

<b>LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT</b>
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**LANDMARK NAME:** Mr. & Mrs. Ralph M. Henderson House**AGENDA ITEM:** C**OWNERS:** Mr. & Mrs. John and Mary Steen**HPO FILE NO.:** [HP2021\\_0332](#)**APPLICANTS:** same**DATE ACCEPTED:** 10/21/2021**LOCATION:** 1419 Kirby Drive, Houston, Texas, 77019**HAHC HEARING:** 11/16/2021**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 2, Block 34, River Oaks Section 1, Two-story brick Tudor style 5,553 square foot house situated on a 22,365 square foot lot, completed in 1930.**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY**

The Tudor Revival style home at 1419 Kirby Drive was a speculative house by Houston's first female builder, Katharine Mott. Ralph and Nelle Henderson were the first homeowners at the address. Ralph Maurice Henderson was a successful Houston businessman who became a vice president and director at Great Southern Life Insurance Company. Southern Life was founded in 1909 and is still operating today. Mr. & Mrs. Henderson lived in the home for over fifteen years, until the mid-1940s.

The construction of 1419 Kirby was part of a building program in River Oaks by Katharine and Harry Mott that would include at least ten houses. The Mott's body of work includes more than twenty homes built in River Oaks, Riverside Terrace, Edgemont and Devonshire Place. Mr. & Mrs. Mott's contributions to Houston architecture was recognized in 1998 during the Rice Design Alliance Tour, "Modern Homecraft: The Houses of Katharine B. and Harry L. Mott."

The R.M. Henderson House at 1419 Kirby Drive meets Criteria 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 for Landmark Designation.

**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE***River Oaks*

River Oaks is adjacent to Buffalo Bayou and Memorial Park in west central Houston. Development in the residential garden suburb, which comprises 1,100 acres, began in the 1920s through the foresight and persistence of brothers Will Hogg (1875-1930) and Mike Hogg (1885-1941), and attorney Hugh Potter (1888-1968). The nucleus of the expansive subdivision predates the Hogg's and Potter's involvement. By 1924, Country Club Estates, the section south of the newly established River Oaks Country Club, had been platted, but not developed. The Hogg brothers bought out the original investors and established Country Club Estates, Inc., later renamed the River Oaks Corporation.

Mike Hogg's friend, Hugh Potter, was installed as president of the corporation. Under his expert direction, the development of River Oaks began in earnest. Not only was the existing section developed, the corporation also busily acquired land on all sides of the original Country Club Estates. Between 1926 and 1947, an additional nineteen platted subdivisions were joined to River Oaks.

A study of noteworthy American suburban communities, particularly Roland Park in Baltimore and the Country Club District in Kansas City, was responsible for such innovative ideas as the institution of architectural controls in River Oaks, the levying of a private tax to support a maintenance and services

fund, and the creation of a property owners' association to enforce deed restrictions. Will Hogg was especially determined that River Oaks serve as a model of enlightened community planning standards for Houston. He retained Kansas City landscape architects Hare & Hare to provide a master plan that would protect the environmental integrity and natural beauty of the area.

The developers also hired J. C. Nichols, who built Kansas City's Country Club Plaza, one of the first major shopping centers in the United States, to serve as a design consultant. The River Oaks master plan included home sites, a fifteen-acre campus for River Oaks Elementary School (1926, Harry D. Payne), two shopping centers, and esplanades planted with flowers. The plan called for underground utility lines, eliminated alleys, allowed only three intersecting streets and provided rigid building codes. Deed restrictions and centralized community control assured exclusivity; approval of house designs by a panel of architects and citizens and a minimum purchase price of \$7,000 were required.

On March 15, 1926, the subdivision's developers announced a "Room for All Predevelopment Sale" for River Oaks: Section 1. An additional 134 lots were put on the market, nearly doubling the number of house sites offered in the original development. The lots in Block 40 on Skokie Drive (renamed Pelham Drive) served as the southern boundary of River Oaks. The general restrictions for the new tract required that single-family homes be at least two-stories tall except for 13 lots in Block 40. The least expensive homes in Block 40 were to cost no less than \$7,500, while the price requirements on the remaining homes on Pelham Drive ranged from \$12,000 to \$18,000.

