice in Houston from 1912 until his retirement in 1955. The Garrow house is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style, a style popular in the United States between 1890 and 1935.

After living for the first years of their married life at 701 McGowen, Mr. and Mrs. Garrow custom built their home at 19 Courtlandt Place in 1913. Socially prominent, the Garrows were members of the Thalian Club, the Paul Jones Dance Club, the River Oaks Country Club, and the Houston Country Club. John Wanroy Garrow purchased Tracts 15 and 16A on Courtlandt Place from the Courtlandt Improvement Company on May 6, 1912, for a sum of \$1,500. A contract was signed with the Russell Brown Company for construction of the home at a price of \$16,807.60 on February 17, 1913. The contract called for a completion date of no later than July 15, 1913, but letters from Birdsall Briscoe to the Russell Brown Company show final details to be incomplete as late as September 19, 1913.

W. T. Carter II and his wife purchased the property at 19 Courtlandt Place on May 14, 1945, under the name of Houston Realty Sales, one of the Carter family companies. Several members of the Carter families lived on Courtlandt, and Mr. Carter grew up in #18. The Carters owned the property only until July 29, 1948, when they sold it to Durell M. Carothers and his wife Grace. Grace Carothers gained title to the property through a 1972 divorce settlement, then rented #19 to Pierre and Leslie Schlumberger while they remodeled their home at #20. Later, the Schlumbergers would become leaders of the residents' effort to have Courtlandt Place recognized as a National Register of Historic Places Historic District and once again erect a wall at the west end of the street.

On June 5, 1974, Grace Carothers sold 19 Courtlandt Place to Henry Lemieux who lived there until he sold to Irving Solnick under the name of American Canadian Holding on December 4, 1979. Western Bank foreclosed on the property on December 16, 1982, and it was purchased on March 18, 1986 by Kenneth F. Schwenke and his wife Sallie Gordon, who currently reside in the home with their two daughters, Caroline and Alexandra.

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COURTLANDT PLACE

Courtlandt Place, established as an exclusive neighborhood in 1906, maintains its unique early 20th century elegance and continuity. Eighteen houses built mainly in the 1910s and 1920s along a tree-lined, divided boulevard, reflect excellent examples of early 20th century architectural styles, designed by some of the most prominent Texas architects of the early twentieth century, including Birdsall P. Briscoe, Alfred Finn, John Staub, Sanguinet and Staats, and Olle J. Lorehn. The eighteen houses built between 1909 and 1937 represent the popular architectural styles of the period – Classical Revival, Mediterranean, Tudor Revival, Georgian Revival, Colonial Revival, and Prairie Style.

Before 1900, the land surrounding and including Courtlandt Place was prairie and used primarily for farming. After the city annexed the land in 1903, developers began several subdivisions in this area – Westmoreland (1902), Courtlandt Place (1906), Avondale (1907), and Montrose (1911). Of these early 20th century housing developments, Courtlandt Place was the most exclusive. The neighborhood's urban/country origins are still evident in the stables behind many of the large houses and by the hitching posts in the front yards. Few of the houses have been destroyed or significantly altered, and the street retains a rare and remarkable early 20th century ambience.

One of the few old Houston subdivisions still intact, Courtlandt Place is protected by the supervision of the Courtlandt Place Association and its Board of Trustees, backed by six restrictive covenants established in perpetuity. Courtlandt Place is one of the oldest subdivision in Houston with its deed restrictions still in force, protecting it from the fate of surrounding areas now dotted with commercial enterprises. In addition to the architectural significance of the district, Courtlandt Place was the home of some of Houston's most prominent leaders – doctors, lawyers, oil men, lumbermen and people who founded companies still prospering today. Among the prominent residents who built homes on Courtlandt Place were the W. T. Carter family - W. T. Carter, Sr., W. T. Carter, Jr., Jim and Lena Carter Carrol, Dr. and Jesse Carter Taylor, R. D. Randolph and Frankie Carter Randolph; the A. S. Cleveland family – A. S. Cleveland, and Cleveland's daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. William A. Kirkland; James Lockhart Autry; Sterling Myer; C. L. Neuhaus; Underwood Nazro; Murray Jones; J. M. Dorrance; E. L. Neville; T. J. Donoghue; John W. Garrow; and W. C. Hunt.

