

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Wirt Adams Paddock House
OWNERS: Sam and Paula Douglass
APPLICANTS: Sam and Paula Douglass
LOCATION: 3229 Groveland Lane – River Oaks
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: II.a
HPO FILE NO.: 08L195
DATE ACCEPTED: Feb-5-08
HAHC HEARING: Feb-21-08
PC HEARING: Mar-13-08

SITE INFORMATION:

Tracts 4A and 5, Block 12, River Oaks Country Club Estates, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The building on the site includes a historic two-story, brick residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Wirt Adams Paddock House at 3229 Groveland Lane was built for Wirt Paddock in 1936. The house was designed by noted Houston architect, Birdsall P. Briscoe, who is best known as an architect of single-family houses and is closely identified with the River Oaks neighborhood. Wirt Paddock was a prominent Houston oil man, rancher, and philanthropist who was active in many community organizations. He served for thirty years as chairman of the local chapter of the Red Cross, and was instrumental in acquiring the Kirby House in 1947 as the first permanent home of the Houston Red Cross. Paddock also served as chairman of the Texas Prison Board and vice president of the American Prison Association.

The house at 3229 Groveland Lane is featured in the 1980 *Houston Architectural Survey*, the *Houston Architectural Guide*, and the American Institute of Architects tour of River Oaks. It has been noted as “an excellent example of Birdsall P. Briscoe’s masterful handling of the Regency style.” The Wirt Adams Paddock House qualifies for Landmark Designation under Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

The house at 3229 Groveland Lane was designed by Birdsall P. Briscoe for Wirt Adams Paddock. The house received attention at the outset of its construction. On December 22, 1935, the Houston Post announced:

“Paddock Will Build Home: 14 Room Structure in River Oaks Will Cost \$37,000 – Contract has been awarded to the E. G. Maclay Company, contractors, for the construction of an elaborate two-story residence at 3229 Groveland Lane... for Wirt A. Paddock, Chairman of the Texas Prison Board, and Vice President of the Port City Packing Company... The new Paddock dwelling will contain 14 rooms and will be of brick and tile construction.”

The home was finished approximately one year later and the Houston Press ran an article with a large photo:

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“Prison Board Chairman Builds New Residence – This beautiful Georgian type residence at 3229 Groveland Lane was completed recently... The 10 room home cost approximately \$50,000. B.P. Briscoe was the architect.”

Wirt Adams Paddock was born in Fayette, Mississippi, in 1870 to Buckley Burton and Emmie Harper Paddock. According to the Handbook of Texas online, his father was one of the youngest commissioned officers in the Confederate Army and served as the commander of a select espionage unit. In the fall of 1872, B.B. Paddock moved his family to Texas and settled in Fort Worth. B. B. Paddock “made the development of his adopted city and state his major career.” He had a long and illustrious career in Fort Worth and is best known for serving as the editor of the Fort Worth Democrat, president of the Fort Worth and Rio Grand Railway Company, founder and executive secretary of the Fort Worth Board of Trade, and four-term mayor of Fort Worth.

Wirt Paddock attended public schools in Fort Worth and later attended Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, where he earned a B.S. degree. From 1901 to 1918, Paddock worked as an oil contractor and producer in Beaumont. According to the 1980 Architectural Survey, his investments in the Humble and Goose Creek fields allowed him to pursue ranching, and he purchased a ranch in Harris County in 1918. In 1919, he married Maude Smith of Council Bluff, Arkansas.

Wirt Paddock was very active in the Houston community. River Oaks Magazine (1937) describes Paddock as spending “50% of his time on welfare work.” Paddock served as chairman of the local chapter of the Red Cross for 30 years (1919-1949). He established a foundation that purchased the Kirby House on Smith Street in 1947 and leased it to the Red Cross, which used the house as its local headquarters until 1978.

Paddock also served as chairman of the Texas Prison Board from 1929 to 1937, and as vice president of the American Prison Association. When he died in September 1949, his obituary listed multiple activities including member of Eagle Lake Rod and Gun Club, the Houston Club, the River Oaks Country Club, Knox College Club, Farm and Ranch Association, American Brahman Association, and First Presbyterian Church. He also served as director of the American General Insurance Company and Port City Packing Company. At the time of his death, his pallbearers included neighbors Wilson Saville and Claud Hamill.

Birdsall Parmenas Briscoe (1876-1971) designed the classic Regency style home for Wirt Paddock. The Handbook of Texas online provides excellent background on Birdsall Briscoe and it is quoted below:

“Birdsall P. Briscoe, architect, was born on June 10, 1876, in Harrisburg, Texas, the son of Andrew Birdsall and Annie Frances (Paine) Briscoe. He was the grandson of Andrew Briscoe and the great-grandson of John R. Harris, founder of Harrisburg. He grew up on his parents' ranch near Goliad and attended San Antonio Academy, Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Texas A&M University), and the University of Texas. During the Spanish-American War Briscoe served in the United States Army Infantry as a sergeant; he subsequently served as a major in the army during World War I.

