



**LANDMARK NAME:** Irene and George Robinson House

**OWNERS:** Mary Edith Lunsford Archer

**APPLICANTS:** Mary Edith Lunsford Archer

**LOCATION:** 2322 Dunstan Road, Houston, TX 77005

**AGENDA ITEM:** B

**HPO FILE No.:** HP2026\_0147

**DATE ACCEPTED:** May-13-2026

**HAHC HEARING:** June-18-2026

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 2, Block 18, Southampton Place. 2322 Dunstan Rd, constructed in 1930, is a 2,249 square foot, one-and-a-half story, brick and shingle clad single-family residence located on a 6,188 square foot lot, several blocks from Rice University.

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Protected Landmark Designation

### **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY**

George William Robinson and his wife Irene Elizabeth Canfield Robinson were the first owners of the Tudor Revival residence at 2322 Dunstan, having relocated from the New York metropolitan area with their one-year-old son Charles. The Robinson family was part of a generation of highly educated and mobile professionals whose lives reflected the broader patterns of industrial expansion, technical advancement, and civic engagement that shaped Houston in the early twentieth century. Their residence in Southampton places them among the early professional occupants of one of Houston's most distinguished emerging residential communities during a period of significant economic and urban growth.

Southampton Place is located near Rice University, the Museum District and the Texas Medical Center. The developer E.H. Fleming purchased the land in 1922, and development began in 1923. The early deed restrictions that enforced the building of only single-family residences with required minimum setbacks helped ensure that the neighborhood still has a "1920s feel." The housing stock contains a variety of architectural styles including classical Georgian and Tudor Revival homes, as well as brick cottages and bungalows. However, historic houses in the neighborhood are increasingly being torn down. Many of the new, modern residences do not complement the neighborhood's historic character.

The current owner is seeking a Protected Landmark Designation for the Irene and George Robinson House to preserve the home, which contributes to the historic character of Southampton Place and is representative of the neighborhood's history.

The Irene and George Robinson House meets criteria 1, 3, 4 and 5 for Landmark Designation and criteria 1 for Protected Landmark Designation.

### **HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

#### *Southampton Place*

In 1922, developer E.H. Fleming purchased 160.75 acres from Mrs. Nellie B. League of Galveston for \$297,387.50, originally envisioning a mixed residential and business community. During this early period, deed restrictions were established that would ultimately be



incorporated into every property sale in the neighborhood, helping to preserve the residential character that Southamton Place continues to enjoy today. These restrictions prohibited saloons and the sale of "spirituous liquors," as well as any "foundry, cemetery, reform school, asylum, slaughterhouse, or institutions for the treatment of tuberculosis or the mentally impaired." "Prospecting, mining or drilling" was likewise prohibited, as were apartment buildings and multi-family housing. Minimum construction costs were also established to ensure building quality: lots facing Rice Boulevard were set between \$12,000 and \$15,000, those facing Sunset Boulevard between \$8,000 and \$10,000, and all remaining lots between \$5,000 and \$7,000.

A 1922 sales prospectus advertised Southamton as "a place to love to live in," promising "a community of beautiful homes, harmonious in every detail" and a "desirable environment." The development was further bolstered by its proximity to the Rice Institute, then the largest privately endowed college in the nation. The prospectus outlined an array of planned amenities for residents, including a park and playground, a school site, a transportation fund, paved alleys and sidewalks, ornamental plantings, and utilities with adequate storm sewers. The concept of enforcing stringent deed restrictions to protect the character of a large single-family residential community is credited in part to E.C. Barkley, a colleague of E.H. Fleming and Vice President of the San Jacinto Trust Company, who became one of Southamton's earliest residents.

Early residents built their homes in an irregular pattern extending southward from Bissonnet, with construction on Rice Boulevard occurring last. By 1926, the city directory lists four homes on Bissonnet, six on Wroxton, nine on Albans, and seven on Sunset. By 1928, homes had been established on all of Southamton's east-west thoroughfares, with 144 residences combined across Bissonnet, Wroxton, Albans, Sunset, Quenby, Tangleby, Robinhood, Dunstan, Bolsover, and Rice Boulevard. A.E. Kerr, the first resident on Rice Boulevard, went on to serve as the first president of the Southamton Civic and Improvement Club.

