

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-2010-0031

HLC DATE:

October 28, 2013

PC DATE:

APPLICANTS: Ernesto Cragolino, Cliff Street Condominium Owners Association

HISTORIC NAME: Cranfill-Beacham Apartments

WATERSHED: Shoal Creek

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 1911 Cliff Street

ZONING FROM: MF-2-CO-NP to MF-2-CO-NP-H

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from multi-family residence, low-density - conditional overlay - neighborhood plan (MF-2-CO-NP) combining district to multi-family residence, low-density - conditional overlay - neighborhood plan – historic landmark (MF-2-CO-NP-H) combining district zoning.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

The ca. 1959 Cranfill-Beacham Apartments have architectural and historical significance as they were designed by noted architect, Harwell Hamilton Harris and are an excellent example of mid-century modern design. They were built by prominent Shakespearean scholar Thomas Cranfill, who lived in a Harris-designed house next door, for his partner, Hans Beacham, a nationally-known photographer and illustrator.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: When this case came before the Commission in 2010, there was a unanimous vote to recommend historic zoning.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The apartment house is not listed in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984).

CITY COUNCIL DATE:

ACTION:

ORDINANCE READINGS: 1ST 2ND 3RD

ORDINANCE NUMBER:

CASE MANAGER: Steve Sadowsky

PHONE: 974-6454

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: West University Neighborhood Association

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

Architecture:

The Cranfill-Beacham Apartments were designed by Harwell Hamilton Harris, a leading designer of the mid-century modern style in the 1950s and according to architectural biographer, Lisa Germany, represent some of Harris' best work. The building is a tri-plex of two-story loft apartments, and is constructed of concrete block on the ground floor with board-and-batten wood siding above. The building, along with concrete masonry walls along the sides, frame a courtyard, while the back of each apartment, with a two-story

expanse of glass framed in vertical wood mullions with aluminum muntins, overlooks a bamboo and elm forest.

Historical Associations:

Thomas Cranfill, who hired Harwell Hamilton Harris to design his own house at 1907 Cliff Street (a designated city historic landmark) hired Harris to design this apartment building for his partner, Hans Beacham, in 1958. Harris, who had moved to Dallas at that time after a stint as the Dean of the School of Architecture at UT, was a nationally-known architect in the mid-century modern school of design. Born in Northern California to an architect/rancher, Harris was raised on a ranch in Southern California. He never received any formal academic architectural training, but went to work in the office of architect Richard Neutra in the 1920s and early 1930s, and honed his talents there. Harris went out on his own in Los Angeles in the mid-1930s and designed many small houses in Southern California, including his own, which won the 1936 House Beautiful Small House Award and established his reputation. He worked for two major corporate clients during World War II, designing a solar house for Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Company, and a segmental house for Revere Copper. The latter house was designed with returning servicemen in mind, and could be expanded from a small one-bedroom house to a six-bedroom house with ease through modular components. Harris was influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, and Richard Neutra in his efficient use of space, use of natural materials, and designing a house to fit into its physical environment. He used large expanses of glass to blend the outside with the inside, a feature found on the house he designed for Thomas Cranfill in Austin, as well as on the apartments Cranfill commissioned in 1958. After practicing in Dallas for several years, Harris took a teaching position at NC State University in Raleigh, where he continued his private practice. He retired from teaching in 1973 and from his private practice a few years later.

Thomas Cranfill, who employed Harris on his own house and these apartments, was from Dallas and graduated from the University of Texas before receiving his master's and doctorate from Harvard University. He returned to Austin as an English professor at the University of Texas, where he became nationally-known as a Shakespearean scholar as well as in the literature of the Renaissance. He was the editor of the Texas Quarterly, a nationally-recognized review of literature, and was also an avid collector of art. He amassed major collections of Mexican and Latin American art and graphics for both General Motors of Mexico and Braniff Airways, which led to higher study and recognition of the art of Latin America.

In 1958, Cranfill purchased the two lots adjacent to his house on Cliff Street, and demolished an old apartment house that had been there to build the current apartments for his partner, Hans Beacham. Beacham, a native of Milam County, was nationally-known as a photographer and illustrator. He and Cranfill photographed the art and artists for Cranfill's Latin American collections, and he wrote and illustrated a book on modern Mexican painters. Beacham was known for his unorthodox portraits of famous people, but he was also a prolific illustrator of books and publications for children. His apartment (No. 3) contained a photographic studio and darkroom.

PARCEL NO.: 01130014030000, 01130014040000, and 01130014050000.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Units 1, 2, and 3, Building B, Cliff Street Condominiums, Amended, plus common area.

ESTIMATED ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT:

Unit 1: \$1,260 (owner-occupied); city portion: \$345
Unit 2: \$634 (income-producing); city portion: \$73

Unit 3: \$1,590 (owner-occupied); city
portion: \$436

APPRAISED VALUE: Unit 1: \$116,374
Unit 2: \$116,374
Unit 3: \$147,531

PRESENT USE: Condominiums

CONDITION: Excellent

PRESENT OWNERS: Cliff Street Condominium Owners, Ernesto Cragolino, president.

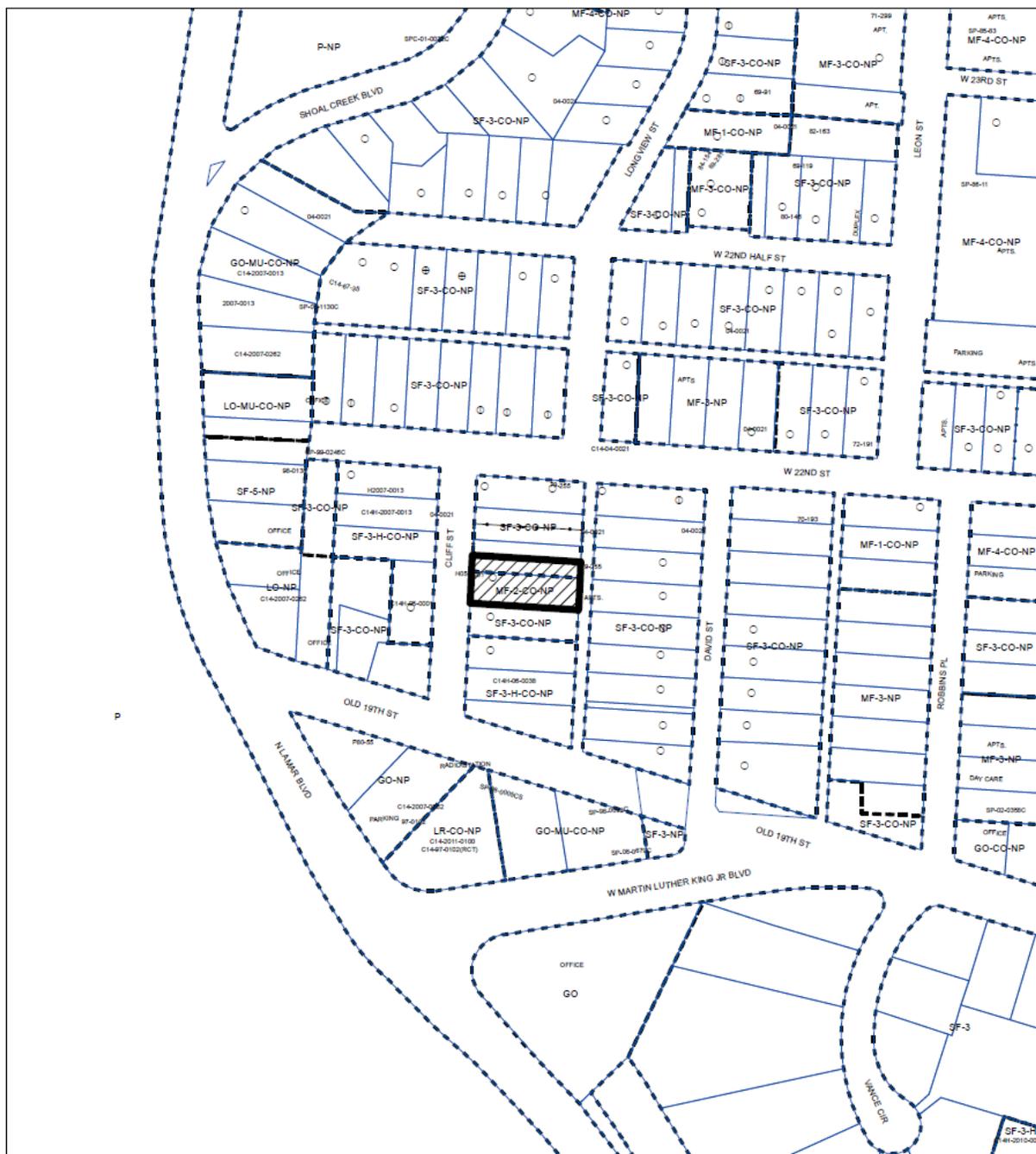
DATE BUILT: ca. 1959

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: Very few – the original cantilevered pergola at the entry has been removed, and the original tar and gravel roof has been replaced with a modified bitumen roof. Tapered wood caps at the parapet have been replaced with metal caps. Two scuppers have been cut into the south wall of the building to help roof drainage. The wood and fiberglass screen that formed the west enclosure to the courtyard was destroyed in a windstorm in 2006 and has been replaced with a steel-framed screen with polycarbonate panels which reproduce the original proportions and divisions of the screen wall. The apartments have had mechanical updates; all new mechanical systems are hidden. A skylight has been cut into the roof of the third apartment after the darkroom and adjoining room were reconfigured to allow for a new bathroom. The new skylight is over the new bathroom and is hidden from view by the roof parapet.

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Thomas Cranfill (1958)

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: None.

LOCATION MAP



-  N
-  SUBJECT TRACT
-  PENDING CASE
-  ZONING BOUNDARY

HISTORIC ZONING
 ZONING CASE#: C14H-2013-0007

1" = 200'

This product is for informational purposes and may not have been prepared for or be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. It does not represent an on-the-ground survey and represents only the approximate relative location of property boundaries.

