

HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY OF THE CLIFF DWELLER HOUSES ON RESERVOIR HILL



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The City of Tulsa, Oklahoma

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ABSTRACT

This report presents the findings of the intensive level survey of seventeen resources in the Oak Cliff Addition of Tulsa, Oklahoma.¹ The survey was undertaken by Cathy Ambler, Principal Investigator, Tulsa, in conjunction with Elizabeth Rosin and the staff of Rosin Preservation, Kansas City, Missouri. The survey and historical research on Oak Cliff, conducted between January and June of 2012, provide a context within which to analyze the survey findings for their potential eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as contributing resources within a historic district.

The survey inventoried seventeen buildings. Of these resources, none are listed in the National Register. No individual resources appear potentially eligible for individual listing in the National Register; however, the surveyed resources appear to form a single historic district that meets the criteria for listing in the National Register. Within this district, sixteen of the seventeen surveyed buildings would be contributing. One resource is non-contributing due to alterations. The district boundaries also include seven resources that do not share the same associations with the Oak Cliff development and would therefore also be considered non-contributing. These seven resources were not included in the Oak Cliff survey, and will need to be formally evaluated for eligibility if an Oak Cliff historic district nomination is prepared. The report identifies the historic context for Oak Cliff which provides a basis for determining eligibility. It also connects the resources to a shared historical background, time frame, and geographic area.

¹ The original number of resources associated with the Oak Cliff development was eighteen, but 261 West Victoria Street was demolished.

INTRODUCTION

Oak Cliff is a unique area in Tulsa. One of multiple additions developed during Tulsa's oil boom, its collection of Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival and Pueblo Revival houses distinguishes it from the majority of residential development that occurred in the community during this period. At a time when most neighborhoods were defined by houses with Minimal Traditional, Tudor, or Craftsman features, the Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival and Pueblo Revival houses that dominate Oak Cliff set it apart. Within the survey area are houses of other styles that have commonalities with the Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival and Pueblo Revival buildings -- all were constructed within a very short period of time and they share a setting that was designed to take full advantage of the Reservoir Hill site. Oak Cliff was platted by a group of investors that included brothers Cass and John Mayo. The Mayo brothers are well-known today for the four buildings they constructed in downtown Tulsa, all of which are listed in the National Register.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. To identify, record, and evaluate through intensive level architectural/historic survey those individual properties and potential districts in the project area that, on the basis of age and integrity, meet the eligibility criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and to substantiate such assessments.
2. To identify and characterize those portions of the project area which, on the basis of insufficient age or integrity, warrant no further study to exclude them from consideration for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and to substantiate such assessments.
3. To identify and annotate all reference material necessary for completing National Register nominations of properties and districts located in the study area.

PROJECT AREA

The study area includes seventeen individual resources within the Oak Cliff Addition. These single-family residences sit along the spine of Reservoir Hill. All were built prior to 1933 and express elements of the Spanish Colonial/ Mission Revival and Pueblo Revival architectural styles. The gray line in Figure 1 shows the division between the Oak Cliff Addition and the Oak Terrace Addition to the south. One of the surveyed resources occupies two lots, one in Oak Cliff and one in Oak Terrace. Surveyed properties front North Elwood Avenue, West Woodrow Place, West Victoria Street, and North Denver Place. Figure 1 shows the location of the surveyed resources.

The resources' architecture is unique among other additions in Tulsa for its distinct expression of the Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival and Pueblo Revival styles. Most commonly found in the southwestern United States, these styles are characterized by flat roofs, stucco finish, canales, battered walls, blunt angles at wall junctions, and vigas. Some of the surveyed resources illustrate variations of the more common Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival styles executed with elements that distinctly reference the southwestern influences.

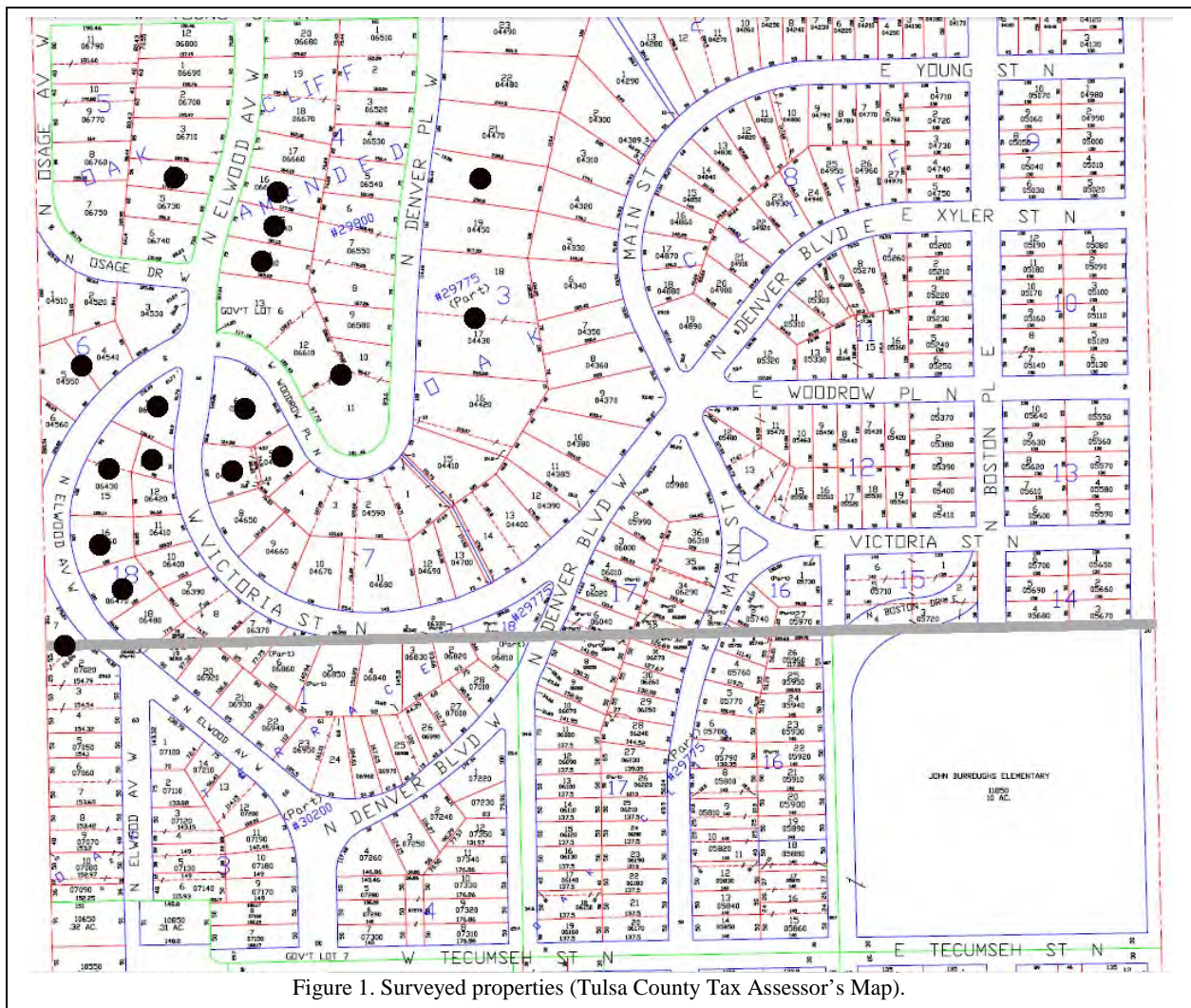


Figure 1. Surveyed properties (Tulsa County Tax Assessor's Map).

