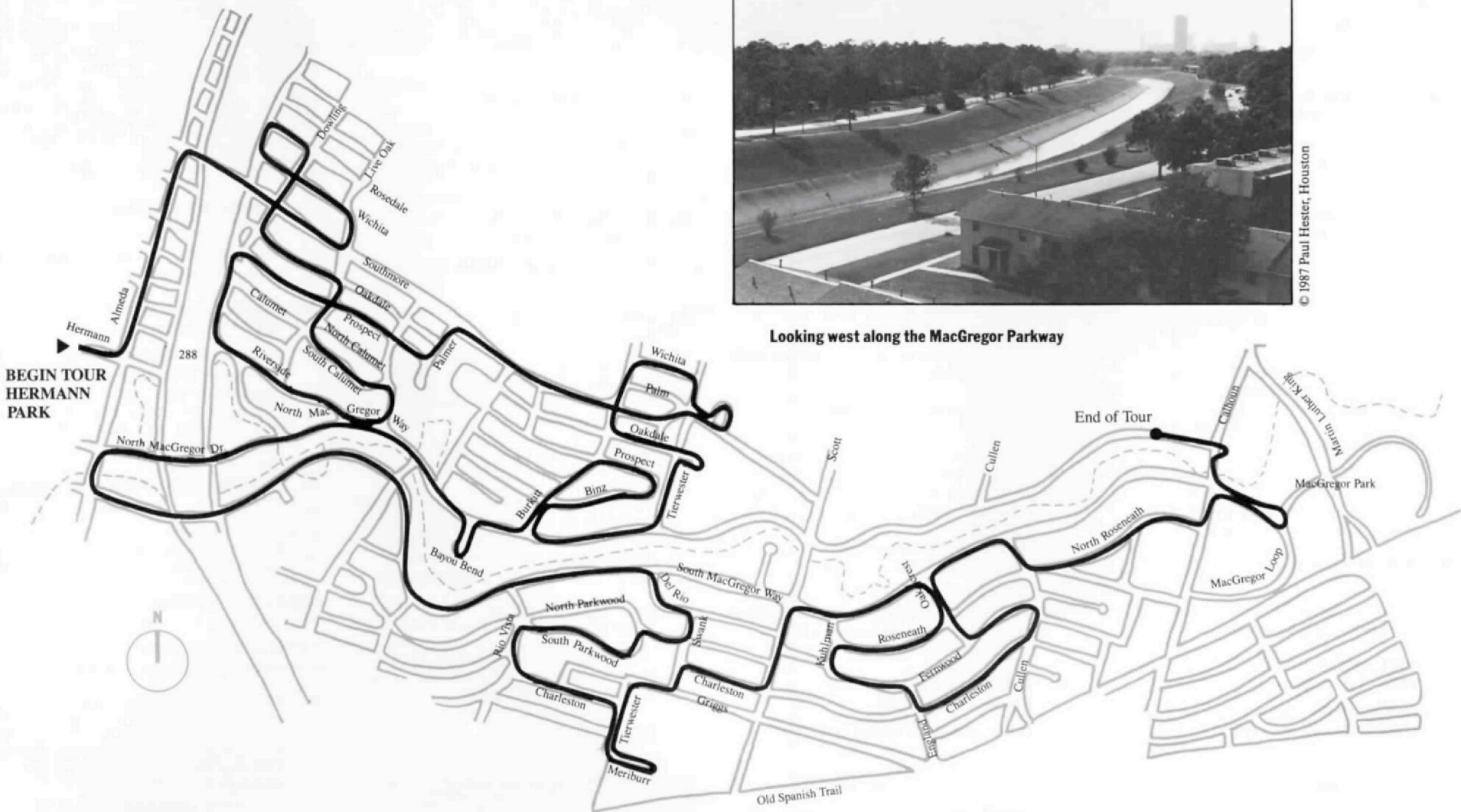


CiteSeeing



Riverside Terrace and Environs: An Architectural Tour

Stephen Fox

Historically, Riverside Terrace has been Houston's "other" River Oaks. It first attained this equivocal status in the 1930s when members of Houston's wealthiest Jewish families chose to build houses there. It maintains this identity today as the foremost neighborhood of Houston's black elite.