The development of Southamton reflected a broader momentum in Houston during the late 1920s, when the city experienced the most significant building boom in its history — one that would not be duplicated for three decades. In keeping with the spirit of the era, E.H. Fleming constructed two sample homes on Sunset Boulevard to demonstrate the possibilities of modern design and technology. The homes were fully electrified, and a contemporary newspaper account noted that "everything...is electrical, bringing before the people of this city an opportunity to learn the many advantages this wonderful invention of science has brought to the present-day household." Architect William Ward Watkin captured the ambition of the moment in Houston magazine, writing that "the opportunity is here to make a city, growing as recently and rapidly as Houston is growing, one of the most beautiful cities in the country." He added, "I wonder if we are not at the beginning of an epoch in the history of our country when we are about to experience a very positive migration from the northern and north-central states to the south and toward the southwest." By 2000, Southamton had grown to encompass 601 homes.



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*George William Robinson (b. 12/02/1901, d. 02/04/1996)*

George William Robinson was born on December 2, 1901, in Joplin, Missouri, to Logan Robinson and Cordelia F. Adzell. The 1920 United States Census lists his father as a steelworker in the building industry, while Robinson was then a student, reflecting a transition from a working-class household to a professionally trained career.

Robinson pursued higher education, earning a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Illinois in 1924. His early career was rooted in the industrial centers of the northeastern United States during a formative period in American electrification and rapid industrial and energy expansion. Beginning in 1926, he worked as an electrical engineer with General Electric in Schenectady, New York, a major center of electrical engineering innovation. He remained with General Electric before moving to New York City in 1928, where he was employed by American Gas & Electric Company and later M. W. Kellogg Company (now Kellogg Brown & Root), firms closely associated with large-scale energy and industrial systems headquartered in Manhattan.

Robinson's personal records from this period provide a detailed account of both his professional life and daily routines during a pivotal moment in American economic history. He maintained a pocket diary documenting his professional engagements and social life. These entries included golf outings, dinners, and evenings spent playing bridge, indicating his integration into a socially active and professionally connected environment.

The diary also captured his experience during the 1929 stock market crash, offering a contemporaneous account of the financial uncertainty of the period. His notes for Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929, stated "16,000,000 shares in stock market - worst break in history". After his weekend social engagements, he wrote "closed my margin account". These records provide insight into both the everyday life of an early-career engineer in New York and the broader economic disruption that shaped the trajectory of his generation.

Robinson's career followed a broader national shift as engineers moved toward emerging industrial regions. In 1930, he married Irene Elizabeth Canfield, and the couple relocated to Houston, establishing residence at 2322 Dunstan in the Southampton subdivision. This move coincided with the rapid expansion of the petroleum refining industry along the Texas Gulf Coast. By 1937, Robinson was listed in the Houston city directory at this address as an engineer, reflecting his integration into Houston's growing industrial economy. Their son, Charles Canfield Robinson (b. 1932), later earned a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from MIT and pursued a career in research, continuing the family's engagement in technical fields.

Later records show Robinson joined Humble Oil & Refining Company (now Exxon) in Baytown, Texas, where he spent his remaining career and advanced to senior engineering roles. He was also a registered professional engineer in Texas and a member of the American Chemical Society and American Institute of Chemical Engineers.



In addition to his professional work, Robinson contributed to civic infrastructure development in the Baytown area, serving as President of the Board of Supervisors of Fresh Water Supply District No. 8.

As an early professional resident of Southamptton, Robinson embodies the migration of highly trained engineers to Houston during the city's rise as a center of the petroleum industry.

*Irene Elizabeth Canfield Robinson (b. 08/08/1905, d. 01/19/1994)*

Irene Elizabeth Canfield Robinson was part of a well-educated family with strong technical and professional backgrounds and contributed to the intellectual and civic life of Houston during the mid-twentieth century. She was born on August 5, 1905, in Chicago, Illinois, to Charles Ernest Canfield and Martha Elizabeth Hoyt. Her father, an engineer educated in both mechanical (Drexel Institute, Philadelphia) and electrical engineering (University of Vermont), worked for a series of major industrial firms, including General Electric, during a period when electrical power systems and infrastructure were rapidly expanding. He was a well-known authority for alternating current systems, including generator design.