METHODOLOGY

The survey was limited to seventeen properties in the Oak Cliff Addition that share a period of construction and a particular genre of architecture. These resources run along the spine of Reservoir Hill, and share a specific topography. They are geographically separated from the rest of the Oak Cliff Addition, which lies at the base of Reservoir Hill.

FIELD SURVEY

The project began with digital field photography of all the resources to be surveyed and a visual inspection of landscape characteristics within the survey area. Two photographs were taken of each resource. They were printed in 4- by- 6-inch black and white format, labeled and submitted according to SHPO survey guidelines.

DATA ENTRY

Information from the field survey was entered into a Microsoft Access database. Survey forms, including an architectural description, were prepared for each resource following the SHPO template.² All designations and codes used on the survey forms meet those defined by SHPO in the “Architectural/Historic Resource Survey: A Field Guide.”³ Architectural styles and terminology also conform to the guidelines provided by Virginia and Lee McAlester in *A Field Guide to American Houses*.⁴

Archival research provided background information about the planners, dates of construction, early residents of Oak Cliff, and the development context that spawned such a creative and unique residential area. Research examined the Tulsa City/County Public Library collections and vertical files, *Polk’s City Directories*, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*, Tulsa County Register of Deeds Land Records, the sketches of architect Lawrence Blue at the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, reference materials on the internet, and pertinent National Register Nominations. Data from the 1930 U. S. Census provided information about the residents of Oak Cliff at the time the surveyed houses were constructed.⁵ The context was considered within themes established in the "Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office Comprehensive Historic Preservation Planning Process and Historic Context Development," for Region 3 which includes Tulsa County.⁶

A neighborhood meeting was held with residents of Oak Cliff and the Reservoir Hill Addition on March 22, 2012 at the home of Rhonda Hinrichs, President of the neighborhood association. At the meeting Amanda DeCort, Tulsa Preservation Planner informed the neighborhood about the survey and answered questions about the National Register of Historic Places. Cathy Ambler also attended, and shared with residents information she had gathered about Oak Cliff. She also asked residents about the availability of

² The survey form template can be accessed at <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/shpofirms.htm>.

³ The “Architectural/Historic Resource Survey Field Guide” can be accessed at <http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/architsurveys.htm>.

⁴ Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

⁵ The 1930s census information was provided by Gretchen Hannefield, resident and historian of Oak Cliff. She is also the Volunteer Coordinator/Friends Liaison at the Tulsa City/County Public Library.

⁶ George O. Carney, et al. “The Historic context for Energy Development Management. Region #3, 1897-1930,” Department of Geography, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1987, provides an excellent background for the discovery of oil in the Tulsa area, how it was produced and resources that are related to oil production between these years.

historic photos and sought stories about the neighborhood that might not be readily available from traditional archival sources.

DETERMINING NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY

The National Park Service requires that properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places 1) be fifty years or older; 2) retain architectural integrity; and 3) meet one (or more) of the four Criteria for Evaluation. Two criteria are relevant to this survey: Criterion A for properties associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history; and Criterion C for resources that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. Once the historical research, survey forms and historic context of Oak Cliff were completed, eligibility of each resource was evaluated and boundaries of a potential historic district were defined.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Prior to the discoveries of oil in 1901 and 1905, Tulsa was a small town along the Arkansas River, economically dependent on ranching, agriculture and railroad transportation. The historical period of oil dominance in Tulsa was wild and chaotic, but it created the city's most important early industry. With Red Fork, Glenn Pool and other nearby wells, Tulsa became a hub of oil-related activities. As Angie Debo observed, by 1916 streams of wealth were pouring into Tulsa not only from Glenn Pool and Red Fork but also from the Cushing Oil Field.⁷

Oil money reshaped the city through far-reaching growth. Population figures reflect the growth Tulsa experienced: the town grew from 1,390 residents in 1900 to 18,182 residents by 1910. The population of Tulsa reached 72,075 in 1920; further oil field discoveries and the rising price of oil pushed the 1930 population to 141,258.⁸ Geographically, the city more than doubled in size during this period, growing from seven square miles to 20 square miles.⁹

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
~1390	18,182	72,075	141,258	142,157	182,740	261,685

Figure 2: Population Growth in the City of Tulsa

Oil money caused radical changes to the physical town, altering it from a densely built urban core to a far flung city that expanded rapidly with the development of new housing areas. Helping spread the city outward was the increase in automobile ownership. It was an exciting time for developers because such extreme growth assured not only a demand for their new houses, but also their accumulation of personal wealth. Oak Cliff was one of hundreds of new housing subdivisions platted in Tulsa during the 1920s. Figure 3 shows areas of development by decades.

Most early housing areas outside of downtown Tulsa surrounded the city core on the north, east and south. To the west, the Arkansas River formed a physical barrier to expansion. The city tended to grow outward in rings of development, but with new additions and subdivisions hopping over vacant land that would be filled later. Brady Heights, named for early Tulsa entrepreneur Tate Brady, was one of the first additions just north of downtown and one of the city's oldest "silk stocking" residential areas, where young professionals and oilmen owned homes.¹⁰ Platted in 1904, this area was a fashionable district from territorial days until the 1920s.

⁷ Angie Debo, *Tulsa: from Creek Town to Oil Capital* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), 99.

⁸ Debo, *ibid.*, 84, 87. Also see John W. Morris, Charles R. Goins, and Edwin C. McReynolds. *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 83.

⁹ "A History of Tulsa Annexation," Research Staff at the Tulsa City/County Public Library, 2004, 8.

¹⁰ Tulsa Preservation Commission, "Brady Heights II," *The 1997 Tulsa Historic Preservation Resource Document*, Kent Shell, editor (Tulsa, OK: City of Tulsa's Urban Development Department, 1997), 135-6.

As the city continued to expand, residential areas spread north of Brady Heights. In the vicinity of Cheyenne Park, most of the thirty-two subdivisions were platted between 1917 and 1922 at the height of Tulsa's oil boom. Cheyenne Park links Brady Heights to Reservoir Hill and was popular with working or middle class residents.