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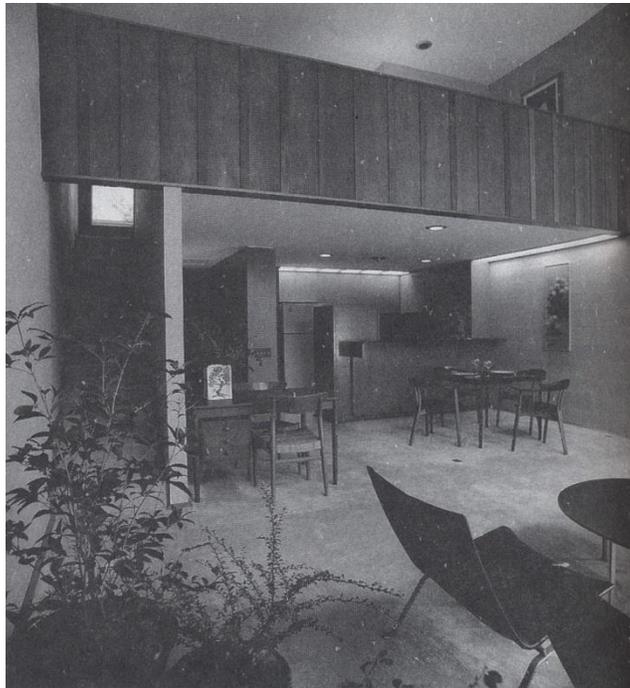


Cranfill-Beacham Apartments
1911 Cliff Street
ca. 1959









Photographs taken by Hans Beacham ca. 1961
in Lisa Germany's book on Harwell Harris



Cranfill-Beacham Apartments (1958)

1911 Cliff Street, Units 1-3, Austin TX 78705

Prepared for Ernesto Cragolino, president, Cliff Street Condominium Owners Association

By Phoebe Allen (phoebezink@gmail.com)

Legal description: Lots 14 & 15 + S. 25ft. of Lot 16, Block 3

SUMMARY

The Cranfill-Beacham Apartments, located eight blocks from the University of Texas, were designed in 1958 by architect **Harwell Hamilton Harris**, one of the leading designers of the Mid-Century Modern style, to house Thomas Cranfill's partner, **Hans Beacham**, a highly respected photographer, on property one lot away from Cranfill's home, also designed by Harris. According to Harris' biographer, Lisa Germany, "the double height, rectangular box quality of the Charles Eames house in Los Angeles with its open-mezzanine second floor may have worked subtly on Harris as he designed three apartments¹ in Austin for Tom Cranfill. ... Hidden behind a conventional house on a remote street, the concrete block apartments held out Harris's favorite surprise: a rich and private exposure to nature. Quiet and elegantly functional, they are among his best work."²

Cranfill's home and the Cranfill-Beacham Apartments both reflect the adaptation of Harris' California style to the climate, environment, and materials available in Austin, and mark a further transition between his work in California and that in North Carolina.

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING & HISTORY OF PROPERTY

The apartments are located on a quiet street in the West University neighborhood area known as the **Carrington Subdivision**. The triplex is situated behind a modest, early 1930s bungalow.³ The 1935 Sanborn map indicates a prior one-story rear apartment whose footprint was considerably smaller than the triplex. Full glass windows and louvered glass doors on the rear façade of the Cranfill-Beacham Apartments overlook gardens and vegetation in a drainage creek that feeds Shoal Creek. Significant vegetation screens the rear garden area from adjacent neighbors to the rear.

Leonidas Davis Carrington (1816-1897) purchased for \$3,200 the property between Palmetto/22nd and Magnolia/19th, Shoal Creek and San Gabriel in 1854 as a family farm. The land was originally owned by **Hannah** and **David Gouverneur Burnet** (1788-1870) (President of the Republic of Texas for seven months in 1836 and Vice President under Mirabeau Lamar), to whom it had been given by the Republic of Texas.⁴

Carrington, a merchant and land speculator who would serve as Captain and Assistant Quartermaster in the Civil War, arrived in Austin from Mississippi in 1852. The family lived in

¹ Harris lists 1958 as the date for the Cranfill apartments in *The Organic View of Design*, an interview by Judy Stonefield, under the auspices of the Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985.

² Germany, Lisa. *Harwell Hamilton Harris*. University of California Press in association with the University of Texas Center for the Study of American Architecture. 2000 edition; first published by the University of Texas Press, 1991. pg. 175.

³ The house, believed to have been used as a dormitory, was converted into a duplex after a fire. It was recently renovated with removal of vinyl siding to expose the original wood boards.

⁴ *Austin Daily Statesman*, Feb. 13, 1897, pg. 3.

the 1857 Carrington-Covert House (RTHL 1962) at 1511 Colorado, just north of the Capitol, until 1870, when L.D. Carrington moved to his farm to live out his life. His oldest son, **Robert Emmet Carrington** (1845-1900), married the only daughter of Hannah and William Gowdey Denny in 1867. R.E. Carrington is listed as the owner of Blocks 26, 27 and 28 in Division D in the 1890 Lot Register. The 1900 Lot Register indicates that the Carrington Addition was being subdivided to individuals; Lots 14-17 in Block 3 were owned by T.W. Hill.

Thomas M. Cranfill purchased Lot 14 and the south half of Lot 15 from R. Fisher Lewis on January 17, 1958. H.H. Harris' original architectural drawings from his Dallas studio for "Apartment Units for Dr. Tom M. Cranfill" (copies attached separately) are dated **22 September 1958**, revised 2 March 1959.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION by Ernesto Cragolino

The Cranfill-Beacham Apartments are a rich typological contribution to this neighborhood of single and multi-family housing. Tucked behind a one-story bungalow, the triplex of loft apartments adds density to the central city while maintaining the scale and character of what was originally a neighborhood of single-family dwellings.

A concrete masonry wall that supports a cantilevered pergola abuts the wood clad bungalow and begins the procession into the complex. Beyond the masonry wall is an entry courtyard that surrounds a majestic Live Oak. The courtyard is bound to the east by the apartments themselves and to the north by the entry wall and a trellis formed by the structure of the entry pergola. To the south is a second concrete masonry wall that encloses a darkroom extension for the third apartment and to the west is a screen wall originally built of cedar framing members and fiberglass panels. The result is a serene and intimate space that contributes to the communal life of the complex while maximizing the sense of removal from the exterior world. This space is animated by day with the shadows cast from the oak tree and at night by a series of simple light fixtures tucked between the structural supports, giving the low lit courtyard and entry pergola a warm inviting glow.

Upon entry, the pergola gives way to the overhanging second floor of the apartments. Under this cover a concrete masonry wall frames the three solid doors that give both passage and privacy to the apartments beyond. The interior space of the three loft apartments is primarily defined by four concrete masonry demising walls that support the roof and mezzanine floor framing. The living space of apartments opens up to the east through a wall of glass framed by a unique assembly of vertical wood mullions and horizontal aluminum H-channels. To each side of this delicate window wall are wood doors with jalousie ventilators that are protected by a small canopy housing an etched glass soffit panel that conceals a light fixture. Above the canopy four glass panes framed by heavier horizontal wood mullions accentuate the delicacy of the middle portion of this wall. The roof overhangs six feet, and provides much needed solar protection for this wall of glass that connects the interior spaces to a natural setting of tall elm trees and bamboo.

The double-height living space is supplemented by a loft bedroom above and a kitchen and dining area tucked below. All spaces are open to each other and the view to the exterior. The kitchen is efficiently appointed with ergonomic cabinetry and recessed lighting that is formed by the cavity between the 2x12 floor framing and an etched glass panel. Similar light fixtures graze the concrete masonry wall of the dining area as well as the entry hall between the stair and the kitchen. This stair, which runs along the southern concrete masonry demising wall, and is separated from the hallway by a gypsum board partition wall, houses a storage closet below. At

the top of the stair a west-facing wall of glass is composed of a wood framed door with jalousie ventilators and an enormous nine-foot wide floor to ceiling sheet of glass. An additional pane of glass completes this wall providing the loft bedroom with direct access to a balcony and visual access to the courtyard's majestic oak.

The bathroom shares the second floor overhang with the balcony, and the south facing etched glass panels and jalousie ventilator provide light and air into this small but efficient space. Ergonomically designed cabinetry with built in mirrors lend efficiency to a small walk in closet located to the east of the bathroom. The volume of the closet creates an L-shaped loft space that graciously accommodates room for a bed and a work area. Guardrail high bookcases and cabinetry form the perimeter of this space providing enclosure and privacy from the living area below, while maintaining site lines to the exterior.

The second floor balcony and bathroom volumes are clad with 1x12 board and batten redwood siding. A horizontal wood band transitions to a redwood cap that terminates the half wall of the balcony railing. The deep fascia at the roof is also clad in board and batten redwood. It is anchored on the north side by a concrete masonry volume that encloses that bathroom at the first apartment. On the south side the roof floats free via a double cantilever over the balcony of the third apartment. Except for these disparities all three units are essentially the same in plan and general appointments. The third apartment has a slight variation as the entry is between the apartment to the left and the darkroom to the right. The latter amenity was specifically designed around the needs of the complex's most noted tenant – photographer Hans Beacham.

ALTERATIONS by Ernesto Cragnolino

The Cranfill-Beacham Apartments have seen relatively few modifications since their construction in 1959. All elements that are visible from easily accessible areas are original with only minor modifications. Most of the changes have taken place on or in relation to the south facing wall of the complex which was clearly seen by Harwell Hamilton Harris as the service wall. Original electric meters and cutoffs are located on this wall as is the crawl space access hatch. This wall is set on the five foot setback and, unlike all of the other exterior walls, there are not usable/programmed spaces adjacent to this façade.

Perhaps the most significant change to the original character of the complex is the loss of the cantilevered pergola at the entry which was set on 4x4 wood columns that match the existing structural lumber. Inspection of the original detail reveals an improperly designed connection as opposed to an undersized structural member, thus making the cantilever achievable in the future without modifications to the perceived structure.

