

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

## LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

**LANDMARK NAME:** William and Hazel Knight House

**OWNERS:** Tom and Camille Reiser

**APPLICANTS:** Same

**LOCATION:** 3405 Piping Rock Lane – River Oaks

**AGENDA ITEM:** II.B

**HPO FILE NO:** 12L268

**DATE ACCEPTED:** May-7-2012

**HAHC HEARING:** July-12-2012

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 9, Block 60, River Oaks Section 7, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story, brick residence.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The William and Hazel Knight House was designed by architect Hermon Lloyd and built by Ivan H. Greer in 1941. The home was designed in the English Picturesque style with Modern details common during the 1940s. The Knights moved in to the home in 1942. Mr. Knight practiced law with Sewell, Taylor, Morris and Connally, which later became Gardere, Wynne, and Sewell, one of Texas' pre-eminent law firms.

Hermon Lloyd designed many houses in River Oaks, and in conjunction with Harvin C. Moore, designed public and commercial buildings such as the Memorial Center and Chapel at Rice University. Moore and Lloyd also designed a building at 2006 West Alabama that became the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning. Moore and Lloyd created a substantial body of work, which includes over 84 houses in River Oaks.

The William and Hazel Knight House at 3405 Piping Rock Lane meets Criteria 1, 4, and 6 for Landmark designation.

### HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

#### *William and Hazel Knight*

William Jackson Knight was born in the Creek Nation Indian Territory in Waggoner, Oklahoma in 1899, eight years before Oklahoma became a state. His father was a railroad agent. Knight attended the University of Arkansas and graduated from Sewanee, known as the University of the South, where he was a Sigma Chi. He then graduated from Harvard Law School. He practiced law in Helena, Montana before moving to Houston in the late 1920s. In 1935, he joined the law firm of Sewall, Taylor, Morris, and Connally. That firm eventually became Gardere, Wynne, and Sewell and grew to become one of Texas' pre-eminent law firms. Mr. Knight was a member of St. John the Divine Church, the American Bar Association, the Texas Bar Association and the Petroleum Club. At the time of his death on March 2, 1974, he was still living in the house at 3405 Piping Rock Lane.

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Hazel T. Knight was born July 8, 1902 in Kentucky. When Mrs. Knight first began working in Houston, she was employed as a legal stenographer. She died on September 23, 2006 at the age of 104; her obituary states that she loved to travel all over the world. The Knights had two daughters, Jean and Joan and one son, William, Jr.

The construction of the house was detailed in the *Houston Post* on two different occasions. The first, from September 7, 1941:

“Plans will go out to bidders this week for the construction of a spacious residence at 3405 Piping Rock Lane, in River Oaks, for Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Knight. The house, designed by Hermon Lloyd, architect, will include (an) entrance hall, living room, library, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, powder room and screened porch downstairs and four bedrooms and three bath upstairs. It will cost approximately \$20,000. It will be an English type of brick veneer construction. Mr. Knight is an attorney.”

As construction started, the *Houston Post* reported on December 7, 1941:

“Work has begun on a spacious two-story brick veneer English residence at 3405 Piping Rock in River Oaks for Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Knight. Designed by Hermon Lloyd, architect, it is being erected by Ivan H. Greer, contractor, at a cost of approximately \$23,000. The Floor plan includes entrance hall, living room, library, dining room, solarium, kitchen, breakfast room and powder room downstairs and four bedrooms and three baths upstairs. Servants’ quarters will be above a two-car garage. Mr. Knight is an attorney.”

Mrs. Knight continued to live in the home after Mr. Knight’s death in 1974. Subsequent owners include E.W. Barnett, and Philip and Enid Cleland.

## *Hermon Frederick Lloyd*

Hermon Frederick Lloyd was born in Houston on October 9, 1909. His father was a notary public and a manager at an insurance firm and his mother was a clerk. He attended Rice University and graduated with a B.S. in Architecture in 1931. Upon graduation, construction was slow due to the Depression so Moore collaborated with Hermon Lloyd, a fellow undergraduate in the Rice architecture program, to design party decorations and sets. The two worked well together and in 1934 they formed the architecture firm of Moore & Lloyd. Their office was first located in the Citizen’s State Bank Building downtown. Several years later, they designed a building at 2006 West Alabama that became the first architectural office in Houston with central air conditioning.

According to Harvin Moore’s son, Barry Moore, “Moore and Lloyd were soon very popular and very busy. The reputation of the firm rested largely on their works in River Oaks.” The firm’s work continually increased during the 1930s. The commercial work was often for the same clients as their residential designs. Their residences were usually traditional in style and the commercial buildings were more “Moderne.” Barry Moore attributes this to the fact that clients wished to appear “progressive in business and traditional in family values.”

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During their partnership, Moore and Lloyd designed many commercial, civic and military buildings, including over 84 homes in River Oaks. The catalogue of Moore and Lloyd works put together by Michael Wilson for the Houston Public Library is extensive.

