



The Work of William Norman Floyd

This page attempts to provide a biography of Memorial Bend's prime architect, William Norman Floyd. The information listed below was gathered via conversations with Floyd as well as from articles from the 1950s and 1960s on Floyd's work.

William Norman Floyd was born on December 18, 1910. In the 1930s, he attended Oklahoma State University, The University of Texas and The University of Oklahoma. He graduated in 1934 from The University of Oklahoma with a bachelor's in architecture. While at Oklahoma State, he came to know a friend, classmate and former Memorial Bend resident, William Wayne Caudill. Caudill graduated in 1937 from Oklahoma State before embarking on a distinguished architectural career. Later in the 1930s, Bill was stationed by the military in Florida with his wife Nadeen.

Bill eventually returned to Houston to begin an architectural career that spanned 30 years. During that time, he employed numerous draftsmen who eventually become distinguished architects in their own right. They included William R. Jenkins and Harwood Taylor. Jenkins worked for Floyd mostly as a draftsman while he was still a student at The University of Houston and Rice. Soon after he received his architect's license, he decided he wanted to branch out on his own. To help him get started, Floyd agreed to start a new partnership, Jenkins and Floyd. Floyd allowed Jenkins to place his name first so that he would eventually be able to phase into his own office. The partnership lasted five months and Jenkins was able to design five houses before venturing off on his own. Several William R. Jenkins homes are listed in the Houston Architectural Guide and a couple are located in Memorial Bend, one of which is on Memorial Drive. These were designed while Jenkins was still working for Floyd. Today, the architecture library at The University of Houston is known as the William R. Jenkins Architecture & Art Library.

Another architect who received his start under Floyd was Harwood Taylor. Taylor, like Jenkins, was a draftsman for Floyd while a college student. Upon receiving his license, Harwood Taylor set on his own. William Floyd was the only architect Taylor ever worked for before starting his own architectural practice. Taylor would eventually team up with J. Victor Neuhaus in 1955 to form Neuhaus & Taylor, one of the more important Houston architectural firms in the late 1950s and 1960s. Their firm grew organically and through acquisitions and eventually became known as 3D

International.

During the 1950s, Floyd was active in the Houston Parade of Homes. He designed several models throughout the 1950s, many of which were published locally and nationally. One home was designed by Harwood Taylor and William Jenkins with William Floyd as the architect while Floyd was serving his country in the Korean War.

It was also during the 1950s that William Norman Floyd became involved with the shaping of Memorial Bend. Most of the homes designed by Floyd in Memorial Bend were built by Monroe Construction Company. With Sid Lowen as the Manager, Floyd placed his signature on the neighborhood. It was during that time that Floyd acted as a patron to one of his fraternity brothers, Al Fairfield, in helping him get his start. Sid Lowen helped teach Fairfield his trade and Floyd then financed five of Fairfield's homes. Al Fairfield is still actively building homes in the Houston area. Other developers to have built homes in Memorial Bend were Vernon Griffin and Allan Huvard. Griffin built about 10 homes in Memorial Bend and Huvard built around four or five. Dick Hurley had Floyd design a home for him but that apparently was the only home built by him in Memorial Bend.

Most of the lots in Memorial Bend sold for around two thousand dollars, a figure Floyd was told was simply too high. The homes were usually around 2,000 square feet and sold for anywhere from \$20,000 to \$25,000. Overall, fifty out of the five hundred or so homes designed by Floyd in the Houston area were built in Memorial Bend. Many of these homes appeared in magazines such as Better Homes & Gardens, Good Housekeeping, Ladies Home Journal, House & Home, American Builder, Practical Builder, New Homes Guide, Living Now Magazine, McCall's and numerous house plan books. Memorial Bend homes also appeared countless times in The Houston Chronicle and the Houston Post in both articles and advertisements.

Fairfield and Griffin ultimately built mostly modern homes in Memorial Bend. They, along with Dick Hurley, also built several Floyd homes in nearby Memorial Plaza. At one point, Floyd purchased the entire block of land on Kimberly Lane in Memorial Plaza from Brittmoore to Electra. He built several homes, some of which are similar in design to those found in Memorial Bend. This block of homes was billed by the developers as Houston's "Contemporary Center" and "Houston's One Block Long Idea Street." A quick drive down Kimberley is an easy way to catch a glimpse of about a dozen Floyd-designed homes. One of the lots on the block was sold by Floyd to a young Vincent Kickerillo, a new developer who had built four to five homes in the area.

Other modern homes designed by Floyd appear in Briar Grove (6126 Meadow Lake Lane is listed in The Houston Architectural Guide on page 273), Tanglewood, Gaywood, Briarcroft, Bellaire, Robindell, Woodland Hollow, Fonn Villas, Walnut Bend and Meyerland. The Floyd family's own home at 226 Pinehollow near Woodway appeared in Better Homes & Gardens in June 1958 and, though slightly modified, can still be seen today.

After a distinguished architectural career, William Norman Floyd retired in the early 1970s. Bill is now 91 years old and still lives with his wife in the Houston area. He has been generous enough to supply us with much of the information listed on this page as well as many of the articles showcasing our homes. Floyd had a tremendous impact on the development of the Memorial area. Many of Floyd's homes are fine examples of mid-century modern architecture, a style that has grown in popularity over the past few years. He had a tremendous impact on the development and design of many of Houston's more celebrated neighborhoods from the 1950s and 1960s and many of us in Memorial Bend appreciate his efforts to make our neighborhood unique.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to Bill as without his tremendous help, this page would not be possible.