Relatively narrow lots were the norm in the Cheyenne Park subdivisions, and while many houses had garages, they were detached and constructed at the rear of each lot.¹¹ This pattern differs considerably from Oak Cliff, where the surveyed houses occupied sprawling lots and most had attached garages for multiple vehicles.¹²

OAK CLIFF ADDITION

Oak Cliff was platted March 5, 1923.¹³ Even before the subdivision was platted, the *Tulsa Daily World* ran a full-page advertisement on December 17, 1922 publicly announcing lots for sale in this eighty-acre "Sub-division De Luxe." The ad described the advantages this residential area would offer (see Figure 3). It also emphasized Oak Cliff's exclusive nature.

Comparing it to an area in Maple Ridge, one of the city's wealthiest enclaves, the ad stated, "Oak Cliff is the closest-in highly restricted property that will ever again be placed upon the Tulsa market. Relatively

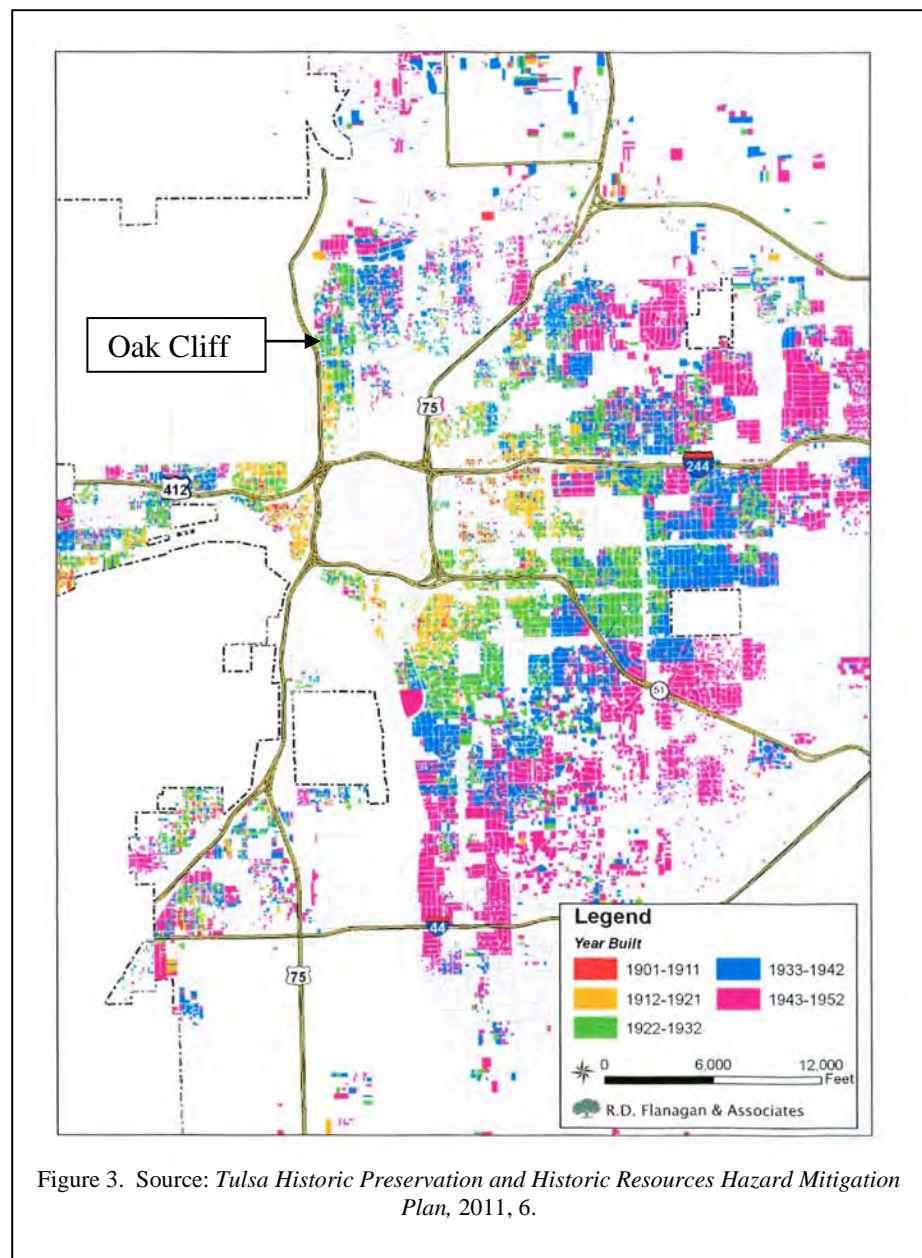


Figure 3. Source: *Tulsa Historic Preservation and Historic Resources Hazard Mitigation Plan*, 2011, 6.

¹¹ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps*, Vol. 1, 1915, Republished 1939. Sheet 78. This area did not have alleys, thus, there were curb cuts with drives to the rear garages.

¹² Tulsa Preservation Commission, "Cheyenne Park," *ibid.*, 145-148. Two exceptions in Oak Cliff are where the steepness of the hills made a drive to the house difficult. These garages are on the street with the house sitting on the hill above.

¹³ The area was originally a Cherokee allotment to R. B. Lloyd.

speaking, it is the same distance from Third and Main Streets as twenty-first and Madison in the Sunset addition.”¹⁴

Perhaps more important distinction was the location of Oak Cliff, high above the rest of the city. The advertisement carried photos of the undeveloped landscape that set the area apart as a desirable place to reside:

Oak Cliff lies on the summit of one of the highest hills that encircles the city on the north and northwest, being 875’ above sea level. This insures coolness in the heat of the summer and freedom from the dust and smoke that usually accompanies city life. In all large cities the highest class additions are built on table lands and this is the first time in the history of Tulsa that investors and home owners have been privileged to purchase property combining so many attractive features.¹⁵

The Oak Cliff addition was laid out by Kansas City landscape architects Hare and Hare, one of the most influential Midwestern landscape architecture firms of the 1920s.¹⁶ The company is best known for designing Kansas City’s Country Club Plaza and the Philbrook gardens in Tulsa. They also prepared a plan for the Oklahoma City Civic Center, and laid out the Tulsa neighborhoods of Sunset Park and Sunset Terrace, both in the Maple Ridge addition. Oak Cliff exemplifies their design aesthetic. The plat features curved streets that follow the topography; the large lots have broad street frontage and deep set-backs; and landscapes incorporate native stone. All of these features set the addition apart from traditional grid-based developments, which could be visually boring or scrubbed of



Figure 4. *Tulsa Daily World*, December 17, 1922

¹⁴ The plat was amended in July 1924 to reconfigure the lot lines, adding six more lots to Block 4 and three more lots to Block 5.

¹⁵ *Tulsa Daily World*, 17 December 1922.