The original tar and gravel roof was replaced by a modified bitumen roof. While this modification is not visible, and simply reflects trends in the roofing industry, the tapered wood cap that topped the parapet, was replaced by a more standard (and weather resistant) metal cap. The roof drainage over the darkroom volume was also modified. The original design drained onto the balcony of the third apartment prior to being relieved by a scupper at that balcony. This was a poor method of draining this roof, as it channeled a large amount of water over the conditioned entry and within two inches of the second floor door threshold. Two scuppers were cut through the south facing wall to relieve this roof. As noted above, these scuppers are not visible from easily accessed areas of the complex.

The wood and fiberglass screen that enclosed the courtyard to the west finally failed due to a windstorm in 2006. The 2x4 construction on concrete masonry footings was never properly designed to resist wind loads, and had been precariously supported by a series of temporary

measures. The screen was replaced in 2008 with below grade concrete footing and a steel frame using HSS 4 x 1-1/2 rectangular steel tubing thus closely matching the original proportions of the 2x4 wood frame. The fiberglass panels were replaced by polycarbonate panels. The original proportions and divisions of the screen were retained.

The original chilled water mechanical system was abandoned in the early 1990's when the machinery had outlived its lifecycle. At that point the chiller was removed from the mechanical room and the three rooftop fan coil units were replaced by three packaged rooftop DX units to serve the second floor. Three compressors for the DX split systems were located on the south facing wall of the complex with air handling units replacing the original fan coil units below the living room of the three apartments. None of these mechanical alterations are visible from easily accessed areas of the complex as conduit runs, electrical cutoffs and compressor pads are located on the aforementioned south façade.

A major interior change did occur in 2007 when the original darkroom for the third apartment was reduced in size and the adjoining office was enlarged. A small bathroom was also added within this interior space. The defunct mechanical room was reduced in size to accommodate a smaller storage closet. The tanked hot water heater was relocated as a tankless unit to the south façade. The louvered double doors that enclosed this mechanical room were replaced with solid double doors. A window was added to the aforementioned south facing façade, replacing a portion of the concrete masonry veneer wall. This is a wood window that is painted to match the original wood windows, but has different profiles so as not to be confused with the original window frames. The area above this window was treated with a board on board pattern to echo the board and batten cladding of the original design. A skylight was added to the roof of this area to bring natural light into the new bathroom. Since the roof is wrapped by a parapet, the skylight is not visible except from the balcony of the third apartment. The original 2x8 roof joists in this area became ceiling joists with the provision of a mechanical plenum. The roof was thus raised within the height of the original 30" parapet to create a shorter 6" parapet. This roof was sloped at 1/4:12 to conform with current building codes and standard roofing practice.

The interior of all three units is mostly unchanged. With the exception of the aforementioned modifications to the darkroom in the third apartment, all three units maintain most of their original appointments. All three units have original ovens, cooktops and decorative lighting fixtures. All three units have original cabinetry and trim work throughout. The first and second units have original paint colors. The second unit has new cork floors to replace the original carpet (the units were originally designed for oak flooring, yet this was changed during construction to carpet). The first and third units have original vinyl tile floors in the kitchen. Bathroom floors have been replaced on all three units as well as plumbing fixtures (all three kitchen sinks and fixtures, bathroom sink and fixture at unit #1). Dishwashers were placed in all three units, replacing a segment of drawer and door cabinetry.

ARCHITECT **Harwell Hamilton Harris**, was one of the first American architects to follow the Modernist style, merging it with materials characteristic of the American Arts & Crafts Movement. Frank Lloyd Wright and Wright's teacher, Louis Sullivan inspired Harris; both incorporated natural materials and took advantage of regional climate and geographical surroundings in their designs. According to his biographer, Lisa Germany, Harris's particular contribution to American architecture was his melding of "the strict ideas of efficiency and modernism, that he learned from the Austrian architect Richard J. Neutra, with the warmth and

natural organic ideas of Frank Lloyd Wright.⁵ Some of Harris' trademarks – including indirect lighting, cork flooring and grass wallpaper – came to characterize the average American home.⁶

Photos of Harris' buildings are available at www.trianglemodernisthouses.com/harris.htm. A biographical sketch from the Alexander Architectural Archive at UT follows.

“Biographical Sketch of Architect Harwell Hamilton Harris (1903-1990)”⁷



“Harwell Hamilton Harris was born on July 2, 1903 in Redlands, California. The son [and only child] of Fred Harris, an architect [locally renown in fashionable eclectic styles, such as Craftsman and Mission Revival] and rancher, Harris grew up in the Imperial Valley area [the family moved to a ranch in southern California in 1913] and later attended San Bernardino High School. [He then studied for two years at Pomona College, emerging with a goal of becoming a sculptor.] In 1923, he moved to Los Angeles to attend the Otis Art Institute and in 1925, he began to study drawing and painting with Stanton Macdonald-Wright at the Art Students League.

Harris' ambition to be a sculptor, however, was changed after visiting **Frank Lloyd Wright's** Hollyhock House. Soon thereafter, he applied to the architecture program at the University of California at Berkeley. He never attended the program, however, as he found employment with **Richard Neutra** and **R.M. Schindler** [1928-32]. Neutra discouraged him from attending formal classes in architecture although he did attend classes given by Neutra at the Los Angeles Academy of Modern Art. While in Neutra's office, he worked on such seminal projects as the Lovell Health House and the Rush City Competition. During this period, Harris became familiar with the principles of the Modernist movement and served as secretary of the American chapter of the Congr s Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). In 1931, Harris met his future wife, Jean Murray Bangs, who would have a strong influence over his life and his professional career. They were married in 1937.

In 1933, Harris left the Neutra office to establish his own independent practice in Los Angeles. His first commissions were for small homes, based on a modular system, in which he applied the modernist principles he had learned in the offices of Neutra and Schindler. Among these early homes were the Pauline Lowe House (1934) in Altadena and the Fellowship Park House (1936). Fellowship Park, Harris' own house, won the 1936 House Beautiful Small House Competition and established his reputation in California. In 1937, John Entenza, the influential editor of *California Arts and Architecture*, commissioned Harris to design his own home. The

⁵ Fraser, Gerald C. “Harwell Harris, 87, An Architect Known For House Designs” <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/11/20/obituaries/harwell-harris-87-an-architect-known-for-house-designs.html> Accessed October 5, 2010.

⁶ Fuller, Larry Paul. “Harwell H. Harris,” *Texas Homes*, July 1985.

⁷ Sketch from: Harwell Hamilton Harris Papers, 1903-1990, California, Texas and North Carolina, the Alexander Architectural Archive, University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin. <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utaaa/00001/aaa-00001.html> accessed 5 July 2010. [bracket material added by Phoebe Allen]

Weston Havens House (1939-40), dramatically perched on a hillside outside of Berkeley, used inverted gables in a novel structural solution that allowed Harris to maintain sensitivity to this peculiar site.

With the advent of World War II, it was difficult to obtain new commissions, and building materials were scarce. Harris designed several model homes including an early solar house (1946) for the Libbey-Owens-Ford glass company and the "Segmental House" (1941) for the Revere Copper and Brass Company. Designed with the returning veterans in mind and utilizing a modular system, the segmental house could grow from an inexpensive, one-bedroom home to a six-bedroom, four-bath house to accommodate the growth of a family over the years. Harris also designed the Ingersol Utility Core for Donald Deskey at this time. In 1943, Harris moved to New York where he taught at Columbia University and was involved in the CIAM Chapter for Relief and Postwar Planning.

Upon his return to California in 1944, Harris and his wife Jean rediscovered the work of Greene and Greene. The influence of their Japanese-inspired bungalows can be seen in Harris's work of the 1940s including such projects as the Ralph Johnson House (1947-48) in Los Angeles, the Gerald M. Loeb Pavilion (1947) in Redding, Connecticut, and the Clarence Wyle House (1946-48) in Ojai. Harris's sensitive use of native woods added to the intimate quality of these homes.

In 1952, Harris accepted the position of **Dean for the School of Architecture at The University of Texas**. Although he lacked both formal architectural training and administrative experience, he expanded the School's programs and attempted to revolutionize the methods of teaching. Harris directly involved some of the students in the design process when he collaborated with them on the Texas State Fair House (1954), offering them actual experience with the design and construction process. Harris hired new faculty whose innovative ideas clashed with the traditional Beaux-Arts methods still in use in Texas. Later known as the "Texas Rangers," Harris hired Colin Rowe, John Hejduk, Robert Slutsky, Werner Seligmann, and Herbert Hirsche. The autocratic nature of Harris's new theory for teaching design, however, created enormous tensions within the school, which interfered with his own private practice. As a result, Harris resigned as dean in the summer of 1955. He moved to Dallas where he continued to practice, designing homes that were brilliantly adapted to the harsh Texas climate. Among his many Texas works are the J. Lee Johnson House (1955-56) in Fort Worth, the Seymour Eisenberg House (1957-58) House in Dallas, and the Dallas Trade Mart for Trammell Crow (1958-60) in Dallas.

In 1962, Harris accepted a teaching position at the North Carolina State University in Raleigh. He continued his private practice, designing numerous buildings including the Stanley Bennett House (1970), the Saint Giles Presbyterian Church (1967-69), and a new, combined home and office for himself (1968). Harris retired from teaching in 1973 and from private practice in 1975.

Harris has been the recipient of numerous awards, including the Richard Neutra Medal for Professional Excellence (1982). Harris's work was published extensively and has appeared in numerous exhibitions, including the Museum of Modern Art (1939, 1943, 1943, 1945, and 1953), the National Gallery of Art (1957), and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum (1977). In addition, several one-man exhibitions of his work have been held at the North Carolina State University (1981), the Museum of Art in Fayetteville, North Carolina (1982) and The University of Texas at Austin School of Architecture (1985). Harris was made a fellow in the American Institute of

Architects in 1965 and received an honorary doctorate from North Carolina State University in 1985.”