A selection of Moore and Lloyd's River Oaks homes includes:

- 3379 Inwood (Hamman House, City Landmark)
- 2132 Troon (Kendall-Levine House, City Landmark)
- 3310 Del Monte Drive (1934) (demolished)
- 2228 Del Monte Drive (1934) (demolished)
- 2133 Pine Valley (1935) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 1839 Kirby Drive (1935) (demolished)
- 1927 Bellmeade Road (1935) (demolished) "*Architectural Forum: 101 Finest Small Homes*"
- 2125 Bellmeade Road (1935)
- 3257 Ella Lee (1935) (demolished)
- 2940 Chevy Chase (1935)
- 1558 Kirby Drive (1935)
- 2148 Looscan Lane (1935)
- 2117 Looscan Lane (1935) (demolished) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 2129 Looscan Lane (1936) (demolished)
- 1112 Shepherd Drive (1935)
- 2404 Brentwood Drive (1935)
- 2216 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished) "*Home of the Month: McCall's*"
- 2137 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 2132 Troon Road (1936)
- 1801 Sharp Place (1937)
- 3239 Locke Lane (1936)
- 1537 Kirby Drive (1936)
- 2022 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 2136 Pelham Drive (1936)
- 3215 Ella Lee (1937)
- 2036 Chilton Road (1936) (demolished)
- 3324 Ella Lee Lane (1937) (demolished)
- 3068 Reba (1937)
- 5 Briarwood Court (1937)
- 2440 Inwood Drive (1937)
- 3417 Ella Lee Lane (1938)

- 3412 Piping Rock Lane (1938)
- 7 Briarwood Court (1938)
- 3208 Chevy Chase Drive (1938)
- 1910 Kirby Drive (1938) (demolished)
- 2327 Claremont Lane (1938) (demolished)
- 2057 Claremont Lane (1939)
- 3689 Del Monte Drive (1939) (demolished)
- 3413 Piping Rock Lane (1939)
- 2033 Claremont Lane (1940)
- 1909 Olympia Drive (1939)
- 3610 Meadow Lake Lane (1940) (demolished)
- 3225 Reba Drive (1940)
- 1665 Willowick (1940) (demolished)
- 3666 Chevy Chase Drive (1940) (demolished)

This house at 3405 Piping Rock Lane was designed in 1941, shortly after Hermon Lloyd dissolved architectural partnership with Harvin Moore. Hermon Lloyd established the firm Lloyd & Morgan around the end of World War II.

*Ivan H. and Alfred W. Greer*

The developer Ivan H. Greer designed and built numerous houses in River Oaks, including:

- 2128 Brentwood
- 3754 Chevy Chase (demolished)
- 3801 Chevy Chase
- 3459 Ella Lee
- 3635 Ella Lee
- 1944 Larchmont
- 3412 Meadow Lake
- 3755 Olympia
- 3655 Piping Rock
- 2184 Troon (City of Houston Landmark)
- 3395 Del Monte (City of Houston Landmark)

Ivan sometimes worked in partnership with his father, Alfred W. Greer.

*River Oaks*

When Will C. Hogg, Mike Hogg, and Hugh Potter began the development of River Oaks in 1923, it was with the intention of making it into a demonstration of the highest standards of

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modern community planning, a role model for the rest of Houston to follow. Will Hogg's ambitiousness and Hugh Potter's skillful management of River Oaks during its first thirty years made the community known nation-wide as a symbol of Houston. Since its creation, River Oaks has been published in national news, real estate, and design media, and has been the focus of scholarly analysis, in recognition of its significant contributions to the history of Houston and twentieth-century American elite suburban community development.

The creation of this type of subdivision was unique for Houston in many respects. The subdivision was laid out at what was then the far western edge of Houston. Prior to 1923, the majority of Houston's residential developments had occurred in a tight girdle around the downtown business district, such as Westmoreland (1902), Avondale (1907), Montrose (1911), Audubon Place (1906), Cherryhurst (1908), Binz, Southmore (1914), and Courtland Place (1906). River Oaks, however, was situated at the western city limits far away from other developments.

In addition, the developers broke with convention by laying out an organic pattern of roadways which lent a sense of spaciousness to the neighborhood, which was very different from the traditional Houston neighborhoods that followed a more rigid approach to development. These traditional neighborhoods used street grids which carved the land up into predictable square or rectangular blocks.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY**

The home at 3405 Piping Rock sits facing north on the corner of Piping Rock Lane and Claremont Lane. The house contains 4,591 square feet on a 15,375 square foot lot. The home is designed in an English Picturesque style with Modern details including lack of traditional Tudor detailing. It is faced with painted brick and stucco. The house is formed under a steep side gabled roof, with two intersecting front gables.

From the east side of the front façade is a two story bay under the main side gabled roof. On the first floor façade of this bay, a large fixed window is surrounded by thick wood molding with a flat pediment. The second story façade features two windows; both are metal casement with eight lights, and are sited at the height of the roof eave. The first and second floors are delineated by a projecting brick table course.

The entrance bay is placed under a front facing steep gable and protrudes forward from the east bay. The rectangular entry is recessed and stepped back with three layers of brick. The door is a wood paneled door with two glass lights. Two small rectangular windows of diagonal lights are placed on either side of the entry. Above the entry is a flat arched detail of brick. Centered above the entry on the second story is a large fixed window of 18 lights. It features a heavy brick surround with a flat arch. Copper downspouts run down either side of this bay.

The west bay of the front façade is the tallest at 2 ½ stories tall, and is slightly recessed from the entrance bay. It is also placed under a front facing gable. The first story façade is faced with brick; the second story façade is faced with stucco. The second story slightly overhangs the first

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story. On the first floor is a pair of casement window of ten lights each. On the second floor is a pair of casement windows of eight lights each. In the attic gable is a rectangular attic vent.

To the west of this bay is a recessed portion of the house that is just one story tall under a side gabled roof. A fixed window of 12 lights is on the first story.

Because the house is on a corner, the east façade of the house is slightly visible from the street. It is heavily obscured by landscaping. A massive chimney is centered in the middle of the east façade. On the first floor façade, north of the chimney, is a metal casement window of 8 lights. To the south of the chimney on the first floor is a set of double doors with single pane glass. An open one-story porch finishes the east façade's first story. The second story of the east façade features three shuttered openings.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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*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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## EXHIBIT A

William and Hazel Knight House

3405 Piping Rock Lane



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## EXHIBIT B

### SITE LOCATION MAP

William and Hazel Knight House

3405 Piping Rock Lane

NOT TO SCALE

