

3229 Groveland

Remarkably distinguished and architecturally sublime, Groveland estate is one of River Oaks' most intriguing properties. Completed in 1936 for prominent oil man, rancher, and philanthropist Wirt Adams Paddock, the Georgian Revival estate's chain of ownership is exceptionally short. Only four families have called Groveland home, and given its location on a short side street of three addresses, the property has kept a low profile over the years. In the last decade, however, a pains-takingly detailed, three-year restoration has gathered a groundswell of admiration and acclaim for this venerable estate.

Groveland was designed by the Houston architect Birdsall Parmenas Briscoe, a dominant architectural force in Houston's growth years of the first half of the 20th century. Considered a master of the eclectic trend, Briscoe was admired for his disciplined formal composition and correct, scholarly rendition of historic detail. His signature style was non-monumental, approachable, and always perfectly proportioned regardless of the size of the house.

Groveland's exquisite light-filled reception hall, floored in restored white-oak parquet, is enhanced by delicate lead tracery in the glass front door and spiderweb transom. Solid double doors open into the living room where a superbly carved antique marble fireplace anchors one wall and floor-to-ceiling, wood-sash jib windows overlook the front prospect and rear patios, lawn, and pool. Commonly installed in fine houses prior to the advent of central air, jib windows raise to function as doors and create exceptional cross-ventilation. An adjoining solarium also features jib windows in addition to a marble floor, faux marble pilasters, and a cove ceiling, and overlooks the reflecting pool and garden.

On the other side of the reception hall, the library's hand-painted ceiling paper and custom cabinetry with gold-leaf accents are attributed as the 1950s creations of either New York designers Eleanor McMillen Brown or Sister Parish. The formal dining room is surrounded by splendidly restored vintage Gracie avian wallpaper, built-in corner cabinets with urn pediments, and jib windows that overlook the stone patio.

Fanciful Chinese-Chippendale wooden gates announce the sun-lit rear gallery floored in terrazzo inlaid with black granite rondels. The gallery's impressive, mahogany paneled, fully equipped bar overlooks the expansive rear lawn and breezeway and includes a cigar humidor, television niche, chiller, and icemaker.

The thoroughly modern, inviting, and professionally equipped gathering kitchen offers Viking appliances and granite countertops, and serves well for casual entertaining. A custom-designed door and interior window access the butler's pantry, designed as a caterer's set up with abundant counter space and storage, warming drawers, sink, chillers, and a dishwasher. A breakfast or morning room offers banquette seating beneath a bay windows, storage cabinets, and a television niche.

On the second floor, the serene master suite features refurbished hardwood floors, an antique display and storage cabinet, and a fireplace with delicate tambour carving; a spacious dressing room with vanity and wardrobe cabinets; a pair of custom-fitted walk-in closets; two separate, luxuriously-appointed, marble-clad full bathrooms; and an adjoining kitchenette with a Miele coffee system.

A side hall travels past the elevator to a pair of guest suites with attached marble-clad bathrooms and generous closet space. One suite includes a stone balcony overlooking the rear grounds.

The beautifully finished third floor with a full bathroom offers flexible usage as a fourth bedroom, gameroom, home office, or gym. Amenities include deep dormers with bottle-glass windows and window seats; a media cabinet; dumb waiter; a large storage closet; and access to floored attic storage.

A recently added free-standing pavilion reflects the vintage spirit of the fabled Raffles Hotel in Singapore. The pavilion's bar and lounge overlook the estate's lawn-dropped saltwater swimming pool inspired by Bayou Bend's "Diana" pool." Bifold doors open to the lawn and pool, and rich mahogany millwork, antique bar de beaucaire limestone floors, and a massive carved wood fireplace contribute to the rooms' fin-de-siècle appeal. A breezeway connects the pavilion with the outdoor summer kitchen equipped with concrete countertops and pull-up seating; a Viking grill, range, and warming drawers; sink; an icemaker; and an under-counter refrigerator.

On the second floor of the four-car carriage house / garage, the house guest or staff apartment features pine floors; cypress paneling; a vintage English fireplace; kitchenette with bar sink, under-counter refrigerator, and wine chiller; and a full bathroom.

Over the years, Groveland has been featured in publications including the Houston Post (December, 1935), the Houston Press (1936), and more recently, the 1980 Houston Architectural Survey, successive editions of Houston Architectural Guide, and the magazine PaperCity (2012 and 2017). It has been featured on the American Institute of Architects tour and the Preservation Houston Good Brick Tour.

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