As was common among engineers of this era, his professional advancement required frequent relocation to meet the needs of large-scale industrial projects and corporate assignments. As a result, the Canfield family lived in multiple locations across the northeastern United States and Canada during Irene's childhood. This mobility placed her within communities tied to emerging centers of industry and innovation and reflects the broader pattern of movement among technical professionals whose work supported the electrification and industrial growth of the early twentieth century.

Irene, and later her younger sister Alice, were educated at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts. Irene graduated in 1926 from an institution recognized for advancing higher education opportunities for women at a time when such opportunities were still limited. Wheaton College emphasized rigorous academic study and intellectual development, positioning its graduates to participate in professional, cultural, and civic spheres.

During her time at Wheaton College, Robinson was actively engaged in student leadership and academic organizations, serving on the Student Council, holding multiple cabinet positions, and acting as Director of the Bureau of Vocational Opportunities, while also participating in language and literary societies, including the Romance Languages and German Clubs.

Following her marriage to George William Robinson in 1930 and subsequent relocation to Houston, Irene Robinson became part of the city's emerging community of educated residents. During the early 1930's and early 1940's, while residing at 2322 Dunstan, she hosted meetings of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) study groups in her home. These gatherings brought together college-educated women for discussions and presentations on architecture, design, and the decorative arts, reflecting broader patterns of civic engagement and intellectual exchange among women in Houston during this period.



The use of private residences such as the Robinson home for AAUW meetings illustrates the important role that neighborhood homes played as informal centers of cultural and educational activity. Through her participation in AAUW and her role as a host for these study groups, Irene Robinson contributed to the social and intellectual fabric of Houston's professional community at a time when women's civic organizations were expanding opportunities for engagement beyond traditional domestic roles.

Irene's life reflects both the mobility of professional families in the early twentieth century—moving from the industrial Northeast to the growing energy centers of Texas—and the parallel emergence of educated women as active participants in civic and cultural life. Her activities at 2322 Dunstan demonstrate how the home functioned not only as a residence but also as a setting for organized intellectual and community engagement within Houston's developing neighborhoods.

Together, George and Irene Robinson represent the convergence of technical expertise and civic engagement that characterized Houston's growth in the early twentieth century. The Robinson household reflects both the migration of highly trained engineers to the Gulf Coast during the expansion of the petroleum industry and the parallel emergence of educated women as contributors to the city's cultural and intellectual life, illustrating how professional households shaped the development of neighborhoods such as Southampton.

#### *Albert A. Bertelsen, Builder*

Albert Bertelsen was a prolific builder in early twentieth-century Houston, with work concentrated primarily in River Oaks and the University Place neighborhood near Rice University. His homes were known for their quality of construction and architectural distinction, and his projects contributed significantly to the character of some of Houston's most prestigious residential communities.

#### *Homes identified as built by Albert A. Bertelsen:*

- 2004 River Oaks Blvd, Dr. B. D. Thompson, Armond Mabry, architect, \$50,000
- 2006 Bolsover, Laura Lackner, Joseph W. Northop, Jr. architect, \$6,900
- 2110 River Oaks Blvd, Clarence M. Frost, John F. Staub, \$15,000- Last listed sales price \$18.9 million.
- 2428 Prospect, Robert V. Shelby, \$15,000 Riverside Terrace
- 2803 University, James T. McGuirt of Tidewell Oil Company, \$22,500, year 1945.
- 2923 Del Monte, Milton R. Underwood, John F. Staub architect, \$25,000
- 2975 Lazy Lane, D. J. (Dan J.) Harrison, John F. Staub architect, \$128,918
- 2995 Lazy Lane, Stephen P. Farish, "Ravenna", John F. Staub architect, \$89,460
- 3009 Chevy Chase, Walter T. Burns, \$7,500
- 3657 Olympia Dr., Mr. & Mrs. Lottman, Donald Bartholme architect, \$17,000



- 5300 Block of Main, parish hall for St. Mathews Episcopal Church, Bailey Swenson architect, \$35,000
- Mack Street for Roller Bit Company, Hermon Lloyd architect, \$26,000

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY

### *Tudor Revival Style*

In *A 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 (16th-century) England." Rather, the style is loosely adapted from a variety of late Medieval and early Renaissance English prototypes, ranging from thatched-roof folk cottages to grand manor homes. This broad range of influences provided the foundation for a domestic architecture revival that flourished in both Great Britain and the United States from approximately 1850 to 1930, shaped in large part by the work of British architects including Philip S. Webb (1831–1915), C.F.A. Voysey (1857–1941), M.H. Baillie Scott (1865–1945), and Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944).