¹⁶ The firm is nationally recognized as one of the pioneers such as “Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., James Surgis Pray, John Nolen, Arthur Comey, Earle Draper and Henry Wright – all of whom built on landscape architecture’s dual heritage as fine art and a profession of social environmental reform to establish the planning profession in the United States.” See Kenneth I. Helphand, “Henry Vincent Hubbard,” *American Landscape Architecture: Designers and Places*, edited by William H. Tishler, (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1989), 68.

landscape elements that could raise costs or complicate construction. Residential developers were mostly pragmatic, developing on flat land when they could, where it was easy and most economical to build. Oak Cliff's challenging hilly setting distinguished it from the norm, but Hare and Hare's design embraced these attributes with roads that respected the topography and maximized the potential for views.¹⁷

The addition was platted by the Oak Cliff Realty Company, led by president Theodore Cox.¹⁸ Other company leaders were Cass A. Mayo, John D. Mayo, K. M. Vaughn, and Thomas B. Merrill.¹⁹ The company had offices in the Mayo Building. A real estate developer and oil producer, Theodore Cox was part-owner of the Ridgewood Subdivision and of Tracy Park, platted east of downtown in 1919 on a remnant of the Nola Childers Tracy allotment. Cox and partner Harry Castle built homes in Tracy Park as well as in Ridgewood.²⁰ K. M. Vaughn was in construction and built one of the more historic houses in the Gillette Historic District, the Tulsa World Model Home of 1923.²¹ He also was the owner of K. M. Vaughn lumber yard, located in the industrial area of East Sixth Street. An engineer by training, Thomas B. Merrill was secretary of the Oak Cliff Realty Company. He lived in Oak Cliff at 222 West Denver Place.²²

Perhaps the most well known members of the Oak Cliff Realty Company were brothers John and Cass Mayo.²³ Resources note that John Mayo was involved in the Oak Cliff Realty Company, but he may have served only as an early investor. The names of Cass Mayo and his wife Allene appear on land records associated with Oak Cliff.²⁴

Cass and Allene Mayo came to Tulsa in 1903. Shortly thereafter Cass's brother John followed from their family home in Missouri. Before coming to Tulsa, Cass worked for a Dallas real estate firm, while John worked in a furniture store in Clinton, Missouri.²⁵ Together, in 1904, the brothers opened a small furniture store in rented space on South Main Street, using their meager savings and a loan from their grandmother.²⁶ They obtained their furniture inventory on credit, but as Tulsa began to experience extraordinary growth the brothers' business began to prosper. The continued growth in furniture sales allowed them to erect a building of their own – the Mayo Building (NRIS #08001152) – which they began in 1909.

¹⁷ Hare and Hare's Oak Cliff records are at the Western Historical Manuscript Collection in Kansas City, and they note that the firm was working with the 6-7% grade from the "main road" to the reservoir. Other of their notes concern the way a block is organized because of the steep hillside. A photo of an Oak Cliff linen plan shows street names, block and lot numbers, trees and shrubs. This information was communicated by Rachel Nugent, Rosin Preservation, via e-mail to Cathy Ambler, February 8, 2012, after a visit to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection at the University of Missouri-Kansas City to review at Hare and Hare archival materials. The set-backs are shown on the plat filed at the Tulsa County Land Records, and along North Denver Place, they are not as deep as they are elsewhere in the addition because of the change in grade to the east.

¹⁸ Land records indicate Cox purchased land in the area of Oak Cliff by 1918 (Book 14, Section 26, Township 20, Range 12). It is unknown if he sought out others that would be eventually involved in Oak Cliff.

¹⁹ R. M. McClintock, "Tulsa – A Story of Achievement," *Tulsa Tribune*, 1924, 90.

²⁰ Kathy Keith, National Register Nomination, NRIS #82003707, Tracy Park Historic District, Section 8, 1.

²¹ http://www.livingplaces.com/OK/Tulsa_County/Tulsa_City/Gillette_Historic_District.html (referenced May 8, 2012)

²² *Polk's Tulsa City Directories*, 1923, 1926, 1929.

²³ Cathy Ambler, National Register Nomination for the Mayo Building, NRIS #08001152, Section 8, 9-11.

²⁴ Tulsa County Registrar of Deeds. Early plats are in alphabetical order in separate land record books. Oak Cliff blocks and lots are shared with other "O" plats.

²⁵ "Mayo Remembers Wagon Days," *Tulsa Tribune*, November 15, 1971.

²⁶ As many furniture store owners did, the brothers also operated an undertaking parlor for a short period of time. *Burkhart's Tulsa City Directory* (Tulsa, OK: Burkhart's Printing and Stationery, 1909), 307.

The Mayos' furniture business and office leasing created increased income for the brothers and helped them finance the construction of other buildings in downtown Tulsa. Their second building was the Petroleum Building (NRIS #82003706) at Fifth Street and South Boulder (1921). In 1925, the brothers built the Mayo Hotel (NRIS #80003303), the most modern and luxurious hotel in Tulsa at that time. The brothers were now large land owners in downtown Tulsa and also held oil interests.²⁷ They sold their furniture business in 1935 in order to manage their extensive real estate holdings through their management firm, Mayos, Incorporated. John managed the Mayo Hotel after it was constructed, and Cass managed the rental space in the Mayo and Petroleum Buildings as well as their other properties. In 1950, the last building with the Mayo name was constructed, the Mayo Motor Inn, a parking garage (NRIS # 08000850). They also owned the Sears and Harris Building. In 1952 *The Tulsa World* described the brothers' real estate holdings as "some of the most extensive ... in Tulsa."²⁸ Oak Cliff was among their extensive properties.

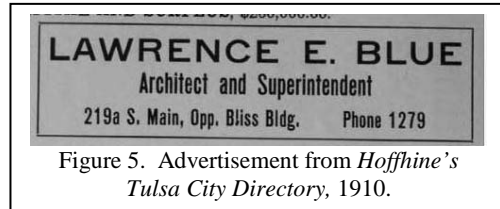


Figure 5. Advertisement from *Hoffhine's Tulsa City Directory*, 1910.

When the Mayo Building underwent rehabilitation in 2007-2008, preliminary sketches for the Mayo Hotel, the Mayo Building, and the Oak Cliff houses were found in the basement. The Oak Cliff plans were drawn by Lawrence E. Blue (AIA 1874-1963) and Charles Stevens Dilbeck (AIA 1907-1990), both Tulsa architects. The Dilbeck drawings were for a Dr. Fred Glass house in Owasso, Oklahoma. The Blue tracing paper sketches, however, related specifically to Oak Cliff.