The landscaped, crescent-shaped entrance to Courtlandt Place at the east was destroyed in 1969 by an extension of the Southwest Freeway Spur 527, although stones from the pillars and the wrought iron fences were saved and reused at the present east entrance. With encroaching commercial development in the surrounding neighborhoods, Courtlandt Place has become a quiet residential island surrounded by the freeway, busy thoroughfares, and businesses. Courtlandt Place was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, and was designated as a City of Houston Historic District on June 12, 1996.

JOHN WANROY GARROW

Born on February 5, 1879, John Wanroy Garrow spent his entire life in Houston. After graduating from Washington and Lee University in 1899, John began his career in the cotton business in his father's firm, the H. W. Garrow Export Company. After the death of H. W. Garrow in 1916, the business was continued under the same name by his two sons, H. W. Garrow Jr. and John Garrow,

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until 1924, when it was dissolved. In 1918, John became associated with an existing factor business, Hogg, Dickson, and Hogg. Additionally, he helped organize and was the president of Garrow, MacClain and Garrow, another cotton factor firm. Garrow became active in the affairs of the Texas Cotton Association, twice serving as a director and once as its president. He was president of the Houston Cotton Exchange in 1929 and president of the American Cotton Shippers Association. Particular interests were the traffic department of the Houston Cotton Exchange and the promotion of the new Exchange building. John was made an honorary life member of the Texas Cotton Association and the American Cotton Shipper's Association shortly before his death in 1944.

Garrow also served as a director of the American General Insurance Company, Navarro Oil Company, Houston Farms Development Company, and Houston Chamber of Commerce. The abrupt decline of the cotton industry during the depression caused Garrow to close his cotton factor firm and retire while still a young man of 35. Garrow continued to be active in the political affairs of the cotton industry. He was among the early opponents of government participation in the cotton industry and made numerous trips to Washington D. C. to oppose impending legislation. Once Garrow met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the presidential retreat in Warm Springs, Georgia to discuss various issues involving the cotton industry. He also managed his personal finances and property inherited from Mrs. Garrow's family, but he never again held a formal business position.

H. W. GARROW

John Garrow's father, H. W. Garrow Sr., was born in Mobile, Alabama on November 16, 1845. At age 15, with other cadets from the Virginia Military Institute, he joined the Confederate Army, "being one of the renowned regiment of youthful cadets who rallied to the Confederate flag, and won fame at Newmarket and on other historic fields of battle." In 1877, at the age of 32, Garrow Sr. transferred his cotton business from his hometown of Mobile to the thriving cotton market in Houston. After helping to organize the Houston Cotton Exchange in 1882, he served as its president for ten years beginning in 1892. He served as a director of the Exchange from its inception until the time of his death in 1916. A resolution passed by members of the Houston Cotton Exchange upon Mr. Garrow's death read: "Resolved, that in the death of H. W. Garrow the Houston Cotton Exchange and Board of Trade has been deprived of a wise, zealous and efficient member, one who, as an officer and member always manifested an abiding interest in the success of the exchange, and who contributed in no small measure in bringing it to its present eminent position as a commercial body."

Mr. Garrow died in December 1916, at the age of 71 after a short battle with pneumonia. He was survived by his wife and two sons, H. W. Garrow Jr. and J. W. Garrow. Garrow Sr. was an active participant in the cotton business for forty-nine years. He was widely respected both as a businessman and an individual. Upon learning of Mr. Garrow's death, the President of the Houston Cotton Exchange ordered the flag placed at half mast over the building, and the Exchange closed during the funeral ceremonies.

The local newspaper noting his death eulogized:

He was a Southern gentleman in every meaning that phrase implies, rigid in his views of right and wrong, outspoken in his sentiments and fearless in the performance of that which he regarded as his duties. He had a subtle humor in his fine old heart and a quaint blunt way of

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expressing himself. He lived an eventful life in his early years and the fire that glowed in the eyes of his youth toned down into a kindly twinkle in his declining years. He was one of the best beloved members of the Cotton Exchange and his advice and counsel was sought and given in the affairs of that organization for the past 35 years.

