

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: R. Kingsley and Alma McHenry House
OWNER: Meggan and James Walsh
APPLICANT: Courtney Tardy, for Preservation River Oaks
LOCATION: 3660 Chevy Chase Drive – River Oaks

AGENDA ITEM: IIa.
HPO FILE NO.: 12L262
DATE ACCEPTED: March 6, 2012
HAHC HEARING DATE: April 19, 2012

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 17, Block 76, River Oaks Section 9, Houston, Harris Co., Texas. The site contains a two story brick veneered residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The house at 3660 Chevy Chase Drive was designed by well-known Houston architect Robert C. Smallwood, who was known for his residential works in Riverside Terrace as well as the Usonian inspired public health clinic in Houston's East End. The home at 3660 Chevy Chase Drive was built in 1940 for Dr. R. Kingsley and wife Alma McHenry. Dr. McHenry was a prominent radiologist, a Fellow of the American College of Radiology and a member of the American Radium Society, which, according to the organization that is still in existence, is the "oldest society devoted to the study and treatment of cancer." During World War 1, McHenry served as a Major in the U.S. Army Medical Corps where he fulfilled the requirements for his medical internship during the height of American involvement in the War and during the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918, which is considered one of the worst natural disasters on record. After his honorable discharge in 1919 McHenry moved to Houston where he practiced Radiology for the next 25 years. Beginning in 1928, he became one of the earliest physicians in Houston to specialize in X-ray diagnosis and treatment. Dr. McHenry lived in the home at 3660 Chevy Chase until his death in 1949. His wife Mrs. Alma McHenry continued to live in the home with her second husband Edward Putnam until 1981. Alma McHenry had been a school teacher and elementary school Principal before her marriage to McHenry. She later became active in the Blue Bird Circle, St. Luke's Methodist Church and the Daughters of the American Revolution

The R. Kingsley and Alma McHenry House is significant both for its historic association with Dr. Kingsley and the home's architect Robert Smallwood, and meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6 for Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

The *Houston Chronicle* and the *Houston Post* both first described the plans for the new home on August 11, 1940. From the *Houston Chronicle*:

"Construction started last week on a two-story Southern Colonial home at 3660 Chevy Chase Drive for Dr. R.K. McHenry. The house will be 32 by 68 feet and of brick veneer.

The first floor will have a paneled library and screened porch in addition to the living room, dining room, kitchen and breakfast room. The second floor will contain four bedrooms and three baths. A game room will be a feature of the third floor.

Building plans include a three-car garage and servant quarters.

Robert C. Smallwood is the architect; J.O. Jones the contractor."

Once the McHenrys moved in, the *River Oaks Magazine* reported in November 1941:

“Dr. and Mrs. R.K. McHenry have built a beautiful Southern Colonial home at 3660 Chevy Chase Drive. The very dark green shutters against white painted brick reflect the deep shadows of the pines and oaks among which it is set. Dr. and Mrs. McHenry have two boys, Kingsley, Jr., age 14, who is a student at Lamar, and John, age 10, who attends Montrose School. Dr. McHenry is an X-ray specialist.”

R. Kingsley and Alma Irvin McHenry

Dr. McHenry was a prominent radiologist, a Fellow of the American College of Radiology and a member of the American Radium Society, which, according to the organization that is still in existence, is the “oldest society devoted to the study and treatment of cancer.” During World War I, McHenry served as a Major in the U.S. Army Medical Corps where he fulfilled the requirements for his medical internship during the height of American involvement in the War and during the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918, which is considered one of the worst natural disasters on record. After his honorable discharge in 1919 McHenry moved to Houston where he practiced Radiology for the next 25 years. Beginning in 1928, he became one of the earliest physicians in Houston to specialize in X-ray diagnosis and treatment. Dr. McHenry lived in the home at 3660 Chevy Chase until his death in 1949.

