

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: H. George Schneider House
OWNERS: Leon and Julie Payne
APPLICANTS: Same as Owner
LOCATION: 3434 Del Monte Drive - River Oaks

AGENDA ITEM: II.a
HPO FILE NO: 12L259
DATE ACCEPTED: Jan-10-12
HAHC HEARING: MAR-22-12

SITE INFORMATION: Lot 10, Block 5, River Oaks Country Club Estates, 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 house at 3434 Del Monte Drive was designed in 1941 for H. George Schneider and his wife Margaret by Houston architect, Birdsall P. Briscoe. The home is of the American Colonial Revival style with Creole style elements. H. George Schneider was an oil engineer and an accomplished horse breeder. He lived in the home from 1941 until 1971. Birdsall Briscoe was one of Houston's most significant architects of the first half of the 20th century, designing many fine homes in an array of eclectic architectural styles.

The H. George Schneider House is significant both for its architecture and its architect, and meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, and 6 for Landmark designation.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

H. George Schneider House

The H. George Schneider House is an L-shaped, two-story residential building with a one-story sunroom attached to the east side. The house was designed by Birdsall P. Briscoe, a noted Houston architect with an established reputation as an exceptional designer with an aptitude for disciplined formal composition and correct, scholarly rendition of historic details. He worked extensively in the Houston neighborhoods of Courtlandt Place, Shadyside, Broadacres, and River Oaks - where he designed over 30 houses.

The original owner of the house, H. George Schneider, was best known in Houston as the manager of C.F. Braun & Company, a refinery contracting provider. H. George Schneider and family lived in the house at 3434 Del Monte Drive for thirty years.

On January 4, 1942 an image of the house appeared in the *Houston Post* with the caption, "Mr. and Mrs. George Schneider have recently completed this charming home in River Oaks at 3434 Del Monte Drive. There are nine rooms, three baths. The cost was \$18,000. Birdsall P. Briscoe was the architect. Mr. Schneider is an oil operator." (Ref.: Exhibit D)

Subsequent owners of the house include H. Fred Haemisegger, Francis G. Coates, Jesse B. Heath, Jr., Gerald and Sheralyn Merfish, and Jonathan and Marita Fairbanks.

H. George Schneider

Born on September 30, 1900, Hubert George Schneider, “George”, was a native of Warwick County, New York. Schneider graduated from the Naval Academy in 1929 and served on the USS Arizona. In the 1930s Schneider relocated to Houston and was the manager of C.F. Braun & Co.’s Houston office; by 1948 Schneider was Vice President. H. George Schneider worked for C.F. Braun & Co. until his retirement in 1963.

Schneider was a member of St. John the Divine and he joined the Houston Allegro Club in 1936. He was also the owner of the Over the Grass Farm in The Plains, VA, where he raised thoroughbred horses for the major eastern racing tracks. He lived in the house at 3434 Del Monte until 1971 and he died in 1978. At the time of his death, he was married to Geraldine (Jennings) Dyer Schneider, the widow of baseball player/manager and Houston businessman Edwin Hawley Dyer, who died in 1964. Schneider was also survived by his stepchildren, Mr. Edwin H. Dyer Jr. and Mrs. John M. Greer (Gerry).

Birdsall P. Briscoe

Birdsall P. Briscoe was born in Harrisburg, Texas on June 10, 1876. He was the son of Andrew Birdsall and Annie Frances (Paine) Briscoe, the grandson of Andrew Briscoe and the great-grandson of John R. Harris, founder of Harrisburg, Texas. During the Spanish-American War, Briscoe served in the United States Army Infantry as a sergeant and subsequently as a major in the army during World War I. He was educated at Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Texas A&M University), and the University of Texas, where he was a classmate of Will Hogg. He began his architectural career in 1904 in Houston as an apprentice with architects Lewis Wilson and Lewis Sterling Green. During this time, the firm designed the original Blessed Sacrament Church (circa 1910), an East End landmark demolished in 2005. After a brief partnership with Green (1909-11), Briscoe started his own firm in 1912. He designed the W. L. Clayton house on Caroline Street in 1916 in the Georgian Revival style and construction was completed in 1917. The house is now open to the public as the Clayton Genealogical Library and is a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. 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 worked extensively in the Houston neighborhoods of Courtlandt Place, 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-

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known project was the remodeling of the Patton-Varner House near West Columbia (see Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Park) 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, Texas.