MARIE ETTA BRADY GARROW

John Wanroy Garrow married Marie Etta Brady on February 25, 1908. Brady was a member of one of the oldest families of the South whose members have left an indelible mark on local, state, and national history. Mrs. Garrow was the granddaughter of General Sidney Sherman, the hero of the Battle of San Jacinto. Her father was John Thomas Brady, lawyer, legislator, newspaperman, and Houston Ship Channel organizer. Her brother was Sidney Sherman Brady, who served as president of the Sherman Brady Brick Company, Brady Hamilton Land Company, and Sherman Brady Brick Works. He was also the organizer of the Buffalo Bayou Transportation Company and was one of the largest personal holders of real estate in the city. He served as Secretary and Treasurer of the Courtlandt Improvement Company, which developed Courtlandt Place. His home at 3805 Wilmer Street in Houston's East End is a City of Houston Protected Landmark.

An unreferenced newspaper clipping from the Garrow family files announcing Miss Brady and Mr. Garrow's engagement described Marie Etta as follows, "Since her entrance into society Miss Brady has been much admired and very popular. She is a very chic and pretty girl, and her marriage will be one of the smart and fashionable ante-Lenten events." The wedding ceremony was performed at Brady Place, the family home of the bride. The wedding itself was described in the Houston Post as:

Beautiful and elaborate in every detail was the marriage yesterday of Miss Marie Etta Brady and John Wanroy Garrow. The prominence and popularity of the bride and bridegroom, the beauty and artistic details of the occasion, and the splendid hospitality expressed, conspired to make the marriage one of the most important nuptial events recorded in the social history of the city.

Birdsall Briscoe, later to be the architect of the John and Marie Etta Garrow House, served as a groomsman in the wedding.

John and Marie Etta had three children: Estelle, born December 24, 1909; Gwendolyn, born June 29, 1916; and John W. Jr, born July 28, 1919, all of whom were born at the Garrow residence. Mrs. Garrow died on December 31, 1941 from illness associated with a heart condition caused by rheumatic fever she contracted as a child. Mr. Garrow continued to live in the Courtlandt house until his death in 1944.

COL. JOHN THOMAS BRADY

Marie Etta Garrow was the youngest daughter of Col. John Thomas Brady. John Brady was born in Maryland on October 10, 1830. Before his arrival in Houston in 1856, Brady was admitted to the bar at Port Tobacco, Maryland in 1855 where he practiced law briefly; was editor of the Frontier News of Westport, Missouri for two years; assisted in organizing the new territorial government of Kansas where he was elected public printer, a position in which he published the journals and laws

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of the state's first legislature; and became district attorney for the Third Judicial District of the Territory of Kansas.

Brady came to Houston in 1856 as a young lawyer. He established a law practice, and settled along the bayou near Harrisburg. Shortly after moving to Houston, John Brady became a Confederate soldier. In the Civil War, Brady served the Confederacy on Gen. John B. Magruder's staff and was a volunteer aide to Commodore Leon Smith on the steamer Bayou City in the capture of the Harriet Lane and the defeat of the federal fleet at Galveston Harbor on January 1, 1863. He received special mention for his courage at the battle of Galveston.

After the war, Brady served two terms in the Texas state legislature. He was elected to the Tenth Legislature in 1863 and served as chairman of the committee on finance. In 1866 he was chairman of the committee on internal improvements in the Eleventh Legislature, and he was an advocate of the State Plan for building railroads. As a senator in the Sixteenth Legislature in 1878, he was chairman of the committee on public debt. In 1880 he was nominated for Congress by the National Greenback Labor party. He was among the first Texas lawyers to appear before the Supreme Court of the United States after the state was readmitted to the Union.

Brady was a principal organizer of the Texas Transportation Company, which became part of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The Texas Transportation Company was chartered on September 6, 1866, to construct a railroad along the south side of Buffalo Bayou from Houston to a point near Bray's Bayou. By early 1876, Texas Transportation Company constructed an eight-mile line from Clinton to Houston along the north side of Buffalo Bayou. The railroad line was completed and opened in September 1876. The Texas Transportation Company was merged into the Texas and New Orleans in June 1896, and the line is still operated as an industrial branch of the Southern Pacific.