*Katharine Bock Mott (December 1, 1890 - July 9, 1979)*

*Harry Loder Mott (1887 - 1957)*

Katharine and Harry Mott designed and built the house at 1419 Kirby Drive with Indianapolis architects Burns & James in 1929. Katharine Mott was born in Michigan in 1890 to parents Ida and Frank Bock, originally of New York. Harry Mott was also a Michigan native whose parents, Mary and James, were from New York. Katharine and Harry were married in Battle Creek, Michigan, on June 1, 1912. The Motts had two daughters, Frances Newkirk and Eleanor Jane Howell.

The Motts moved to Houston from Indianapolis in 1927. In Indianapolis, Mrs. Mott had begun designing houses after the last of her three daughters started school. The first three houses she designed were all for her own family, but each was subsequently sold to an admirer. Mr. Mott, a real estate developer, realized his wife's talent and commissioned her to design houses for an entire block in one of his Indianapolis developments. In twelve months, Mrs. Mott saw twelve of her designs constructed. She completed 18 more before leaving Indianapolis.

Between 1928 and 1932, the Motts built over twenty houses in the Houston subdivisions of Riverside Terrace, Edgemont, Devonshire Place and River Oaks. These houses were formularized to a certain extent, although each was unique in elevation and plan. They are all of tapestry brick with casement windows; their plans are asymmetrical with the main entrance off center, and their scale is large. Some are Tudor in character, some contain half-timbering in the Elizabethan tradition, and others have more Norman elements such as a round tower with a conical roof. Mrs. Mott brought her carpenter and brick mason from Indianapolis with her, both of whom were skilled craftsmen. The unusual brickwork, although it is never the same, is a recognizable feature of the Mott houses.

When Katharine Mott became ill with cancer her involvement in speculative real estate came to an abrupt halt. In addition, the economic depression of the 1930s slowed all building in Houston. In 1932, Mr. Mott became a sales representative of the River Oaks Corporation, which managed to continue its sales campaign throughout the 1930s. He remained in this capacity until 1950 when he opened his own real estate office where he worked until his death in 1958.

The Motts constructed their own home at 11527 Memorial Drive in Piney Point Village in the 1950s and Katharine Mott continued to live there until her death in 1979. It should be noted that Mrs. Mott received notice early on from Hugh Potter, one of the developers of River Oaks. The *Houston Business Journal* quotes Mr. Potter as saying to Will C. Hogg, “the houses built by Mrs. Mott and her husband in Riverside Terrace and Edgemont have done more to attract prospects than any other one thing. They are, by all odds, the most attractive structures in those additions.” Her contribution to architecture in Houston was recognized in later years by a 1998 Rice Design Alliance Architectural Tour and Lecture “Modern Homecraft: The Houses of Katharine B. Mott and Harry L. Mott.” According to various sources, including the Rice Design Alliance, the *Houston Survey* and Stephen Fox’s *Houston Architectural Guide*, Katharine Mott was responsible for the following homes in Houston:

- 1635 South Boulevard, with Burns & James, 1928
- 1659 South Boulevard, with Burns & James, 1928
- 2612 Riverside Drive, 1928 • 2620 Riverside Drive, 1928
- 2627 Riverside Drive, 1928 (demolished)
- 1660 South Boulevard, with Burns & James, 1929
- 2421 Brentwood Drive, with Burns & James, 1929
- 2513 MacGregor Way, 1929 (demolished)
- 2555 North MacGregor Way, with Burns & James, 1929
- 2591 MacGregor Way, 1929
- 2413 Brentwood Drive, 1929 (demolished)
- 3335 Del Monte Drive, 1929 (demolished)
- 3263 Del Monte Drive, with Burns & James, 1930 (demolished)
- 3325 Inwood, with Burns & James, 1930 (City of Houston Landmark)
- 1920 Woodbury, with Burns & James, 1930
- 2947 Inwood Drive, with Burns & James, 1930 (City of Houston Landmark)
- 3027 Inwood, Drive with Burns & James, 1930
- 3196 Del Monte Drive, with Birdsall Briscoe, 1931
- 1419 Kirby Drive, with Burns & James, 1930

#### *Burns & James, architects*

Because Katharine Mott had no formal training in architecture, she worked with Edward James of the Indianapolis architectural firm, Burns & James. The partners, Lee Burns (1872-1957) and Edward D. James (1897-1965) worked together from 1926 to 1949. Edward James, F.A.I.A., was an Indianapolis native who received his architecture training at Cornell University after attending classes at Butler University in his home state. James worked with firms in New York, Philadelphia and Orlando from 1923 until 1926. He then returned to Indianapolis and partnered with Lee Burns who had been in practice with William Osler for several years.