According to Stephen Fox, the Briscoe houses in River Oaks include:

<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>DESIGNATIONS</u>
3376 Inwood Drive	Clayton Summer House	1924	<i>National Register of Historic Places, 1984; City of Houston Landmark, 2006</i>
3237 Inwood Drive	William T. Campbell House	1925	<i>City of Houston Landmark, 2009</i>
2950 Lazy Lane	Dogwoods (demolished)	1928	
3015 Chevy Chase Drive	River Oaks Corp. speculative house	1930	
2113 Bellmeade Road	River Oaks Corp. speculative house	1931	
2920 San Felipe Road	River Oaks Corp. speculative house	1931	
2929 Chevy Chase Drive,	River Oaks Corp. speculative house	1931	
2938 San Felipe Road	River Oaks Corp. speculative house	1931	
3127 Avalon Place	River Oaks Corp. speculative house	1931	
3196 Del Monte Drive	Harry L. Mott speculative house	1931	
2923 Del Monte Drive	Underwood House	1934	
1829 Sharp Place	Birdsall Briscoe House #1	1936	
3229 Chevy Chase Drive (3229 Groveland)	Paddock House	1936	<i>City of Houston Landmark, 2007</i>
3401 Sleepyhollow Court	Johnson House	1936	
2227 Chilton Road	Kempner House	1937	
3023 Del Monte Drive	Bullington House	1937	
3249 Chevy Chase Drive	Frost House	1937	
3439 Del Monte Drive	Pinckney House	1937	
2308 River Oaks Boulevard	Fountain House	1938	
3334 Chevy Chase Drive	Wilson House	1938	
3414 Del Monte Drive	Anderson House	1938	<i>City of Houston Landmark, 2008</i>
3425 Sleepyhollow Court	McKallip House	1938	
2317 Claremont Lane	Birdsall Briscoe House #2	1939	
3707 Knollwood Drive	White House (with George W. Rustay)	1940	
3820 Willowick Road	Davis House	1940	
3434 Del Monte Drive	Schneider House	1941	
3880 Willowick Road	Schuhmacher House	1941	
3606 Knollwood Drive	Britton House (demolished)	1942	

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3601 Inverness Drive	Hutcheson House	1948
3707 Inwood Drive	Vaughan House	1949
3606 Chevy Chase Drive	Austin House	1951
4019 Inverness Drive	Dupree House "Legend"	1959

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 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 H. George Schneider House is sited in the center of a 21,951 square foot lot facing south. The 4,862 square foot house is designed in a traditional style with elements of the American Colonial Revival style in its windows and entrance, and evoking the Creole French style with its lacy wrought iron portico and balcony railings and roof supports.

The Schneider House has a three part façade of multi-colored and whitewashed brick under a low hipped roof clad with asphalt shingles. The first part, or west bay of the façade, features a 6-over-9 wood sash window on the first floor and a 6-over-6 wood sash window on the second floor. All windows on the front façade have working wooden shutters.

The central bay of the home features the entrance and is decorated with a full-width iron portico, and iron balcony railing on the second floor. The iron portico is held up by three thin columns at the corners and pairs of two thin columns framing the front entrance. Decorative iron fretwork is featured on the railing and as bracketing for the portico columns. Two 6-over-9 wood sash windows frame the front entrance on the first floor façade.

The front entrance features a solid wood paneled door framed by fluted wood pilasters and a rectangular glass transom with a spider web window pattern. Decorative wood capped the

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transom and the pilasters. Above, on the second story façade are three 6-over-9 wood sash windows.

The east bay of the facade breaks the symmetry of the front elevation of the house as it is slightly wider than the west bay. It features one 6-over-9 wood sash window on the second floor and two 6-over-6 wood sash windows on the second story façade.

On the east side of the front façade, set back is a one-story small sunroom with windows framed in wood and an iron balcony railing on the flat roof of the sunroom.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

City of Houston City Directories, various dates.

Handbook of Texas Online.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *Field Guide to American Houses*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984.

“Obituary for H. George Schneider”, *Houston Chronicle*, October 15, 1978.

Sanborn Fire Insurance map for Houston, 1924-51, Volume 11, Sheet 1111.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Delaney Harris-Finch, Planning and Development Department, 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 |
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the H. George Schneider House at 3434 Del Monte Drive.