From the time he arrived in Houston, Brady was interested in deepening the ship channel to bring large ships to the port. In 1876, with his own funds, he had the channel dredged along the section where the turning basin now stands. The new channel cut Brady's Island from his property. Partly in response to his efforts, the Houston Ship Channel Company was organized to dredge the bayou to a minimum of nine feet. The city eventually invested in the Buffalo Bayou Ship Channel Company and in July 1870, Congress designated Houston a 'port of delivery' and posted a customs official in the city.

Magnolia Park, one of Houston's oldest Hispanic neighborhoods, was laid out in 1890 on a 1,374-acre site owned by Thomas Brady. It was named for the 3,750 magnolias that developers planted there. Magnolia Park became an independent municipality in 1909 and was annexed to the City of Houston in October 1926. Though whites first inhabited the town, Mexican Americans began arriving by 1911, brought here by political and economic unrest in their native country. The new settlers first settled in an area they called Las Arenas (the Sands), residential property laid out from the sands dredged from the nearby Houston Ship Channel. Composed mostly of working class families, the Mexican-American community would become Magnolia Park's predominant ethnic group. Most of the new settlers worked as laborers, laying railroad tracks or dredging and widening Buffalo Bayou. Others loaded cotton on ships and railroad cars or helped construct the ship channel. Mexican-American women worked in jute mills, making gunnysack material for binding cotton bales. Residents of Mexican origin purchased lots at the townsite, built single-family homes, and fostered an active Mexican cultural life through clubs, fraternal organizations, theatrical groups, and

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events. By 1929 Magnolia Park, surrounded by refineries, factories, textile mills, industrial plants, and wharves, was the largest Mexican settlement in Houston. The local population increased in the early 1940s, as war-related jobs drew Mexican Americans to Houston from across the Southwest. By the 1960s, the middle class had expanded under the programs of President Lyndon Baines Johnson's Great Society, but the bulk of the local Mexican-American residents remained poor. In 1978 up to 20 percent of local residents were below the poverty level. In 1990 the community was a working-class neighborhood with a population of 14,000. Today, Magnolia Park continues to be a Hispanic community deeply rooted in Mexican-American history.

After John Brady's first wife, Caledonia Tinsley of Brazoria County, died, he married Lennie Sherman, General Sidney Sherman's daughter, on November 24, 1880. Lennie and John had two children, daughter, Lucy Sherman (born August 1881; married attorney Wilmer Sperry Hunt) and son Sidney Sherman Brady. After Lennie died, John Brady married Estelle Jenkins and had one daughter, Marie Etta Brady. Brady died after suffering a stroke on an inspection of the Port of Houston on June 26, 1890, and was buried at Glenwood Cemetery.

SIDNEY SHERMAN BRADY

Sidney Sherman Brady was Marie Etta Garrow's half-brother. Brady was active in many business ventures. According to a Houston Chronicle article which reported Brady's death, he maintained a well respected reputation in the business community, "and the connection of his name with a business venture was an insurance of success for that venture." He was president of several companies including the Sherman Brady Brick Company, the Brady Hamilton Land Company, and the Sherman Brady Brick Works. He was the organizer of the Buffalo Bayou Transportation company and was one of the largest personal holders of Houston real estate in the city. Brady was also the Secretary and Treasurer of the Courtlandt Improvement Company, which purchased the land and laid out the Courtlandt Place subdivision on the southern edge of the city.

In addition to his many business pursuits, Brady was active in social clubs throughout the city. He was a member of the Country Club, the Thalian Club, and the Houston Club. He was a charter member of Houston Council 803 Knights of Columbus, the sixth Knights of Columbus Council to be instituted in Texas. He owned the first high-speed car in Harris County, was an authority on automotive matters, and was one of the first officers of the local automotive club.