The connection between Lawrence Blue and the Mayos may have begun when Blue designed John Mayo's residence at 1401 South Cheyenne, c. 1915.²⁹ He must have worked closely

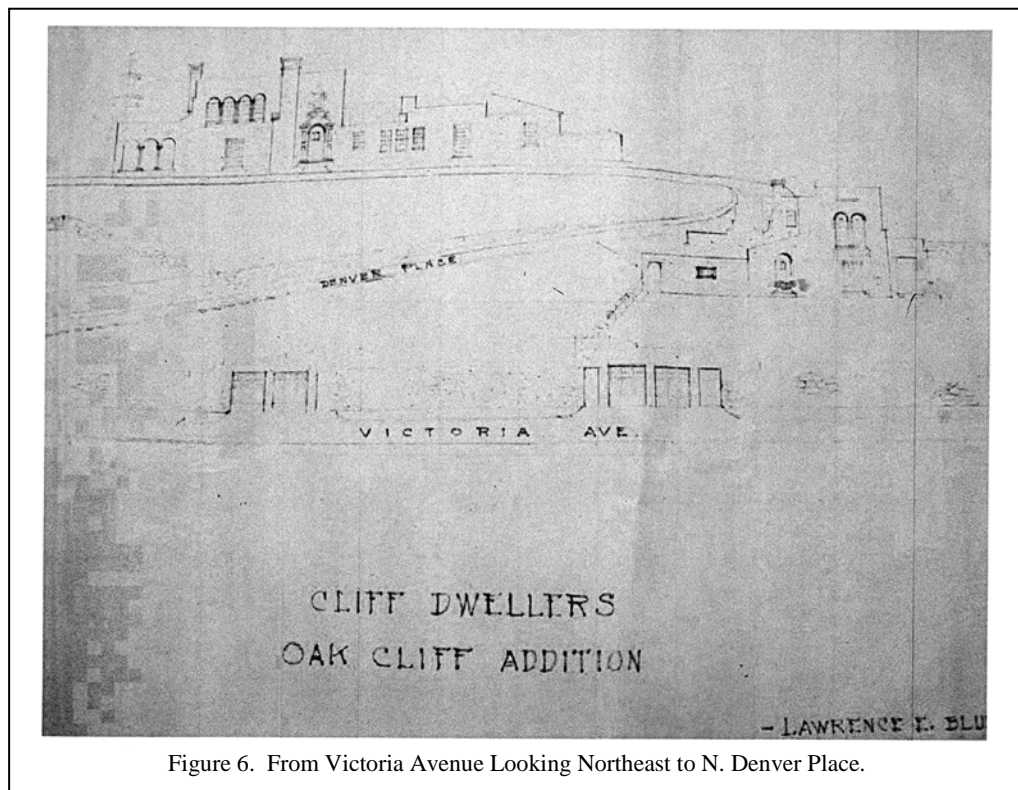


Figure 6. From Victoria Avenue Looking Northeast to N. Denver Place.

²⁷ Tulsa City-County Library, Vertical File: Mayos. John Mayo died October 29, 1972. Cass Mayo died September 10, 1949. See "Cass A. Mayo, Tulsa Pioneer, Builder, Dies," *Tulsa Tribune*, September 10, 1949, and "Cass Mayo, Pioneer Tulsa Builder, Dies; Rites Pending," *Tulsa World*, September 11, 1949.

²⁸ Tulsa City-County Library, Vertical File: Mayos. Also see "Mayo Name Closely Linked with History of this City," *Tulsa World*, August 17, 1952.

²⁹ Cynthia Savage, "Intensive Level History Survey of the Riverview Neighborhood," September 1, 2005, 85.

with both John and Cass, however. While he did not prepare the final plans for the Mayo Motor Inn, extant sketches show he was involved with the early design for that building, although Leon Senter is credited as the architect.³⁰ Blue also designed the Cass Mayo house at 2301 South Boston, c. 1925.

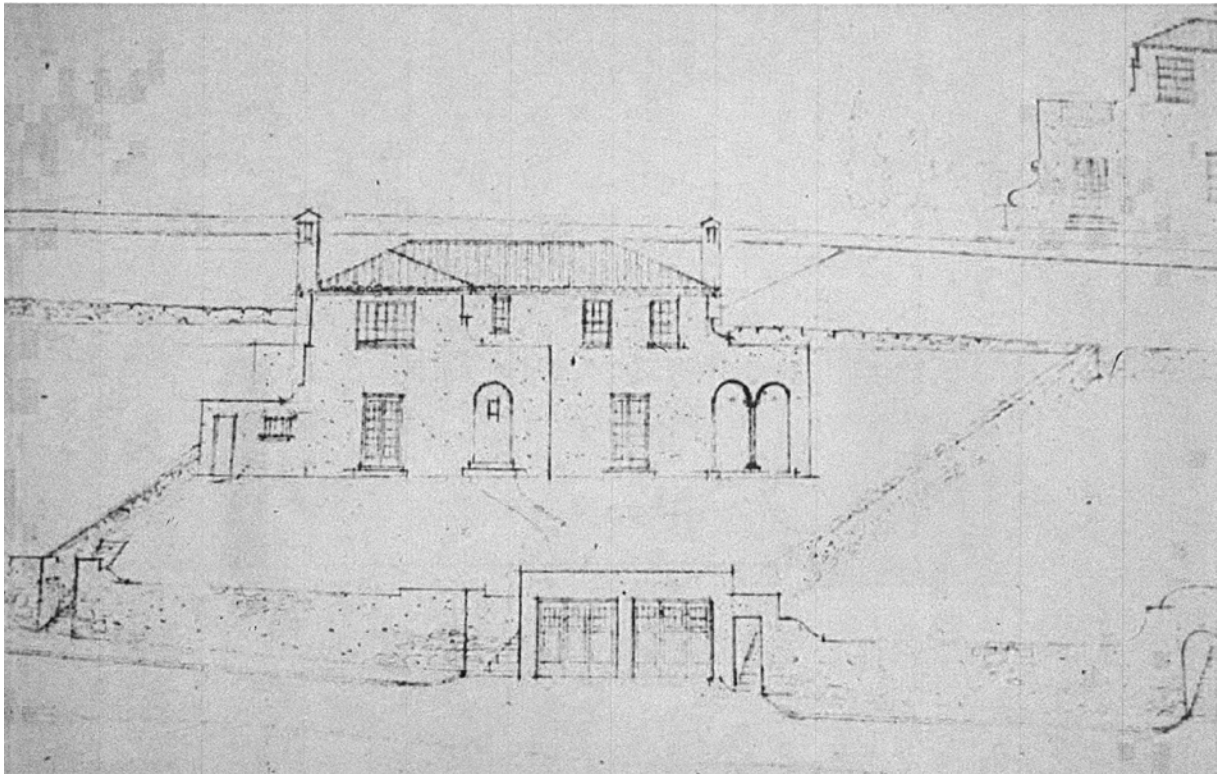


Figure 7. Hillside House with Street-side Garages.

Blue's sketches for the Oak Cliff residences are called "Cliff Dwellers". His drawings carefully addressed the hilly nature of the Oak Cliff Addition as he worked multi-car garages into hillsides when they could not be included with the homes on flatter ground (see Figures 6 and 7). While the drawings are undated, the houses Blue sketched are best characterized as Spanish Eclectic, suggesting that they predate his drawings for individual houses in Oak Cliff, which are more typically Pueblo Revival.