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Harris' Career in Texas

In 1951, with the threat of the Korean War, work slowed in Harris' California office; he and his wife were ready for a change of scenery. Harris decided to accept an offer from the University of Texas to become the first director of the School of Architecture, newly separated from the College of Engineering. He began in September of 1951. Despite scrutiny and hostility from the old faculty and lack of funds for new faculty, Harris pulled together a few new faculty members that supported his artistic educational philosophy.

He was thus able to influence the curriculum enough to “put Texas on the map as the home of a progressive school of architecture.”⁸ In 1954 Harris collaborated with six of his students in designing the *House Beautiful* Pace Setter House⁹ at the Dallas State Fair. Another innovation in the curriculum included student field trips; he took one group to Mexico City to attend the 8th Pan American Congress of Architects, another to Chicago and St. Louis to see buildings by Sullivan, Wright, and Mies van der Rohe.

Tired of the bickering among the UT faculty, Harris resigned in June of 1955, lured away from his administrative duties and back to a drawing board in Ft. Worth by the daughter of oil and newspaper magnate Amon Carter, Ruth Carter Stephenson, who wanted a Modern, unpretentious house.

In addition to the Cranfill House and Apartments, Harris also completed designs for four other properties in Austin: Portable Sales Office for David B. Barrow Sr. (1954), Balcones House No. 1 for the Austin Corporation at 4002 Edgemont Drive (1955), Balcones House No. 2 for the Austin Corporation (1955, unbuilt), and the **David B. Barrow Sr. Residence** at 4101 Edgemont Drive (1955-56).

In 1958 Harris opened an office in Dallas with David Barrow Jr.¹⁰ as associate; his studio was in Dallas when the drawings for the Apartments were completed. Barrow Jr. later acquired Harris' drawings as a gift to the Center for the Study of American Architecture at the University of Texas – a gift which led to the 1985 exhibition of Harris' work.

Harris' most notable Texas work includes the Seymour Eisenberg residence (1958) in Dallas, the John S. Treanor House in Abilene, St. Mary's Episcopal Church and houses for Milton Talbot and Jack Woodall in Big Spring, the J. Lee Johnson III house and Greenwood Mausoleum in Fort Worth, Stemmons Towers and the Dallas Trade Mart Court¹¹ for Trammell Crow, and the First Unitarian Church in Dallas.

Regarding the design of the **Cranfill-Beacham Apartments** in comparison to Harris' Raleigh home, Lisa Germany states: “The Cranfill Apartments with a single run staircase, loft-

⁸ Germany, op.cit. pg. 140

⁹ The Pace Setter House was relocated to 12020 Stone Brook Circle in Dallas.

¹⁰ Barrow's son, a student of Harris, worked with Harris on the House Beautiful project.

¹¹ “The design of the Trade Mart Court as the first modern atrium was so delightful that its influence on hotel design spread nationwide.” – “Harwell Hamilton Harris: a proposed Fellowship in Architecture.” UT at Austin, School of Architecture, Austin History Center vertical file AF Bio.

like room above a kitchen, and double height exposure to the outdoors through a wall of windows also bear a strong connection to Harris's own later house in Raleigh (1968)."¹²

And, "The plan [for the Raleigh office/home] bears some similarity to the apartments Harris designed for Tom Cranfill in the 1950s, but where these apartments were entered on the ground floor, the Harris Raleigh house was entered on the mezzanine level, that is if one were to approach it from the front door."¹³

In the early 1980s, following Harris' 1975 retirement, "A student at the University of Texas traveled to interview him with his professor in order to write an article for *Texas Architect*. The architecture student, **Paul Lamb** had become interested in Harris while living in his Cliff Street Apartments for Tom Cranfill, and the article he wrote with **Lawrence Speck**, entitled "Rediscovering Harwell Hamilton Harris," began to interest a new generation of Texas students. ...at the instigation of Speck, an exhibition and small monograph were planned under the auspices of the Center for the Study of American Architecture, part of the University of Texas School of Architecture."¹⁴

The exhibition, with photographs and drawings from Harris' long career, was held February 22, 1985. Harris' wife died while he was en route to Austin, but as she had requested, he stayed for the opening with a large crowd of former clients and friends that included Harold Box, then dean of the School of Architecture.

Thomas Cranfill (1913-1995)

In 1952, with the assistance of a young Harvard graduate, **Eugene George**, Harris had designed a house for UT English professor and art collector **Dr. Thomas Mabry Cranfill**, which brought Harris' early wooden style to Texas. The Thomas Cranfill House, 1901 Cliff Street, is a City of Austin landmark and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004. Cranfill specialized in Shakespeare and the literature of the Renaissance and served as an editor of the *Texas Quarterly*, a nationally known review of literature. Twice a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship holder in Mexico, Cranfill organized the Mexican modern graphics collection for General Motors of Mexico, and a Latin American art collection for Braniff Airlines. His personal collection of paintings, prints, etchings, woodcuts and lithographs included more than 1,000 pieces of European, American, Latin American and Oriental art in 1958. The *Texas Quarterly* devoted three volumes to describe the Latin American collection he organized for Braniff and General Motors, with photography of the art and artists by **Hans Beacham**. Cranfill donated his art collection to the Humanities Research Center. Works of art in the Cranfill Collection include pieces by Matisse, Picasso, Sully, Duvenceck, and Toledo.

According to architectural historian Peter Maxson, who was acquainted with both Cranfill and Beacham, Thomas Cranfill was from a very prominent Dallas family (also Cranfill's Gap in Bosque County). Tom's childhood home was an exquisite house at the edge of the Swiss Avenue Historic District in Dallas; it was razed circa 1960. He attended Washington & Lee University in Virginia, but transferred to UT when his father died. He was a Phi Delt with Maxson's father and the actor Zachary Scott. He received his bachelor's degree from UT in 1934. He received master's and doctorate degrees from Harvard in 1937 and 1944, respectively. On his Harvard

¹² Germany, *op. cit.* footnote #12.20, page 219.

¹³ Germany, *op.cit.* pg. 197

¹⁴ Germany, *op. cit.* page 201.

application, when asked about his hobbies and recreation, he answered "Dancing round the maypole and frigging on the green," which the Harvard staff recognized immediately as an obscure quote from Chaucer. He was accepted in return mail.

Cranfill first taught at Georgia Tech and later at Harvard and Northwestern University in Illinois before coming to UT in 1945. He was long the leading Shakespearean scholar at UT, an accomplished art historian and collector, and a musician – a singer and avid opera fan. Cranfill lived in his home until his death in 1995; his heirs sold the house to its current owners, Mathilde and George Schade, Cranfill's longtime friends.

Cranfill's Cliff Street Apartments

In January of 1958, Cranfill purchased Lot 14 and the south half of Lot 15, which included an older house at the front of the lot and a small apartment building in the rear, which was demolished. In November of the following year Cranfill purchased additional, adjacent property that included the north 25 feet of Lot 15 and the south 25 feet of Lot 16 to buffer his new apartments.

It is likely that Cranfill's main purpose in building the apartments was to house his life partner, **Hans Beacham**, who was living in Apartment #3 by 1960. At the time, Beacham was the technical editor for the National Oil Scouts & Landmen's Association, but he was also a photographer who would work closely with Cranfill in Mexico. Apartment #3 included a photography studio/darkroom. Beacham lived in the apartments until his death in 2004.

HANS BEACHAM¹⁵

Robert Johannes Beacham was born March 31, 1925, in Milam County Texas. His parents were both born in Texas. The 1930 Cameron, Texas Census indicates that his father was a garage mechanic at the time Hans was five years of age.

One complicated but very important aspect of Hans' life was his relationship with Tom Cranfill. According to friends who knew both men, they were life partners. Both of these creative men were part of the intelligentsia of Austin of their era. Hans accompanied Cranfill on numerous trips to Mexico City, where they had a 1922 Porfirian¹⁶ townhouse (restored by Cranfill in 1968) at 303 Puebla Street in Colonia Roma. Beacham had a photo studio on Sevilla Street a few blocks away. Both had strong ties to Latin America, as evidenced by the list of titles following. Several Austin friends visited the pair at their house in Mexico.

Hans resided in the Cliff Street Apartments from late 1959 or early 1960 until his death from cancer in 2004. His older sister Grace lived one street over at 1916 David Street. Beacham's prolific photographic and written work is documented in the following titles (copies available in local libraries noted in parentheses):

- *The Architecture of Mexico, Yesterday and Today*, by Hans Beacham. 1969, Architectural Book Pub. Co. (New York). 255 pages, with most photos by Beacham.

¹⁵ Beacham did not have an obituary. He was a very private person. Information about his life was gathered from public records, brief bios in books listed on the next page, and from friends including Carolyn Osborn (whose husband Joe Osborn served as Beacham's lawyer during his lifetime), Peter Maxson and Alvin Nickel.