McAlester notes that early landmark examples of the Tudor Revival style appeared around 1890, with more modest interpretations becoming prevalent by 1900. By the early twentieth century, only the Colonial Revival style surpassed Tudor Revival in popularity in American suburbs. The style reached its national peak during the 1920s and 1930s, when more elaborate examples were sometimes referred to as "Stockbroker's Tudors." Following the Depression, Tudor houses were simplified in character, and the French Eclectic style began to supplant them in popularity. After World War II, both styles were largely displaced by more modern architectural trends.

In Houston, significant concentrations of Tudor Revival architecture are found in the Boulevard Oaks Historic District and River Oaks, with approximately one-third of Boulevard Oaks homes designed in the style. Houston's first female builder, Katharine Mott, designed several notable Tudor Revival residences in the city.

The Tudor Revival style is characterized by prominent front gables, steeply pitched roofs, substantial chimneys, and arched doorways. Decorative details commonly include ornamental brickwork, stone accents, and half-timbering, in which wall surfaces appear to contain massive timber beams with brick or stucco filling the spaces between.

### *Shingle Style Architecture*

The Shingle Style originated and reached its fullest expression in the seaside resort communities of the northeastern United States, including Cape Cod, Nantucket, Newport, and eastern Long Island. Unlike the highly ornamental Victorian styles that preceded it, the Shingle Style emphasizes overall form and massing over applied decorative detail. In *A Field Guide to*



American Houses, architectural historian Virginia McAlester describes it as "the first style that begins to emphasize the volumetric spaces within the house more than the exterior surface details."

According to McAlester, the Shingle Style draws from three earlier American architectural traditions. From the Queen Anne style it borrowed wide porches, shingled surfaces, and asymmetrical compositions; from colonial architecture it adopted gambrel roofs, classical columns, and Palladian windows; and from the Romanesque tradition it incorporated irregular, sculptural forms, Romanesque arches, and, in some examples, stone-clad lower levels.

Common features of the style include broad porches supported by substantial piers, grouped windows, and cross-gabled roofs arranged asymmetrically to create a dynamic, sculptural composition.

### *Architectural Description*

The Williams House is a one-and-a-half-story residence exhibiting characteristics of both the Shingle Style and Tudor Revival traditions. The façade is clad in a combination of red brick at the ground level and painted wood shingles on the upper story, creating a distinctive two-tone exterior.

The steeply pitched front gable is a dominant feature of the composition, punctuated by a set of triple casement windows at the lower level and a coordinating pair of double-hung windows above. Both window groupings are framed by matching board-and-batten shutters painted brown. The casement windows at the first floor are framed by climbing fig ivy trained along the brick façade.

The entry is a notable feature of the façade. An arched brick surround frames the central entry door, the arch rendered in contrasting brick coursing. The dark-painted door is set within a recessed opening and features a small diamond-paned window. It is approached by a short flight of brick steps and an irregular flagstone pathway in terracotta tones extending to the street. Directly above the entry, a recessed dormer window faces east.

A side-gabled wing extends to the right, with a set of triple casement windows and shutters consistent with the main bay. A brick chimney rises at the far-right elevation, its vertical mass providing a counterpoint to the dominant front gable and lending balance to the overall composition.

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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 Samantha de Leon and Emily Ryan, 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"/>            |               |                      | (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;                    |
| <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;   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" 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;                    |
| <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;  |
| <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;   |
| <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; |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |               |                      | (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;   |
| <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.   |

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)).





**EXHIBIT A  
CURRENT PHOTOS  
THE IRENE AND GEORGE ROBINSON HOUSE  
2322 DUNSTAN ROAD**





EXHIBIT B
SITE MAP
FIRST CITY NATIONAL BANK
1021 MAIN STREET