Whether the Mayos or Blue chose the uniquely Southwestern architectural genre for Oak Cliff is unknown, but the neighborhood did develop with a collection of



Figure 8. 2221 North Denver Place

³⁰ Derek H. Lee, archivist & historian for the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture. Interview with Cathy Ambler, May 9, 2012.

houses of Pueblo-style similar to those Blue proposed. The neighborhood brochure for Reservoir Hill indicates that the Mayos constructed “several” model houses within the addition, and Blue’s sketches may have provided preliminary ideas for these seed houses.³¹ This would have been common practice. Like most developers the Oak Cliff Corporation realized that it would be easier to draw public interest in purchasing lots with one or two houses to view. The sprawling Pueblo Revival house at 2221 N. Denver Place (Figure 8) was one of the Oak Cliff model houses.

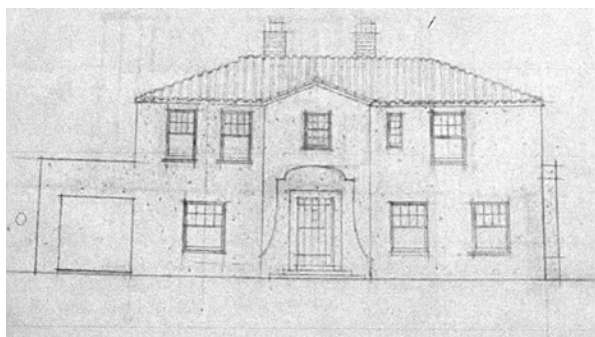


Figure 9. House sketch by Lawrence Blue



Figure 10. 2151 North Elwood Avenue, c. 1929

While none of the extant houses in Oak Cliff match Blue’s drawings exactly, the houses at 230 West Woodrow, 2151 North Elwood, and 2145 North Elwood bear a close resemblance. Figures 9 and 10 juxtapose a Blue sketch with a historic photo (c. 1929) of 2151 North Elwood.³² Both the sketch and photo show the north elevation.³³ These houses are very similar despite the different architectural styles. Blue may have accommodated the change by dressing the basic plan in a different exterior style. Figures

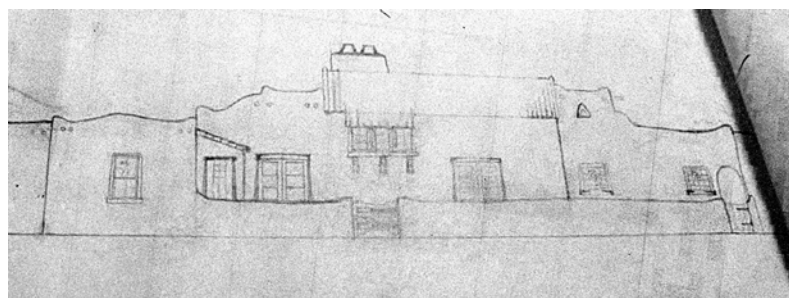


Figure 12. Sketch by Lawrence Blue, 2145 North Elwood Avenue

11 and 12 compare 2145 North Elwood with another sketch by Blue (c. 1929).

The original residents of Oak Cliff were generally well off; some had

servants, although two houses had early renters. Early residents included a contractor, a manager at the Dicky Ashby Fountain Company, an auditor for Skelly Oil, a real estate agent, an architect, the president of W.H. Owens and Company, a Vice President of John Winemiller Corporation, a construction engineer for



Figure 11. 2145 North Elwood Avenue

³¹ City of Tulsa Preservation Commission, Urban Development Department, A Neighborhood History of Tulsa’s Historic Reservoir Hill,” 1999, 7. At the public meeting held March 22, 2012, neighbors supported the idea that these were seed houses built by the Mayos.

³² The photo is courtesy of Rhonda Hinrichs who owns 2151 N. Elwood.

³³ Historic photos were provided by Gretchen Hannefield. This photo is c. 1929.

Black Sivals and Bryson, a heating and plumbing contractor, an electrical contractor, a pharmacy owner (in the Mayo Hotel), Thomas Merrill (secretary to the Oak Cliff Corporation), and a widow.³⁴ Many residents lived in the neighborhood for decades. Over time, many of the newer residents worked at Tulsa oil companies in positions ranging from division managers, to pilots, clerks and geologists. Tulsa artist Joe Sigall moved to the neighborhood in the late 1940s.

The Great Depression brought a halt to construction in Oak Cliff after the initial wave of houses were built in the mid-to late 1920s. The 1930 census shows only one more house in the survey area at that time (261 West Victoria); that house is no longer extant. The 1939 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* (Figure 13) shows only the few houses in the addition that were part of this survey. It was not until after World War II that interest in the neighborhood revived, although only twelve more houses were constructed near the survey area before 1962. Most of these were in the Ranch House style.³⁵

As the 1922 advertisement for Oak Cliff noted, the addition was restricted to white

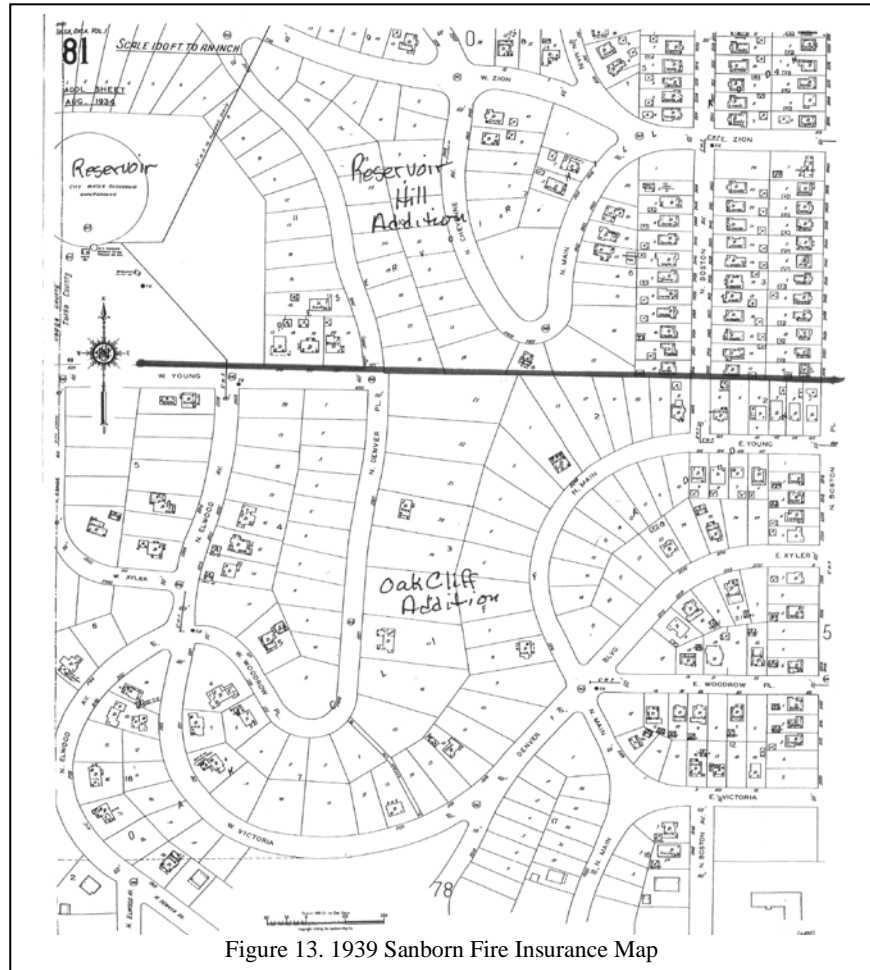


Figure 13. 1939 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

residents. That began to change in the 1950s when non-whites began to buy houses in and around Reservoir Hill and Oak Cliff. Resident Warren Weldon, who lived in Reservoir Hill for more than 37 years, noted in 1993 that the area experienced “white-flight”.³⁶ The same difficulties occurred in the Oak Cliff area. When one resident moved, he refused to sell his house to anyone who was not Caucasian and