¹⁶ Its Parisian Belle Epoch style is characterized by high ceilings and elaborate moldings. An apartment in Casa Cranfill is available today as a rental unit for tourists. (casacranfill.com)

According to his bio in this book, Beacham's work appeared in the *NY Times*, *Time Magazine*, *The Times* in London, and numerous other publications in Europe and Latin America. He made three motion pictures, including "Mr. Pratt's Habitat" for Mr. Pratt's daughter. He was involved with Mexico beginning in 1927, documenting the intellectual and artistic life of Mexico. He made "photos of Mexico's most outstanding artists and intellectuals." He illustrated and wrote a book on 60 modern Mexican painters, and illustrated many books and publications for children, "but his principal work is making unorthodox portraits of famous persons." (Benson Library, Architecture Library)

- ***The Way of Art: Inner Vision / Outer Expressions***, by Kelly Fearing, Emma Lee Mayton and Rebecca Brooks. 2 volumes. W.S. Benson & Co., Austin, 1986. Textbook for art education in public schools. Numerous Beacham photos in both volumes, with an acknowledgement to Beacham.
- ***Your Texas Geography*** by C.C. Bajza and M.G. Bowden; illustrations and maps by Watt Harris, Jr.; photographic illustrations by Hans Beacham. Austin. W.S. Benson, c1964. 292 pages. Educational textbook. (Center for American History)
- ***Himalaya: An Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts of Tibet and Nepal***, December 6--January 5, 1964, University Art Museum, the University of Texas / introduction by Marian Davis; photographs of exhibits by Hans Beacham; photographs taken in Nepal by David Kung. UT, Art Museum. 1964. Catalogue. (UT Fine Arts Library)
- **A Modest Madness: Drawings by Hans Beacham**. "Catalogue... published to celebrate an exhibition of the drawings at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio during autumn of 1975." (Center for American History)

The following *Texas Quarterly* photographic projects were undertaken, usually during summers, with Harry Ransom as general editor and Cranfill as special editor:

- **Image of Mexico; the General Motors of Mexico Collection of Mexican Graphic Art.** *Texas Quarterly*, Vol. XII, Nos. 3-4, UT, Autumn & Winter 1969. Editor: Harry H. Ransom; special editor: Thomas Mabry Cranfill; photographic editor: Hans Beacham [and others]. Reproductions of drawings and prints, artists' biographical data. A bilingual publication. Artist names A - K appear in Images of Mexico I (No. 3) names from L - Z appear in Images of Mexico II (No. 4). (Ransom, Center for American History, Fine Arts Library)
- **The Braniff International Airways Collection of South American Art.** *Texas Quarterly*. Vol. VIII, No. 3, Autumn 1965. Supplement. General Editor Harry H. Ransom. UT Press. A special issue edited by Thomas Mabry Cranfill. Of the 107 artists represented, 81 were photographed in South American by Hans Beacham. 202 pages. (Ransom Center)
- **Images of Britain 2.** *Texas Quarterly*. 1969. Harry H. Ransom, general editor. Thomas Mabry Cranfill, issue editor. Contributors: Stephen Spender, Eudora Welty, Ted Hughes, Joyce Cary, Angus Wilson, Stephen Spender, Sylvia Plath. Austin, University of Texas, First Edition. Poetry by many noted British poets, plus 57 black and white photos of British sculptors and painters by Hans Beacham.

- **Images of Britain 1.** *Texas Quarterly*, Winter 1960. Vol. III, No. 4. UT. Ransom, Harry, general editor. Thomas Mabry Cranfill, editor of issue. "Photographs of British Writers and Others," by Hans Beacham. 42 photos including T.S. Eliot, C.P. Snow, Ted Hughes, Joan Sutherland, Sir Lawrence Olivier, Lady Astor, and Henry Green. It is believed by his friends that Beacham visited many of the European artists in their homes to create their portraits.
- **Portrait of a Street: East Sixth**, by Hans Beacham. 24-page booklet of black and white photos, from *The Texas Quarterly*, Spring 1958. (Austin History Center AF-S5075)

Other Occupants of the Cranfill-Beacham Apartments

Alvin A. Nickel, professor of textile design in Art Education at UT, has lived in Apartment #1 since 1963. The unit was occupied the previous year or so by a guest classics professor, **John Sullivan**, brought over from England to edit *Orion Magazine*. A native of Wisconsin, Nickel studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. He spent two years in Germany as Crafts Director for the U.S. Government as a designer of textiles and wallpaper, and also worked for Marshall Field & Company and the Container Corporation, one of his first jobs. He came to Austin as an assistant professor in 1960. His studio expertise was in design; he is primarily a batik designer and is known for his "sun totems." He started a class at UT in textile surface design. His work included the supervision of student teachers at UT. For seven summers he taught high school and middle school students at the Art Institute of Chicago to get away from Texas' heat. He has traveled widely in India, Bhutan, and the islands of Indonesia studying batiks and textile design.

According to Nickel, most occupants over the years were architects: **John Watson** (who received a fellowship at Taliesin), **Chris Page**, **Ray Payne**, **Robert Viselka**, **Paul Lamb**, **John Mayfield**, and **Ernesto Cragnolino**. Other professionals included attorney **Richard Keahey** and computer analyst **Thomas Linsley**, who lived in the front house. Hans Beacham was the property manager of the Apartments from the beginning.

Ernesto Cragnolino, president of the Cliff Street Condominium Owners' Association

Ernesto Cragnolino, AIA, is passionate about this project. He created a corporation to buy the property and convert it into condominiums in order to properly preserve it. He has undertaken restorative work on the building, scanning the full set of Harris' drawings and specifications for the Alexander Library and working closely with the original documents. He has a professional practice in architecture as a partner in Alterstudio Architects, LLP. He is also an adjunct professor at The University of Texas School of Architecture. He and his wife, **Krista Whitson**, AIA, an architect with Mell Lawrence Architects and a photographer, have a small child they are raising in Hans Beacham's former residential unit.

JUSTIFICATIONS & CONCLUSION

The Cranfill-Beacham Apartments merit landmark status as one of the few buildings designed in Austin by nationally acclaimed architect Harwell Hamilton Harris. The triplex has strong historic integrity of materials, workmanship and design. A second justification point may

be made for the Apartments as the longtime home of Hans Beacham, Cranfill's partner and an extraordinary photographer in his own right.

The triplex is above all an expression of a significant movement in architecture that resonated strongly both in its time and beyond. Kenneth Frampton, arguably the most important architectural critic of our time, popularized the notion of a 'Critical Regionalism.' In developing his thesis Frampton¹⁷ cites Harris and his notion that a 'Regionalism of Liberation' runs counter to a 'Regionalism of Restriction.' The former being a manifestation "of a region that is especially in tune with the emerging thought of the time."¹⁸ Harris' believed in an architecture that was in harmony with its context, not through the authority of vernacular forms, but through a process that sought to develop and incorporate ideas that were in concert with the landscape, climate and material culture of the region. Harris promoted a vision of modernism that did not look to a stylistic model, but instead, to a process of "imagination and intelligence" that unearthed an emerging spirit, grounded in place, and open to progress and invention.

Harris' influence on the development of this type of 'Liberative Regionalism' changed domestic design in the United States. His artistic background as a sculptor, and his affinity for the naturalism of Frank Lloyd Wright, combined with his fondness for the handcrafted works of California architects Charles and Henry Greene, led to Harris' unique brand of modernism – a modernism that imbued residences across America with elegant discipline, artful detail and a fundamental connection to place.

DEED CHAIN: Lots 14 & 15 + So. 25 ft. of Lot 16, Block 3; Plat Map 94 Vol. 1, 4/23/1895

1909 Cliff B1 Cliff St. Dev. Ass. to **Alvin A. Nickel** 2005197763 (\$116,374 TCAD)
10/24/2005 .053 acres, 858 sq. ft. +18% int. 1911 Cliff St. Apt 1 #01130014030000

1909 Cliff B2 Cliff St. Dev. Ass. to **Nirav V. Patel** 2005211711 \$102,950 note
11/14/2005 .0527 acres, 858 sq. ft. + 18% int. #01130014040000.

1909 Cliff B3 Cliff St. Dev. to **Ernesto Cragnolino & Krista Linn Whitson** 2005197764
10/24/2005 \$137,000 + \$16,500. 1911 Cliff Street, Apt. 3, Austin TX 78705.
1,100 sq. ft living space on .068 acres #01130014050000

8/6/2005 Condominium Declaration #2005164899 & 2005177936

8/9/2005 Charles Vance Campbell Jr., trustee, Life Estate Trust of **Thomas Cranfill**, to
Cliff Street Development Association \$641,750, #2005147852
Tract 1: N 25' of Lot 15 and S 25' of Lot 16, Block 3, Division C
Tract 2: Lot 14 and S 25' of Lot 15, Block 3

1974 Lot Register, V2: Cranfill, Lot 14 + N1/2 of 16 \$15,120
N1/2 of 15 + S1/2 of 16 \$2,600

1960 Lot Register: Block 3, Lots 14 + S 1/2 of 15 Cranfill \$11,200
N ½ 15 + 16 Cranfill \$1,930

11/23/1959 J.M. Stegall & wife Lila to **Tomas Cranfill**. Vol. 2048 pg 497.
N 25' of Lot 15 + S 25' of 16, Block 3, Carrington Subdivision of Outlots 26-28D

1/17/1958 R. Fisher Lewis et al to **Thomas Cranfill**, Vol. 1912 p. 98-101, \$14,000. Lot #14
+ S1/2 of Lot #15, Block 3, Carrington Div. Outlots 26, 27, 28D.

1958 Lot Register: Lots 14 + s ½ 15 Thomas Cranfill \$2,500
N ½ 15 + 16 J.M. Stegall \$1,930

1951 Lot Register: Block 3, Outlots 26, 27, 28 D, R.E. Carrington Addition
Lots 14 + S ½ 15 R. Fisher Lewis & wife
N ½ Lot 15 + S ½ lot 16 J.M. Stegall \$1300

1940 Lot Register V1: Lots 14, 15, S½ 16 Annie Webb Blanton \$4000

1930 Lot Register: Block 3, #12 – S½ 16 F.W. Hill & wife \$4750 (with lots 4-6)

1920 Lot Register: Block 3, #10 - S½ 16 F.W. Hill

1915 Lot Register: Block 3, #10-15 + S½ 16 F.W. Hill \$1,070

1910 Lot Register: Block 3, #10-17 F.W. Hill \$800

1900 Lot Register: Carrington Addition, Block 3, Lots 14-17 T.W. Hill \$130 (formerly \$200)

1890 Lot Register: Lots 26, 27, 28 D **R.E. Carrington** et al (6, 5, and 6 acres) \$6,000

OCCUPANCY CHAIN 1909 & 1911 Cliff Street

Note: The front duplex was in the past considered 1909 and 1911, and the triplex was 1911 #1, #2, #3. When the condo conversion took place, the mailing address of the duplex became 1909 A&B while the mailing address of the triplex remained 1911 #1, #2, #3. The legal description of the condominium differs from the mailing addresses in that the duplex is 1909 A1, A2 and the triplex is 1909 B1, B2, B3. The directory listings are thus often in error and/or confusing. According to Alvin Nickel, Beacham lived in Apartment #3 until his death in 2004. Nickel's corrections/additions to the directory listings appear in brackets.