He learned architecture through apprenticeships with the Houston architects C. Lewis Wilson and Lewis Sterling Green. After a brief partnership with Green (1909-11), Briscoe began independent practice in 1912. 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.

He 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.

He 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 Blafferqqv (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 Andersonqv (1938). Outside Houston, Briscoe's best-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.”*

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

- 1829 Sharp Place, Briscoe House #1 (1936)
- 2227 Chilton Road, Kempner House (1937)
- 2950 Lazy Lane, Dogwoods (1928-demolished)
- 3237 Inwood Dr., House for Country Club Estates (Red Bird House, 1925)
- 3196 Del Monte Dr., Harry L. Mott speculative house (1931)
- 3023 Del Monte Dr., Bullington House (1937)
- 2923 Del Monte Dr., Underwood House (1934)
- 2920 San Felipe Rd., speculative house for River Oaks Corp. (1931)
- 2938 San Felipe Rd., speculative house for River Oaks Corp. (1931)
- 2308 River Oaks Blvd., Fountain House (1938)
- 3127 Avalon Place, speculative house for River Oaks Corp. (1931)
- 2113 Bellmeade Rd., speculative house for River Oaks Corp. (1931)
- 3015 Chevy Chase Dr., speculative house for River Oaks Corp. (1930)
- 2929 Chevy Chase Dr., speculative house for River Oaks Corp. (1931)
- 3249 Chevy Chase Dr., Frost House (1937)
- 3376 Inwood Dr., Clayton Summer House (1924)
- 3439 Del Monte Dr., Pinckney House (1937)
- 3434 Del Monte Dr., Schneider House (1941)
- 3414 Del Monte Dr., Anderson House (1938)

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- 3334 Chevy Chase Dr., Wilson House (1938)
- 3425 Sleepyhollow Court, McKallip House (1938)
- 3401 Sleepyhollow Court, Johnson House (1936)
- 3606 Chevy Chase Dr., Austin House (1951)
- 3707 Inwood Dr., Vaughan House (1949)
- 3601 Inverness Dr., Hutcheson House (1948)
- 3606 Knollwood Dr., Britton House (1942, demolished)
- 3707 Knollwood Dr., White House (1940, in association with George W. Rustay)
- 3820 Willowick Rd., Davis House (1940, moved to one side of its original site)
- 3880 Willowick Rd., Schuhmacher House (1941, moved here from its original site and extensively altered)
- 4019 Inverness Dr., Dupree House "Legend" (1959)
- 2317 Claremont Ln., Briscoe House #2 (1939, extensively altered)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The Wirt Adams Paddock House is designed in the Georgian Revival Style. The house is two stories in height with a low standing seam hipped roof. The exterior of the house is clad in brick and tile which features decorative quoining, pilasters, string courses and relieving arches. The plan of the home is a central rectangular block with a wing to the east. The main entrance faces north and features a paneled door with a semi-circular fanlight and is also framed with square pilasters and ornate architrave. A small, semicircular balcony is located directly over the main entry on the second floor. The balcony is accessed via a multi-lite wood-sash jib window. The balcony features a decorative semi-circular wrought iron railing. The windows on the first floor are multi-lite wood-sash jib windows that lead to the second floor balcony. Each window is flanked by fixed wood and glass sidelites and capped by a fluted wooden fanlite panel. The house has received much attention over the years with listings in the 1980 Houston Architectural Survey, the Houston Architectural Guide, and the American Institute of Architects tour of River Oaks.

This home has been owned by very few families in its 72 year history. After the Paddocks, the home was purchased by the Strange family, and then sold to Sam Harrison. The Douglass family recently purchased the home from Harrison. Harrison cared very much that the home not be demolished and conducted his sale among pre-selected bidders who turned in sealed bids.

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, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Handbook of Texas Online, s.v. ", <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/PP/fpa3.html> (accessed June 7, 2007).

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

River Oaks Magazine, "We are proud to have among us", December 1937.

Houston Chronicle, Obituary of Wirt Adams Paddock, September 25, 1949.

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Houston Architectural Survey 1980, prepared by Southwest Center for Urban Research and the School of Architecture, Rice University.

Houston Red Cross, www.houstonredcross.org

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);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(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);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(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);		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(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);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present (Sec. 33-224(a)(7);		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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).		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(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 the Wirt Adams Paddock House at 3229 Groveland Lane.

SITE LOCATION MAP

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WIRT ADAMS PADDOCK HOUSE
3229 GROVELAND LANE
NOT TO SCALE