³⁴ Gretchen Hannefield provided Federal 1930 census data on the early residents of Oak Cliff. One house in Oak Cliff at 2247 N. Denver Place is known as the Glass House. In the “Neighborhood History of Tulsa’s Historic Reservoir Hill,” the house, c. 1919, is believed to be constructed by Dr. Fred Glass, founder of the Glass-Nelson Clinic in Tulsa. However, land records show no ownership by Dr. Glass of any property before or after Oak Cliff was platted. In 1920, a Merrit J. Glass had a contract with Rachel M. Lloyd to purchase land, but it was released only a month later and the name Glass does not appear again. The first indication that the lot and block of Oak Cliff transferred in 1928, when Theodore Cox sold the lot to a Mr. Chastain. *Polk’s* indicates that no one lived at this address until c. 1931. To confuse ownership more, Glass’s partner, Dr. Fletcher L. Nelson did live in the house beginning in 1941. Dr. Glass lived in the country near Owasso and thus is connected to Charles S. Dilbeck’s drawings found at the Mayo Building which show the Owasso address.

³⁵ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map*, Vol. 1, 1915, republished June 1962, Sheet 81.

³⁶ Strobe, *ibid.*

left the home sitting empty. One mixed-race couple purchased their home through the wife's name because they feared not being able to buy a home.³⁷ Today, Reservoir Hill and Oak Cliff additions are integrated neighborhoods with faded memories of the neighborhood's integration issues in the 1950-60s. The Reservoir Hill and Oak Cliff neighborhoods function as one entity with a single neighborhood association.

³⁷ Neighborhood meeting March 22, 2012.

SURVEY FINDINGS

LOCATION AND SETTING

The Oak Cliff Addition lies approximately two and one-fourth miles north-northwest of downtown Tulsa in a looping Osage Hills limestone outcrop, which approaches from the west and then proceeds mostly northward. The location is best known as the top of Reservoir Hill, an area that once held a large reservoir as part of Tulsa's historic water transportation system. While the reservoir itself is no longer used, Reservoir Hill remains a high point on the landscape. It is known for a large white arrow pointing east, which was historically erected to help Charles Lindbergh, and later other aviators, find the Tulsa airport at McIntyre Field near Admiral Boulevard and Sheridan. Today the arrow points to the Tulsa Municipal Airport.³⁸ Figure 14 shows Oak Cliff outlined in black. On the topographic map the ground ascends from south to north as it approaches the top of Reservoir Hill.³⁹ The properties surveyed are on this hill, particularly along the north-south ridge.

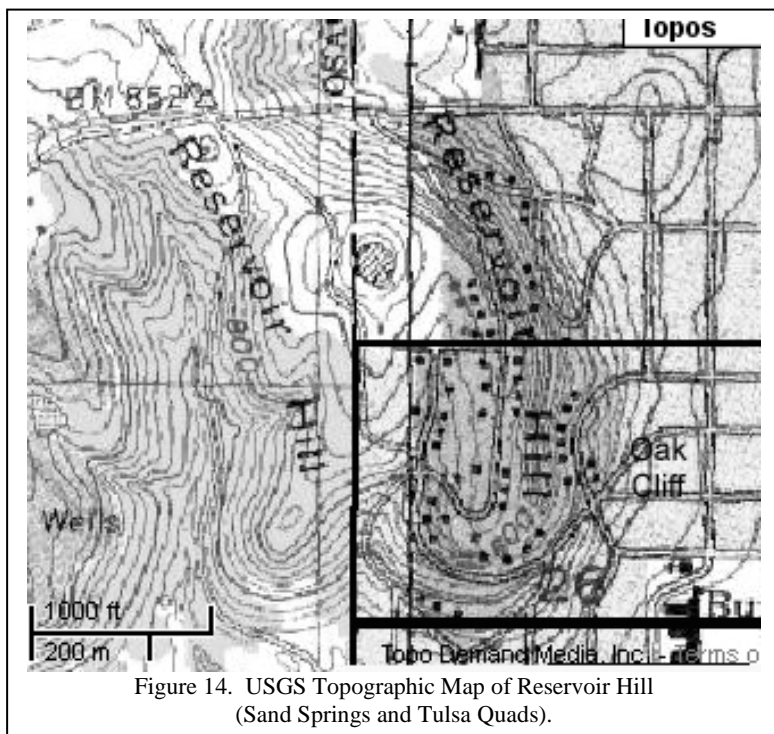


Figure 14. USGS Topographic Map of Reservoir Hill (Sand Springs and Tulsa Quads).

The setting for Oak Cliff is wooded and hilly today, although in 1924 it was nearly bare. The historic photo in Figure 15 looks south toward the Oak Cliff addition from the Reservoir Hill addition and shows new road paving under construction.⁴⁰ The image confirms the lack of vegetation also seen in the 1922 advertisement.

Houses are set back on large lots or sit above the street on hillsides, placed to take full advantage of the views whenever possible. Today, mature trees and shrubbery nearly hide some houses in Oak Cliff.

³⁸ "Tulsa Aviator's Arrow Restored in Reservoir Hill," Posted July 18, 2009, <http://www.newson6.com/global/story.asp?s=10748643> (referenced January 2, 2012).

³⁹ The setting on Reservoir Hill was auspicious because the site was developed as a holding reservoir for city water from Lake Spavinaw, located northeast of Tulsa. The underground reservoir had a diameter of 300 feet and was 27 feet deep. The reservoir park was known as a local place for courting, and local radio station KVOO erected a tower there, although the station moved to Eleventh Street in 1929. See Leigh Strobe, "Reservoir Hill: Room With a View," *Tulsa World*, February 22, 1993. Reservoir Hill is also an addition to Tulsa, filed September 1923, that sits north and east of the hill and Oak Cliff. Because of Oak Cliff's location adjacent to the reservoir, the addition is often confused with the Reservoir Hill Addition, or the two are combined as one in the Reservoir Hill area.

⁴⁰ "The Reservoir Hill Association Newsletter," November 2005, 2. Gretchen Hannefield provided copies of these newsletters to Cathy Ambler.

Residents appear to place value on the natural features that contribute to the neighborhood's sense of place.