- 2010 1909 B1 Alvin A. **Nickel** [mailing address is 1911 Cliff St. Apt 1]
 1909 B2 Nirav V. **Patel**
 1909 B3 Ernesto **Cragolino** & Krista **Whitson**
- 2007 1909 Cliff Kevin P. Beck (no occupations listed) [?]
 Mariana Moncada [1909 B]
Alvin A. Nickel [Apt. 1]
 Matt L. Slusarek [1909 A]
 1911 Cliff Krista **Whitson** [Apt. #3]
- 2002 1909 Cliff Heather L. Murray [front house]
Alvin A. Nickel
 [Yvonne Munn, UT French professor]
- 2000 1911 Cliff Hans Beacham [Apt. 3], **Alvin Nickel** (1), **John Mayfield** (2)
 Heather L. Murray [front house]
- 1996 Hans Beacham, no street listed [Apt. 3]
 1909 Cliff not listed
 1911 Cliff **Thomas F. Linsley** [front house]
John M. Mayfield [Apt. #2, architect]
Alvin A. Nickel [Apt. #1]
- 1992 1913 Cliff **Hans Beacham** (no listing for 1909 Cliff)
 1911 Cliff Thomas F. Linsley [front house]
 Rear: Alvin Nickel [Apt. 1], no return, Hans Beacham [Apt. 3]
- 1990 1909 Cliff Bill Records, Bill Records Photography (38th Street)
 1911 Cliff Thomas F. Linsley, sr sys analyst UofT
 Apartments (REAR): Alvin A. **Nickel** [1], student; Paul M. **Lamb**[2]; Hans **Beacham** [3]
- 1985/86 1909 Cliff Bill C. Records, Bill Records Photography at 505 W. 38th
 1911 Cliff Thomas F. Linsley, computer programmer UofT
 Apartments (REAR): 1. **Alvin A. Nickel**, studt [Apt. 1, UT professor of art]
 2. **Hans Beacham**, property manager [Apt. 3, photographer]
 3. **Paul M. Lamb** [Apt. 2, architect]
 4. vacant [there is no 4th apartment]

- 1980 1909 Cliff William Records
 1911 Cliff Thomas F. Linsley, computer programmer UofT
 Apartments (REAR): 1. **Alvin A. Nickel**, professor UofT [Apt. 1]
 2. **Hans Beacham** [Apt. 3, property manager, photographer]
 3. **Robert Sterling** (no occupation listed) [Apt. 2]
 4. no return [no 4th apartment]
- 1975 1909 Cliff Hans Beacham [lived in front duplex for a time, but kept #3 as studio space, property manager]
 1911 Cliff Wm. C. Records, photog [incorrect]
 Apts (REAR): 1. **Alvin A. Nickel**, assistant professor UofT
 2. Ray Payne, design coordinator Barnes Landes Goodman & Youngblood
 3. **Hans Beacham**, photographer, Apt 3; h. 1909 Cliff [studio space]
 4. **Richard H. Keahey**, exec sec State Genl Land Office [Apt. 3]
- 1970 1909 Cliff vacant [incorrect]
 1911 Cliff vacant [incorrect]
 Apts. (REAR): 1. **Alvin A. Nickel**, assistant professor UofT
 2. Richard H. Keahey (no occupation listed) [attorney]
 3. **Hans Beacham** (no occupation listed) [property mgr.]
 4. no return [there was never a 4th apartment]
- 1965 1909 Cliff Ronald A. Seeliger [UT library staff]
 1911 Cliff Chavarche Tehalekian, tchr UofT [Apt. 2]
 Apts. (REAR): 1. **Alvin A. Nickel**, assistant professor UofT
 3. **Hans Beacham**, student [student is incorrect; photographer and property manager]
- 1962 [John Sullivan lived in Unit #1 for about a year, prior to Nickel's residence]
1961 1909 Cliff Ronald A. Seeliger [UT library staff]
 1911 Cliff George D. Schade, instr UofT [front house]
 1911 Cliff rear #3: R. **Hans Beacham**, tech editor Nat'l Oil Scouts & Landmen's Assoc
 1911 Cliff rear #2: **John Watson**, drftman
- 1960** 1909 Cliff Ronald A. Seeliger, library asst. UofT
 1911 Cliff **Hans R. Beacham** (o) tech editor Nat'l Oil Scouts & Landmen's Assoc
 [Apt. 3; photographer, property manager]
 1911 rear vacant [incorrect]
- Prior to Cranfill Apartments: (old apartment building)*
- 1959 1909 Cliff Rodolfo Ramirez, studt
 1911 Cliff Vacant; rear – John Hakac, instr UofT
- 1958 1909 Cliff Rodolfo Ramirez, studt
 1911 Cliff Vacant; rear – John Hakac
 1300 San Antonio A: Hans Beacham, tech editor Nat'l Oil Scouts & Landmen's Assoc.

Texas Homes
July 1985

Austin History Center
Ms. Harwell Hamilton

ARCHITECTURE/ BY LARRY PAUL FULLER

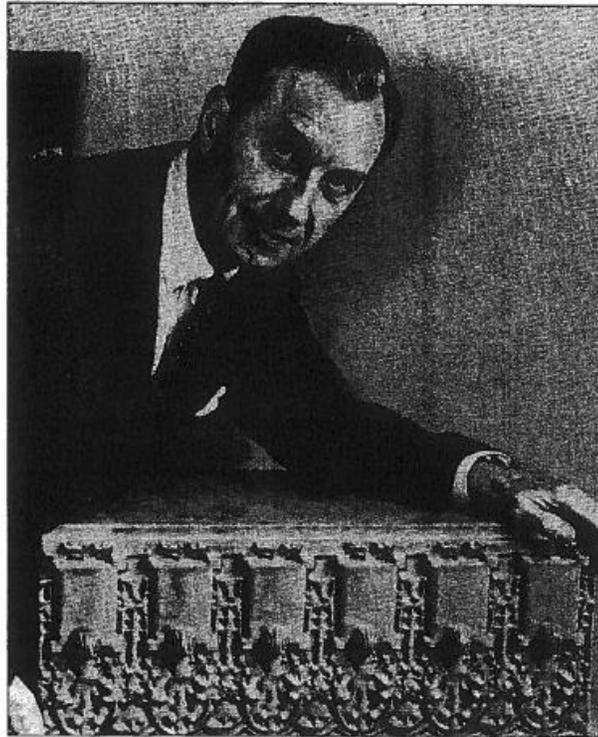
HARWELL H. HARRIS

Rediscovering a tastemaker of the '50s

I have always suspected that the success of architects Edward Durell Stone and Edward Larrabee Barnes—not to mention Frank Lloyd Wright—is at least remotely related to the formality and distinction of the names they go by. Accordingly, when I first heard mention of Harwell Hamilton Harris, I couldn't wait to hear more.

That was in the mid-'70s, and since then Harris' name has been mentioned with increasing frequency, most recently due to a resurgence of interest in his work prompted by the Center for the Study of American Architecture at The University of Texas at Austin. Partly because of director Lawrence Speck's interest, the center has launched a campaign to promote the rediscovery of Harwell Hamilton Harris. Rediscovery is right, for the 81-year-old Harris—who directed UT's department of architecture in the early '50s and now lives in North Carolina—is relatively unknown today, though he once achieved international acclaim as a maker of houses whose innovations trickled down into ordinary neighborhoods throughout the country.

UT's acquisition of Harris' drawings—a gift from Austin architect and former Harris associate David Barrow Jr.—prompted the center's recent exhibition of Harris' work. Austin writer Lisa Germany's 96-page exhibit catalogue, as deftly and lovingly crafted as the work it describes, is the definitive account of



Harwell Hamilton Harris achieved international acclaim during the '50s as a maker of houses whose innovations trickled down into ordinary neighborhoods throughout the country.

Harris' career and is a convincing assessment of his importance. Germany records how Harris, a California native, trained under Modernist immigrant Richard Neutra in the '20s but succeeded in tempering the rigors of Bauhaus Modernism with his own softer, warmer aesthetic.

Because of his affinity for the naturalism of Frank Lloyd Wright and the handcrafted works of California architects Greene and Greene, Harris' brand of Modernism was reflected in undeniably American, artfully detailed houses that responded to site and climate, celebrated the beauty of wood and other natural materials and were lean and dis-

ciplined. So widely published were his works that, by the late '50s, Harris trademarks such as indirect lighting, cork flooring and grass wallpaper had come to characterize a favorite look for the average American house. Ironically, however, these innovations so thoroughly permeated the domestic architecture of the time that their source became almost anonymous.

Although Harris initially made his mark in California, he practiced in Texas from 1951 to 1962, and subsequently in North Carolina, where he taught at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. His legacy in Texas includes, most notably, the Thomas Cranfill and David Barrow houses in Austin, the John S. Treanor house in Abilene, the J.M. Woodall house in Big Spring, the J. Lee Johnson house in Fort Worth and the Seymour Eisenberg house in Dallas.

When Harwell Hamilton Harris came to Austin for the exhibit opening at UT, we met at the Cranfill house (which Harris designed for a UT professor of English in 1952), where we talked—about his design, his ideals, his enduring notions of what makes a house a good house.

One idea that sets Harris' work apart from the Pop architecture of today is his notion that the architectural form of a house should not result from a preconceived intellectual image or existing pattern. He believes instead that intellect should be used to implement one's in-

ARCHITECTURE

tuitions in a process of developing total architectural form. That process begins with a thorough knowledge of the life that will be lived in the house—the “human particulars”—and continues through open-minded sensitivity to the full range of considerations.