Sidney Sherman Brady died November 3, 1910 in a high-speed car accident. He was 26 years old. Brady and his friend, Charles Dieke, were driving along Harrisburg Road, heading home from La Porte, when Brady lost control of the car. The car veered into a ditch, rolled over onto him and pinned him beneath it. It was estimated that he was traveling between 70 and 75 mph. A passerby who saw a man pinned beneath the car drove Brady to the Country Club, where he was examined by Dr. R. W. Link. He was pronounced dead on arrival from a broken neck. The funeral took place at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament on Sherman Avenue and Brady Place at 10:30am on November 5, 1910. Brady was buried at Glenwood Cemetery. Brady was survived by his wife, Chaille M. Jones, and their two daughters, Florence M. (born 1907) and Harriett A. (born 1908).

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PIERRE SCHLUMBERGER

Pierre was the only son of Marcel Schlumberger who, along with brother Conrad and father Paul, founded Schlumberger in 1919. Schlumberger is a complete oil services company which has become a transnational, high-technology leader in oil exploration and wellsite and drilling services in the oil and gas industry. The world's eightieth largest company in 1992, Schlumberger is highly diversified, with operations in over ninety-seven countries. Schlumberger's main operations involve drilling, testing, completing, pumping and cementing wells. Its Measurement and Systems Division is the world's largest manufacturer of meters for gas, water, and electric utilities, while other components produce computer-aided design and manufacturing systems or build devices for nuclear and military projects. Subsidiaries have included Fairchild Semiconductor, Dowell Schlumberger, and Sedco Forex, which was the world's largest oil-drilling company in 1982. In 1981, the company logged over seventy percent of the world's oil wells.

Marcel Schlumberger had begun to work with John de Menil, the husband of Conrad Schlumberger's daughter Dominique, to move the corporation from Paris to Trinidad during World War II, but died in 1953. In 1956, the lack of a clear leader to replace him and a need for central planning and coordination among the four divisions led to the formation of Schlumberger Limited as a parent company for Schlumberger operations. Pierre Schlumberger was named president of the new company. Pierre moved the company's headquarters to Houston, incorporated the firm in Curaçao for tax purposes, listed the new company on the New York Stock Exchange in 1962, and announced that Schlumberger family members would no longer be given preference within the company for promotions. Expansion began in 1959 with the acquisition of Forages et Exploitations Pétrolières (Forex), later the world's largest oil drilling company, and with the acquisition of Daystrom in 1961. Pierre resigned in 1965.

In Texas, Schlumberger is associated with its 438-acre Austin Systems Center, designed by Howard Barnstone and established in 1987 to design and develop advanced computer systems. Other Texas research, engineering, and manufacturing centers include the Schlumberger Laboratory for Computer Systems in Austin, Vector Cable in Sugar Land, Schlumberger Perforating and Testing in Rosharon, and in Houston the Schlumberger Well Services, and Anadrill, GECO-PRAKLA. Pierre's aunt, Dominique de Menil, founded the Menil Collection, which opened to the public in Houston in 1987.

BIRDSALL BRISCOE

The John and Marie Etta Garrow House was designed by the Garrows' long-time friend, Birdsall Parmenas Briscoe. Briscoe was born in Harrisburg, Texas, in 1876. His grandmother, Mary Jane Harris Briscoe, was one of the organizers of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, which held its first meeting in her home at 620 Crawford in Houston on November 6, 1891. Her husband, Captain Andrew Briscoe, fought in the War for Texas Independence in 1836 and subsequently signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. He later became the first Chief Justice of Harrisburg and began Texas' first railroad.

Birdsall P. Briscoe was educated at Texas A&M University and began his architectural career in Houston in 1904. Because academic programs in architecture were not available in Texas at the time, Briscoe received his professional training through an apprenticeship with architects Lewis

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Wilson and Lewis Sterling Green. During much of this time, Briscoe lived in a boarding house at 818 Austin Street, which was described by Mrs. Briscoe as "far from an ordinary one" in a July 18, 1979 letter:

I don't know whether it would have been called a fashionable one, but the widow who owned the house (Mrs. Bryon) was quite a person, well known and accepted in Houston circles. It was evidently a haven for bachelors who became intimate friends. Most of them married wealthy girls and Birdsall designed houses...for them. That was the era of Courtlandt Place.