Within the neighborhood native rock is used for retaining walls, steps from the street to house, front door surrounds, garage and wall cladding, landscape features, fountains, curbing and driveways. In keeping with the southwestern architectural theme, several houses have stucco walls along the front of the property, especially those with street-side garages.



Figure 15. 1924 Photo of Paving on Reservoir Hill, Looking South

RESIDENCES

The survey encompassed seventeen single-family residences constructed between 1923 and 1932. Ten of these houses were constructed in 1928 alone. They occupy large lots, sometimes double or triple lots, on a prominent point north of downtown Tulsa. The elevation coupled with the large lots gives the development a remote feeling.

All of the surveyed houses have architectural elements characteristic of Southwestern design motifs. Native stone, stucco walls, shaped parapets, and red tile roofs are abundant. The survey identified the majority (ten) as examples of Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, while another three are Pueblo Revival designs. The remaining four buildings illustrate regional variations of the more traditional Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival architectural styles.

The integrity of these buildings is very strong. Significant exterior alterations have been few. Three buildings were recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register with minor caveats:

- 271 West Victoria – New windows were installed within the historic window openings, but the roof form, irregular massing and façade materials otherwise remain unaltered.
- 282 West Victoria – A small one story addition on the south end of the house modifies the original façade, although it complements the scale and materials of the original design. The amount of historic fabric lost to add this element was minimal, and if it were removed the original façade and fabric could be easily restored. This house bears a particular resemblance to a tracing paper sketch by architect Lawrence Blue.
- 2123 North Elwood – A metal awning was added to the front porch more than 40 years ago and storm windows were installed over the original windows. Neither of these changes significantly

compromises the integrity of the dwelling. The awning in particular complements the architecture of the house and could be easily removed in the future.

Only one building is recommended as not eligible for listing in the National Register as part of a historic district. At 2225 North Elwood new windows were installed in the historic window openings and an addition was built on top of the attached garage. While the building retains the irregular massing, façade materials and ornament that communicate its Spanish Colonial Revival Style, the alterations to form, materials, and design compromise the integrity sufficiently to render it non-contributing.

POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Analysis of the survey data reveals that the houses of Oak Cliff form a potential historic district. These buildings form a cohesive node that documents a concerted and intentional effort to develop a residential enclave in a unique location and with a distinctive architectural vocabulary. Within the boundaries,

shown below on Figure 16, there are eight non-contributing resources. Six of these are ranch houses that were constructed in the post-World War II period, long after the period of significance for Oak Cliff. One house, 2304 North Elwood, was built in 1925 but has a very traditional Prairie School/Craftsman design that does not share the unique Southwestern architectural traits of the surveyed buildings. The eighth non-contributing house was built within the period of significance in the Southwestern genre but has experienced a loss of integrity. As a historic district, Oak Cliff would be unique from Tulsa's other residential neighborhoods due to its architecture and setting. An Oak Cliff historic district with the boundaries shown on Figure 16 appears to retain sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association to meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

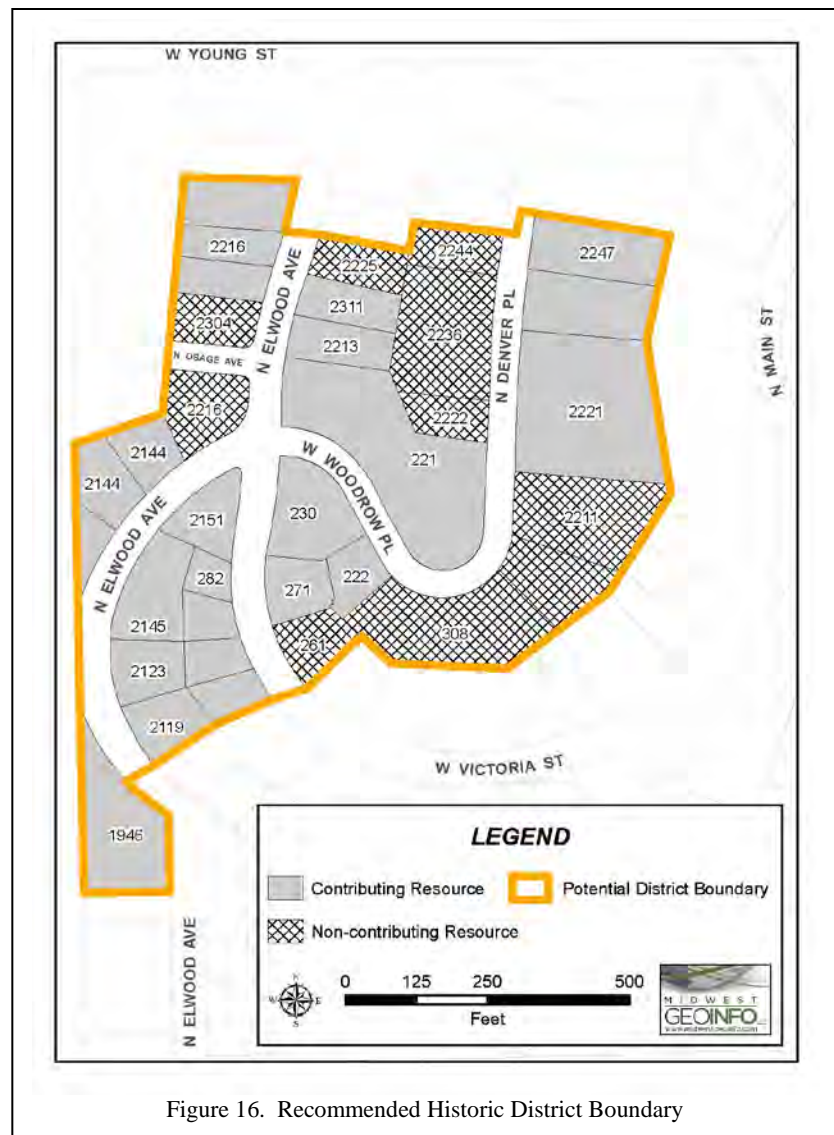


Figure 16. Recommended Historic District Boundary

RECOMMENDATIONS

The scope of the Oak Cliff survey was limited to seventeen specific properties that appear to form a cohesive historic district that meets the National Register criteria. The surveyed resources share a historical background, time frame, geographical area, and setting that distinguish this neighborhood from Tulsa's other residential developments. The development context for Oak Cliff has provided a means for determining eligibility. More than 50 percent of the resources have associations with this context and would contribute to the district.

Because the scope of the survey was very narrow, however, there are seven houses within the proposed district boundaries that were neither inventoried nor evaluated. Assumptions have been made about their construction dates, architectural styles and attributes, integrity, and historic context based on windshield review. These assumptions led the consultants to believe that these resources would be non-contributing to an Oak Cliff historic district. If an Oak Cliff nomination is pursued, these seven resources should be examined more closely and their status officially determined. After this evaluation, the boundaries of the historic district can be refined if necessary to take into consideration the resources that are currently considered non-contributing.

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