Alma Irvin McHenry remained in the house after her husband’s death and raised her family. She was born on May 16, 1896 in Temple, Texas. She graduated from the Daniel Barker School in Brownsville with her teaching certification. Before her marriage, she taught school and was the principal of Lanier Elementary in Temple. She married Kingsley McHenry in 1922. After his death, she married Edward Lee Putnam in 1966, and they remained in the house until 1981. She was active in the Blue Bird Circle, St. Luke’s Methodist Church and the Daughters of the American Revolution. She died January 18, 1990.

Robert C. Smallwood

Robert Clarke Smallwood was a well-known Houston architect who designed mainly residential projects. He was born in Houston on October 11, 1894, the son and grandson of Houston-based printers. He grew up in Houston’s Third Ward at 2009 Jefferson Street. Buildings in Houston that can be attributed to Smallwood include: 3028 S. MacGregor Way and 2626 S. Calumet Drive in Riverside Terrace, and the Trinity Lutheran School Building in the Heights area. One of his more notable civic buildings was the Canal Street Health Center(1952) formerly located at 7728 Canal Street in Houston’s East End. The Canal Health Clinic was an impressive mid century design collaboration with noted Houston Mid Century architects Fred MacKie and Karl Kamrath. In addition, Smallwood took the lead in designing the Ross Sterling Mansion on Bay Ridge Drive when he was the residential designer for Alfred C. Finn. Smallwood worked for Finn from 1923-28. In 1940, when this house was designed, Smallwood kept an office in the Studio Building at 3940 Main Street, where other well-known architects like Joseph Northrop, Bailey Swenson, and Harry Payne kept their offices. He was a member of the AIA. Robert Smallwood died on April 28, 1961.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

The McHenry House is designed in a Southern Colonial style, featuring a central entrance with full height portico and columns. The 5,887 square foot house is sited facing South in the center of a 15,210 square foot lot. The front facade consists of a large main bay with a smaller addition to the west, all faced with painted brick.

The main bay of the house is situated under a side gabled roof. The first floor front façade features a centered entrance with a wood and glass paneled door with sidelights. The doorway is surrounded by decorative wood

molding with pilasters and an open pediment. One small, leaded, rectangular glass window is located to both sides of the doorway. The entry is flanked by 8-over-8 wood sash windows, with working shutters, to either side. On the second floor front façade, a 6-over-6 wood sash window with working shutters is located above the front entrance. An 8-over-8 wood sash window with working shutters is located above each 8-over-8 window on the first story façade. The second floor windows are located directly under a wooden pediment that runs around the building.

The front portico extends with a shed roof over the central entrance way. Four thin, square columns with simple Doric capitals support the portico. Pilasters are placed on the front façade of the house to mirror the corner columns of the portico. A large lantern hangs down over the entrance. The roof is punctuated by three dormer windows. Small in size, the dormers feature 6-over-6 wood sash windows and are trimmed with wood. Front gabled roofs top the dormer windows.

The west addition is recessed from the main bay. On the first floor façade, there is a tri-part window, with a 6-9-6 configuration. A door is located to the east of the window. A shed roof with very thin, wood, square columns extends out from the addition here, creating a small portico. On the second floor façade, there is an 8-over-8 wood sash window with working shutters situated under a front gabled wall dormer. A tall brick chimney is situated on the east façade of the house. The house has been recently restored and renovated, and is in excellent condition. The current residents have owned the house since 2010.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

City Directories 1919-1941

Fox, Stephen, *Houston Architectural Guide*, American Institute of Architects/Houston Chapter and Herring Press, 1990.

Fox, Stephen, "Finn, Alfred Charles," Handbook of Texas Online (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffi32>), accessed February 23, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Houston Chronicle, August 11, 1940.

Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 70, January-June 1918. Edited by George H. Simmons, M.D., LL.D., American Medical Association, Chicago, 1918.

River Oaks Magazine, November 1941.

Various ancestry.com sources.

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, Historic Preservation Officer, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, 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 D - does not satisfy 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.

AND

- (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 City Council the Landmark Designation of the R. Kingsley and Alma McHenry House at 3660 Chevy Chase Drive.

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

SITE LOCATION MAP



CURRENT PHOTOGRAPH