During Briscoe's professional training with Wilson and Green, the firm designed the original Blessed Sacrament Church (circa 1910), a former East End landmark demolished in 2005. After a brief partnership with Green (1909-11), Briscoe began independent practice in 1912. He designed the William L. Clayton House at 5300 Caroline (City of Houston Protected Landmark) in 1916 in the Georgian Revival style and construction was completed in 1917. From 1922 until 1926 he was in partnership with Sam H. Dixon, Jr. From 1919 until his retirement in 1955, Briscoe shared an office with Maurice J. Sullivan. Although from time to time he collaborated with both Dixon and Sullivan on nonresidential commissions, Briscoe was best known for his elegantly composed and detailed houses.

Briscoe established his reputation as an exceptional designer at the outset of his career. His aptitude for disciplined formal composition and correct, scholarly rendition of historic detail placed him at the forefront of the eclectic trend in Houston architecture during the second decade of the twentieth century. Briscoe's finest houses, designed between 1926 and 1940, exhibit the array of historical architectural styles characteristic of American eclectic architecture and are distinguished by the architect's gift for harmonious proportion and full-bodied ornamental detail.

Briscoe's earliest Courtlandt Place commission was with Olle J. Lorehn in 1912 for 18 Courtlandt Place, also know as the W. T. Carter, Jr., House. The Garrow House followed in 1913, then the E. L. Neville house at 11 Courtlandt Place in 1914. By this time, Briscoe had replaced Sanguinet and Staats as Courtlandt Place's favored architect. Later, Briscoe would work on initial or remodeling designs for houses at #20, #22, #16, and #14 Courtlandt Place.

In addition to his work in Courtlandt Place, Briscoe worked extensively in the Houston neighborhoods of Shadyside, Broadacres, and River Oaks. Among his clients for houses were William Lockhart Clayton (1917), W. T. Carter (1920), R. Lee Blaffer (1920), Walter H. Walne (1925), Burdine Clayton Anderson (1928), Robert W. Wier (1928), Milton R. Underwood (1934), Wirt A. Paddock (1936), I. H. Kempner, Jr. (1936), and Dillon Anderson (1938). Outside Houston, Briscoe's best-known project was the remodeling of the Patton-Varner House near West Columbia for Ima and William Clifford Hogg in 1920.

Briscoe married Ruth Dillman in 1927. He joined the American Institute of Architects in 1921 and was elected a fellow of the institute in 1949. From 1934 until 1941 he served as District Officer for South Texas of the Historic American Buildings Survey. He was the author of two western adventure novels, *In the Face of the Sun* (1934) and *Spurs from San Isidro* (1951). He was a parishioner of Christ Church. He died in Houston on September 18, 1971, and is buried at Oak Hill Cemetery in Goliad.

The only native Texan in the group of locally prominent architects, Briscoe appreciated the rigors of the Houston climate and aptly exploited the ventilation possibilities provided by the southeast

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Gulf Coast breezes. Many of his designs were symmetrical with a north/south axis through the central hall. This hall was often used as a spine around which Briscoe developed the spatial organization of his floor plans. His practice of flanking dining and living areas on either side of the hall is reminiscent of the popular Greek revival plan. National recognition was achieved for Briscoe when the John and Marie Etta Garrow House was featured in *Architectural Record* in July 1915.

On a personal level, Briscoe is remembered as a gentleman: polite, modest, reserved, dapper, and relaxed rather than intense. He had a graceful way about him which served him well in dealings with his largely affluent clientele. These personal characteristics are an interesting juxtaposition to his architectural reputation for attention to "elegant detail and assured handling of materials."

Correspondence between Briscoe and the construction firm of Russell Brown evidence Briscoe's attention to detail. On August 22, 1913, he wrote, "You will find below a memorandum of several items in the J. W. Garrow job that should be attended to and rectified at once. The job has been dragging considerably of late and you will find that it will be to your best interests to push it to an early completion." He then detailed a list of sixteen items which did not meet his approval. Again, on August 29, Briscoe wrote Russell Brown, this time with a list of twenty-nine items.