Riverside Terrace itself comprises 23 subdivisions platted between 1924 and 1946, which extend discontinuously along either side of Brays Bayou and the MacGregor Parkway from Alameda Road on the west to Calhoun Road on the east. These all were developed by Clarence M. Malone (1885-1960), cofounder and eventual president of the Guardian Trust Company, which financed much of this real estate activity. Several other developments flanked the northern sections of Riverside Terrace: Crescent Island (1926), along North MacGregor Drive, almost completely obliterated by SH-288; North MacGregor Oaks (1936), developed by Ben Taub to the east of Riverside Terrace, and Timber Crest (1940), which lies east of North MacGregor Oaks and is still marked by triumphant stone piers.

This area contains a notable array of houses, the work of such familiar figures in Houston architecture as John F. Staub, Birdsall P. Briscoe, and Joseph Finger. Particular to it are a group of spirited and distinctive modern houses of the early 1950s, notably those produced by the office of Bailey A. Swenson.

Special thanks for assistance in the preparation of this tour to W. H. Linnstaedter.

- 1

2020 Hermann Drive
Jewish Community Center
(now Hermann Regional Center)
1950/Lenard Gabert with W. Jackson Wisdom

Gabert had worked with MacKie & Kamrath on Temple Emanu-El and he and his design partner, Jack Wisdom, seem to have absorbed Kamrath's Wrightian inclination, evident especially in the center's horizontal emphasis.
- 2

5516 Alameda Road
Third Church of Christ, Scientist
1929/Henry F. Jonas & Tabor

J. Rodney Tabor leaned rather heavily on Elmer Grey's Christian Scientist church in Palo Alto, California when designing this exceptionally well-maintained Mediterranean number, with its recall of Ravenna.
- 3

5314-5302 Alameda Road
Patio Shops
1931/H.M. Sanford and B.W. Holtz

Alameda's answer to Main Street's Isabella Court: an exuberant Spanish-Mediterranean shopping center.
- 4

5202 Alameda Road
Houston Turn-Verein
1929/Joseph Finger

A triumph of art deco detailing, Finger's clubhouse for the city's oldest social club is in a reprehensible state of decay.
- 5

2428 Southmore Avenue
1928/Katharine B. Mott and Burns & James

Katharine Mott and her husband Harry came to Houston from Indianapolis in 1927 and set to work building a series of speculative houses of manorial style in River Oaks, Riverside Terrace, Edgemont, and Devonshire Place. Mrs. Mott designed the houses with the assistance of the Indianapolis architects Burns & James.
- 6


2504 Wichita Avenue
1930/W.D. Bordeaux

Bordeaux, best-known as the architect of the Isabella Court, here produced a trimly designed brick house, one of the first Houston examples of the Monterey style popular in the 1930s.
- 7

2221 Rosedale Avenue
1929/Joseph Finger

This block of Rosedale seems to have been the high-end district within the first section of Riverside Terrace. Finger's arcaded house makes up in scale and massing what it lacks in refined detail.
- 8

2620 South Calumet Drive
1936/Burns & James with Lenard Gabert



Among the survivors of Section 5, the most elite (and now most devastated) of the Riverside Terrace sections north of the bayou, is this elegant, asymmetrically massed French spread, built by the retail merchant Louis Leon. It is Burns & James's only Houston house not associated with Mrs. Mott.
- 9

2626 South Calumet Drive
1940/Robert C. Smallwood

A late, rather stripped-down example of the suburban manorial, which Clarence M. Malone had established as the preferred architectural genre in Section 5 with his own house at South Calumet and Live Oak, built in 1927 and pulled down in 1963.
- 10

2619 North Calumet Drive
1930/J.M. Glover

The '30s successor to the medieval manorial was the Southern manorial: the columned plantation house. Built for A.C. SoRelle, it now houses a neighborhood institution, The Groovy Grill.
- 11

2555 North MacGregor Way
1929

Occupying a pivotal site at the confluence of the parkway and Riverside Drive, this is one of the most engaging examples of the Riverside pastoral mode.
- 12

2627 Riverside Drive
1929/Katharine B. Mott with Burns & James

Mrs. Mott's characteristic mixture of stone and ornamental brick work is evident here.
- 13