Intuition and feeling are all-important to the process, just as the way a room feels is important, dictating how well we like it at any given moment. During his early training as a sculpture student, Harris says he learned to “feel myself into a form” as it was evolving, thus developing an almost mystical ability to understand the feeling a particular form would convey and learning to create forms that would impart the desired feelings.

Attempting to illuminate these ideas, Harris offered a simple analogy: “The architectural form—the total form—is more than simply the sum of individual forms, just as your head is more than a collection of breathing forms, seeing forms, hearing forms, eating forms, speaking forms. Of course, such forms are more than just holes in your head or bumps on it. They do something. And most of the forms do more than one thing. The mouth is not only for eating and fighting; it is also for speaking and kissing. The nose is not only for breathing and smelling; it is also for poking and snorting. They are natural forms, and natural form is versatile. So is architectural form.”

A kind of harmony should emerge from all these forms and multiple roles, says Harris: “As in any great art, architecture’s main purpose is to arrive at a great simplicity. In a great house, there is only one form, seemingly. The one form does many things. It does them all easily, naturally, unconsciously. And the form appears to exist only for its own sake.”

Another term Harris uses often, and one that relates to his idea of overall harmony, is “continuity.” In a Harris house, there is an easy transition—a continuity—between outside and inside, natural and built; site and structure seem continuous. The plan often unfolds as a sequence of connected parts. Short pieces are strung together to make long pieces. A color or a pattern may appear repeatedly before it disappears; but then it

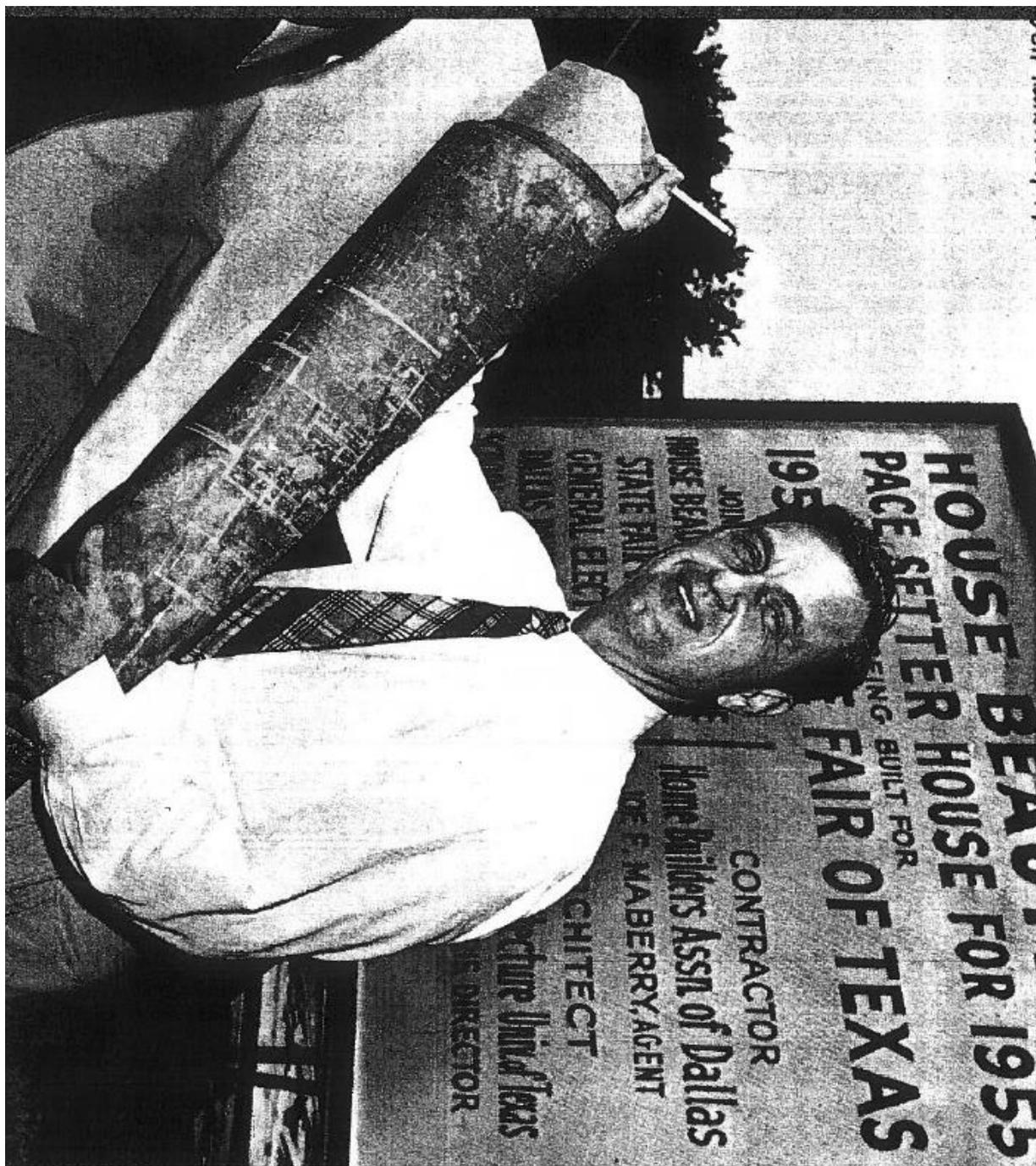
ARCHITECTURE

appears again. The cumulative result is a seamless quality that is the hallmark of fine works of art and craft.

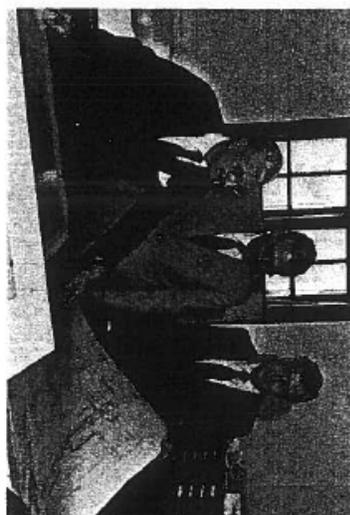
At the same time, Harris says, a good house should encourage and convey an appropriate range of emotions. A low ceiling, for example, can bring a space into scale with people. “Sometimes you want to bring the house around you, to burrow in,” he says. Likewise, running the ceiling up into the peak of the roof can be a source of emotional satisfaction: “We also need to soar.” Spatial and textural variety, controlled views, sensitive use of color and materials and light—all are necessary to meet our need for a broad range of feelings.

One feeling emphasized in Harris’ houses is serenity or tranquility, the sense of a place of refuge. “A house is to shelter and protect you not only from weather, but from disturbances and distractions of all kinds—visual, auditory, other things, other people,” says Harris. “It should give you a sense of freedom from the outside world, a true feeling of escape, and not entrapment. You want protection and freedom both.”

Harris is a captivating conversationalist, and the hour or so of talking went by quickly. Reflecting on the ideas we had discussed, I thought back to the house I had just left. From the street, the Cranfill house is modest—scarcely noticeable—by virtue of its board-and-batten walls and the unobtrusive way it nestles into its wooded site. Outside and inside meet in modulated realms—a cool and shady courtyard, a terrace dappled with light from an overhead wooden trellis, long bars of shadow from broad eaves. Inside, as the plan unfolds, one is first led to the left through a long, low gallery displaying the owner’s art collection. Inevitably turning right, the visitor experiences one of those modest architectural serendipities of which special houses are made: The space explodes into a grand living room with tall, sloped ceilings and views to the hills. In all its particulars, the house reflects the lives that are lived there, and it does so without seeming ponderous. As articulate as Harris is, he never did respond satisfactorily to my probing for a succinct definition of a good house. Perhaps he knew, better than I, that a good house speaks for itself. □



HARWELL HAMILTON HARRIS F.A.I.A.



The architecture of Harwell Hamilton Harris is known for its imaginative concept, sympathetic scale, skillful adaptation of building to site, rhythmic development of modular elements, and sensitive use of materials and colors. Harris acknowledges Frank Lloyd Wright and new ideas from post World War I Europe as "the seminal influences" on his work. A native Californian, Harris' first ambition after two years at Pomona College, was to be a sculptor. But in 1926 Harris saw Wright's Hollyhock House. "This," said Harris, "turned my mind toward architecture. Later, I saw Rudolph Schindler's studio-house and met him and Richard Neutra. This turned my mind toward Neutra."

Neutra persuaded Harris to give up his plan to enter architecture school in favor of working with him in Los Angeles, and studying engineering at night. From 1928 to 1930, Harris and Gregory Ain worked on collaborative projects with Neutra, including C.I.A.M. (Congres Internationalaux d'Architecture Moderne) projects in low cost housing and urban planning. Harris left Neutra in 1932 to work on his own.

From the earliest days, Harris turned his back on stucco and pipe rail and began designing in wood. He abandoned the International Style and his work was widely accepted. The Lowe House, his first built design, won an honorable mention in the 1934 House Beautiful magazine Small House Competition. His third building, the House in Fellowship Park, received an honor award from the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and appeared in European publications. In 1937 and 1938 Harris received first prizes in the Pittsburgh Class

Institute Competition which led to publication. However, his first major national recognition came with the furor that marked the award of First Prize to two architects in the 1935 General Electric Small House Competition for an almost duplicate of the Lowe house.

Harris believes that it was the absence of the period's dominant cliches in his work that appealed to Howard Myers, editor of *Architectural Forum*. In 1940, the magazine published a folio of five Harris houses. This exposure led to many exhibitions including the New York and San Francisco Museums of Art. The publicity resulted in a stream of visitors to Harris' Fellowship Park home—Philip Goodwin, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Eero Saarinen, Elizabeth Mock, Serge Chermayeff, Charles Eames, Edward D. Stone, and others interested in his work.

By this time Harris had married Jean Murray Bangs, a U.C-Berkeley graduate who later wrote about architecture. In 1943, the Harrises went to New York where Harwell lectured at Columbia University and also worked with Donald Deskey on prefabricated housing. On their return trip West, the Harrises visited Taliesen as guests of the Wrights and saw the Johnson Wax Building. In Chicago, Morgan Yost showed them the architectural highlights of Chicago and Oak Park.