"Many of the items to which I have previously called your attention have not yet been corrected and made good. I would suggest that you give these matters at once your personal attention. The owner has grown very impatient, and has just cause to be impatient, for the job has dragged along in a very unsatisfactory manner for the past several weeks."

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

THE DESIGN

The design composition of the John and Marie Etta Garrow House is typical of early Briscoe work. It is a single, block-like mass with Georgian symmetry; asymmetrical designs were not attempted by Briscoe until 1921. The Garrow House, like #20 and #22 Courtlandt, was decorated with large dormers, heavy eaves, a clay tile hip roof anchored by large decorative brackets, and boldly proportioned windows. The sun porch, and later the porch cochere, were set back slightly to alleviate the severity of the long flat facade; later Briscoe would experiment with even more pronounced breaks. The Garrow House was the seventh to be built on Courtlandt Place but only the second to exclude the prominent front porch, an architectural evolution in Houston at the time. In the Garrow House, an architecturally elaborate but restrained portico took the place of the large gallery that had been fashionable in this semi-tropical city. The portico of the main block is an excellent example of Briscoe attention to detail and concern with quality craftsmanship. The well-designed columns, detailed cornice and dentils, and curved moldings define an entry which is covered by a second-story balustrade. Full-length, multi-paned windows are crowned by panels of sculptured garlands and enclosed on the lower ends with wrought iron balconies. The low hip roof contains a central pedimented dormer on the main facade.

The Garrow House is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival, a style popular in the United States between 1890 and 1935. In the typical eclectic style, Briscoe also chose to incorporate decorative elements with other historical precedents. The swag garlands and arched roof dormers are typical Beaux Arts, the overall symmetry of the front facade, dentils, paneled front door, and multi-paned windows are Georgian, and the iron balconies have Adams-style associations.

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Inside the home, architectural details still stand as design achievements. Moldings with rich, free-flowing curves, a Briscoe trademark, are found throughout the house. Frequently, he used undercuttings for a greater feeling of depth in his designs; this technique was used throughout the upstairs rooms of the home. Briscoe's designs have been described as having a "certain fullness and softness," and that is an accurate description of the main staircase in the Garrow house. Soft, repeated curves were emphasized in the balustrade with its boldly proportioned rail, the newel post, and the casing. Briscoe often relied on Peter Mansbendel, the noted Swiss-born woodcarver, to execute his designs, but there is no evidence that he was employed in the Garrow project.

The floor plan was typical of the period, although there were more bathrooms and closets than usually found in earlier houses. Front living and dining rooms were separated by the central hall, a typical Briscoe scheme. The kitchen, pantry, and back stairs were set to one side. Porches as part of the living space were an important part of the Garrow plan. Four decks and a screened sleeping porch were built on the second floor. Downstairs, Briscoe put a screened breakfast room as well as the large east side porch and covered front portico. Generally, porches did not disappear from homes until later in the twentieth century when more efficient heating and air-conditioning systems became available. Vertical windows on the interior wall of the upstairs sleeping porch opening onto the main staircase landing and central hall provided for excellent north-south cross ventilation inside the home.

The landscape of 19 Courtlandt Place, also Briscoe's design, was planted in the typical Briscoe manner of straight lines to compliment and restate the various features of the house. He used tall, vertical shrubs, Italian cedar trees at corners and low-growing, horizontal ones in between. Variety was obtained by contrasting the horizontal with the vertical and by plant texture. An early photograph of the house which appeared in *Architectural Record* in 1915 shows very minimal planting. There appear to be only six shrubs along the front elevation of the house in addition to the terraced lawn. Jardinieres designed by Briscoe are in their original place today. Above the side porch there is a deep, decorative roof-line trim which appears to have a ledge supporting sparse but live planting. In a later photograph, when shrubs have reached maturity, some additional low planting appears under the front windows in a continuation of Briscoe's simple design.