2623 Riverside Drive
1936/Birdsall P. Briscoe

Briscoe's only house in Riverside Terrace was his last essay in the medieval manor house genre. Built for Israel Friedlander, founder of Gibraltar Savings & Loan Association.
- 14

2620 Riverside Drive
1928/Katharine B. Mott and Burns & James

A good example of Katharine Mott's adaptation of the picturesque manorial house to the exigencies of Houston's climate, with rooms pulled-out in long, thin wings to facilitate cross-ventilation. Occupied from the mid-'30s to the mid-'50s by specialty store cofounder Tobias Sakowitz and family.
- 15


2612 Riverside Drive
1929/Katharine B. Mott and Burns & James

The LaDet Motel, an emblem of Riverside Drive's unwelcome identity as Sugar Hill, is a late '70s adjunct to Katharine Mott's turreted Norman house.
- 16

2608 Riverside Drive
1936/Lenard Gabert

Gabert designed prodigiously in Riverside Terrace from the 1920s through the 1950s. Here he produced a gabled stone manor house, now obscured by a high wall. Across the street, at Riverside and Live Oak, once stood Joseph Finger's impressive Wesley West House, built in 1938 and demolished in 1963.
- 17

2521 Riverside Drive
1929/Charles A. Dieman



The corner turret and the three-story mirador make this house a local landmark.
- 18

2506 Riverside Drive
1936/Bailey A. Swenson

The first in a series of houses that Swenson designed for Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Proler and their children, this is a modernistic delight, complete with horizontal speed lines and a bull-nose corner that artfully acknowledges the Riverside-North MacGregor Way intersection.

- 19

5401 Palmer Street

1941/MacKie & Kamrath

The refreshing modernity of this slit-windowed, flat-roofed house has not been spoiled by later alterations.
- 20

3129 Southmore Avenue

St. James Church

1940/Dunaway & Jones

A small parish church souped-up with additions by Clovis Heimsath Associates (1972). The adjoining parish school is by Haywood Jordan McCowan.
- 21

3501 Southmore Avenue

Congregation Beth Yeshurun Synagogue

(now Lucian L. Lockhart Elementary School) 1949/Finger & Rustay

Of Joseph Finger's ambitious "Out-of-Phase" scheme for Beth Yeshurun, only one of the two wings that were to have flanked the central synagogue block was built.
- 22

3450 Wichita Avenue

1939

A compact, severely-detailed, flat-roofed brick house in the modernistic vein.
- 23

3401 Oakdale Avenue

1939/Claude E. Hooton

Hooton virtually reproduced here his 1937 house for Virginia and Randolph C. West on Dryden Road in Southgate.
- 24

3512 Oakdale Avenue

1959/John S. Chase

The architect's own house, it features a central well.
- 25

3504 Oakdale Avenue

1948/Wilson, Morris & Crain

Horizontality, which was the theme in this house by Ralph Anderson, premiated in the 1949 Houston Chapter AIA design awards. Dig the corrugated siding. Behind it, at Oakdale and North MacGregor Way, formerly lay the estate of Ann and Bernard Sakowitz (1940-1967).
- 26

3423 North MacGregor Way

1951

With its second-story, shed-roofed appendage, its contrast of horizontal strip and big picture windows, and its brick pylon wall staying the lateral thrust of its continuous eaves line, this Timber Crest contemporary is a genre classic.
- 27

3401 North MacGregor Way

1955

Flat-roofed bays faced with limestone and wood siding fan-out in a complexly stepped sequence.
- 28

3402 Binz Avenue

1968/John S. Chase

A late but contextually deferential example of flamboyant contemporary design.
- 29

3315 North MacGregor Way

1948/Bailey A. Swenson

A '40s Swing-style version of the turreted Norman manorial.
- 30

3303 North MacGregor Way

1950/Milton Foy Martin

This '50s contemporary was built by Cynthia and George P. Mitchell.
- 31

3226 North MacGregor Way

1949/MacKie & Kamrath

An austere house whose boxy masses are abruptly eroded by glazing.
- 32

5808 Bayou Bend

1950/MacKie & Kamrath

This discreet one-story house, like that at 31, lacks the overt Wrightian detail one expects of Kamrath.
- 33

2221 North MacGregor Drive

1942/MacKie & Kamrath

One of the few houses left in the Crescent Island subdivision. When published in *Architectural Record* in 1942, it was described as having excited neighborhood controversy for being so modern. Dreadful repainting obscures the salmon-colored brick.
- 34

3028 South MacGregor Way

1936/Robert C. Smallwood

The Wright F. Morrow House occupies one of the few estate-sized parcels remaining along the



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parkway. Lavishly documented in *Architectural Digest* upon completion, it more recently was used in the filming of "Liar's Moon."