Burns & James' published houses were generally in the Colonial style rather than in the Old English styles preferred by the Motts. This stylistic difference reinforces reports that Mrs. Mott herself was primarily responsible for the Tudor influenced designs.

In 1949, the Burns & James partnership was dissolved. Burns and his son formed Burns & Burns and Edward James organized his own firm in which he practiced until his death in the 1960s. His most notable works were modern institutional projects including several buildings for Indiana University (1947-1953) and the Indianapolis Airport (1955).

*Mr. Ralph Maurice Henderson (January 12, 1886-January 20, 1946)*

*Mrs. Nelle Crump (March 9, 1897-November 23, 1989)*

Ralph Maurice Henderson and wife Nelle purchased the home at 1419 Kirby in 1930. Prior to that, Mr. and Mrs. Henderson and their son William rented an apartment at the Warwick Hotel Apartments overlooking Hermann Park.

Mr. Henderson was born in Sulphur Springs, Texas, to Robert Murray Henderson of Huntington, Tennessee, and Virginia (Beck) Henderson of Mt. Pleasant, Texas. Ralph Henderson began a successful career in the insurance industry after briefly attending college. In 1910, at age 24, he was working as an insurance clerk in El Paso, Texas.

A little more than ten years later, on January 10, 1921, Ralph Henderson married Nelle Crump in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Ms. Crump was the daughter of prominent Oklahomans William Jackson and Dora Crump. William J. Crump was a civil court judge in Muskogee. The wedding announcement in the *Muskogee Times* describes the wedding and the bride and groom:

“A pretty wedding which took place...at the home of Mr. & Mrs. W.J. Crump...the home was beautifully decorated with palms, ferns and American Beauty Roses.” Nelle Crump is described in the same article as a “beautiful and charming society girl,” and Mr. Henderson is characterized as a “prominent business and club man.” After the wedding, a honeymoon was planned in St. Louis and New Orleans. The newlyweds settled in Shreveport, Louisiana, where Ralph Henderson had been working.

The Hendersons purchased the home at 1419 Kirby Drive from the Motts in 1930. At the time, Ralph Henderson was Vice President and Director at Great Southern Life Insurance Company. Great Southern Life (GSL) is still in existence today as a member of the Americo Life, Inc. family of insurance companies. Mrs. Henderson was a homemaker. In 1939, tragedy struck the family when William, the Henderson's only child, was killed in an accident in Acapulco, Mexico, at age 23.

Ralph Henderson lived at 1419 Kirby for sixteen years until his death in 1946. A few years later, in 1949, Mrs. Henderson was residing at a new address on 2413 1/2 San Felipe Road in Houston. In 1951, Nelle Henderson married Edward Broun in Los Angeles. Nelle Henderson Broun and Ralph Henderson are buried in Forest Park Cemetery in Houston.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY**

*Architectural Style: Tudor Revival/Norman Revival*

In her *Field Guide to American Houses* architectural historian Virginia McAlester explains that, “the name Tudor Revival style is historically imprecise, since relatively few examples closely mimic the architectural characteristics of Tudor (16<sup>th</sup>-century) England. Instead, the style is loosely adapted from a

variety of late Medieval and early Renaissance English prototypes, ranging from thatch-roofed folk cottages to grand manor homes. This broad variety provided the basis for an English domestic architecture revival that began around 1850 and lasted until 1930. British architects such as Phillip S. Webb (1831-1915), C.F.A. Voysey (1857-1941), M.H. Baillie Scott (1865-1945), and Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) designed homes that were imitated in both the United States and Great Britain.”

McAlester notes that early landmark examples of Tudor style homes were built around 1890 with more modest versions being constructed by 1900. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the only style that surpassed Tudor Revival in popularity in American suburbs was Colonial Revival style. The Tudor Revival style was a prevalent architectural style nationally throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1920s, at the height of the style’s popularity, homes built in the style were sometimes called Stockbroker’s Tudors.

In Houston, significant concentrations of the Tudor style are found in the Boulevard Oaks Historic District and River Oaks. Approximately one-third of the homes in Boulevard Oaks were designed in the Tudor Revival style. Katharine Mott is well known for designing homes in the style. The Henderson House had both Tudor and Norman style elements. Following the Depression, Tudor houses were simplified and French Eclectic houses began to supplant Tudor in popularity. After World War II more modern styles replaced both the Tudor and French styles.