ALTERATIONS AND RESTORATION

The Garrow House has undergone extensive remodeling throughout the years, beginning with significant, early changes made by the Garrows themselves. However, the alterations, which were made over 50 years ago, were harmonious to the original design. As John W. Garrow, Jr., observed, "When you think about it, the house was small in the beginning. My parents made changes as their family grew and they could afford it." The first change was made in August 1914. Outside, cement steps with two six-foot newel posts and lattice were added to the back side of the east porch.

The original plans of #19, published in the *Architectural Record*, show a screened breakfast room with a cement floor, smaller than the one that exists today. The porch on the east side of the house is unscreened but accented with lattice and columns. There is no porte cochere and no west side entry to the house. Fireplaces in the library and upstairs master bedroom are not drawn. A family photograph taken in about 1914 or 1915 and a photograph published in the *Architectural Record* indicate that, in fact, the house was built according to these original plans.

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Another set of plans, undated, for 19 Courtlandt drawn by Birdsall Briscoe are in the collection of Charles Ligon, a Houston architect. These drawings include a porte cochere, a west side entry, an approximately four-foot enlargement of the breakfast room which encloses it and aligns the south wall with that of the kitchen, and the addition of fireplaces in the library and master bedroom. The original coal furnace installed in the house was guaranteed to "heat all the rooms and halls throughout the entire house at the same time to a uniform temperature of seventy degrees Fahrenheit, when the outside temperature is zero, but the fireplaces in the house have a needed, functional value today, and one must wonder if the coal furnace ever met the standards of its warranty.

At some point in time, the open, east sun porch was screened. Originally, there was a wooden floor in this room which was installed as a builder error instead of the specified cement. The Garrows probably regretted accepting the \$1.55 credit offered by the builder for this inadvertent change. John Garrow, Jr. recalls that the exposed wooden flooring required frequent repainting, and it finally was replaced with a cement floor of olive tint which was cross-hatched to resemble tile, an impressively unique design for the time. As a final thought to the changes made during this period, an arched doorway was cut from the front hall to the butler's pantry to allow for more convenient passage to the new west side door and porte cochere.

Eventually, the coal furnace was replaced with gas, probably about 1930, and in the late 1930s the first window air-conditioning unit in the house was installed in the breakfast room. By the 1930s, the original refrigerator with its dripping blocks of ice was no longer in use, and it was possible to incorporate the storage and refrigeration areas into the body of the house, although the original wall between the kitchen and these areas was not removed during the Garrows time. With the change in the south wall, it was possible to enlarge and enclose the upper deck for additional sleeping space. By this time, the Garrows wanted another bathroom, so a closet adjacent to the new sleeping area was converted to a bath for Mr. Garrow. Again, the exact date of these changes is unknown, but Garrow family photographs and the history of family events indicate that by 1940 it was complete.

By the time the Carothers purchased the house in July 1948, the house had been through some years of inattention because of illness in the Garrow and Carter families and changes in ownership. The Carothers were in a position to give the old house a face-lift, and they immediately proceeded to do so. The most significant change to the house was the removal of the original east sun porch and the subsequent addition of a large family room to accommodate the entertaining requirements of the Carothers. The kitchen was remodeled and brought up to the standards of the time. The original living room mantle was replaced with an antique one of white marble purchased in Tennessee. The Carothers traveled extensively for both business and pleasure and enjoyed collecting furnishings for their home during their stays in foreign countries. Grace Carothers established a beautiful garden in the back yard of her Courtlandt home and ornamented it with garden statuary she purchased on her trips to Europe. With the Carothers, 19 Courtlandt Place entered a new era but continued to provide a comfortable, gracious environment for the families living there.

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

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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:

- | <u>S</u> | <u>NA</u> | <u>S - satisfies</u> | <u>D - does not satisfy</u> | <u>NA - not applicable</u> |
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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;
- (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 Planning Commission accept the recommendation of the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission and recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the John and Marie Etta Garrow House at 19 Courtlandt Place.

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EXHIBIT A
JOHN AND MARIE ETTA GARROW HOUSE
19 COURTLAND PLACE



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Planning and Development Department

EXHIBIT B
SITE LOCATION MAP
JOHN AND MARIE ETTA GARROW HOUSE
19 COURTLAND PLACE
NOT TO SCALE