- 35

3126 South MacGregor Way

1952/Bailey A. Swenson

Extensive glazing and counterthrust shed roofs make this a nifty '50s contemporary.
- 36

3302 South MacGregor Way

1937/John F. Staub

This Regency style house for Mr. and Mrs. Sellers J. Thomas appears rather stiff in comparison to Staub's customarily dexterous relation of massing and siting.
- 37

3314 South MacGregor Way

1984/Haywood Jordan McCowan

Like much of HJMcC's work this wood-sheathed, shed-roofed, three-story house reflects the influence of the San Antonio architect O'Neil Ford.
- 38

3448 South MacGregor Way

1954/Bailey A. Swenson

Another of the big contempo land cruisers.
- 39

3701 Rio Vista Drive

1982/Haywood Jordan McCowan

The addition of a freestanding garage in 1987 has compromised the clarity of this brick-faced, metal-roofed house.
- 40

3615 Parkwood Drive

1940/Joseph Finger

For the eldest of the Battelstein brothers, Abe, Finger produced this asymmetrically massed, classically detailed house.
- 41

3612 Parkwood Drive

1938/Joseph Finger

A companion house to 40 across the street, for the grocery company executive Abe Weingarten, in what was described at the time of its completion as a Charleston style.
- 42

3611 Parkwood Drive

1953/Bolton & Barnstone

Howard Barnstone described this contemporary style house, with its odd, pop-up clerestory band, as a "brick cottage."
- 43

3530 South Parkwood Drive

1952

The ultimate '50s rambler, exhibiting the characteristic second-floor protrusion that Bailey Swenson called the "mother-in-law room," plus split-faced limestone facing, picture windows, a carport, and hulking horizontality.
- 44

3430 South Parkwood Drive

1942/Lenard Gabert

Gabert's entry into the big-biggie league was this austere house with its bowed classical portico.
- 45

3418 South Parkwood Drive

1938/Henry A. Stube

The Lufkin lumberman Joseph H. Kurth, Jr. built this Southern plantation type house, the first house in the Parkwood district of Riverside Terrace.
- 46

3402 South Parkwood Drive

1951/Philip G. Willard

A low-slung contemporary house set far back on its luxuriantly undulating site.
- 47

3403 North Parkwood Drive

1953

One of the most exuberant '50s modern houses in Riverside Terrace, this concrete-framed number, built for furniture company executive Samuel Finger, looks as though it is about to take flight.



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- 48

3403 Charleston Circle

1952/Bailey A. Swenson

The retirement home of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Proler (18), this was Swenson's homage to the Prairie school.
- 49

3417 Charleston Circle

1950/Bailey A. Swenson

A structural tourette-de-force in tubular porch struts.
- 50

3605 Meriburr Lane

1956/Herb Greene

This extraordinary house - triangular in plan, built around a tree, its walls hung with roofing tiles - has been allowed to fall into a woeful state of deterioration.
- 51

3707 Charleston Street

1939/C.D. Hutsell

The Dallas architect-builder Charles D. Hutsell and his brother A.E. constructed this house in C.D.'s quirky Mediterranean manner. Enclosure of the front porch conceals one of Hutsell's distinctive egg-shaped arched windows.
- 52

3711 Charleston Street

1940/C.D. Hutsell

Also altered, this house nonetheless gives a clearer demonstration of Hutsell's idiosyncratic Mediterranean cottage style.
- 53

3716 Charleston Street

c. 1905

Theo H. Kuhlman, a carpenter, belonged to a family whose dairy farms covered much of what became the southern sections of Riverside Terrace. Being in the right place at the right time, he was able to have his cottage incorporated into the subdivision.