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EXHIBIT A

H. GEORGE SCHNEIDER HOUSE
3434 DEL MONTE DRIVE



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EXHIBIT B
SITE LOCATION MAP
H. GEORGE SCHNEIDER HOUSE
3434 DEL MONTE DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE

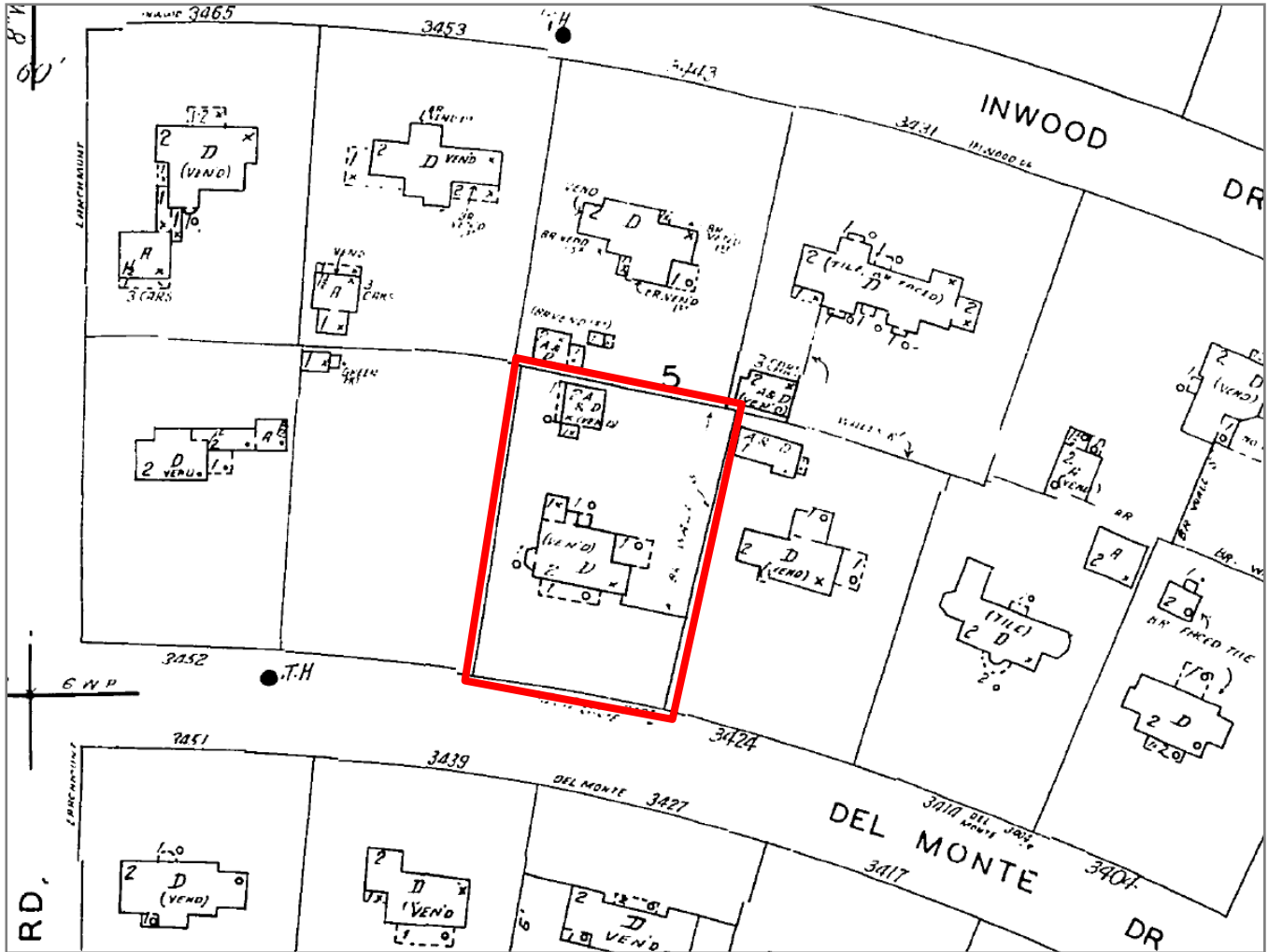


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EXHIBIT C
SANBORN MAP 1924-51 – VOL. 11, SHEET 1111
H. GEORGE SCHNEIDER HOUSE
3434 DEL MONTE DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE



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EXHIBIT D
HISTORIC NEWSPAPER ARTICLE
THE HOUSTON POST – JANUARY 4, 1942
H. GEORGE SCHNEIDER HOUSE
3434 DEL MONTE DRIVE