The Tudor Revival style is characterized by asymmetry, prominent front gables, steeply pitched roofs, massive chimneys, arched doorways, and leaded-glass casement windows. Details like decorative brickwork, stone accents and ornamental half-timbering were inspired by late Medieval English architecture. The Henderson House includes many Tudor elements including decorative brickwork, casement windows, prominent chimneys, a heavy, wooden arched front door and an asymmetrically arranged façade.

There is significant overlap between the design elements in Norman Revival and Tudor Revival style homes. The Norman Revival style typically falls within the French Eclectic category of American home types. French Eclectic houses were popular in the United States from 1915-1945. Vernacular buildings in Normandy and Brittany, France, shared much with Medieval English domestic design. Half-timbering, slate, stone or thatch roofs, arched doorways, leaded casement windows, prominent chimneys and an overall asymmetrical arrangement of these elements are typical of both the Norman and English Tudor style. The Henderson house includes a popular Norman style flourish: a distinctive tower with a conical roof.

### *Architectural Description*

The Henderson House is a two-story tapestry brick Tudor/Norman Revival style home with an asymmetrical façade comprised of five bays which vary in shape and size. The house is loosely arranged around the central third bay. On either side of this bay are two eclectic bays that balance one another despite the fact that they vary in appearance.

The far left bay has an arched central door with a stone surround flanked by matching iron casement windows on the first floor. The casement windows on the second story mirror the windows below.

This bay has a steeply pitched, slate hipped roof. A gas, copper lantern is situated above the wooden front door. Alongside this bay is a massive chimney with terracotta chimney pots.



The second bay is the smallest. On the first floor is a plain expanse of brick. The second story contains a ribbon of casement windows. There is a slate shed roof.

The central third bay includes two pairs of casement windows centered on the first floor, each with operational wooden shutters. There is a solitary, oversized pair of stacked casement windows centered above the first floor windows. The set of four casements is a through-the-cornice dormer.

The fourth bay is a Norman style conical tower containing the front door and stair hall.

Centered in the tower on the first floor is an arched, four-panel door with a stone quoin surround.

Gas lanterns decorate both sides of the front door. The brick above the front door is arranged in a gradually widening step pattern. Centered above the front door on the second floor is a large, intricately patterned pair of leaded glass windows with a stone surround. To the right of this double window is a single window with matching patterned glass. On top of the conical slate roof is a decorative weathervane.

The fifth bay, on the far right of the house, is single-story and has a row of six, diamond-patterned leaded glass windows that are off-center. The slate roof is a steeply pitched and side-gabled with an enormous leaded glass window on the gable side. The dramatic window contains small stained glass accents that include a family crest design.

The house retains its original copper gutters and stained glass windows decorated with a family crest.

### *Restoration History*

When the Steen family purchased the house at 1419 Kirby it appeared to be in good condition with many of the original architectural details intact: stained glass windows, beamed ceilings, plaster moldings, and carved doors. Beneath the brick veneer they discovered structural damage to the wood framing caused by termites and rot. The brick on the front façade needed to be removed in order to replace the wood framing below. Brick that was removed was saved, cleaned, and re-laid in the original drunken-brick pattern. Original steel windows were cleaned and restored. The original stained-glass windows were cleaned, repaired and protected. Mechanical systems were updated, and asbestos was removed. Original door hardware was repaired and cleaned. The restoration project was completed in 2020 when the home was 90 years old. The homeowners are hopeful that they've given the home at least another 90 years.

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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 Roman McAllen 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 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |               |                      |                     |
|                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>            |               |                      |                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" 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;
- (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;

- (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;
  - (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;
  - (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;
  - (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;
  - (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
  - (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.
- AND**
- (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)).

**Sec. 33-229. Criteria for protected landmark designation**

**S**    **NA**    **S - satisfies**    **D - does not satisfy**    **NA - not applicable**

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- (1) Meets at least three of the criteria for designation in section 33-224 of this Code;
- (2) Was constructed more than 100 years before application for designation was received by the director;
- (3) Is listed individually or as a contributing structure in an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places; or
- (4) Is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Henderson House at 1419 Kirby.

**HAHC RECOMMENDATION**

The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommends to City Council the Landmark Designation of the R.M. Henderson House at 1419 Kirby Drive, Houston, Texas.



**EXHIBIT A**  
**PHOTO**  
R.M. HENDERSON HOUSE  
1419 KIRBY DRIVE





**EXHIBIT B**  
**FRONT ENTRANCE DETAIL**  
**R.M. HENDERSON HOUSE**  
**1419 KIRBY DRIVE**



## EXHIBIT C SITE MAP R.M. HENDERSON HOUSE 1419 KIRBY DRIVE