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- 54

3734 Charleston Street

1940/MacKie & Kamrath

Before Modernism, MacKie & Kamrath occasionally designed historically informed period houses. Like several others that they did, this one evinces a distinctly mannered approach to the Georgian colonial look.
- 55

3807 South MacGregor Way

1953/Flatow, Moore, Bryan & Fairburn

The Albuquerque architect Max Flatow designed this house for his brother's family. Its flat roof could be flooded to provide evaporative cooling. Note the jaunty cantilevers and the infill panel façade.
- 56

3819 South MacGregor Way

1954/Bailey A. Swenson

This was one of Swenson's best houses, designed for his patron, contractor, and business associate Leon Green to take advantage of its sloping site. Bland repainting diminishes its vigor.
- 57

3904 South MacGregor Way

1936/John F. Staub

One of Staub's first efforts in the Texas farmhouse genre. Built for J. Coulter Means, uncle of Treasury Secretary James A. Baker III, it has not been treated kindly by its present occupants, who remain here in violation of the single-family provision in the deed restrictions
- 58

4000 South MacGregor Way

1939/Joseph Finger

Weingarten grocery-chain founder Joe Weingarten had Finger design for his family the largest house in Riverside Terrace, a French manorial style suburban chateau, located on an estate-sized lot.
- 59

3934 Roseneath Drive

1949/Bailey A. Swenson

Another of Swenson's Proler houses, this features an aggressively bowed picture window bay. Across the street, in the dense vegetation, lies the old Kuhlman family cemetery.



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- 60

3939 Roseneath Drive

1978/O'Neil Gregory, Jr.

The architect's own house, a discreet cluster of wood-sheathed boxes.
- 61

3912 Roseneath Drive

1956/Leo Kern, builder

Kern, a home builder, constructed for his family the ultimate '50s ranchero dream house, replete with zany cantilevers, Quién es más macho? picture windows, multiple floor levels, interior planting troughs, and a glass-block bar on axis with the front door.
- 62

4216 Charleston Street

1950

Cranked in plan in response to its corner site, this house combines brick and concrete-block construction. The garage is at basement level.
- 63

4216 Fernwood Drive

1949/Bailey A. Swenson

Long and low, this - another of the Proler houses - is an expanded version of the house at 62.
- 64

4102 South MacGregor Way

1949/Irving R. Klein & Associates

A brick and shingled contemporary style house, it has been slightly compromised by subsequent alterations.
- 65

4210 South MacGregor Way

1939/Dehnert & Vesey

A substantial neo-Georgian house.
- 66

4505 North Roseneath Drive

1950/Bailey A. Swenson

The expressed stair pops the mother-in-law room up above the long, low eaves line of the first story.
- 67

4511 North Roseneath Drive

1952

The same formula as at 66, only here carried out in stone, aluminum, and curved corrugated glass. The glazed void of the stairwell is especially well handled and the palm trees lend just the right touch.



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- 68

4506 North Roseneath Drive

1954/Bolton & Barnstone

The mother-in-law room becomes the maid's quarters atop the garage while the one-story house encloses a central garden court. Major rooms are oriented toward a south-facing rear garden.
- 69

4619 North Roseneath Drive

1953/Bailey A. Swenson

Movemented massing, multiple materials, and bright polychromy are the distinguishing traits. The deck above the carport is an addition.
- 70

South MacGregor Way and MacGregor Loop Drive

MacGregor Park Clubhouse

1931/A.E. Nutter

In the spirit of Nutter's Mediterranean clubhouses in Hermann and Mason parks.
- 71

South MacGregor Way and MacGregor Loop Drive

Henry F. MacGregor Monument

1937/William Ward Watkin

Watkin designed this cenotaph commemorating the real estate developer Henry F. MacGregor, in whose memory the 110-acre park and the bayou parkway properties were donated to the City of Houston in 1926. Watkin also was responsible for the stone piers that mark the park's several entrances.
- 72

5069 Calhoun Road

1939/Lenard Gabert

Gabert's version of the Texas farmhouse, located on the one estate still left on the north side of the bayou.

End of Tour. For a thorough account of the history of Riverside Terrace and surrounding neighborhoods, see Barry J. Kaplan, "Race, Income and Ethnicity: Residential Change in a Houston Community, 1920-1970," *The Houston Review*, 3 (Winter, 1981), 178-202.