Back in California, Harris worked with architect Henry Eggers to win recognition of the work of Greene & Greene. Mrs. Harris published an illuminating article about them in *Architectural Forum* (1948). This research, combined with a local AIA chapter traveling exhibition, represented the earliest scholarship on Charles and Henry Greene.

From 1944-1951, Harris' office was in Los Angeles. His international reputation dates from 1944 when the government began a program to publicize the new American architecture. The Office of War Information, the Department of State, the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art, and the American Institute of Architects all collaborated in this effort. Harris' work was shown in these and other exhibitions which appeared from Cairo to Zurich and Rio de Janeiro to Moscow.

In 1951, Harris accepted the position of Director of the School of Architecture at The University of Texas in Austin. Until then architecture was taught in the College of Engineering. Harris' innovations included extending student field trips; he took the Fourth Year Students to Mexico City to attend the 8th Pan American Congress of Architects. Another trip featured Chicago and St. Louis to see buildings by Sullivan, Wright, and Miles van der Rohe.

The University Board of Regents established a School of Architecture Foundation, initially funded by gifts from the Central Texas Chapter AIA, the Tips Engine Works, and Harris' clients—David Barrow, Sr., Weston Havens, and Gerald Loeb. Harris also hired new architecture faculty including Colin Rowe, Marcus Whiffen, John Hejduk, and Heinrich Waechter.

In 1953, Harris turned his commission to design a House Beautiful Pacesetter House for the Dallas State Fair into a collaborative project with students—giving the school statewide publicity.

During the four years he was Director of the school, Harris designed a house in San Antonio for Sylvan Lang,

COVER PHOTO: Harwell Harris at the site of the House Beautiful Face Setley House at the 1934 Dallas State Fair. F&K LEFT: Harwell Harris with two members of the House Beautiful Face Setley design team—Pat Churney (left) and Neal Lacey. Other members of the design team were David Barrow, Jr., William Hoff, Haldor Nielsen, and Don Legges. CENTER: Surrounding Frank Lloyd Wright and Harwell Harris are some of the fourth year architecture students who attended the VIII Pan American Congress of Architects in Mexico City. Students standing (left to right): Overton Shelburne, Jack Turner, Irwin Meyers, Benny Bloomer, S. McCall Fitzpatrick, J. B. Hancock, Sealed (left to right): Harwell Hamilton Harris, Frank Lloyd Wright, Nick Terrazas. Kneeling: Tom Conger, Duane Larue, unidentified. RIGHT: Harwell Hamilton Harris, Dean Hal Box, and David Brown Barrow, Jr., (left to right) are shown in the Architectural Drawings Collection at Battle Hall. Barrow, a former student and associate of Harris, is acquiring the "HHH" drawings as a gift to the University. Photo by Dedde Sharpe.

and houses in Austin for Thomas Cranfill and David Barrow, Sr. With Eugene George, he designed the Features Exhibits Building for the National Orange Show in San Bernardino, California.

Eager to practice again, Harris resigned his position at the close of the 1955 spring semester. He moved to Fort Worth where he opened an office in partnership with Frank Sherwood, P.E. Work there included the J. Lee Johnson III house in Fort Worth; the John Treanor house in Abilene; St. Mary's Episcopal Church and houses for Milton Talbot and Jack Woodall in Big Spring; and the Greenwood Mausoleum in Fort Worth, which received an Honor Award from the Texas Society of Architects. Out of state work included the Motel-on-the-Mountain near Suffern, New York (in collaboration with Perkins & Will), the restoration and expansion of the Louis Sullivan bank in Owatonna, Minnesota, and the design for the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki, Finland.

In 1958 Harris opened an office in Dallas with David Barrow, Jr. as associate and designed several projects for Trammell Crow. The design of the Trade Mart Court as the first modern atrium was so delightful that its influence on hotel design spread nationwide. The Dallas Unitarian Church (with Beran & Shelburne) also belongs to this period.

Harris left Texas in 1962 to become Professor of Architecture at the School of Design, North Carolina State University in Raleigh. In 1965, he became a Fellow of the A.I.A.

Harris believes that his work for the International Executive Service Corps is among the most important of this

period. IESC sprang from David Rockefeller's belief that developing countries needed help in learning 20th century building and business techniques rather than money. IESC projects took Harris to El Salvador, North Borneo, and Singapore.

In 1977, Harris retired from North Carolina State University and completed the final addition to his St. Giles Presbyterian Church—the sanctuary. He received the Richard Neutra Award in 1982 for professional excellence. Today he continues a consulting practice in architecture in Raleigh.

Harwell Harris' contributions to architecture include his influence on the development of the California house which changed American domestic design; the effect of his work on several generations of architecture students throughout the country; and the extent to which his international acclaim helped focus attention on modern American architecture.

His Wyle House was part of the AIA's Centennial Exhibition (1857-1957), "One Hundred Years of Architecture in America," shown at the National Gallery. Other Harris houses appeared in architectural journals as among the one hundred most important buildings of the last century.

THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE TODAY

The School of Architecture is situated in the southwest quadrant of the original forty-acre campus of the University and occupies three excellent works of architecture. Our flagship is the Architecture Library, Battle Hall, one of the most significant buildings in the state. It is by Cass Gilbert, the architect of the U.S. Supreme Court Building in Washington and the Capitol of Minnesota. Also designed by Cass Gilbert is Sutton Hall, with its terra cotta polychrome ornament; it is the only building on campus to win a design award from the Texas Society of Architects. Paul Cret, the outstanding Beaux Art architect of the '30s, designed Goldsmith Hall with its courtyard and fountain. All of these buildings have either just been restored, or are about to be restored and re-equipped to form a special campus as the finest facilities for the study of architecture anywhere in the U.S.

These fixed assets give enormous advantage to our moveable assets: our students. Because of our high entrance requirements, our SAT scores are next to the highest

on campus. We are in a position to be selective in our students and hold the unique position of being the smallest undergraduate component of the University with 465 undergraduate students. We also have 188 graduate students in Architecture, and 79 graduate students in Planning. Approximately one-third are women.

A great university and a great architecture school must have a great library. Ours ranks among the top four in the country with 85,000 volumes.

Our faculty assets are significant. They include 45 full-time faculty members educated in 26 different universities with specialties to embrace most of the vital issues in planning, design, and construction. Many are design award winners as practicing architects, and five are Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. Our first endowed chair holder is Charles Moore.

Until recently, State appropriations were the only funds for use by the School. Now, we have the additional benefit of private gifts forming endowments and specific project grants. During the last two years within the School we have raised over \$2 million in gifts for endowments, substantially increasing the quality of our program in every area.

To offer exciting programs and to develop new ones, the school must raise funds like the private schools with which we must compete: Harvard, Yale, MIT, Columbia, Rice, and Princeton. The combination of State appropriations and private endowments will catapult us into a position to compete for the top young architectural talent in the country to train and practice in Texas. And Texas is where the action is. This is our challenge, and this is why your support of the School is so important.

Austin History Center


Hal Box, F&A
Dean

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

The University of Texas at Austin
 School of Architecture
 Graduate Program in Architecture

August 14, 2020

Planning Commission
 City of Austin
 300 West Cesar Chavez St.
 Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Commissioners:

This is to very strongly support the application for Landmark status for the Harwell Hamilton Harris triplex on Cliff Street that is coming before you this summer. I first had the pleasure of touring this project in the early 1980s and was delighted at that point to see that it was very nearly in its original condition. I have kept track of this little jewel since then and have been extremely impressed with the efforts of both the current and former owners to maintain the integrity of this important work of architecture.

This is one of two really distinguished works Harris left during his years in Austin in the early 1950s. (The other, the Thomas Cranfill House has already gained Landmark status.) Harris came to Austin to head the Architecture Program at University of Texas after gaining considerable renown as an architect in Southern California. A disciple and colleague of both Frank Lloyd Wright and Richard Neutra, his work had been published widely, and his Havens House in Berkeley of 1940 had gained icon status as an example of mid-century modern residential architecture.

The Cliff Street Triplex is an important example of Harris' commitment to creating beautifully designed houses on an affordable budget. The units are small, but feel spacious. They take full advantage of their tight site and contribute greater density in a single-family neighborhood without compromising the amenity of any of their neighbors. This little project offers a lot of lessons we need to be paying attention to in Austin today.

This project seems to offer exactly the kind of situation Landmark status was meant to address. It is a significant building by a renowned architect that offers lessons for us to learn from half a century after its creation.

Kind regards,



Lawrence W. Speck FAIA
 W. L. Moody Centennial Professor of Architecture
 University Distinguished Teaching Professor

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July 26, 2010

Mr. Steve Sadowsky
City of Austin
Historic Preservation Officer
505 Barton Springs Rd.
Austin, Texas 78704

Dear Mr. Sadowsky:

I am writing on behalf of the Original West University Neighborhood Association in support of historic landmark designation for 1911 Cliff Street, the Cranfill-Beacham Apartments.

Our steering committee voted unanimously to strongly recommend the application. The structure, as described in the application, is architecturally significant, designed by Harwell Hamilton Harris. In addition, it has been owned and resided in by historically significant people.

We believe the structure is not only worthy of the Landmark status, but also in need of the protections the status affords. As you are likely aware of, it is not rare for older structures to be demolished in our neighborhood in favor of structures with greater capacity to house students. This trend is eating away at the historic fabric of our neighborhood. The Cranfill-Beacham Apartments provide density, and do so in a way that is respectful to the heritage of our area.

The Cranfill-Beecham Apartments tell an important part of our neighborhood's history, and we are grateful to its owners for taking this step to preserve them. We are hopeful that the City of Austin and the Historic Landmark Commission will help ensure their preservation by awarding them Landmark status.

Regards,


Nuria Zaragoza
President, OWUNA